

The Reminiscence

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PREFACE

IN THIS WORLD, love still is a category that is difficult to escape from, except to those who have completely repressed their desire. But most others have acquired amorous nets.

There was a writer who had written, “You count up how many stars are there in the sky, I will love you more than that number. I have counted the stars in the sky, I continue counting and keep on counting till to the end of the universe, but you were nowhere to be seen.”

This book is not a short story collection. It is a love-novel style including nineteen chapters and a letter to be used as a conclusion of the story.

To begin, the story is a love story between a female (Jung) and a male (Vu). They chanced upon each other at the park when they came there to exercise every morning, then they loved each other.

From their first meeting, the love between both of them was gradually blooming over time. She found on him a good man, and she thought she has found the right person for her. He understood she was an ideal woman whom he was looking for. She always looked into reality, doing her best, and did not rely on others. She had succeeded in her education and financial profession in record time.

She was concerned in many different things, from the heart to reason, dream to reality, severe public opinion, and her true love. However, they've met each other quite late, but they felt they could not diverge from each other. What will happen will happen. She decided to go on looking forward to her new life, like a river merges into a source of water.

Day by day they fell deeply in love with each other. Their life had been changed a lot. They were living and working in the same town. Daily they could meet each other after work. They were enjoying their beautiful love, and they expected someday they would have the chance to live with each other as husband and wife.

But unexpectedly, suddenly he transferred to another college in another state. What must be must be, and he has reported for duty as a college teacher in Philadelphia.

He had flown back home with her every three weeks. She also had flown in to visit him twice. She seemed to like this town because it was a peaceful place, and people were very nice. He

promised to marry her in a couple of months as soon as he settled down his business in his new place.

Her parents were also very happy about her marriage in the near future; they were waiting for the wedding day.

Suddenly, she fell sick and was hospitalized. Her younger sister, who sent him a letter via e-mail to inform him, knew her sister had a severe sickness and wanted to see him as soon as possible.

According to the doctor's examination, her illness was at the final phase, and the doctor was at the end of his resources. Her doctor had tried to lengthen her life to wait for her lover who could come back in time to see her before it was too late.

Her image in this story had been closed, with readers having compassion on her destiny. He was very pained when he saw her on her bed in the hospital; he could not hold back his tears.

Love is as beautiful as a dream when in an inconclusive love affair.

Life is no happier than when a promise has been completed.

You make a rendezvous, but you won't come.

Let love from time immemorial hang in the air forever.



THE REMINISCENCE

BY
BUI TRAN VUONG



I

FROM NOW ON the
dating has been closed.

Everything was over; we have lost each other forever. Everything just remaining was a singing, an echo, a recollection, a sorrowful past! Vu stooped his head down to Jung's chest, and he wept to see her in such a state.

Meanwhile, the doctor was entering the room, moving toward Vu. He gently put his hand on Vu's shoulder and talked with Vu in soft tones to bring him back to reality.

Autumn was in, the leaves were beginning to color, the weather was slightly cold, and the leaves turned brown in autumn. The scene of the whole park was clothed in mist. It looked the same as an early morning four years ago when Vu and Jung met each other at this very park.

The opaque light from the lampposts along the lake that were playing on the surface of the lake reflected the flicking walkers' silhouette that went up and down on the water.

In the autumn morning, the breeze ruffled the surface of the lake; the fog entirely cloaked the Eldridge Park. There was a lovely couple who were hand in hand walking abreast on the park's trail. In the far distance they looked like the silhouettes that became attached to each other vaporously in the mist.

Unexpectedly, Vu saw a woman who was sitting on the bench at the park, whose figure was exactly like Jung's. She seemed she had just finished her exercise.

Vu was flabbergasted when he saw her sitting there; it was an unexpected encounter that caused Vu to be motionless. He asked himself, was this reality or a dream? Was he dreaming or not? He didn't believe his eyes anymore. He rubbed his eyes several times, then he wisely opened his eyes and looked attentively at that woman to find out who was as alike to Jung, like two peas.

"What an incredible story!" he shouted. She was exactly the person named Jung, who was looking far away to the horizon. She looked like she was thinking of her childhood. Her house was not very far from the park; she came out to the park every morning for exercise. Whether it was sunny or rainy, she was always there, and she had never missed any single day.

One day of the first week of April, Jung sent Vu an e-mail. “Last night I missed you very much. I have had a strong headache, and I was extremely tired, but this morning I have tried to go out to the park to exercise. I was expecting to see you there, but I was completely disappointed because you weren’t there while it was heavily raining.

“I have decided to keep walking in the heavy rain without an umbrella with only one purpose – to meet you. No matter, the unfavorable weather has abused me. I put all my confidence in you that you have been there to hold an umbrella to shelter me from the rain. You and I would walk together in the rain. But the bitter truth is, my hope has vanished! I kept going on, walking in the rain, and felt very lonely! Suddenly, I burst into tears. The tears were rolling down my cheeks!”

At the time there was only Jung walking in the rain. Everybody had come inside the building to escape from the rain. She was walking while asking herself why she had maltreated herself. Had he loved her or not?

Last night Jung was sleepless; she missed him too much to sleep. The next morning, she woke up, she felt exhausted, but she decided to go out to the park for a jog.

The letter she sent to him via e-mail. She wrote, “Yesterday afternoon I was at the Buddhist temple to participate the meeting and discuss about the mission assignment to each member of the festival committee. Each member was with a specific duty

that has an obligation to help the Buddhist musical festival on October 17. I was too busy to have lunch; in the evening on the way going home, I was getting hungry. When I arrived home, the first thing I did was I went to the computer, checking your e-mail. An awkward situation! In lieu of your e-mail, there was an e-mail from the hospital to notify me that you've passed away. I was stunned by the thunderlike news; my heart seemed to run out from the thorax. My arms and legs were trembling uncontrollably, and I was going to faint. Whole day, I had nothing in my stomach, but suddenly I felt full from eating. I was sorrowful and exhausted; that night I was sleepless. I woke up in the next morning, I had strong headaches, my whole body was in pain as if spanked, and my eyes were swollen and red like the golden fish's eyes.

“When I could not sleep, I took your picture to look at it for a long moment. Frankly, you were very handsome. I do love you, honey,” she said. “I understood that your e-mail, that just was your game, but the game you played that caused me to escape death by an inch!”

Once he was out of town for almost a month. In the morning, after she finished her exercise, she sat on the bench next to the table to relax before she went home. Afterward, suddenly his image had appeared consecutively in her mind. She asked herself what he was doing now. By the way, she used her car keys to engrave a few words on the surface of the wooden table. It was the very table she and he had met each other for the first time.

Although she wasn't a xylographer, one look at the words she engraved on the wooden table proved she was gifted in engraving.

Three months later, the evening of Saturday, he himself came out to the park; he went for a walk. She called him and asked him to go to the wooden table to find out if there was anything strange on it. If he couldn't find anything strange on the surface of the table, could he try to find out if there was any "My dear" on it?

She told him, "Did you understand while I was engraving these words on the table how much did I miss you and love you?"

She missed him very much. She remembered the day when she and he were at a tiled-floor showroom, and she embraced his shoulder and slept on him. She missed his sweet voice; she craved for a cup of Victor's coffee that he made for her every morning before she went to work, she missed his cozy hand, and she missed everything about him.

He tried to use his eyesight to look over the wooden table, but he found nothing. He intended to give up, but at last he found the words at the corner of the table: "My dear."

With inspiration he added three more words under of hers: "My dearest treasure." The words "My dear" and "dearest treasure" attached to each other. It stayed out in the sun and rain that

was a symbol to throw down a challenge to the severe weather conditions.

Every morning she and he went to the park to exercise. Normally, they met each other at 5:30 a.m. But he always was there thirty minutes earlier than scheduled to wait for her because at 5:30 a.m. it was still dark, and there were very few people there at that time. The evildoers always took unfair advantages of darkness to abduct a woman who was walking alone to do evil things unpredictably.

That commonly happened. He wanted to protect her against a disastrous situation. Because of this reason, he always was at the park before she came to the park to keep her out of danger.

Her car was uncommon at the time; there were no more than five cars like hers in the whole city. Sometime on the weekdays she and he have lunch together at a French restaurant at Colony Square.

She drove on Highway 59 South at a speed of 85 mph. All of a sudden, she turned toward him, held and put his hand on her lap. He was feeling very happy because of her caressing manners.

Otherwise, her car has a special feature, which he easily recognized it in a far distant. This special feature was its headlights; they were very bright.

If she was early in the park when it was dark, nobody could predict what will happen. For this reason, he and she always were side by side, and ready to deal with evildoers. When she and he were walking side by side, she was secure from attacks because he is a martial arts expert.

Every early morning both he and she met each other at the park. She and he were walking abreast along the park's trail. At noontime, they have lunch together. In rainy evenings, they looked forward to seeing each other.

In the morning every day, they usually met each other at Eldridge Park for an hour. After they finished their exercise, they got to work. He gave her a kiss whenever he met her, and they treasured their moments.

Jung was the same as a bird in the cage. Its door was too small to fly freely. She wanted to flap her wings to fly high, but she was limited by time and space. She told him that whenever she has a good chance, she would meet him right away, she wouldn't lose her chance.

“I did understand your difficult situation,” he said.

On December 24, evening, this was her first time to witness the snow fall since she arrived in the United States of America. She called Vu and cheerily told him that it snowed and the snow was falling down on the ground, dazzling white. He asked her how much beautiful was the snow falling.

“Very beautiful, very beautiful,” she answered.

The more it got late at night, the more it snowed. The whole park was blanketed with snow. Snow began to mantle the roofs at night.

On December 25, snow still robed the roofs, trees, and grasses in the park, but the street ice had melted, and it was already clear. In the evening she and he went out to the park as usual.

2

AFTER SOUTH VIETNAM collapsed into the hands of North Vietnamese communists, Jung and her family was in the same fate with more than twenty-six million South Vietnamese people. Her father was a businessman in town. The communist regime had changed money twice to drive her parents into being moneyless. The purpose of Vietcong to change their money was to demolish South Vietnamese bourgeois; communists pushed South Vietnamese get into financial difficulties. Vietcong launched the great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to eradicate the remains of the so-called bourgeois ideas and customs.

After April 30, 1975, Jung dropped out of school because her family belonged to the middle class that Vietcong called comprador bourgeois. Ever since, Jung was out of school, and she stayed at home to help her parents make a living.

The house of her family was a three-story house, which was located at the center of Ca Mau province. The Vietcong has confiscated her house, grocery store, and the other valuable assets. They drove her family out of her house, and then they moved in to take her house as a new owner without pay a penny for the house. Indeed, Jung's mother was very angry. She pointed at the Vietcong cadres' faces and told them, "You are hypocrites and daylight robbers." Her properties were her hard-gotten fortune!

Jung's family had to disperse into small groups in order to escape from moving to a "new economy area." The Vietcong used the beautiful words, the so-called New Economy Area, but in reality it was a remote and desolate area.

People were transported to the new economy zone. They stood on their own feet; they self-made their own thatched huts for living to do farmhand, and it was called a collective farm or state farm! How the beautiful word that the Vietcong has given a name to the new economy zone. It was a compulsory productive labor camp, neither more nor less.

In the true sense of the word, it must be called a compulsory labor camp. It was the prison that the Vietcong had kept in the South Vietnamese officials and ARVN officers. The Vietcong called these places "reeducation camps," but in fact, these were the prisons or POW stockades.

Prisoners were barbarously tortured. The prisoners have been under key for a long period. When the prisoners were released from the education camp, most of them became the mobile

dead bodies. The Vietcong's words had stunk of hypocrisy and should have called it prisons instead of reeducation camps. The Vietcong had propagandized to the free world that they treated the detainees well. But in reality, the Vietcong was playing a cat-and-mouse game with the people of the free world, a game that was sheer political propaganda – no more, no less. It was hard to appreciate the full horror of life in reeducation camps that the cruel educator-warden treated the prisoners; truly say that the Vietcong was always a right little horror.

Jung and her third brother came to the Chua Ba Thien Hau Buddhist temple to ask for a place to take refuge. The abbot of the temple accepted them to stay at the back building. As soon as the Ca Mau province was controlled by North Vietnamese communists, the temple got into many difficulties. The power was cut off, and monks were not allowed to receive food donations from Buddhist believers, etc. Jung and her brother shared every bowl of rice and bit of clothes in hard times at the temple.

The back building has a big hall that was used as dining hall for Buddhists. There were two more rooms reserved for nonresident Buddhists to stay overnight. Between the Buddha Hall and the back building was a large courtyard with secular trees, and the dusty scenery was melancholic. Evening came, and the temple faded into darkness. At night, the wind howled through the trees; the chirping of crickets sounded sad, indeed.

The evening prayers began from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and included recitation, chanting, and meditation. The old lady who does charity work for the temple, every day she prepared meals

for monks and did the odd jobs for temple. At night she attended the evening prayers until the prayer was over then she came back to her bed next to Jung.

As soon as the evening prayers are over, all lights must be turned off, except for the candles on the Buddha altar. Looking out through the window, the darkness had settled over the temple. The wind had blown uninterrupted, the sound of the windlike lament of apparitions. If anyone was too chicken-hearted to sleep at night, it was nearly midnight.

Jung heard noises in a corner of the building. With the youth's spontaneous character she wouldn't feel fear.

She walked toward the noises. When she arrived there, the noises stopped. She was listening out for the noises a little while, but there was nothing, then she went back to her bed. But a few moments later, the noises reappeared again, and it like someone was opening the iron gate or pushing table on the floor. The sound sometimes was as if a tap was running. She walked toward where the noises reappeared; like the previous time, the noises disappeared when she arrived there.

On the next day, at morning, she briefly related to the old woman what happened last night. The old lady said that might be the wraith of soldiers who died in the battle or people killed in accidents in wartime. The wraith came to the temple for its salvation, but it durst not come to the Buddha hall because the Buddha hall was guarded by the colossal. So they came into the

kitchen searching for food. Since the old lady told Jung about that, Jung's hair stood on end.

Jung didn't know what the old lady spoke with the monks. On the evening a couple of days later, Jung saw a junior monk who carried a plate of vegetarian food that was laid on a small table at the foot of a tree. The monk chanted prayers for their soul. On the next day, the old lady told Jung, "Didn't you know? Yesterday the monks chanted prayers for the wraith." From then on the noises didn't appear anymore.

Jung and her brother stayed at the temple for a couple of months. The situation had cooled down, and Jung and her brother came back home to live with their parents.

One day, Jung suddenly heard her parents talking about her. Her father said among his five daughters, Jung was the brains of the family. She was a vivacious little girl. She was being endowed with speech and irresistible beauty than her sisters. Therefore, he had registered her at a Chinese-language course in a Chinese elementary school in town.

She had an aptitude for living language; she learned the Chinese language very fast. She not only spoke Cantonese, but also Mandarin very well; she was quick on the uptake, and even her teacher was surprised.

As a result, when Jung arrived in the USA after she graduated in banking, she was offered a job by a Taiwanese bank. She was

assigned a position as a financial expert. She has been working in the bank for twelve months. She had been promoted to vice president.

Outside the scope of her financial profession, she spoke fluently – she was trilingual – that helped her to have all necessary skills to acquit herself of her task that the bank required. Almost all the employees in the bank did not meet the requirement. Nature had bestowed many great talents on Jung. She spoke the Chinese language as fluently as the Chinese by birth. The employees were working in the bank, most of them were either Taiwanese or Chinese from mainland China. They couldn't conceal their envy of Jung's success, and moreover Jung wasn't Chinese.

In front of Jung everyone says, "Hao, hao" or "Good, good," but they have always envied Jung's position at her back, and talked bad words about her. Even someone talked in whispers that she had sexual relationships with the banker, not her real professional expertise.

It was the way things went. They had always envied Jung because she was doing better than them. They attempted to talk bad about her in order to eradicate her reputation. In this world, rare are they who are spared by envy.

Somebody is usually a goody-goody, they are doing trickery themselves, and they have envied somebody who is doing better than them and have embellished a bad story to vilify someone with evil intentions.

A Chinese woman had an aversion to Jung. Her name was Chen; her age was not much older than Jung's. She was a portly young woman and had a comely body. When Jung hasn't been hired yet, Chen was presumed the most beautiful woman in the bank. However, she was married and had two sons. But the banker had a crush on Chen, he has admitted to a love affair. He was careful to give her the finest care and place of prominence in his life. He cared for her break-off relations, and he pampered her like his princess.

His stealthy love could not be hidden from his wife's eyes. His wife turned a blind eye to his affair. She had someone in bank that was her eyes; these people followed close behind the banker to report her everything about his activities. But she didn't care about his secret love with Chen; the most important thing that she was interested in was money, as long as she can control her financial resources.

If she dug his affair up, he would fly into a rage, and he was going to get a divorce; it was the only solution he could do! His asset would be divided into many parts; she would just receive her part only, the rest he will give his lovers. So she had better she made believe that she was deaf and blind, that meant she knew nothing about his adultery. Otherwise, she would hire a private detective to stick close on him. She was a highly capable person, and a firm-stuff woman. For this reason, she was as calm as a cat; she pampered her husband as usual, and like there was nothing happen between them.

Chen suddenly discovered the president's secretary was the one who reported to the banker's wife on the relationship between Chen and the banker. Chen put very heavy pressure on the banker to discharge the president's secretary. Chen personally typed the discharge letter and brought it to the banker to sign right in front of her. The banker was between the devil and the deep blue sea. He didn't know what to do. If he refused to sign it, he would lose his fancy woman. In order to make his sweetheart happy, and with the power of love, finally he was resigned to sign it. After he signed it, she gave the glad eye to him, and then she handed the letter to the human resource department manager to carry out the banker's order. The result was on next day the secretary got the sack without warning!

After two weeks from the day the secretary was discharged, the banker's wife called in talking with Chen. She requested Chen to tell the banker he must rehire the secretary because the secretary did nothing wrong. She determined that if Chen tells the banker, he will listen to her. Before closing the conversation, she strongly reminded Chen she shouldn't let all her hope be gone!

Although she was gentle with her voice, Chen knew that it was a very serious warning to her: "Don't play a cat-and-mouse game with me."

Jung didn't know why since she had worked for the bank, some employees in the bank offered Chen a funny name, "Fat Lady."

Jung's father was an honest man. Jung's way of life was exactly the same as her father's way. She had been on her best behavior; she had treated her subordinates as an equal. She had worked dutifully; her ways of working were "Duty before pleasure" and "Finish the job, not the hour." She didn't have a bias in favor of anybody. She praised those who worked hard, but she reprimanded to shun one's responsibility. In case someone got a serious mistake, she spoke with gentle tones and considered carefully her words to explain one's mistake. She tried to avoid doing somebody an injury that needed her delicate handling. She was a sighted leader, deserved to be revered, and loved from her employees. She never backed out of her duty.

As compared with Chen, you would find Jung was much better than Chen in all aspects, from the professional field to the field of public relationship. She was lovely beyond compare. As a special policy of the bank, Jung's position was right directly responsible to the banker, not through any department or even the president of the bank.

Although Jung has worked for bank eleven years, if in a certain chance both Jung and Chen met face-to-face, one looked to the right, another looked to the left. They have never spoken to each other, even a word of hello!

Nature has endowed woman with a sensitive sixth sense. For this reason, Chen knew her banker had a love affair with other woman. Chen regarded Jung with suspicion. By accident, Jung

became a “sacrifice goat to God,” and Jung also was a thorn in Chen’s eyes that she needed to remove as quickly as possible. But it was not easy, she couldn’t remove it out. On the contrary, the thorn has moved deeper and deeper in her eyes. She fired up and was angry enough to spit blood, but she couldn’t make a lot of noises about his love affair because she wasn’t his lawful wife; so she gulped back her tears until she died.

Jung’s father continued his conversation with his wife. He spoke according to Jung’s appearance and astrology. He pointed his finger at Jung’s horoscope chart and told his wife Jung has a “beauty and lovely” star, which indicated that she had the support of a man whom she could rely on him in case of distress. Jung wouldn’t be needy in the future. In addition, she would be happier than her sisters. Then Jung’s father had smacked his tongue and told his wife, “You wait and see. You will know how accurately I predicted.”

Jung was born in the Year of the Dragon; therefore, she was hot tempered and self-willed. Her dad was still joking that she was dragon, it was much better than being a dinosaur. If she was born in the dinosaur year, this world would be broken to pieces. But in reality she was very levelheaded and gay.

Jung’s father had been practiced in Oriental medicine, beyond his profession in herbs. He also studied astrology and told fortunes by the counting-fingers method. He predicted, however, that Jung was luckily born in the dragon year, but she has fallen in an evil hour of Pluto that meant her life would be with much

evil influences, such as dying young, being overwhelmed in misfortune, and agonizing of her affection in the future.

According to her physiognomy and astrology, it was predicted that her destiny was very appropriate for the mouse. However, although the mouse was a small living being, it was a smart one, and it was the dragon's repressor. The Japanese believed that the mouse was a symbol of the propertied classes.

The dragon was cumbersome, showed its teeth, and had eyes wide open in agony. The dragon could submerge to the bottom of the ocean and fly high in the cloud, touching it, and the dragon also could spit fire to burn the canopy of heaven; for all that, the dragon dares not to disregard the small mouse, as well as the venomous snake that could kill people in the twinkling of an eye, but the poisonous snake frightened the ants.

Jung's father did very well in reading and writing Chinese language. He was fond of reading the book of changes or the I-Ch'ing. He knew well about Chinese and Vietnamese predictors. The famous predictor of Chinese was named Khong Minh Gia Cat Luong, who was Lu Bi's advisor, hatched a plot for Lu Bi to pour gasoline on the river and waited for Tao's troops to approach velocity. The Lu Bi troops ran off and opened fire, and the running fire arrowed to the river. Almost all of Tao's troops were burnt to death on the Xich Bich river battle.

On the Vietnam side, the most well-known predictors were Ta Ao and Trang Trinh, those who were intellectuals and used to be

the top high ranking in the reigning king's court. They had the capability to foretell accurately and were admired by the king and his people.

Jung's father told his wife about the Vietnam prehistory. He said the Quang Dong, Quangxi cities in the olden times belonged to Vietnam territory. At that time, hundreds of Viet tribes were southward of the Yangtze River that was called Bach Viet. Lac Viet was one of them at the time. In the first century, the Han clan invaded Lac Viet in the south. After a fierce battle between Lac Viet and Han, Viet lost the battle, and Han burnt the capital of Lac Viet. Han was a nomadic tribe. Its character was warlike, dishonest, and greedy. The Han tribe always invaded her next-door neighbors then merged the land to its territory.

The symbol of Han was the tiger, not the dragon, as she had the audacity to proclaim herself a dragon. The tiger was a carnivorous and bellicose animal. She liked to drink blood from the other animals that were killed by her.

The dragon was the symbol of the Lac Viet tribe and became a legend. The mother of Lac Viet was Au Co and the father was Lac Long (Au Co meaning *fairy*, Lac Long meaning *dragon*).

History has proven that from thousands of years before and thousands years after, China has always brought up her dream to be the "Great Han" to invade her neighbors and nurtures her wild ambition of world hegemony. Now she was starting her dream to bare the teeth and brandish the claws to redraw the South China Sea or the East Sea with the cow's tongue or a U-shape, including

nine discontinuous sections to cover the whole China Sea or Vietnam called East Sea. China had without reason claimed that it was China's territorial waters.

China was a blatant lie and dictatorial. There are three countries that China cordially dislikes. These are the USA, Japan, and Vietnam. The Chinese thought that these countries were the biggest obstacles for her marching forward to dominate the whole Asian countries and seas from the Japan Sea to Malacca. China has an aversion for Japan because during World War II, Japan dominated China. When World War II was over, China received aid from Japan to build up her economy and industrial development for fifty years until now. On the one hand, China begged for money from Japan, but on the other hand, China had brought up her hatred for the Japanese and waited for a chance to take revenge on Japan. China was like a hungry tiger after she has been fed; she gained her energy then she turned around to kill her food provider. Now she was strong enough. She was making a U-turn on Japan and the USA. China has been Vietnam's vendetta, and USA is the most powerful country in the world both in economic and the military. Only the USA can stop China's wild ambition.

After the Chinese communist took over the whole of China mainland in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of Republic of China or Nationalist China, withdrew from the mainland to Formosa Island, or Taiwan today.

As soon as the communists seized the mainland, Mao Zedong launched an antidespotic landowners' campaign (1947-1953) to

mobilize the masses to denounce publicly the landowners and middle peasants. The result of this land reform campaign was there were more than thirty million Chinese who died of famine and millions of landowners were buried alive by the land reform movement. Since then China was the biggest prison in the world under a sanguinary ruler.

North Vietnamese communists imitated the original scenario land reform from China, like the parrots imitate human speech. The land reform in North Vietnam from 1953 to 1957, the foolishness of North Vietnamese communists, caused 150,000 landowners and middle peasants to be killed. Communist cadres denounced to kill their very parents; they committed parricide, and most of the victims were buried alive.

Mao Zedong was a gorilla. He treated his people as cheaply as an animal. He declared that the life of Chinese people wasn't of more value than manure. He also was a great man of libido. According to an article of his private physician, he had a sex aid team with three thousand young beautiful girls, those whose responsibility was to solve his sexual desire whenever he needed. In addition, he also had a young man with a special task to touch his testicles before he has sex with the girls. Making love with three women at a time was one of his favorite pastimes. Mao Zedong preferred to perform sex in every possible position with several girls at a time. In his caddish manner, the result was he has got syphilis.

As soon as he seized China mainland, Mao declared that he was ready to sacrifice three hundred million Chinese to achieve

his dream to move up to the socialism. Indeed, he did exactly what he said. He has thrown more than four million Chinese youths into the abattoir in the Korea War in 1950-1953.

With the dishonest and greedy character of Han, he has just taken over the China mainland, and he launched next a long march of the Red Chinese Army to invade Xinjiang, the territory of Uyghur in 1949, and then he continued to invade Tibet in 1950. Red China redrew the China map to include Uyghur/Xinjiang, and Tibet metamorphosed into Chinese territory.

Uyghur and Tibet have been barbarously treated by the Chinese. The Chinese used the perfidious plot with the purpose to eliminate the specific characteristics of Tibetan culture. The Chinese forced Uyghur and Tibetan children to only learn the Chinese language. The Chinese ruler had planned to mass emigrate Han to Tibet and Uighur land, and then sooner or later, Uighur and Tibet will be a minority in their country. China's policy of expansion and assimilation to force Uighur and Tibetan women were biocide. The Chinese government encouraged Han males to marry Tibetan and Uighur women. This is China's evil-minded plan to wipe out the Tibetan and Uyghur people on this planet in the next little generations, and Uyghur and Tibetan would be entirely exterminated races by China.

China entirely demolished 151 mosques in Kashgar, close to the Kirghizie border in 1966. China destroyed the most splendid mosque of Uyghur and changed it into a pigpen. In addition, China also burnt and destroyed six thousand Buddhist temples, monasteries, and cultural institutions of Tibet.

In the Vietnam history along the length of four thousand years, China had invaded Vietnam many times. Vietnamese ancestors sacrificed and withstood hardships to resist Chinese invaders through the Dien Hong nationwide conference to call upon people of all walks of life, from the oldest to the youngest people, to stick together to fight against the enemy, the Chinese. They were expressing their determination and decided to die fighting against the Chinese invader. The Chinese invaders were utterly defeated. They looked like a flock of hares as they ran back to China.

In the space of eight hundred years, Han has invaded Vietnam seven times, but the Chinese invaders had been entirely defeated all seven times. Vietnamese ancestors did understand China's evil-minded plan to burn down all documentations of Vietnam history and literature to ashes. Because of this reason the descendant's generations have been taught history and literature of Vietnam by the oral literature method. Relying on this oral literature method, the Vietnamese hasn't lost their literature history.

All Bach Viet tribes living in the southern end of the Yangtze River were gradually invaded by Han and were merged to China territory.

In the thirteenth century Nguyen Mong dynasty made an attack on Japan. While Nguyen Mong's gunboats were floating on Japan waters, the tsunami all of a sudden attacked. All Mongolian flotillas sunk into the bottom of the Japanese sea. It was more than a year later that the Mongolians attacked

Vietnam; the battle took place at Bach Đang River. Thoat Hoan was the Mongolian Chinese general. On the Vietnam side, it was General Tran Hung Dao who was the theater commander. The Chinese were defeated, and Chinese soldiers were killed almost empty. The Bach Đang River had been dyed red by the Chinese soldiers' blood. Thoat Hoan, the Chinese general, and some of his remnants of a defeated army ran as fast as their legs could carry them back to China. The Bach Đang River battlefield entombed numberless Chinese invaders.

At the end of the twentieth century, China invaded Vietnam in 1979; this war was a bloody battle. The purpose of this war was for China to invade Vietnam neither more nor less. The war took place on February 17, 1979, at 5:00 a.m.; the Chinese used six hundred thousand soldiers supported by tanks and heavy artilleries. The People's Liberation Army of China used the human-wave tactic and swarmed into attack at the five provinces of North Vietnam. Those were Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Hagiang, Cao Bang, and Lang Son. Chinese soldiers escorted by tanks ran over provinces, and they used their knives and hammers to kill Vietnamese people who were children and women, even though they were expectant women. The Chinese soldiers have massacred barbarously Vietnamese people. The innocent victims were chopped by scimitar, hammer.

In the twentieth century China invaded Vietnam's land and waters five times.

China invaded Paracel Island in January 19, 1974; this island belongs to Vietnam. The South Vietnam Navy fought against

China. In this sea battle, the South Vietnamese Navy lost one warship completely and destroyed were the HQ-10, and HQ-16, HQ-4, and HQ-5, which were light and heavily damaged. About human life the South Vietnam Navy lost one navy major, the captain of warship HQ-10, one navy captain, the deputy of the warship HQ-10, and fifty-seven seamen.

According to Chinese news, on the China navy side, they had lost one warship that was destroyed completely. The warships 271, 274, 396, and 389 were lightly damaged, and the warships 281, 282, 402, and 407 were heavily damaged. About human life China lost one rear admiral, one navy colonel, and an unknown number of seamen were killed. However, there was an imbalance of power between the South Vietnam Navy and China Navy; the Vietnam Navy had four warships, the Communist China Navy had eight warships, but Republic of South Vietnam Navy fought with fortitude. Vietnam Navy lost seventy-four soldiers.

The Colin reef (Colin) and Johnson South reef (GACMA) in the Spratlys were invaded by China in 1988. These islands belong to Vietnam. China used four warships to attack and destroyed one cargo ship of the North Vietnamese Communist Navy then Chinese soldiers landed to occupy the island. This sea battle of the North Vietnam Navy lost sixty-four soldiers, and almost all were engineering group without weapons.

In the war between Vietnam and China in 1979, the Chinese communist invaded five provinces of Vietnam along the North Vietnam and China border in 1979. China's war with Vietnam in 1979 lasted twenty-nine days, from February 17 to March 16, 1979.

The Chinese army was more superior in number than the North Vietnamese army. The Chinese Army used six hundred thousand soldiers and was supported by heavy artillery, and tank units stormily attacked the five provinces of Northern Vietnam. The North Vietnamese army had only three regular infantry divisions and a number of the local irregular and militia forces units; Vietnam, in self-defense, fought against Chinese expansionism.

However, the manpower of the North Vietnamese army was smaller in number than the Chinese army, but Vietnamese soldiers fought with fortitude and caused Chinese heavy casualties in human life and equipment. In the war with China in 1979, Vietnam had lots of difficulties because Vietnam at that time had been isolated by the free world. But today Vietnam is different than the Vietnam in 1979 because many countries in the free world now are Vietnam's friends. China should not be stupid to make the war in 1979 happen again! China had always relied upon her overcrowded people to bully small neighboring countries. That's an action of a coward!

Dang Xiao Ping wanted to wipe out entirely three North Vietnamese regular infantry divisions, but the Chinese were completely disappointed because China couldn't achieve her goal. Deng Xiao Ping declared he would teach Vietnam a lesson. Finally, the China Politburo of the Party Central Committee and the headquarters of the PLA in Beijing made a thorough self-criticism and made a full confession. The lesson he has taught for Vietnam was not only for Vietnam but also for China, who has also learned a very shameful lesson from Vietnam, because the fighting spirit of Vietnamese soldiers was very high and brave, fighting against

the human-tide attack from China. Vietnam soldiers had been equipped the most sophisticated weapons that the Americans had left after April 1975. The Chinese army launched a massive attack to Vietnamese defensive units. Vietnamese soldiers repelled effectively the waves of enemy attack. Chinese soldiers were killed like flies. The Chinese army also lacked of the coordinate theater of war. They had only relied on human-tide tactics because they were too many in numbers of man. China's bitter failure caused Deng Xiao Ping to blaze with anger. He looked up to the sky, shouted, and punched his fists in the air. He gave orders to his cabinet to make immediately a reform plan with four phases. The first priority phase was to reform the People Liberation Army.

The result of China's war with Vietnam in 1979 was that twenty-six thousand Chinese soldiers were killed in action, and thirty-seven thousand soldiers were wounded and shamefully withdrew back to China. On the Vietnam side, many innocent children, women, pregnant women, and elderly were killed by the savage action of Chinese soldiers. China had been the greatest catastrophe in the world and mankind. The whole world was disgusted with China's uncivilized action. The whole world didn't have confidence in China because she didn't practice what she preached. She relied on the fact she was a big country to bully the small neighboring countries. That was her cowardly character. China massively invaded five provinces in North Vietnam in 1979. The Vietnamese government must insert the truth of this war into the curriculum of elementary, high school, and college.

In the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, there were hundreds of thousands of students and citizens who joined in the

demonstrations to request PCC to a political reform parallel to an economic reform. Chinese people have worried about prices escalating and the growing corruption in the country.

The student movement for democracy had requested a political reform. The student movement was supported by people from every walk of life in China and the member of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee, who refused the solution to use military forces to crush out the students' revolt.

Zhao Ziyang, general secretary of PCC, himself appeared at Tiananmen Square in the early morning to speak with the students. After that people didn't see Zhao Yang appear in public anymore. According to the news, Deng Xiao Ping gave the order to place Zhao Yang under house arrest. The next evening, Deng Xiao Ping and his factions declared martial law and gave orders to the army and tanks to advance toward Tiananmen Square. They crushed out students and demonstrators. Deng Xiao Ping gave orders for armies and tanks to shoot directly students and people. Tanks ran over the bodies of demonstrators. People heard a lot of gunfire at midnight, but in reality, the mass killing took place at 3:00 a.m. on June 4, 1989. There were dead bodies of victims lying everywhere on the entrances to Tiananmen Square; many bodies of the victims were crushed by tanks, thin like the papers. The exact number of people killed still was unknown but was estimated to be about twenty-six hundred, and seven thousand people were wounded. In addition, the number of people who have been arrested by the secret police was unknown. Until now their relatives still didn't know where they were and if they were still alive or dead. Nobody knew!

Tiananmen was so-called the Gate Heavenly Peace, but Deng Xiao Ping changed that name to “Gate Heavenly Bloodbath”!

Tiananmen was a bloody historical event that took place on June 4, 1989. Now it was more than twenty years past, but it kindled around the world people's compassion and deep sympathy to the students and people who died for democracy and freedom.

Democracy and freedom will come to the people of China soon. The obligation of the youth generation of Uighur, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia is to stand up and fight for their independence. Their history does not let them lower their head to yield to the Chinese neocolonialism. They must fight for their country, for independence, freedom, and for democracy. Freedom never is granted if you don't fight for it. China always oppressed the ethnic minorities. China has oppressed with poverty Tibet, Xinjiang, or Uyghur, and, Inner Mongolia, don't hang your heads to yield to the Chinese ruler. You must stand up to fight against the Chinese invader. Better a glorious death than a shameful life under oppression of the Chinese. The world peace occurred only when Red China collapsed. On the day of June 4, 1989, that was a mournfulness of the Chinese people. China's wild ambition of Asia and world hegemony will be crushed completely.

If Vietnam wants to survive in this world, she must give up the communism doctrine to escape from Red China's grip. The nearby day, when Xi Jinping took office as president of Red China, he announced that he would fulfill the “great China dream.” He wanted to swallow up the whole Asian countries, seas, and lands.

The people of Tibet and Uighur will stand up to fight with fortitude for the survival of their country, independence, and democracy. China's crazy ambition was to become a "Great China" or "Great Han" to dominate the whole world, but it just is a hallucination.

China is a disaster for the whole world and mankind. If she wants to dominate the whole world, it'll be over American's dead body! Don't imagine that something is easy for her to do.

3

JUNG'S FAMILY HAD crossed the ocean several times to seek freedom, but finally, she had pulled up to the free shore. The first time, Jung's mother went to the Buddhist temple praying to Bodhisattva Quan Yin to ask for guidance for her family to flee country safely. Bodhisattva appeared in her dream to tell her that the journey she had planned to go wasn't safe. It wasn't good enough to cause the accident; she should wait for the next journey; that would be better.

When Jung's mother woke up, she told her husband about her dream. Jung's parents decided to postpone the journey to the next one.

As a matter of fact, the event took place as expected. The boat of Jung's parents had been registered for the family's journey. When the boat left its station, about fifteen kilometers, the boat suddenly exploded while it was running on sea. Almost all of

the people on the boat were killed or missing. Jung's family had a narrow escape from death. What were the reliable sources of information from this accident? Nobody knew! Until now, even though the accident took place more than thirty-five years ago, people still haven't heard any information about this accident!

The Vietcong was moving into the Ca Mau province on April 30, 1975. Jung's family was in a panic. Her family didn't know how and where to go! Jung's mother told her husband that their children were not soldiers or government officials. She thought that communists wouldn't treat badly her family, but her thought was entirely wrong; what she had thought was completely opposite. The truth was always a bitter truth to her family!

Jung's father has been through many difficult times over his last forty years about communists. He told his wife, "You are too honest to understand communists. Communists have four tongues," left, right, up, and down. They could turn their tongues to any direction that they wanted to. Communists speak one way, but they act another way. They said you are free to go, but when we walk, they shot you at your back. Do not trust what communists say to look at their actions. Never have confidence in communists! If they say no, we must understand that meant yes!

The real-life experiences proved that in the land-reform movement in China "between" 1946 to 1953, there were three million landowners and middle peasants who were killed, and many of them were buried alive. And there were thirty million people who have been died from hunger by its reform movement.

Communist cadres denounced publicly the very nature their parents until proven their parents died.

The North Vietnamese communists copied the same scenario that the Chinese used in China, under the guidance of Chinese cadres to direct the implementation of a plan from 1953 to 1956 in North Vietnam. The land reform movement in North Vietnam caused 150,000 despotic landowners was killed. How uncivilized action communists were!

The Chinese communists took over China in 1949. They were impressed by the people's wealth, and they seized the people's fortune. If anyone disobeyed them, they were beaten to death. Even at Buddhist temples, they beat the monks unconscious and robbed the wealth of the temples. They thought that temples had much money and gold to hide. So they beat the monks until the monks declared the place where the money and gold were hidden!

The Chinese communists or the Vietnamese communists were the same; they were the offspring of Max and Lenin. Like father, like son, they did the same manners.

Everyone acknowledged that Jung's father was right. Her parents were doing business when the communists seized the province. They went house by house to inventory their assets, and Jung's parents' store was "closed for stock-taking," and the house owners were told to make up a list of their assets, then they affixed the seals "Don't Make a Move." A couple of days

later they sent their men, and trucks came to move everything out; nobody knew where their property had been moved. They only gave the owners a piece of paper or receipt with the words “Government keep and protect your property,” that was all. They used the words *to protect* instead of *robbing*. Who were the robbers? Everybody knew the communists were daylight robbers! In this planet only communists did things like this! After the Chinese communists have taken over China mainland, they tortured landowners, middle peasants, and even monks for money and gold. If anybody didn’t have money or gold for them, they beat them to death.

Monks also wouldn’t be an exception, even Grandmaster Xu Yun, the abbot of the Nam Hoa Zen temple. They investigated him. Where was the money and gold he hid? Had nothing, Grandmaster replied. They didn’t believe him; they thought the temple always had much money and gold to hide somewhere! They asked Grandmaster Xu Yun repeatedly many times. He gave them the same answer: “Had nothing.” They got angry with him, beat him black and blue and broke several of his ribs.

It was the sixth Chan patriarch Huineng who established the Nam Hoa temple. The temple was located in the Caoxi area, the Shaoguan district, and the Guangdong province; the Nam Hoa temple was constructed on the Baoling Mountain.

A brief note about the history of the Baolam Temple or Nam Hoa later; in AD 502 there was a great monk whose name was Arya Jnanbhaisajta, and his students came to China from India. When the grandmaster arrived at the cluster of five mountains, he

had walked past the Taokhe area or Cao Xi. He found a spring, and its waters were very pure and sweet. Enjoying the magnificent view from the top of the mountains, the landscape of the Baolam forest came into his view, and that looked like a landscape in Indian. He believed this place had a supernatural power; it was worthy to be a place for monks to practice Buddhism. For this reason, he decided to stay at this place and called upon the villagers' help building up the temple. During five years uninterrupted of construction, the temple has been accomplished. Grandmaster named the temple Baolam. *Baolam* meant "forest" and had a great number of precious woods.

The grandmaster had predicted that after he died, 170 years later, there will be a great monk who will come to this place for propagating Buddhism.

Exactly as he predicted, 170 years later, the very grandmaster Hui Neng came to this place and lived at the temple for thirty-nine years. He was born in Ling Nam, Quangdong Province. Hui Neng died at age seventy-five (AD 638-713). Great master Hui Neng received no formal education and was illiterate. He died while he was sitting zazen at the Nam Hoa Temple. His flesh was untouched; the undamaged physical body of Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng was worshipped at the principal Hall of Nam Hoa Temple for 250 years. He was considered father of Zen tradition, who perpetuated Buddha's teaching.

Now returning to Jung's escaping journey again, her parents discussed over with each other about their plan to flee Vietnam. Finally, all members of the family decided to flee from the country

at any cost, even if they died at sea. Her father said, “We must go. Better a glorious death than a shameful life under the communist regime!” The Vietcong had confiscated all her parents’ properties. Her parents lost all their possessions in the communists’ hands. Her family could not survive under the totalitarian regime without house and money.

Her mother was a clever woman; she had a premonition disaster. Three months before South Vietnam collapsed, she sold out goods, but she purchased goods with limited quantity, not as much as usual. Instead of buying goods, she bought gold to be prepared for all possible contingencies.

The Vietcong paid lip serve to humanity and to be cruel in their heart of hearts. They were always saying, “The revolutionary cadres serve the people utter dedication!” What was the truth? The truth under the communist regime was the bitter truth! They were deceitful!

In 1987, Jung’s family fled Vietnam. Her mother used her gold to buy over the Vietcong cadres for her family’s journey. If she didn’t have gold to buy off the Vietcong officials, her family couldn’t get out of the country. Everyone in Vietnam under the communist regime knew the saying that goes, “No gold, no charity and justice.” That was the truth in Vietnam after 1975 and nowadays!

Jung’s family journey faced the danger that couldn’t tell all in here. It was beyond belief. The small boat was floating on the immense ocean for nearly two weeks. Everybody knew their fate

was 80 percent death and only 20 percent life. If a wave crashed onto the boat, the boat will turn over and hundreds of people on board will be buried under the deep ocean or, said another way, was to find life in death. The boat was small. Everyone was packed as close as herrings. Jung had enough room fit to sit grasping her knees. If her legs were tired, she could only stretch her legs out for a little while.

When the boat was in bad weather and heavy rain, all people got nervous. Death was sleeping fitfully in front of them. Besides the big waves and wind, the Thai pirates also were a nightmare for the boat people. They were ready to rape women and kill anybody on the boat for gold and money. The boat turned from side to side because of big waves; women and children have been seasick and vomited. Drinking water was not enough for everyone on the boat; everyone had to economize on drinking water as much as possible. The boat was floating on the water; they didn't know how long they can reach the haven.

Otherwise, when the boat came face-to-face with the Thai pirates, they kept their boat in close touch with the refugee's boat then they jumped over to the refugee's boat to rob the refugees' personal assets that included money and gold. After they have dispossessed of gold and money, the women and girls have got raped in front of their relatives, husbands, or parents.

Some of the rape victims were kidnapped and taken away to land. The victims have been sold to the dens of prostitutes in Thailand. Our hearts go out to these victims. These heartbreaking plights of these victims were unforgettable.

One of their boats that were unfortunate had the registration number MT065. This boat carried over three hundred people. It sunk at the Malaysian coast on December 1978. Sinking along with the boat were more than 170 dead bodies buried in the bottom of the sea. The sinking boat was identified as *Kim Hoang*, registration number MT065. The word *MT* stood for “Mytho.” This boat carried about three hundred Chinese Vietnamese who left Vietnam on November 26, 1978. Finally, the boat reached Malaysian coasts on November 30, 1978, at 6:00 p.m.

Malaysia didn’t want to receive the refugees; her coastal police drove the refugees away from her water. When the coastal police saw the boat, which was far from the shore about three hundred meters, the police shone a searchlight on the boat and shot a machine gun to it. The boat lay at anchor outside the shore overnight to wait for next morning to find out ways and means to solve the problem.

At midnight, suddenly a rainstorm popped up with heavy rain and big waves. The sea tide was as high as ten feet and covered the boat. At about 5:00 a.m. the next morning the storms became stronger, and the boat couldn’t stand steady on its legs. Finally, the boat was overthrown and sunk, and 170 dead bodies were fished from the sea. These dead bodies were buried into two graves in Kelantan, Malaysia.

One of the many tragic plights of the Vietnamese boat people was that they have faced many difficulties on the sea, and they were in a hopeless plight. But the most mournful plight was the

predestination of the boat that registered the number MT-065. Both the boat and 170 dead bodies died in Malaysian sea on December 1978. We couldn't ignore the heart-wrecking plight of these Vietnamese boat people.

As for Jung's family, the days they were on the sea water, Jung was seasick; her face was as green as a banana leaf. Her eyes were as deep as a gulf. She was exhausted because she lacked food and water. Otherwise, she could not stand the bad odor of gasoline that caused her to vomit.

This time her family stayed in Pulau Bidong and Galang islands in the Philippines. She could not forget the bygone days in the islands. The more she talked of her journey, the more she felt deep grief. One evening her family landed in the refugee camp in the island. Everybody was exhausted because of hunger and thirst. Within four days they did not have any food and water in their stomachs. As for Jung, she was very hungry and thirsty while she the unbearable smell of the gasoline on the boat caused her to reel like a drunken man.

The first night on the island, she was nearly kidnapped. Her family stayed together up in the corner of a tent. Suddenly, at midnight a bandit held her leg and pulled her out from the tent. Luckily, her father discovered the event and shouted to alert everyone. The bandit dropped her leg and ran away. If her father didn't on time discover her, surely she had been kidnapped and raped by the bandits. At the time Jung's father was sixty years old, but he still was very strong.

Moreover, before Jung's family escaped from Vietnam, her father was told many stories about the pirates who were doing whatever they liked on the sea. When his family was on the island, he kept vigil to keep watch his daughters just in case of a bad situation. When he discovered his daughter was pulled out by the bandit, he shouted and knocked at the pan to sound the alarm for all people who were near him. The bandit feared the sound alarm enough to give up and ran away, and Jung escaped from danger.

Time waiting at refugee camp was so long. Jung's family had been at the refugee camp on the island for three years and half. It was hanging three years that felt like ten years. At this time the United Nations high commissioner for refugees had reduced the food supply for refugees in the Asian refugee camps. Jung and her young sister daily went into the woods to find some greens to bring home to eat because food distributed by the UNHCR was not enough to eat. The time waiting for sponsorship was very slow, and the future was far away from their hands.

Childhood is a spontaneous time, a time for going to school and jumping for joy. Everyone had a beautiful childhood, but since 1975 Jung felt she had entirely lost the spontaneous and beautiful childhood. As soon as the North Vietnamese communists took over South Vietnam, she was not allowed to go to school because her family was middle class, and now in refugee camp, she had many difficulties in her life.

Youth time is the age of dreaming, but the war had robbed her of youth time. In front of her was an entire gray color. She

thought that she was still luckier than others because her parents still were alive. There were many children who lost their parents, their lives were lonely, and they were like a chick straying from its mother.

If anyone of us has had a chance to be in an Asia refugee camp, we would all know how poor and miserable life was in the refugee camps. Crying was more common than laughing; it was sadder and less joyful. It was in the boiling sun and the lack of water. Every night, Jung must go to the well to get water to bring home. The distance from her tent to the well was about a kilometer. She used the twig being used as a shoulder pole to carry two buckets of water on her shoulders. Her shoulders were black and blue all over because of the weight of the buckets pressed upon her shoulders.

One day, in the afternoon, Jung and Linda, her younger sister, went to the stream that was closest to her camp to have a swim. The stream was quite big and deep. At first both Jung and Linda swam nearby the stream bank, but after a moment her younger sister disappeared. Jung panicked and didn't know what had happened to her sister. Her younger sister has sunk deep under water. She saw only her sister's hand on the surface of the water in the middle of the stream, waving for rescue. She was gradually drowning.

Jung hurried to swim out to rescue her sister. She came up against serious difficulties to save her sister from drowning. It was very lucky for her younger sister; she has been rescued from the death!

After her sister was rescued from drowning, Jung was swept away by the whirlpool waters. She tried to get out of the whirlpool waters, but she was in a hopeless situation. She was too tired to escape the Reaper then she was slowly sinking!

While Jung was giving up hope, suddenly she recalled her mother's instructions. "When you get into trouble, call upon Bodhisattva Quan Yin to save you." Jung just has had enough time to say two simple phrases: "Quan Yin, save me."

It was so miraculous. Suddenly there was a very strong force to pull her out of the whirlpool waters, and it pushed her in a safe place. She has been saved from death! If without the supernatural power, she was sure to die from drowning, and she would be absent from this world forever! Jung was told that there were several people who had been drowned at this stream. Maybe a soul of a victim of an injustice wanted to have someone being drowned like them. From that time forward, Jung didn't come back to the stream anymore.

After cheating death, Jung understood that everything in this world is impermanent and that the life of a human being is too faint. From then on, she put all her faith in Quan Yin Bodhisattva. Every early morning and at night before she went to bed, she reserved one hour to meditate and pray for everyone to be happy and at peace.

Among millions of Vietnamese people who had escaped their country by boats or land after April 30, 1975, there were

hundreds of thousands of people who died in the deep forest or were buried to a bad cold and cheerless in the deep bottom of the ocean.

The tragic plight of the Vietnamese refugees on the Eastern Sea was uneasy to forget in the minds of the Vietnamese people. They recalled the past of how bad the luck of the frail boats that brought them to cross the immense ocean were, to find the life in death!

The commemorating ceremony was held on April 30 each year, where Vietnamese communities have been living to have compassion thought of their people, even themselves who have experienced through many difficult times over their hard and dangerous journeys.

Jung's family had been in the refugee camp for three years and a half. Her family had been sponsored by a voluntary service, and her family settled down in Houston, Texas, at the end of year 1982. This year Jung was full eighteen years old. Jung was in an eager bustle to go to school again. She has enrolled in eleventh grade at a high school in Houston ISD. Her English was weaker than her classmates because she had left school for eight years since 1975. But she made every effort. Therefore, English wasn't an obstacle; she worked very hard. So she overcame the English obstacle easily.

She was a very clever student. She went to school while she worked at McDonald's. She was at school at 7:30 a.m. till 3:30

p.m. After she left school, she went straight to McDonald's to work until 9:30 p.m.

She was a newcomer to the USA. Everything was unknown to her. Her parents were too old to speak English; she had a responsibility to her family while she was studying and working to bring through her family's difficulty in finances. Her job was for four hours per day. She didn't have enough time to study, but she tried to do her best. She must stay up late at night to study and do her homework. Her father always reminded her that "when there is a will there is a way" to encourage her to work hard; the success will come later.

With her will of steel to succeed in life, she overcame obstacles and difficulties to better her. She graduated from high school with first class honors, and she was successful in education. Certainly, she would be successful in life.

Before she fled Vietnam, one evening she and her younger sister went through her old house. There were people who stood on the balcony to pour water down in the street. Linda's head was all wet. Linda didn't know what kind of water a man on the balcony poured down on her. The water caused her eyes to sting hotly. On the next morning, Linda's eyes were considerably swollen. At that time, they didn't have any doctor in town. All of them already have fled the country. Her right eye gradually lost eyesight. Day by day, month by month elapsed. Her eyesight was completely lost. She was very doleful!

When her family settled down in Texas, she was referred to an ophthalmologist. After the doctor examined her eyes, the doctor said the retina and optic nerve of her right eye was completely paralyzed. Linda was told this by the doctor, and she felt very sad; her face was anxious and sorrowful. Looking at Linda's face, the doctor was filled with compassion. Immediately, the doctor advised her not to be dolorous and hopeless. "Never think to die, I will do my best to save your eye."

After she heard the doctor say that, his saying warmed Linda's heart. She had confidence in the doctor who will bring her eyesight back again. The doctor was devoted to treat Linda's eye. As a result, Linda's eye was well again, and she had an eyesight as good as normal.

Talking about Jung's first days in the United States of America, there was an idle story that laughed till the tears rolled down her face. In the United States, if you don't have a car, it was the same as you having no legs. For this reason, whether it was new or old, you must have a car to use as your leg. Therefore, after two months in high school, Jung enrolled in a driving course at the high school. She passed the writing law test, the driving test she must take at the Public Safety Department.

Early Saturday morning, she came to the Public Safety Department at 6:00 a.m. to line up to report to take a driving test. While Jung was waiting at the waiting room, she paid attention to a white man. His attitude was imperious, and he seemed to

disregard the Indochinese refugees. Jung felt so displeased at the white man's behavior.

It was her turn to take the test; unfortunately, she met the same white man. She didn't know how to escape him. The Oriental proverb "When Greek meets Greek" was out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Jung submitted her papers to him, and he asked her to prove her I-94 card. She had forgotten it at home; he didn't let her take the test. He requested her to run home to get the I-94 card to show him. She ran home and brought it to him. As a matter of fact, he must give her permission to take the test, but he didn't do it. He told her to reline up and wait until it was her turn. When she showed her I-94 card to him, he asked her where her writing test papers were. She told him that she has given him all her papers in the early morning before she ran home to get her I-94 card. Why was he now asking for her papers again? She asked him where he put her papers. He said, "I don't know!" She was angry enough to spit blood, but she tried to control herself, but it was fruitless.

Due to circumstances that were out of her control, Jung shouted at his face. Everyone looked at him. The manager of Public Safety Department (PSD) came out to ask her what was happening to her. She stated the matter to the manager about the examiner's behavior. The manager turned her face to the examiner and asked him where Jung's papers were. He looked down to the garbage can, picked the papers up, and showed them

to his manager and said, "I thought she gave up, so I threw it away."

The manager asked Jung and the examiner to come into her office to solve the problem. The manager found a good solution to the problem. Finally, the problem was solved peacefully, and Jung met fully the manager's way to deal with the problem. That was Jung's memory of her first days in the USA.

Jung told Vu this story. When she talked of the white man, her anger still appeared on her face. When she had her drive license, her parents spent their money to buy her a secondhand car. However, it was an old car, but it ran very good and seldom broke down on the road.

Since she had a car, she saved lots of times; she didn't have to wait for the bus for long hours. In former times when she didn't have a car yet, she must take the city bus to her work every day. When she got out of her work, she spent twenty to thirty-five minutes waiting for the city bus. In winter nights, the cold wind froze her feet because the bus stop was empty, and the cold wind was blowing hard.

At any time she recollected her old scenes, she greatly appreciated her parents, who dedicated their life to her. When a child grows up, they never think of their parents, only themselves. There was a Vietnamese proverb that goes, "The tears roll down, never roll up." The affection of parents given to a child was as big as the ocean, but a child's love to their parents was as small as a piece of sand.

The car was the sole means of transportation for the family. Jung drove to school and work; sometimes on weekends she took her parents to visit relatives and friends to make them have an easy life.

4

THE TWO-STORY house was located on the Orchard Lakes subdivision. It was just like a splendid villa. From the backyard to the lake, it was a huge garden with shadow trees and fruit trees. The vines were trailing through the garden. The rows of trees gird the lake. The lake was boundless, about a hundred acres. In autumn the surface of the lake was entirely cloaked by fog in early morning. With a gentle breeze, the lake was very romantic. The fog obfuscated entirely Jung's house. The morning sun slanted over the lovely lake. The flock of wild ducks was waiting for Jung to give them food.

The house was built with a contemporary style that combined specific characteristics that looked different with the others in the subdivision. The house was more than five thousand square feet in area; the double front door was standing in front of the huge saloon, which could fill with five hundred guests.

On Christmas or New Year occasions or on great festival, the saloon was used as a dancing room. The saloon's floor was of a floorboard that was easy to convert into a dancing room. The dancing room was specially designed and equipped with a Bose audio system that was terrific. The sound waves transmitted were parallel with the digital colored light to make the room become a fanciful scenery.

Jung had spent a lot of times to go around looking for the best audio system. After all others, she selected the Bose audio surround-sound system because that was an impeccable system and the best in the market. She felt satisfied of her right choice.

On the left side of the saloon was the guest's dining room. The room was fitted with high-quality and famous wines to entertain the guests, such as cowslip and quinine wine. Behind the dining room was the bedroom. Its door ran to the front road. The room on the right side of the saloon was a peaceful room, where Jung usually sat in an hour to contemplate on the causal principle of Buddhism.

On moonlit nights Jung listened to soft music while enjoying the moonlight. The full moon was shining on the lake. The moon was obscured by clouds reflecting the darkness on the lake. The sky was alight with myriads of scintillating stars. The breeze ruffled the surface of the lake. She remembered the story of a great poet of China whose name was Ly Bach.

Ly Bach was a romantic poet who was madly in love with the moon, or Chi Hang. One night he sat on the balcony of a tall

building where he could drink and wait for the moon to come up. He was drinking while waiting for the moon. When he was drunk as a fish, he saw the reflection of the moon at the bottom of the lake. He thought the reflection of the moon was the real Chi Hang. He immediately jumped down to the lake from the balcony to take Chi Hang in his arms and kiss her, but it was not real, he fed himself on illusions. As the result of mad love, he found a watery grave.

At the huge back garden of her house, she had planted kinds of flowers such as the Japanese magnolia, ginger lily, orchid, primrose, etc. The flowers gave a delicate aroma to spread over the garden. Besides, she planted some more shadow trees such as pine and cypress to make the garden glow with colors in autumn.

The front of the house faced the street, and on both sides of the entrance she planted different kinds of flowers: cherry blossom, night lady, marigold, peony, heather-bell, forget-me-not, jessamine, king of flowers, and carnation. This was to make the front yard become a flower garden. In autumn, the flowers bloomed, decorating her house. It was magnificent, and the smell of jasmine filled the air at night.

One day, her friend Huong came to visit her. Huong was a very close friend of her since they were classmates from first grade to fourth grade. They loved each other like sisters. They fell out of touch with each other since April 30, 1975. Afterward they got in touch with each other again through a friend. When they were in Vietnam, they were in the same school and in the same grade. They shared with each other everything, from food to clothes. They have never hidden from each other anything.

Both of them rejoiced greatly when they saw each other. Jung led her friend into the house. They haven't seen each other for many years. Now they were very happy to see each other again. Jung asked her friend to stay with her for a week to confide in each other. Her friend stayed only one day as after that she must be back home because her two sons were going to school and there was nobody to take care of them. Huong promised she will come back with Jung next summertime. At that time she can stay longer with Jung.

Jung said that was all right, and she started to cook something for her friend and for them to eat together. Her friend was hungry because since they had met each other, they were talking only. Jung cooked while she talked with her friend.

She told Huong about her family's story when South Vietnam collapsed. Her family fled Vietnam to seek freedom; they have been in Asian refugee camps for three years and a half. When her family arrived in USA without money, she worked hard while she went to school to help her parents. Her mother made cake deliveries to Asian markets. After a period, her mother saved enough money to buy a house. She also graduated from high school. She continued her education in college at night. As soon as she graduated in finance, she worked for a financial institution as a loan officer. After many years of working hard, Jung had saved enough money to buy a piece of land at Boone Street. She built a building for her business. She promised to show her building on the next day.

The house interior was decorated Oriental style. There was a shadow of a lady behind the bamboo curtain. The wind blew, causing the pieces of bamboo to brush up against each other to make noises like the “La Rose de Chine” melody.

Dzong walked out to the sitting room from behind the bamboo curtain. Jung introduced Dzong to Huong. Dzong was a store manager. She was also Jung’s classmate when they were at twelfth grade in high school.

Dzong was a tall and slender woman. Her age was about forty-five years old. She had shoulder-length hair; she had a seductive smile with her blue dress.

Jung looked slender and taller than Dzong a little bit. Jung wore a light-blue silk dress with her long hair over her shoulder, and she had beautiful jet-black eyes.

Jung had prepared the dinner meeting to entertain Huong solemnly. Huong was moved by the solicitude of Jung. Huong reminded Jung that next time she shouldn’t do it like this because her meeting was more important than anything. She reminded her that on her next visit Jung should do simple authentic Vietnamese dishes only.

Jung was afraid Huong felt sad, so she hurriedly told Huong that next time she won’t do it again! If next time Huong visited her, she’ll cook vermicelli and sour crab soup, egg rolls, and grilled

meat, which were authentic Vietnamese dishes. Huong said she liked that because cooking is an art. “You demonstrated how to cook, we enjoyed food together,” Huong said.

Jung had already prepared a private room for Huong staying overnight in order to have a heart-to-heart talk after twenty years of living far from each other; that night both were uninterruptedly talking of their private lives, from things of the past to present.

Huong asked Jung about Dzong, the Jung’s store manager. Jung said Dzong was a Vietnamese refugee who lived in a refugee camp in Malaysia for three years. She had settled down in Texas at the same time with Jung. She was in the same class with Jung in High School. She fled Vietnam when she was fourteen years old.

When she was in twelfth grade, there was a matchmaker who acted as a go-between Dzong and a Chinese man. He was a mechanic, the oldest son of a large family. The matchmaker contacted Dzong’s sister to make arrangements for him to visit Dzong’s parents. At that time, Dzong was fully nineteen years old. The time and date of the meeting had been set up by Dzong’s sister. The matchmaker took the Chinese man to come visit Dzong’s parents and by the way to see Dzong’s face, a prospective bride afterward. She wasn’t impressed of him because he wasn’t good looking. He was thin and short.

After he visited her parents, her family pressured her. Especially her second sister, who put heavy pressure on their parents and complained to them that Dzong led a debauched

life. She was a delayed action bomb. If the bomb exploded, her parents must vanish underground.

Dzong was very sad. She found no way to escape. Out of weariness, she let things run their course. In order to make her parents happy, she agreed to marry him.

Before the wedding day, she cried her heart out for nights. Because it was a forced marriage, not a marriage for love, then she gave birth to her first son; she named him Edison. She had another son when she was twenty-two years old. She named her second son Theodore.

Her husband was the oldest son in a large family; he had a responsibility to care of his parents and seven younger brothers. His younger brothers were lazy men; they did nothing but smoke and wander on the street. They thought she was a financial burden to his brother, and she took their food. They didn't understand her salary and perquisite was double their brother's salary. In their parents' house, grasses grew up to the knees, but they didn't cut. They pushed their job to her, their sister-in-law. She was afraid the neighbors would complain with the house owner association, so she must mow the lawn.

As a matter of fact, she wanted her husband to educate his brothers, that they shouldn't treat their sister-in-law in this manner, but he did nothing to his brothers. He seems to care for his parents and his brothers instead of his wife. The Chinese man usually treated his wife like this.

Jung confided to Huong about her family. She said the first days in the USA, her family got many difficulties, like her parents not speaking English and being moneyless. Her mother had to make Vietnamese cakes at home and distributed them to the Asian markets. After several years of working hard, her parents bought a house. "As you know when our family was in Vietnam, my mother, she didn't have to do anything. She just sat in the store to collect money." Everything else, her father took care of it all.

"I took my hat off to you," Huong said. "You were resourceful and better than man. Compare to my husband, he was nothing!"

"One must take things as they come. Maybe I was lucky I was not as good as your glorification to me," Jung said.

Huong might be tired because of long driving. She wasn't into the conversation with Jung. As Jung turned to Huong, she saw Huong drop off to sleep and snore with a buzzing sound like that of a bee.

5

THE LOVE STORM suddenly came up to Jung's life. One day she chanced upon Vu while taking a walk. He was a college teacher who has arrived here from the north. He was tall and had pepper-and-salt hair, his style worldly wise. He dignified in his speech. His eyes were bright. Attentively looking at his eyes she found he was confident, honesty displaying through his deeply felt words.

He had poor eyesight, so he had to wear glasses all day long. His eyes were sparkling; he looked tenderly into her eyes.

They have exchanged few words. "How long have you have been here?" she asked.

"I have come here for two months," he replied.

She continued to ask him, “Why do you like to move to this place? You didn’t hesitate to face the heat in summer, did you?”

He said he had been in the north quite long enough. In there, the weather was very cold in winter, and it snowed up to one’s knee. The streets were snowed up, and traffic was very dangerous and caused accidents.

“In this state there is a Vietnamese community with their businesses. The weather is mild. It is quite hot for a few months in summer only. But there are Vietnamese restaurants to serve not only Vietnamese American but every people. On the north the weather was too cold, and that was not fit for Vietnamese people. Conversely, I could conclude that the southern region were the so-called sunny states. Many people have moved from the northern states to southern states to resettle in this state, and lots of Vietnamese American businesses were opened that made a great contribution to the prosperous regional community. In the commercial district, where all kind of businesses have been gathered together, you could buy whatever you wanted to. There were restaurants that you could have a free choice. With me eating was not important because I used to eat mixed Vietnamese and American food. However, it was more convenient for me,” he said. Sure, fire the Vietnamese American who wouldn’t forget authentic dishes such as pho or rice noodle beef soup.

When he was in the north, every weekend he drove twelve miles from his home to the Vietnamese restaurant downtown to have a bowl of pho or rice noodle beef soup. Sitting inside the restaurant he looked out on the street through the window of the

restaurant. It snowed and was cold. When a busboy brought him a hot bowl of pho, he ate pho while cold wind was blowing hard outside. The soup was very hot. He ate pho while he cooled it by blowing his breath. How the pho looked delectable!

Jung said that she listened to his depiction. She could not stop her craving for pho. If she was not mistaken, she was sure today he went out to have pho, didn't he? And why was he going alone? Was he selective about the people he confided in?

Might be he needed her help to introduce him a woman, Vu said.

OK, that was easy, but he must be patient a little bit, Jung said. He predestined affinity; it also needed to have time. It was more haste, less speed.

“Do I need time, was it true?” Vu asked. He looked at Jung’s eyes, he could read her mind. Jung’s answer was, “There is a love that didn’t need a long time to have strong attachment to each other.”

Before he said good-bye to Jung, he gave her his business card with his home address and phone number. Since the moment he and she said good-bye to each other, she had attached herself to him. She had been thinking a lot of him. He gave his regards to her always by calling her every day to inquire after her.

When they said good-bye to each other, he held her hand. When he touched her hand, she felt like there was an electric

current going through her whole body. Her body was shaking like she got an electric shock.

One day she told Vu that she had a very good friend named To Lien. She had a good education, and she was not just a pretty face. If he wanted, she would introduce her to him, Jung said.

Vu understood that her inquisitive question was to conduct a poll on how much he was interested in her. He understood that it was because she talked for the sake of talk. If he said yes, he was cock-sure she would be falling down in a fit. Because of that reason, he really thanked her consideration for his need. Undecided, he said he was not yet sure! Listening to his answer, she was pleased to know he took interest in her.

She was fond of art. For this reason, both have exchanged their common views. Therefore, both were in concord with each other. So there was rarely any difference between them.

He was happy to have her, a beautiful, keen, delicate, and captivating woman. This fact was arranged by God, and they had a strong attachment to each other in this life. Regarding her knowledge and beauty, that was an opportunity for a man to come to her, such as Vu, who was cosseting, worried, and concerned.

He showed his interest in her. He always reminded her to have adequate nutrients in order to keep her in good health. He warned her not to show excessive interest in a slender body but instead of her health.

They have often gone to the beach on holidays to walk along the shore for exercise and to have fresh air. They had adequate food and good rest to improve their life and health after the hardworking days.

He wasn't a piscatorial; he didn't want to hurt them. He always asked himself why she was happy to hurt a creature. "If someone hurt me as I hurt the living being, how much suffering did I feel? Whether we are human beings or living beings, we have the same feeling." They held the same point of view.

In the world, nothing was impeccable, and you can't have your cake and eat it too. Jung felt lonely and was as very long as a sad melody. Once she confided to Vu that since she fell in love with him, every night she has thought of him. If one day she did not meet him, she had a fond remembrance of him. Next morning when she woke up, she had a strong headache, but she didn't tell him!

Since she met him, her life felt lively. He often told her stories to exchange opinions to improve knowledge. Her voice was very sweet, and she sang very well too. They walked side by side while they sang together; they were feeling very happy.

They often talked to each other through their eyes. They have exchanged happiness as well as upsets with each other. They did not hide anything behind them. One day, he suddenly caught a glance at her look at a halt; she had looked at him to seek for information. He had admonished her several times that she should put high attention to her parents because her parents

were advanced in years. If she can do anything for them, she must do them now and not wait until tomorrow because time and tide did not wait for any man. She really thanked him for his consideration to her parents. Since then she regularly paid a call to her parents. Before she came to her parents, she usually called at a restaurant to make an order in advance for some special food that her parents like to eat. On the way to her parents, she stopped by at the restaurant to pick up her order. She dished up and ate together with her parents. Her parents felt very happy; sometimes she concocted a new dish, and she brought it to her parents for them to taste it.

Every weekend evening, she asked Vu to come with her to visit her parents. Anytime she came, her parents felt happy; she used a lotion for diabetes to massage her mother's legs. Her mother felt very comfortable when she gave her mother a relaxing massage on her arms and legs. Vu drank tea and had a chat with her father.

One day Vu and Jung visited her parents. When they came there, Ngoc, her elder sister who was already there, was talking with her parents. Jung sat on the floor to give her mother a relaxing massage while Vu talked with her father. She had massaged her mother a little while then she wagged her hand to call Vu to come down on floor to massage together with her for her mother's legs.

Ngoc, her oldest sister, was sitting on the couch and looking at Jung and Vu. She smiled with pleasure and nodded in approval

of the relationship between Jung and Vu. Ngoc was very truthful and had sympathy for Vu.

One day Jung suddenly talked about Ngoc, her oldest sister who was crushed by grief about her husband; he was a very parsimonious man. He kept all money, and he only gave his wife whenever she went to the food market. He did the housewife's job instead of the head of the family. She was so sad because her husband was of a bad manner! All their children were grown up. Most of them were college students. Their oldest daughter was already married. But for unknown reasons, they have always exchanged angry words with each other about pointless reasons to throw cold water on their children. Then didn't know who was blame, husband or wife.

They decided to file a petition for divorce. They divided the family property. She took the current silk flower store, and he had some cash with him to open his own furniture store. His furniture store at long last closed. After he divorced his wife, he took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. However, while they didn't live together anymore, he occasionally came back home to visit the children.

When Vu was told about this sad news, he felt sorry for Ngoc.

Vu was interested in Jung's parents and told her to pay attention to her parents because they were advanced in years. While parents were still alive, she was to take advantage of the time to care for them and make them happy. That was the

obligation of a good son or good daughter. If you don't know how to treasure it, you will be regretting it soon, but it will be too late.

The old mother is the same as a ripe banana on the banana tree; the wind has blown the banana drop down. If we ignore our parents while they are alive, we regret when they die. At that time we want to do whatever we wanted to do for them, but it was too late.

Some people give to their parents some money monthly, and they think that they have finished their obligation as a child. They didn't know the old person often felt complex and lonely about their situation; whether they have money or not, they must display unceasing concern and pour comfort into their parents' heart.

If someone is in a difficult material situation, living far from home, and could not care for their parents regularly, they must find out any means to give their regards to their parents and try to come home to get together with parents and family on a convenient occasion, such as on New Year or holiday season. However, we were out of sight but not out of mind.

Vu loved Jung very much. She knew that because he tenderly loved her through his behavior. He embraced her in his arms, kissed her on her lips and her amorous eyes.

When Jung and Vu were together, she told him that she missed him whenever she couldn't see him. She had a dream that she was to meet him in her sleep. He was kissing and cuddling

her in her dream. When she woke up she still remembered what had happened in her dream.

She did remember when she and he were at the showroom to wait for the interior decorator. She leaned her head against his shoulder and fell asleep. She remembered on that day it was lightly raining when she and he entered the showroom. He sheltered her from the rain by the umbrella. After the interior decorator showed her the sample of wood, they were going out to the car, the rain was over, and he had forgotten the umbrella in the showroom. On the highway she suddenly remembered she had forgotten her umbrella. She called the office clerk to keep it for her, she would come back to pick it up on the next day.

Jung called out Vu's name. She remembered every single cup of coffee that he prepared for her every morning. She longed for him, missed his voice, his laughter, and his warm hands to carry her in his arms.

He walked marvelously into her life, she said. However, his steps were silent, but the deep hollow notes of his steps rend the air like the thunderbolt to make her life unsteady. He had left many footprints in her heart. How could she forget him?

The fond evenings have elapsed to keep into a pleasant memory of hers. He and she had a good time together. She had just finished the song "If I Could Be Where You Are."

"Wherever you are in the sky, in the deep sea, or in the deep forest, I would come to find you. I could not live without

you in my heart," she said. The feeling of sadness flooded her spirits; she shall be with him in spirit. She pulled the curtain of the window aside, and looking out to the backyard, she saw a couple of butterflies that were happy-go-lucky hovering in the late-afternoon sun. She was suddenly moved, and she felt a sharp pain in her heart; the depth in her thought appeared on her face. Sometimes she wished she was a butterfly to hover freely, having a beautiful pansy love.

She seemed to have an immense sadness that was difficult for her to say! Behind her smile there lay a deep sadness. Vu had tried to avoid talking about her grief. He pretended didn't know anything about it while he tried to bring his sincere words of comfort to her, and he let her know that he was always side by side with her.

He told her that life was not as simple as we thought; sometimes it was also easy. The happiness was also fairly simple if we didn't seek for it. If we are honest and love each other with all our hearts, the happiness will come to us. If we were not waiting for it, we will be less suffering because expectation was an illusion that played a hoax on us.

She was looking at him and opened slightly her mouth and smiled. She asked him, "You want me to be as a rock, don't you? How can the water plants and mosses stick to the fingers on the rock that was being scattered?" She wanted the wind and dust wrapped around her life, but her life was quiet. How the wind and dust could cover it. He felt slightly sad and gave a reluctant smile and spoke with her. "I understand you have a very strong

intuition and a selflessness that displayed of emotion. She seemed to be thinking about something, and she said words that were a little bit difficult for me to understand. You have used a lot of metaphors that were difficult for me to understand what you wanted to tell me about!"

Sometime he had pretended to be inattentive to her passionate looking. She wasn't interested in the presence of people about. She fastened her eyes upon him amorously with her infatuated smile.

6

THE DARKNESS WAS overflowing into the small room. The room resounded with the sound of the telephone ringing. Vu started at the sound of the phone ringing. It was 1:00 a.m., but he still stayed awake. He opened his eyes wide to look at the darkness. He felt a premonition that something had happened to Jung.

He picked the telephone up and heard Jung's voice on the other end. "Why at this time are you still awake?" he asked. "Tomorrow morning you got to get to work. You work while you are sleeping. Your employees, how did they think about you?"

"I didn't know why tonight I thought of you so much. I couldn't sleep, and tears started to form in my eyes. I was afraid there was something that happened to you," she said.

On the phone he heard very clearly her breath that was panting and her heart beating fast. There was a sign of her palpitation with fear.

“You are so sensitive, you worry too much. Please don’t think too much. Your hair color will be changed from black to silver very quickly, unforeseen. Let what happens happen. You have worried, but you could not stop it. Had better let go everything!”

“I have been by your side. My destiny was as firm as a mountain. My life was protected by a dragon, so don’t worry about me. But no matter what, I thank you very much. Indeed, you always bear in mind the welfare of my life.”

He reminded her to set her mind at rest. “If we didn’t do evil things, the wickedness won’t return to us.” Before closing his conversation with her, he wished her a good night, and he asked her to remember that tomorrow she must wake up early to exercise then go to work.

After he wished her to sleep well, he hung the phone up then fell asleep. On the next morning they looked at each other and smiled. He asked her to tell him about her dream last night. She threw him a lovely glance and explained her dream. “If you are tired, your sleep normally has a dream because of what you have thought and what you have seen that came into your subconscious. Then the scene would appear into your sleep and metamorphose into a dream.”

He agreed with her explanation that maybe in the daytime what she had read and watched on television came into the dream. If she had a beautiful dream, when she woke up, she felt regret. If the nightmare appeared on the dream, she felt fear, she was absolutely furious then she made things difficult for herself!

“That’s all right,” Vu said. “You have based your argument on fact, I am sure to fail! And there is nothing dishonorable about losing, isn’t there? I didn’t want to make war between you and I, and I didn’t want that I am a winner or you are a loser, but I wanted everything to be fair.”

“Do you agree with me?” she asked.

“Sure, I completely agree with you,” he responded.

She didn’t forget to ask him if he was satisfied.

“Yes, I am a loser!” he said.

She continued to ask him if he thought her dream was true. He explained that if it was based on fact, it didn’t come true because you have seen nothing, but in the mind, the inner feeling that was completely true. For example, if in your dream there was a heartbreak scene, you felt deep grief and you cried your eyes out because you saw something happen with your own eyes, and your consciousness was impacted on something that just had happened in your dream. You moved and were still grieving for the things you’ve seen. Like how you say it wasn’t true. If it wasn’t

true, why you have cried your eyes out? Therefore, whether it was true or not depends on the awareness of each person.

“One time in my dream I saw you walking side by side with a woman. You clasped her in your arms walking in the park.”

Vu said, “You see, that moment your consciousness was affected by my image that was walking with a woman, you flew off the handle, and your heart beat too fast to speak out.”

In another dream she saw him and his girlfriend who was lovable walking on the street in an autumn evening. Jung was angry enough to spit blood, she wanted to beat them. She took off her shoes, running, following them to throw her shoes into their heads. But she couldn’t do it because in the dream her legs were flagging, and she could hardly walk. She also wanted to scream, but she spoke thickly, she mumbled. Whenever she flew into a temper, that put an end to dream; she woke up from the dream, but she still flared up until a couple of hours later.

One Saturday morning after she and he finished jogging, she was yawning and stretching on the deck far away from him, about eighty-five feet. She saw he was talking with a young man who had long hair, with a wool cap. She went off the deep end because she thought that he was talking with a girl. When the conversation between he and the young man was over, the young man passed her place; she looked at him and found out he was a man, not a girl. She was so sorry to have misjudged and thought badly of Vu.

Then there were several nights she wished he was at home with her but he wasn't because he was out of town for his business. She also grew angry, but she bottled up her emotions because she was rather afraid of him telling her she was a jealous woman.

“Exactly! You were excessively jealous,” he said. “I was talking with a man. You thought I talked with a woman. If I have talked with a woman without you, I would make my apologies, and I was willing to accept my fault. I would promise you, I won’t make you sad anymore. When I have promised you, I will never break my promise. So please have confidence in me.

“During the day, you and I were walking in the park then at night you had a dream you thought I walked with another woman. You were taking me for someone else! Didn’t you know to whom I belonged to? You!”

She offered him a tender smile.

“Once in a while, you explained to me what the relationship between happiness and suffering is,” she said. “In most cases, people thought that happiness is not things causing suffering because happiness and suffering are two entities which were completely opposite each other. That based their argument on facts. But in reality, happiness and suffering have a closer connection between two cases, like the body and its shadow, because happiness and suffering are always adhesive together. According to Buddhism, happiness also is impermanent, like morning dewdrops stagnate

on the leaves just like that, only a wind has blown the dew down and has been broken into pieces. The suffering is the same. There is nothing permanent. Happiness is impermanent too. That may become suffering, and suffering also is impermanent. It could become happiness. These two cases are just the same as each other. Why do people usually say health is better than wealth?" she asked.

"Your question is right, people usually say health is better than wealth, but de facto, how many people know health is better than wealth while one is in constantly good health? But when one is sick and confined to bed, the whole body is painful at that moment, and one wakes up suddenly and says, 'Now I do understand health is better than wealth.'"

Love is the same. When someone has love, one didn't know to look after one's love, but one always runs after the delusion and thinks it is a real image. Indeed, if you haven't been suffering, you didn't know the true value of happiness. If you have been suffering, do you have the opportunity to verify what happiness is? And how suffering is?

When you suffer for something, you look deeply into the cause of the suffering, then you will understand what is the source of all this. If you know what the cause of the suffering is, we can find the way to solve it. Otherwise, you are happy, but you don't know how to take care of it. You trample upon your happiness, the happiness will change into suffering. For this reason, you understand that happiness and suffering are interactive

phenomena. It shows in your notion and follows you any minute in our daily life as a shadow.

Jung was a modest and discreet woman. When you have the chance of tying friendship with her, you newly find she was kindhearted. If you are superficially considered, you couldn't understand her best behavior.

Outside working hours, when her time was done, she hurried driving home. After changing her clothes, she went to the kitchen preparing for the dinner. When her family finished dinner, she washed the dishes, cleaned up, and prepared breakfast and lunch for the next day before she took a shower.

Every morning, she woke up at five. She drove to the park to exercise. She spent one hour to exercise. Afterward she came back home to prepare for going to work. Sometimes she skipped her breakfast because she didn't have enough time.

Vu respected Jung's truthfulness because she wasn't grandiloquent and never spoke one way and acted another way. She, like most other women, was fond of the opposite sex speaking highly of her beauty.

She was a very intelligent woman. She was inclined toward truthfulness, goodness, and beauty. She wanted to do the good things to make life more meaningful. So she tried overcoming the characterless.

Since the first day he met her, he found out she was a mature person. Money and position cannot seduce a woman of character like her. She always laid much emphasis on the morality that was the guideline of her life. She wasn't a characterless woman, and because of that reason, she was highly respected by everyone.

When she was young child, she had lived in the lap of luxury, but she wasn't arrogant. When she fled her country and lived in the Asian refugee camp, she was met with serious difficulties and a life of deprivation and misery, but she didn't disgrace herself and never said die. She always looked forward to the future, and she firmly believed that there will be a bright day that will come to her life.

She was very practical and looked into her real situation. She did her best to better herself. She didn't want to depend on others. These were her strong points. With her will she went from one success to another.

She wished to marry an educated man. She herself and her husband together will educate her children step by step to success.

She did not differentiate between boy and girl. She had not any misconception, like the Chinese who just respected boys but abused girls. Whether girl or boy, they must be treated equally. She wanted them to stand on their own feet. She would train them how to cook, how to do the laundry, etc. She wanted them to rely on themselves, not on their parents.

Some parents have overprotected their children. They served their children everything. That was the way to make children being lazy. Children didn't want to do anything. They just wanted their parents to do things for them. When they grow up, they knew nothing.

Vu agreed with her practical ideas. She tried to translate her ideas into actions. She thought that family was a very important school because family is a foundation unit of society, and daily children have learned everything from good things to bad things from their parents. The more good things they learned from their parents, the better their life will be. The relationship between husband and wife, parent and children are based on the morality of relationships; they are in each other's pockets. It is not only blood relations that offer a token of affection and to entertain a feeling of gratitude deep in their hearts.

If parents care about their children and they know how to educate and keep a very wary eye on their children, they will become good citizens and will be successful in the future.

Today, Saturday, the contractor will deliver to her house fifty boxes of wood floor to floor her new house at the Orchard Lakes subdivision. Vu and Jung have attended the high school graduation ceremony of her nephew, who graduated with a high school diploma. The graduation ceremony was held at the Toyota Center in downtown Houston.

As soon as the ceremony was over, Jung left the Toyota Center in downtown Houston, where the high school graduation

ceremony took place that morning. She drove directly to the new house that was being constructing to wait for the deliveryman.

Vu himself was driving to the Walgreens store to develop a roll of film that he used to take pictures of the graduation ceremony at the Toyota Center in the morning.

While Jung was waiting for the deliveryman to finish his work of moving the fifty boxes of wood floor into the garage, she called Vu to remind him that after he finished developing pictures he should go to Mai Restaurant. She would wait for him there.

Vu was a well-educated man. He did not have any difficulty finding a beautiful woman. Yet Jung, with her reliable characters, must be a very special woman so that he was madly in love with her. He was joking sometimes that he had been charmed by her beauty.

He had a habit of telling humorous stories to make the conversation be more fascinating. He told her he had loved her not only for her beauty but also for her arguments that were quite convincing, or her charming voice to delude her interlocutor. If he loved her, it was because of her morality and dignity. He did love her because she was a woman of virtue; she was not an ordinary woman.

7

THE DOORBELL RANG while Vu was preparing to have breakfast. He opened the door. He saw Jung standing at front door. He greeted her with a smile, and he invited her to come in.

“Today is Saturday. You went to bed late last night. Why did you come so early this morning? Was there anything strange, or did anything happen to you?” he asked. “Have you had breakfast yet? Have breakfast together with me, OK?”

She sat down at the dining table; he quickly went to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for them both. He put the basket of bread, butter, a disk of meat pie, and omelets on the table. About ten minutes later, breakfast was ready to serve; they were eating while they were talking.

“Do you think I am a good cook?” he asked.

“A good cook likes me. I have applied for your chef cook position, but I haven’t received any answer.”

“What do you want to drink? Do you want milk or orange juice?” he asked.

She made a sign for him to bring her a glass of orange juice.

While he and she were eating, he asked her the reason why she came very early today. She said last night she had a terrible nightmare. She woke up in the middle of the night and couldn’t seem to get back to sleep. She tossed and turned in bed to wait for dawn then went to meet him.

As usual every time she met him, she was always talking and laughing like a singing bird, but today, she kept silent and sadness appeared on her face. She was worried about something.

She was stunned by the terrible matter that happened on her nightmare last night. She was still moved when she narrated the scenario of the nightmare to him. He was moved and fired by her solicitous care and love to him.

He put a glass of orange juice on the table. He told her there was only one sleepless night and her face looked gaunt. “Please, don’t worry about the nightmare. That will cause deep psychological wounds. We will always be side by side with each other and have nothing happen.”

She tenderly looked at him and asked him, "Have you really loved me?"

"I love you much or less, you have known. It is needed not to ask because if I didn't love you, tell me who loves you and who sits in front of me for."

She put the glass of orange juice on her lips and drank a little bit to conceal the fact she was touched then she put it down on the table. Meanwhile, she held a coffee cup and lazily drank some of the coffee. She looked attentively at the glass of orange juice in front of her. Suddenly, she gently put her coffee cup down on the table then put her ten fingers together, making it like a lotus. She put it under her chin with a pensive expression.

She told him she could not live without him. In her nightmare last night, she dreamed she has lost him. That caused her to lose her mind. If that would really happen, what would happen to her?

She and he were silhouettes of their bodies. She and he had always stuck together. How could she lose him, he asked?

He didn't say she did not believe him. She thought she would lose him. But in his opinion, he was afraid of losing her more than she was afraid of losing him because she was an attractive woman. If she walked alone somewhere, surely, there are some men who would lust after her. How should he control her? How could he stop somebody from lustng for her? Someone cast a spell on her.

At that time she did not cling to him anymore. He had no way to save her. There was only one way, and that was to shed tears.

After she heard him say that, she simulated anger to give him a pinch on his arm; he shouted because of her pinch that caused him to be in pain. She said sorry then she rubbed her hand gently on the place where she had pinched him.

While they were talking, he unintentionally stopped his eyes at her chest. She had worn a fashionable shirt with a wide collar and without an undershirt. Her chest exposed her breasts that were as big as oranges. He acted as though nothing happened then he looked elsewhere.

When they finished breakfast, she cleared the dishes from the table to put them in the kitchen sink. While she washed the dishes, he made two cups of coffee, one for her and another for him. Afterward he walked to the kitchen to help her dry the dishes and arranged them in the basket. She took off the gloves from her hands when she finished washing the dishes. She hung the gloves on the sink faucet to dry them. She washed her hands and wiped them with a hand towel then both of them went to the living room to enjoy the coffee that already had been made.

“Did you think there was any different point of view and way of life between you and me?” she asked.

“It was great happiness for you and me,” he answered. “If you and I didn’t have the same thought, same way of life that was crushed by grief for us because each of us has own lifestyle, living

with our own private lives and innermost thoughts. However, we live together, but it's the same as nothing, and sure fire there wasn't my presence today. Although I didn't tell you, but you understood that since the first day we met each other, till now, you have never made me feel sad."

Even though sometime she made him unhappy, but he always smiled. She felt ashamed of her doing, and she silently corrected her fault. They have been together for four years; that time was long enough. She knew him through and through. She always saw his smile on his lips even though she did something to hurt his pride. He had loved her for four years long, but she had never missed his smile on his lip. She was very proud of having him in her life.

Jung said, "In my deep feelings, I wish to live a simple life, have a true love, and live a real happy life. However, money can buy anything, but money could not buy happiness and personal dignity. Man doesn't want money, unless a dog refuses to eat food. Because beggars' bags are bottomless. The more he has, the more he wants. Money has its own problems. Money must be clean money. That means we worked hard with our own ability to earn money, but to defraud somebody's money, that is dirty money."

Vu looked at Jung's eyes; he understood she wanted to tell him something. She walked round the table and suddenly she stopped at his seat, she held his chair. She talked to him with her sweet voice to resound from his back. "I love you, and I love you forever. You didn't understand me, did you?" she said.

He stood up and turned to face her. He put his arms around her shoulders. He kissed her on the lips to show his sincere love to her then she fell on his arms with his caressing manners.

They looked passionately into each other's eyes. She had been warmed by his warm breath. She forgot everything. There was only one thing she remembered, and that was in this world, there was only him and her.

They were lying together in bed until she whispered in his ear to let him know that it was already eleven, almost noon. She told him, "I must prepare for lunch," then she got out of bed and walked to the kitchen.

Now she and he belonged to each other. He sat in the living room to have a few sips of Victor's coffee while she prepared lunch.

Friday evening she drove to Vu's residence from work. She arrived at his residence while he was reading. He put the book down on the table to greet her coming. She said, "The whole week I didn't have any cup of Victor's coffee. I missed it very much, and could you make me a cup of Victor's coffee now?"

He quickly answered her, "Sure, madam, I would satisfy your demand. I will not only make you one cup, but also make one hundred cups for you, if you wanted. I would do everything for you at once." Then he ran down to the kitchen to make two cups of Victor's coffee, one for her and another for him. As soon as she finished off her cup of coffee, she told Vu, "I want!"

He understood what she meant. She pushed him down on the bed, and she sat on his body. She put her mouth close to his ears and whispered, "I want to have a child with you." This was the first time he heard it from the her very mouth to tell him such words. He was in a passionate mood.

That night she and he dove deep in joyful love. She acted on her own initiative in all work. His body and hers were attached to each other like limuloids. When they brought the merrymaking party to an end, they were rather puffed, and along the puffing and panting. It was an unforgettable night. She breathed hard while she talked to him that she was afraid to lose him. Because of that reason, she wanted to have a child with him.

The next day was Saturday, and they had lunch together then they got to the public park near the river. They walked along the riverbank while they watched a sluggish river. They sat on the bench nearby to call a halt, and they talked about their forthcoming plan. They planned for their wedding day soon.

The sun was falling down to the west. They left the park in the draughty evening. Looking at her graceful carriage with her hair on either side of the head rolling along the favorable wind, his heart was immensely melancholic. He didn't know what will happen to her in the future.

Listening to her, he felt very sad because in the near future, he would be transferred to another city. That meant that every day they could not meet each other.

In the sunshine of the summer noon, he felt pain from the bottom of his heart. That was an event that signaled a change. He understood that he would lose her, he would lose his mystery happiness. He considered his life as null and void. His life would feel lonely and gloomily sad as the days before he met her.

8

M^{R.} HUYNH HAD eight children – five daughters and three sons. Jung was his third daughter. Khon was his oldest son; his third son was Loi. The second son was ill from an early age. He has been treated medically by several doctors, and even Oriental medicine, but it was of no help. Because of that reason, his parents were very grieved about him.

At the wedding party of Ngoc's daughter, Vu was invited to participate in the party, and he sat at the same table with Loi, who seemed to be a man of very little word, but he was a witty and hot-tempered man.

After a year of settling in the United States, he married a Chinese woman but didn't know the reason why he decided to get a divorced after five years of living with her. He remarried a Spanish American woman, and although his mother told him not to marry her, he went on to marry her. His mother had felt

uncomfortable because of the different language that caused misunderstanding between mother and daughter-in-law. Linda's husband also was an American; Jung and her sisters daily came to give their regards to their parents. Vu had never seen Linda's husband. According to Vu's opinion, maybe Linda's husband and his mother-in-law lacked communication and misunderstood each other because of the language barrier.

Mr. Huynh named his children suitable to the stature and character of each child. Loi and Jung looked alike; their noses and eyes were alike particularly. Jung's oldest sister looked like her mother and was the same from walking to stature. Jung's second sister was Lien, whose disposition was abnormal. Somebody called her to be half-witted, but however, she had well taken care of her parents and two ill brothers because she had lived with her parents, and she did not have children. Jung's youngest sister, whose name was Anh, Vu had never seen. He didn't know about her character, and Jung kept secret about her. She had never talked much about her youngest sister. Maybe the character of the youngest sister and Lien were the same.

Lien's thumb and Jung's were alike. Linda and Jung's physical appearance were of slender women. Special Jung and Linda's face looked at all alike. However, while Jung and Linda were of the same build, their characters were much different. Linda was more picky and wasn't as open minded as Jung.

The Huynh daughters' appearance were all pretty, but Jung was the best of all. She was emotional in nature and more liberal than her sisters, Lien and Linda. She was a clever and vivacious

woman. She learned foreign language very quickly, especially in the Chinese language, and she spoke very fluently in Cantonese and Mandarin.

Her knowledge was immense, and she felt quite at home in Vietnamese, English, and Chinese. Her way of life was liberal, calm, and cheerful in disposition.

Man is not perfect; everyone has strong points and weak points. Jung spoke honestly that she had more strong points than weak.

Vu didn't care about her past; he was concerned about what she was doing now. He believed that she had gotten the ability to correct herself to be better and to eliminate the wrong thing if she made any mistakes. The bad thing, it just was a phenomenon, it was not a character. When everyone was born, everyone always had good character, but afterward, one become a good or bad person, depending on the good society or bad society they were living in.

Vu always treated Jung well even though she turned and walked away from him, but he still treated her well as in bygone days. He thought that material things in this world aren't forever; only compassion and unselfishness are permanent.

When people are in love, normally, they treated each other well, but unfortunately when one of the two parts, everything will be in the reverse side. Although it is sweet like honey, it becomes sour like lemon.

Generally, one only pays attention to the outward appearance of a person, such as wealth or a good position, but after time, they get in touch with each other. The more they lived closer, the more they find out of each other's character and knew the true personality of that person, who is a good or bad person.

When they treat each other mercilessly to satisfy one's deadly feud with their lover, there is nothing more left to remember of each other. It was better they open their heart to sink the feud.

Because of that reason, Vu always wanted to send Jung a rose to beautify the love and to make her life more meaningful. If in the future their love would be broken, she at least understood that she had met a good person whom she has dreamed.

He was always concerned of her good character and that the best things she had done were a praiseworthy deed. Jung was a femme fatale; her amorous eyes attracted the interlocutor.

Jung understood her second sister Lien was not normal. She interfered with Jung's business. Jung had told her sister she should not interfere in her business and let her alone. If her sister continued to interfere in her business, she will never talk to her sister anymore. Jung told Vu about what her sister had done, but he kept silent without any opinion. No matter what her sister did, her sister still was her sister. Had better Vu just said is that so?

Maybe during the transitional period, Jung's family was a newcomer to the United States, and moreover, Jung was still very young. She followed her own bent, she didn't obey her sister's

advice and didn't follow in her sister's footsteps. This caused Jung to fall into disgrace with her sister. Lien should not treat her sister badly, but she treated Jung like a child, and it broke Jung's heart.

Jung's parents were very truthful. Her father was an upright man. He was married at the age of eighteen. If made to combine his name and his wife's name together, the name will be Phoenix, the name of the valuable bird.

They have been married for seventy years. They were in love with each other like when they were in young time. In 2005 Jung's father became seriously ill and had been hospitalized for weeks. While he was in the hospital, he always asked Jung about his wife's health situation. In order to set his mind at rest, Jung told him Mom was all right. He felt secure about his wife's health.

At the end of the year 2005, Jung's mother has was hospitalized. She stayed in the hospital for two weeks. Vu came to see her every day. When he came, she often asked him how her husband was at home. Vu told her that her husband is all right. Her face betrayed happiness.

Vu did something for a joke to make her happy. Vu thought that the more she was happy, the more she quickly would be well soon. She has been diagnosed as suffering from diabetes. This is a common ailment that the elderly who have been contracted. The doctor administered medication for her, but she refused to take it. Nobody in the family can help her because she didn't listen to anyone but only Vu.

Once she became unconscious because her blood sugar dropped down very low. Ngoc and her daughter took her to the family doctor. The doctor gave orders to the nurse to give her a can of soft drink and a piece of chocolate candy bar. She took a candy bar and a can of soft drink, and fifteen minutes later, she felt better. Her doctor prescribed her medication to take at home and released her to go home.

Jung informed Vu about her mother, who was at the doctor's office. Vu drove to doctor's office immediately. When he arrived there, Ngoc, Jung's oldest sister, was staying at the waiting room, but Jung was in the consulting room with her mother. While Vu was in the waiting room, he was sure that Ngoc was Jung's sister because Ngoc and her mother were exactly alike as two peas in a pod.

Jung's mother got out from the examination room. Ngoc, Jung, and her mother got out the doctor's office. Her mother sat on a wheelchair, and Jung pushed the wheelchair to the elevator. As soon as the door of the elevator opened, Vu quickly pushed the wheelchair into the elevator. Ngoc seemed surprised as to why the strange man pushed her mother's wheelchair while Jung stayed calm and said nothing. Vu quickly explained to them to let them know that he was doing volunteer work at the hospital. To share Ngoc's suspicions, he explained to let her know that his duty was to help patients. Ngoc felt calm in mind after hearing him say that.

The elevator opened, and Vu pushed the wheelchair off the elevator and to the parking area. Ngoc's daughter drove in, Vu

helped to move Jung's mother from the wheelchair to get in the backseat of the car. Vu glanced at Ngoc's daughter, who looked at Vu with a suspicious "Why is he here, and does he have any relationship with my aunt?" look.

The next evening, Vu and Jung came to see Jung's mother then Jung asked Vu to go with her to the pharmacy at West Airport Boulevard to get medication for her mother. Vu took along him his camera. Along the way he asked the store clerk to give him a snapshot.

On the next visit Jung's mother told Vu a story that had happened to her a couple of years ago. She didn't remember exactly the events of the happening. She had an argument with Lien, her second daughter. Lien had suddenly lost her temper, and mercilessly. She pushed her mother, who fell down on the cement floor. Her mother was injured on the knee. Since then her legs were all trembling uncontrollably. She couldn't walk by herself. From that time forward, she felt wretched; she became abnormal, taking nonsense, and wanted to put an end to her life.

Vu thought she possibly compassionated her sons were contracted with a hitherto incurable disease since they were very young. In addition, she felt sad because of her daughter, who had treated her badly. Because of that reason, she became a stress-related mentally deficient. Since Vu heard her story, he was brokenhearted. He advised her to forget it and not to think of what had happened in the past anymore, let it all be gone. Lien was ungrateful to her parents; she will take consequence of her doing later on. There was no way to escape it sooner or later; she

must pay for it. Who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind. It is the reflection of the return of good for good or evil for evil.

Jung told Vu she didn't know why the in the near days her mother became a lunatic. She had talked nonsense, but she didn't remember what she was talking about and always expressed a wish to commit suicide. "I didn't know how to help her."

Vu interrupted her and said, "You should not think so. Your mother has writhed under her daughter's insults that she writhed in anguish. She couldn't open her heart to somebody. However, you came to see her, but you just stayed for a few minutes then you were looking around yourself. Nobody poured comfort into her heart. So that was reason she felt sad and get angry. To me, I thought she wasn't having a mental illness. If you let me come see your mother by myself, I would talk with her and judge how well she was. I would know her mental power."

Jung agreed with Vu, and she said she and he will come to see her mother next week. She reminded him not to go by himself. If Lien met him, there would be a lot of trouble for her mom, and this would make her sad.

On the day Jung and Vu went together to see Jung's mother, Vu talked with Jung's mother, and she felt very happy. The conversation between Jung's mother and Vu was over. Vu told Jung that he affirmed her mother was not having a mental disorder. He based his argument on facts, and his arguments were quite convincing. One week later, Jung's mother changed a lot of her habit.

So far she had never chanted the heart sutra, but now she was automatically chanting every morning. She didn't need anyone in family to call her to order; she wouldn't say angry words anymore as she did before.

On November 11 her blood sugar dropped very low and caused her to fall into a faint. Jung received an emergency call from her sister. She hurriedly drove home to send her mother to the hospital. Her mother was admitted to the emergency room at Southwest Herman Memorial Hospital.

After she was examined by an emergency doctor, she had been taken care at the emergency room until 3:00 p.m. then she was moved to a regular room at the third floor. At lunchtime on the same day Vu didn't receive Jung's call. He was anxious to know what had happened to her. He called her many times, but there was no answer. He thought maybe her mother was in an emergency situation. He made a very good guess. There seemed to be the phenomena of telepathy; he knew Jung's mother was falling into a serious illness. He drove to Jung's house, but she wasn't at home, so he drove to the Methodist and Memorial hospitals at Sugarland. He asked the nurse at the reception desk if there was anyone whose name was QP admitted to the emergency in the hospital this morning; both hospitals have not admitted anyone who has that name. He continued driving to Southwest Herman Memorial Hospital. He asked a receptionist if there was any old lady named QP who was admitted at the hospital/emergency room this morning, and the nurse answered yes, she was at room 310 at the third floor.

He rushed to the third floor, coming to room number 310. Jung's mother saw him. She smiled at him and told him that Jung was in the emergency room to take care her father, who was also there. He ran down to the emergency room to find her, but she wasn't there. He thought that possibly she has had a rendezvous with somebody. So she lied to her mother in order to leave her mother there by herself.

He came back to room 310 from the emergency room, and he told Jung's mother that he couldn't find her over there. He cast a quick glance at Jung's mother. He caught sight of a feeling of sadness on her face. He was feeling sad too because Jung didn't come visit her mother while her mother was in the hospital. Why was she treating her mother badly while her mother was sick?

He visited Jung's mother every day, but Jung wasn't there. He called her and asked her why she didn't come visit her mother while her mother was in the hospital. She said, "I'm very busy of my business. However, I didn't come to see her, but I often checked with my brother-in-law every day to know her situation."

Jung's mother stayed at room 310 for three days. This morning she was transferred to room 714 at the seventh floor. Jung called Vu to remind him not to come to room 310 anymore. Her mother had already moved to a new room at the seventh floor. She gave him her mother's new room number at the seventh floor. At 4:30 p.m. the same day, Vu was in the hospital to see her mother.

Vu entered the room of Jung's mother; she smiled when she saw Vu. She told Vu she had pain in her arms. Vu gave her a

relaxing massage on her shoulders and arms. She told him she felt very comfortable and the pain had gone. Vu stayed with her until 9:00 p.m. Before he left the hospital, he told her he would come back the next morning.

The next morning it was raining cats and dogs. He arrived at the hospital at 8:00 a.m. Jung's brother-in-law, Lien's husband, had stayed in the hospital at night with Jung's mother, but she seldom talked with him.

When she saw Vu coming, she was very happy. Vu asked her how she felt. She said she was all right, but her shoulders and arms were painful. He started giving her a relaxing massage. The nurse brought lunch to her. He went home to have lunch and rest a little bit. He had a quick nap after lunch then he came back hospital again, and he stayed there with Jung's mother until 9:00 p.m.

On these days Vu hadn't seen Jung come to visit her mother. Vu asked Jung why she didn't come to see her mom. She said she was busy with work with the officer who came from the federal bank for the monthly inspection. Because of this reason, she was absent from the hospital while her mother was there. However, although she couldn't come, she often called and talked with her mother.

In the evening Linda and Ngoc came to see their mother. Linda was cool toward Vu, she said nothing. She observed Vu while he gave her mother's leg a relaxing massage. She possibly thought that was why he took care of her mother with all his

heart while she and her sisters didn't. Maybe she felt shame because she treated Vu badly. He didn't pay attention to Linda's bad manner. He was going to give Jung's mother a relaxing massage until 9:00 p.m.

Ngoc told him it was very dark outside. "I think you should stop and go home to rest. Let Linda, my young sister, to do it for our mother." Vu stood up and washed his hands then he left. He squinted at Linda; he saw her face was less cold with him. He said good night to everyone before he walked out the room. After he walked out the room for a few steps, he turned and looked back at the room. He saw Linda sit down next to her mother and she started to massage her mother's legs.

Jung's mother was in the hospital for one week and a half. The result of her heart scan showed her left coronary artery was clogged with cholesterol. The heart doctor reminded her she needed a coronary catheterization. Before the doctor does the procedure, he needed someone of the patient's family to sign a paper to authorize the doctor to prepare the cardiac procedure as soon as possible.

Two days had gone, but the paper nobody signed because her family didn't want to do so. There were five members in her family, but all of them didn't want to take responsibility. They kicked the responsibility from one another like playing a football. Finally, Jung asked her youngest sister to sign the paper to authorize the doctor to catheterize her mother's cardiac artery.

After Jung's mother had a cardiac catheterization, she felt much better than before. She was moved back to her room 710 from the operating room. In the next morning Vu came to visit her. He stopped by at the bakeshop in the hospital to buy some cakes and soft drinks for her grandchildren when they came to see her after they got out of school so that they have something to eat to relieve their hunger.

In the evening, Vu came back to see her again. Jung went with a Taiwanese man when she came to see Jung's mother. Meanwhile, Lien and her husband were in the room. The Taiwanese man walked toward Jung's mother. He talked and talked to her. Vu didn't understand what he said because he spoke Chinese. His talking caused Jung's mother to be ablaze with anger at him. At that time, the nurse brought the dinner tray in for her. Jung's mother told Vu to help her going to the dining table. Vu helped her sit down on the chair; he opened the tray cover for her to eat. Vu didn't forget to say good-bye to everyone in the room before he left. Vu was going to the elevator when Jung and the Taiwanese ran and followed him to the elevator. When they arrived at the elevator, Vu had already left.

During the time Jung's mother was staying in the hospital, Vu visited her mother every day whether it rained or not. He visited her twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. He treated her as his own mother. Anytime he visited her, he gave her a relaxing massage on her shoulders. He talked funny stories to make her laugh because a laugh makes people cheerful and forget being

disheartened. Vu felt very happy to do so. While his doing it just was a little thing, it had helped her pain, which had provisionally gone, and she felt more comfortable.

After Jung's mother had her artery catheterized, her health improved much, but the doctor wanted her to stay in the hospital for four more days in order for her surgery to be completely healed before she was relieved to go home. On the day Jung's mother went home, Vu deeply regretted that he couldn't be there to escort her home. The reason for his absence, Vu thought Jung had already known.

He had several occasions to visit Jung's parents. Jung's mother, who liked to hear about Buddhism stories, he related briefly to her Hue Nang, the sixth patriarch of Zen, who was born in Southern China. He died when he was seventy-five years old (638-713). Jung's mother felt pleased and found his story enjoyable. She said when Vu tells a story, she was pleased to hear him telling it for all day long.

Vu understood the elderly who had muscle aches and pains. So anytime he visited Jung's parents, he always gave her a relaxing massage on her shoulders and arms because arthritis caused her whole body aches and pains. In order to help her being easygoing, he started to give her a relaxing massage whenever he visited her. She felt more comfortable.

When he finished the massage for her, he asked her to chant Buddha praise with him. She was very cheerful and praised

everyone's peace and happiness. The sound of the chanting gave a peaceful atmosphere that pervaded the whole house.

Jung's dad had already prepared a hot pot of tea. He bought the best quality tea on the market that was called oolong tea or black dragon tea. The faint aroma of the tea was very cheery.

The art of drinking tea is a very sophisticated style. Before he served tea, he cleaned and warmed the tiny cups by pouring boiling water over the tiny cups. These cups were as big as the big toe or a jackfruit's seed. He poured the water from the tiny cup into an empty pot then he poured tea little by little into all four tiny cups until they were full. He invited Vu to enjoy good tea. Enjoying tea is a profound philosophy in life. Vu politely received a cup of tea from his hand then Vu enjoyed tea together with him. Vu felt very buoyant with a hot cup of tea.

Every day Vu woke up early at four o'clock in the morning. He finished doing his personal hygiene; he started to meditate for an hour. When his meditation session was over, he had a cup of coffee before he went to exercise together with Mr. Huynh.

Vu and Huynh walked together for a mile. As soon as he entered his house, Huynh walked to the kitchen to make two cups of coffee, one for Vu and one for him. Vu asked him why he didn't let me do it. He said, "It is my pleasure." Then both he and I laughed.

While he and Vu were enjoying coffee, Huynh told his own stories of when he was young. Vu listened to him with

concentration because Vu had a good opportunity to receive personal experience from the elderly. Vu had an inquiring mind and learned a lot from Huynh's experience. That was an inestimable lesson to him.

On another day, Huynh said he was born into a large family. He was the seventh child in his family. A large family with seven children, that was a heavy burden lay on a parent's shoulder. When he was fifteen years old, he decided to leave home for a living. Two years later he got married. He had worked very hard to provide his wife and to build up a steady financial resource for his own family. He worked in an herb store. The owner of the store was Chinese. Huynh self-studied in medicinal herbs very well. Otherwise, he also studied in filling a prescription. As a matter of fact, the store owner treated him well instead of looking dubiously at him.

Huynh was able to substitute for the owner of the herb store to feel the pulse of a patient and to fill a prescription. Because he knew well the theory of medicinal herbs, the owner of the herb store feared someday Huynh would open his own business and take the patients with him.

The herb-store owner's suspicions went from bad to worse. There was a good opportunity that came to him. He told Huynh to go to the wharf to pick up the merchandise that just arrived and move them from the wharf to the warehouse.

Huynh followed exactly his owner's instructions; he arranged the merchandise into the warehouse. After he finished his work,

he locked the warehouse's door then reported to his owner the quantity of merchandise he has received.

The store owner attempted to hurt Huynh's life. As a matter of fact, that was the warehouse keeper's job, not Huynh's job, but that night he didn't tell the warehouse keeper to go to the wharf to pick up merchandise as usual. He ordered Huynh to do the warehouse keeper's job with his deep implications.

Huynh had done his daily duty with all his best, but he didn't know his owner's bad ambition to do harm to him. However, the deep river can be measured, but a man's heart is unfathomable. The warehouse keeper was Chinese, the herb-store owner's Chinese kinship. After Huynh left the warehouse, the owner told the warehouse keeper to take away one package of merchandise that came last night.

Next morning the owner told Huynh and the warehouse keeper he was going with him to the warehouse. On the way to the warehouse, the owner was still smiling with Huynh, but just a few minutes later, there was an earthquake to Huynh's life.

The owner gave the order to the warehouse keeper to make an inventory of the contents of the warehouse while the owner was smiling and walking around. When the warehouse keeper finished his job, he reported to the owner that there was one package of merchandise that was missing. The owner was in a rage with Huynh. He bawled at Huynh out a string of curses; he put the sole blame on Huynh for stealing one package of

merchandise. It was difficult for Huynh to say no because while he was innocent, they had evidence against him.

The owner reported to the police that Huynh had stolen one package of his merchandise. Huynh was put in jail while his wife was pregnant with their first child. In jail he got hungry all the time because he didn't have enough food to eat. Daily he was interrogated and barbarously tortured by the police. Because he lacked food and was tortured every day, he was very sickly. His wife was permitted to visit him once a week. When she saw him, she was shocked and cried vehemently because he was weak and was very skinny. His health situation has changed beyond recognition. If he did not have a good Vietnamese teacher help him, surely he would spend a lifetime in jail.

His family budget relied on his income, but he was in jail and the owner didn't pay him. His wife, during pregnancy, was without work. How she could survive without income? She fell into a serious need. She walked to the city jail to visit her husband weekly while her belly was getting bigger and bigger as caused by pregnancy. Every time she saw him, she couldn't stop her tears because after a few weeks in jail, he had been beaten while he didn't have enough food. He looked very skinny, and she felt brokenhearted. The jailer browbeat her every time she cried; at that time, Vietnam was under French protectorate. High government officials were reserved for French people.

Her financial situation got worse and worse. She was close to the day where she would give birth to her first child. She could not work and was without income from her husband. She came

up against serious difficulties in her financial situation. At that time she was eighteen years old, but she had strong belief in the causal principle that she had been taught by her parents when she was young.

Indeed, an unusual chance came to her. One day, just at the moment, she was walking to the city jail to visit her husband. Midway to the city prison, she met Mr. Nhan, who was a high school teacher in the province. He was acquainted with Huynh. When he saw her, he stopped his bicycle and paid a compliment to her health situation. He didn't forget to give his regards to Huynh, her husband. She told the truth exclusively about her husband's situation, that he was suffering an unjust accusation. Huynh's store owner vilified him to steal a package of medicinal herbs, and he was in jail now. She told Nhan about Huynh's situation. When Nhan heard that, he was thunderstruck, and he shouted, "Oh my god! Why is a good man like him in danger like this? Does God have eyes or not?"

He gave her words of comfort, and he told her not to worry too much as that can cause an adverse effect to her pregnancy. He told her he would try to do all his best to help her husband be out of jail to come back home with her. He advised her to set her mind at rest and not be too sad as that would weaken her health. Afterward he said good-bye to her then he rode his bicycle to his school. On the way to school, he thought of how he can help Huynh. Then he has decided to see the police chief to explain to him know about Huynh's case because he knew the police chief was a very good person.

As usual he came directly to his class, but today he went to the school headmaster's office first instead of to his class. He explained the reason and asked the headmaster to find someone to substitute for him in this morning class. The school headmaster was elated to let him off and have someone replace him to take care of the class.

As soon as he arrived at the police department, he told the police officer that he wanted to see Mr. Albert de Charles, the police chief. The police officer escorted him to the police chief's office waiting room.

About ten minutes later, the police officer asked him to follow him into the police chief's office. The police chief shook hands with him and asked him to take a seat. The police chief turned to the police officer and asked him to make two cups of tea, one for him another for the guest, Mr. Nhan. While waiting for the tea, the police chief asked him, "Sir, do you have anything, and what can I do for you today?"

Mr. Nhan explained to the police chief Huynh's case. He let the police chief know Huynh was a good and honest person. He had never stolen anything from anyone. He was an herb expert, and he had lots of experience in medicinal herbs better than his boss. Because of that reason, his owner was afraid someday Huynh would open his own business and take his clients. Therefore, his owner calumniated him to steal one package of herb with the hidden motive to harm him. "I guarantee with the police chief that Huynh is an honest person. He hasn't done anything wrong as the store owner vilified him."

Nhan was a high school teacher and also was a patriotic personality in town that the police chief and he have met and knew each other. The police chief told him, "I do believe you. I will give the order to release Huynh right now." As soon as he finished speaking, he told the police officer to ask the jail superintendent to come to his office to release Huynh. Huynh was escorted by the police officer to the police chief's office. The police chief told Huynh, "Professor Nhan certified you are a good person. So I decided to release you from now then." The police chief turned his head to Professor Nhan and said, "Now you can take him home." Nhan thanked the police chief then shook hands with Mr. Albert, the police chief, before he left the police chief office.

Outside the police department Nhan called a rickshaw to take Huynh home. He didn't forget to pay in advance for the rickshaw puller. When the rickshaw started to pull away, Nhan rode his bicycle to school. On the way to his class, he felt very happy because he had done a good thing.

The event had happened sixty years ago, but Mr. Huynh still remembered it clearly as if it just happened yesterday. Today while he and Vu were talking over tea, he narrated this event to Vu. Huynh was touched when he talked about Mr. Nhan, the high school teacher who had helped him out of jail.

After he helped Huynh out of jail, he was promoted to a new position in the Saigon Department of Education. Since then Huynh had no more chance to see him anymore.

Nhan helped him because he carried out the call of his conscience. He had never thought whether will be repaid or of any condition. Huynh repeated many times that Nhan was a greatly good person.

When Huynh told Vu this story, he regretted that without Jung's presence because the time of this story happened when she wasn't born yet. At that time her mother was pregnant with her oldest sister, Ngoc.

Afterward, Jung's parent did a roaring trade. In the first instance, he opened an herb store. He was at the pains of doing business; his business had a great number of clients. A couple of years later, he opened another grocery store. His business got better and better. He often went to Saigon and other towns in the Mekong Delta in South Vietnam to do commercial transactions.

He was industrious to make money, and his wife was to mange a household. His wife had considerable management experience and had good manners.

Jung inherited her clever mother's gene. Later when Jung grew up, she was very wise and *savoir-vivre*.

Anytime her father went to Saigon and other towns for doing commercial trade, she always accompanied her father to learn how to do trading. However, she just was eight years old; her father aimed his efforts at training her to be a brilliant businesswoman in the future.

Jung was coddled by her mother. One day she accompanied her mother to the livestock market. She asked her mother to buy a piggy for her. Her mother disagreed with her on buying because her house didn't have a pigpen. Jung cried vehemently and insisted on her mother to buy the piggy. Her mother obliged but told her to housetrain the pet piggy. She was not allowed to let the piggy uncontrollably defecate and urinate on the floor. She accepted all her mother's requests. Finally, her mother bought a piggy for her to bring home.

Sometimes the piggy couldn't stop her request; she defecated and urinated everywhere on the balcony. Subsequent to this problem, Jung must wash the balcony by herself. She fed the piggy for a year. After that the more she thought of her piggy, the more she got tired of it. She didn't want to keep her lovely piggy anymore. She called a trader to sell her piggy because she no longer wanted to cuddle her piggy. Otherwise, she also thought of her own affair instead taking a loving care of the piggy every day and night.

Jung's parents' business was getting better and better. Her parents built a three-story house in the center of the business district of the Ca Mau province. The first floor was used as a grocery store. The second and third floors were being used as living floors.

Jung was always having sweet words and soft manners to her parents to prove she was a courteous daughter. There was a time when Jung asked Vu how he talked to her mother. She only

believed in his words. She didn't trust and listen to any member in the family.

Vu joked with Jung that he could not tell her his secret because that was his way of making a living. If he told her his entire secret, how could he earn his living? Who helped him when he was out of food and money? Jung put her mouth close to his ear and whispered, "Don't worry, I'll feed you. Is that OK?" He said he hoped she didn't break her promise and not to talk for the sake of talk!

In fact, he didn't have any trick of talking. He only used his soft manner and soft word with sincerity. The reason Jung's mother liked to listen whenever he told stories was because he spoke gently and politely to her, that's all. He understood thoroughly that the elderly always wanted people to speak to them with a soft tone and courteous manner. He understood what she wanted to hear, he knew how to focus on her attention. He spoke deeply into that point that had given pleasure to her.

The character of the elderly is the same as that of a young child. The child always wanted to be commended and rewarded instead of to be blamed. They only felt happy when they saw their parents with happy faces instead of angry faces. The elderly also like to hear their son or daughter speak courteously, and comfort them. Because of that reason, there was a saying, "The elderly and the younger child, their emotions are the same. They are easy in blues and also in joyful mood."

The elderly kept their sadness silently in their hearts for a very long time. They seldom unburdened their sadness to somebody, and they felt lonely. If you know the elderly's psychology, you should speak sweet words, and politely, and you make them laugh easily.

Jung must yield to Vu because her mom never listened to any member in her family. Every day she didn't pray to Buddha. But since Vu talked to her, she was easy to approve of his suggestion. She automatically said her rosary and chanting every morning. She often grumbled, scolded, and cursed everybody in the family in bygone days. Now she smiled all the time, and she no longer said any bad word; she had done whatever he had kindly requested her. Otherwise, in the family, neither son nor daughter could take her to go out for sightseeing or eating out.

"Nevertheless, she has never refused your invitation," Vu said.

Jung told Vu, "It's true, as you told me before you and I came to see my mother. Quite frankly, I have to take my hat off to you because nobody in my family can invite her to go out but you. It was no surprise. I thought you have a very strong talent to convince my mother of listening to you."

Vu said, "Don't think I am a great man. I am not a magician, and I am just as you are, but I know how to speak with the elderly. I focus on what she wanted to hear. She wanted to hear one's sweet voice, a polite word instead of a grouchy voice, that's all."

Jung's parents had three sons. Two of them were ailing from an early age, and another one seldom came to visit his parents. Jung's mother had felt mentally disturbed, melancholic, and lonely since then!

There was one day when Jung's father and Vu were walking together. He told Vu that he and his wife were incompatible. When she got angry, he was resigned to keep as quiet as a mouse and let her talk whatever she wanted to, and he was going out somewhere to wait till she had cooled off. At that time he came back home, everything will be normal, and both will be laughing.

Jung's parents were very joyful. Vu was very warmly welcomed by them when he visited them. They treated him as a son in their family, not only a visitor.

Vu joked that he was an Indian who played a bamboo flute to catch the snake. Vu reminded Jung that he was not like the Indian businessman from Mumbai who teased mischievously with love and death. He died of drowning at the love pool.

Death spares no one. Finally he had a violent death at Hartman Drive, and in the love valley he left a young wife and two children. His dead body was brought back to India for the burial service.

Different with the above Indian businessman, Vu made a living by playing the bamboo flute to catch snake. When he began playing his flute, the snake crawled out of its hole. When the flute stopped playing, the snake crawled back into its hole.

For this reason, while his real name was Vu, he had a nickname as the “Indian playing the flute to catch the snake.” But in the world, there was an awkward situation. The Indian businessman who had played with the fire of love then sooner or later will die of love. He died without time for last words. Indeed, those that live by the sword shall die by the sword.

Vu has a sweet voice. His emotive voice attracted the attention of the listener. Otherwise, his stature was elegant. When he talked, he always smiled and welcomed somebody with unaffected pleasure. He enjoyed the sympathy of listeners.

9

TWICE A WEEK Jung ordered food from an Asian restaurant to bring home to eat with her parents. She used to order the special dishes that her parents preferred to eat. She always picked the most expensive dishes. Her father liked best the grilled shrimp paste dish, and her mother liked to eat fried ground pork mixed with tofu; these two dishes were their favorites.

Otherwise, her mother was also delighted to eat oysters fried with onion. Vu sometime stopped by the restaurant to order some dishes that Jung's parents liked to eat then he brought them to her parents when he visited them. He had served lunch for them and chatted with them. They were very cheerful.

Jung's parents were very happy when Vu came to visit them because they seldom went out. They always stayed inside the house. Her father was too old to drive. They just go out when their daughter took them out.

Sometimes Vu came to see them at noon, Jung's mother told him to call Jung to buy food to be brought home to eat. Vu told her not to worry about him because he had lunch already.

In February the weather was still cold. Lien took her father to the supermarket. Unluckily it was rainy. He got wet and caught the cold afterward. On that night her father had a high fever and had a bad cough convulsively. Lien thought her father's fever was not serious. She gave him some Chinese-medicine pill. It didn't work, but the fever was more serious. He found it difficult to breathe; he had more cough and pain at the upper back, which is the location of the lungs.

Jung asked Vu what he thought about her father case. He said it was serious because he caught the cold. He thought her father might be having pneumonia. If he wouldn't been treated timely, his condition would worsen and would be more dangerous to his life. He recommended she send her father to the hospital/emergency room immediately and not to procrastinate any minute.

Jung took her father to Fort Bend Hospital; he was admitted to the emergency room immediately. He was diagnosed by an emergency doctor. As soon as all test procedures were done, the emergency doctor told her that her father had pneumonia. He will be treated with antibiotics for at least a week, and then he was transferred to the intensive care unit.

During her father's stay in the emergency room, Vu was always side by side with Jung day and night to help her in case of

an emergency. Every day she and he stayed with her father in the emergency room till 8:00 p.m. After that they went home to take a shower and had something to eat before she returned to the hospital again with her father. On the way home, she stopped at a fast food restaurant to have a burger because whole day they had nothing in their stomach. She said when she got home, she would take a shower and rest for a little while then she will be back at the hospital to stay there for all night. She asked him to stay at home to rest. She herself stayed with her father in the hospital. He didn't agree with her to stay in the hospital by herself at night because if anything happened, how can she do it by herself? She told him don't worry, she would manage somehow.

On Saturday, March 12, that was her father's birthday. He was eighty-eight. On the last week when he was well, she had prepared food, cake, and flowers to celebrate her father's birthday. She set up everything for her father's birthday. It just had five more days left, but suddenly, he fell sick. So everything must be canceled to wait for when he gets well.

In the hospital, he had been made to breathe through an oxygen tube. He felt much better with it than without it. However, he had lost some weight because he couldn't eat well and he felt not comfortable, unlike at home. At night he couldn't sleep well. He was treated in the emergency room within twenty-four hours. Afterward he was transferred to the ICU for special treatment for his lungs.

She came to stay at night with her father in the hospital. Next early morning, there was another member of the family who

came to replace her. She went home to take a shower then went to work. At noontime, instead of having lunch, she drove to the hospital to check her father's situation.

A delegation of the Buddhist temple was led by the abbess of the Chung Mei temple, who came to visit and pray for her father in the evening.

Her mother was diagnosed as suffering from type 2 diabetes. Her right leg was swollen. Because of this reason, she had difficulty walking. Jung bought a wheelchair for her mother for when she was going out because she didn't want her mother staying at home all the time. That caused her to be plunged in melancholy.

On the weekend morning, Vu, Jung, and her parents went to Wal-Mart Super Center on Highway 6 in Sugar Land. Vu helped to push the wheelchair and talked with Jung's mother. Jung and her father were walking behind.

In the evening the same day, Jung told Vu that she was very moved when she saw him push her mother's wheelchair in the shopping center. She said she won't and never forget his image, an image of a gentleman who pushed a wheelchair in the shopping center; this image was printed in bold into her memory forever. She asked him, "Did you know what I was thinking of you at that moment?"

"I'm not a thought reader, so I don't know how I can read your mind," he answered.

She caressed him and put her mouth close to his ears and whispered, "I am proud of you, and you deserve to be my darling."

On Saturday noon, March 5, was Ngoc's eldest daughter's wedding day. Vu was invited. He went along with Jung to her eldest sister's house to join the family party with both sides of the bride and bridegroom. Jung's mother was absent from this party because she couldn't walk, and she also didn't want to sit on the wheelchair to participate the party. The party was over at eleven o'clock in the morning. Jung and Vu went back home to take her mother to Kemah Beach. In the first instance Jung planned on going to Galveston Beach, but later she changed her mind and went to Kemah Beach instead of at Galveston because she must go back timely to join her niece's wedding party at My Canh restaurant.

At Kemah Beach, she and he took her mother to the aquarium to see many kinds of fishes that were swimming in the aquarium. After half an hour, they went out of the aquarium. He and she took her mother to see a man who was performing a circus. Her mother was happy to see him do magic things. Jung said her father's flavor is jugglery, and she promised to take him there someday on the next trip.

Jung, Vu, and her mother were going along the beach to catch the sea breeze. This month it was springtime; the weather was breezy and cool. The sea fog made the beach look like a very romantic scene in the morning. Everybody came down to the beach to enjoy their weekend in the open air after a week of hard

work. The activities of the beach were very busy; the restaurant was crowded. Boats were moving on the water. It was a pleasure to the eye. The seagulls were circling in the air. They were skimming over Jung's head and wanted to land on her shoulder.

Jung's mother asked, "Do these birds bite us?"

"No, they just fly in the air, they don't bite people," Jung answered.

Last Saturday, March 3, Jung's mother wanted to go to the beach, but she wanted Vu to go with her. If Vu didn't go, she wouldn't go either. Jung's mother did not much believe her daughter, and she told Jung to call Vu then let her talk to Vu. Vu promised her that he would go with her. She felt delighted and gave the phone back to her daughter. It was possible Jung told her mother something untrue in the past. That caused her mother to lose her trust in her daughter, but all the picnics have been canceled since the day Jung's father was hospitalized.

Saturday morning Jung, Vu, and her mother went to Kemah Beach. Jung booked sailing tickets for all three to go sailing to the island. But her mother didn't want to go on board. She asked Vu to push her down into the seawater. Vu looked at Jung and said, "What to do now?" Jung seduced her mother by sweet promises. Finally, her mother agreed to get on board after Vu asked her much insistently. The ship broke the waves and sailed forward to the island to leave behind the river wharf in expectation. The ship sped up to break the waves, and water spread up to make

everybody wet. Jung's hair was soaked. Vu used a paper towel to dry her hair. Her hair was very sticky because of the saltwater.

There were three girls, who were schoolgirls, to work part time in summertime. They were about seventeen years old and were to sing and dance on board to bring pleasure to people on board. This occasion was a lovely and an unforgettable day for Jung.

On the way home, Jung drove her car; her mother sat at the front seat, and Vu was at the backseat. He was telling a story to her mother while Jung was driving; the sky was shrouded in dark clouds. It was going to rain very soon.

Vu was telling a story about the dragon breathing water while Jung's mother listened attentively to Vu's story. "Do you know the dragon can try versatile tactics, every trick in the book?" Vu asked. "Do you know there was a dragon sitting next to you? This dragon could breathe fire and burn everything she wanted to." Jung understood Vu wished to allude to her because she was born on the dragon year. Jung's mother held his hand and smiled at him.

10

ONE MORNING OF June, it was a nice day, and the sky was blue. The morning was just dawning in the east. The sunrise kindled the blue sky. The park was aflame in glowing colors. The sunrise in the sky looked like multicolor sparkling diamond blocks that make a beautiful scene.

This morning, before Vu went to the park, he had a strange feeling. He was happy and bursting as though he would meet a close friend that he hadn't seen for a long time.

Since he was in the park that morning, he didn't remember how many laps he had walked. But in the middle of the last lap, he suddenly saw Jung, who was walking opposite his direction.

The distance between her and him was just about four or five feet. Their eyes looked at each other, but she quickly turned on

her heel to another direction as if she deliberately didn't know her close old friend and he was presumed to be a stranger.

Vu was stunned for a minute, and he had a strange feeling that was half-happy, half-sad. He had a strong belief that she and he had a close relationship in the past life. He told her that this matter was just for those who had lived in the spirit life. Only they understood such mood. If she wasn't in the spirit life, she didn't understand and thought it insignificant to fictionalize a love story.

His life had changed 360 degrees since he met her. His emotions were mixed. Half was happy, half was melancholic. He felt happy because he recognized her, who was his lover in the past life. He felt sad because they faced a severe situation of reality.

Since then her image was always present in his mind, except for when he was in deep sleep. He understood that this was a predetermined severe destiny to both of them.

He asked himself, was he crazy? Maybe he was crazy because he loved her. He was sure that she was crazy too. But the difference was more or less a delirious situation but not as far as to commit to a mental hospital.

There was somebody who was crazy, but he thought that he wasn't crazy. The same as being a drinker. He never accepted he was a drinker because he couldn't identify himself who he was.

Similar to the moth that saw the fire and thought that was flowers, garlands, or colors lanterns, they continued to follow each other, flying into the fire and were burned and blinded. The same when a person was in love, he or she was blinded by love then was burned by the fire of love.

She said people thought that the real age of a person and the age of love are the same. That is someone's misconception because of a whole new way of looking at mathematics.

A person often said love is borderless and ageless. Love came to us in surprise, but we didn't know. When we wake up, suddenly we discover it and understand that love has been dominant in our hearts from when we didn't know. So based on what facts do we define the boundary between the age of love and age of a person? The age of a person from the date of birth to the date of death – that is just a cardinal number, not more and not less.

However, someone misunderstood that love and marriage are one. This matter also is a regretful mistake. Someone got married and had kids with another, but they didn't love each other. They were married because of certain circumstances, not because of love.

Someone thought that love and sex are the same. That is not right. Love displays deep emotion from the heart. Sex is a physiological phenomenon of both male and female, a physiological phenomenon related to reproductive urges for the need of their offspring and race.

The day Vu left for Texas, Jung was in Taiwan. He drove to the park at 10:00 a.m.; this time there was nobody walking anymore, except for some labor contractors who were fixing the concrete of the parking lot. Vu walked to the bench that Jung usually sat on after she finished doing her exercise. He sat on the bench to look around the park to remember the days when she and he were sitting on this bench.

Vu left the park and went to Chung Mei Buddhist Temple to say good-bye to Ven. Rose. When she saw him, Ven. Rose told him she recognized who he was.

He paid a compliment to Ven. Rose for a few minutes then he said good-bye to Ven. Rose. Once more Ven. Rose reminded him to come back to participate in the Buddhist music festival on October. She will see him again on that day. Vu said yes, but he didn't know for sure if he could come back or not because of reasons beyond his control. He tried to do his best to keep his promise special in spiritual matters.

Before he left Chung Mei Temple, he asked Ven. Rose for a favor, to give Jung a small package when she came back from Taiwan. Ven. Rose said she would joyfully deliver the package to Jung when she came to the temple.

The Sounds of Ganges Rivers or the Buddhist music festival on October 17 was coming. Vu thought over and over about this matter. But at last, he decided to go back because he understood that this was a good opportunity for him.

On this occasion he and Jung will have time for each other. He understood that on the Buddhist music festival day. She would be extremely busy because she was a member of the organization committee. She was responsible for welcoming the VIP guests who came from overseas.

Because of that reason, he was afraid she didn't have much time to give him. He thought it was better he didn't come back, but he changed his mind lately.

This time he came back to participate in the Buddhist music festival. He spent about sixteen hours driving on the highway with only one purpose: to reunite with Jung.

Autumn was coming, and the weather was lightly cold. The leaves on the trees had changed color from green to yellow. The autumn wind was starting to blow. Some dead leaves were falling along the wind. The weather wasn't very cold, but he felt very chilled in his heart. He recalled the wintertime when he was studying in New York many years ago.

In wintertime there were blizzards that were blowing in town. The city was blanketed with snow, and the school was wrapped in snow. He was an international student, and he didn't have a car. His transportation was to rely on the bus. Otherwise, he resided in the school's dormitory. Daily he walked to class instead of driving.

The dormitory was located inside the campus. He could walk from the dormitory to class as it wasn't very far. On the weekend,

if he wanted to go downtown for shopping or to enjoy some food, he took a bus or his classmates gave him a ride.

He returned to his country after he finished his studies. After one year since he returned home, his mother died after a long time of illness. For the first time, he grieved for his mother. And until then he penetrated the truth of life and understood what a motherly love is. When he grieved at the death of his mother, it was too late!

Lunar July is the tradition originating in Buddhism. July is the month that gives an opportunity for Buddhist believers to show gratitude to their ancestors, such as their parents whether their parents were still alive or have died. Vu commemorated his parents by burning incense in all sincerity. He understood everything in this world is impermanent.

The CD player was playing “Unchained Melody” while he was driving; the voice of the singer caused Vu to be melancholic, and suddenly he thought of Jung. He asked himself what was she doing now, whom was she thinking of. Her image reappeared in his mind.

He drove alone, so he could stop whenever he wanted to take a rest or wanted some things to eat and drink.

He left home at 4:00 a.m.; he drove on the highway to the west. He stopped in San Antonio for breakfast, cooling the car engine. After he finished his breakfast, he continued on his

journey until he reached El Paso. He stayed overnight in El Paso to relax his tension.

Next morning after he finished his breakfast, he filled up for gas before he continued his journey again to westward.

He was driving on the highway through the desert. Jung's image reappeared in his mind again while he was driving. He called her name many times, but he didn't know if she could hear his voice or not.

11

THAT DAY JUNG went on a pilgrimage to Taiwan for two weeks to attend the Buddha festival. A special mass, Three Refuges and Five Precepts, was reserved for the Buddhists who came from America. The service was presided over by the abbot of the temple.

Two weeks before Jung went to Taiwan, one day in the morning at the park, Jung told Vu that she was going to travel to Taiwan in the next two weeks from today. Vu heard what she said, and he felt dazed with longing for her. She was very sensitive, and she looked at his eyes. She understood he will miss her when she was absent in the park. She said it didn't matter that she was absent. There were still many people to do exercise with in the park.

He said, "Of course there are many people staying here, but they are not the right person that I want to look for." He

whispered it was a woman he missed, not the people in the park. He let her know that he missed her when she was out of his sight.

He reminded her to remember to take a picture when she was attending the festival at the temple. She gave a nod of assent to him. Since that night he couldn't sleep well, he met her in his dream every night.

Jung spent two full weeks in Taiwan. She took her departure on August 16. She arrived in Taipei on August 18. As from the time her airplane took off the runway, Vu always kept track of her long journey, and he wished she was safe and sound.

At four o'clock in the morning on August 19, he watched the breaking news on CNN. Typhoon Aare pounded Northern Taiwan. He worried about Jung's situation there. Did anything happen to her?

He didn't know how to get in touch with her because the telephone system in her area was broken off. All connection with the outside world was interrupted. He was anxious and lay awake for hours, worrying.

Finally, he got into contact with Jung in the afternoon on the next day. Jung let him know that she was all right, but the terrible storm destroyed many houses. Trees fell down on the streets. Traffic was brought to a standstill by the storm. All means of transportation in the city was obstructed. She was talking with Vu while the storm still went on, but it was less fierce than two days ago.

Jung came back home from Taiwan after two weeks on her pilgrimage to Fo Guang Shan Temple. Due to the storm, the first-week's agenda was delayed. So the agenda of the first week must be combined with the second week. The members of the American delegation must overwork. Every day, Jung and her friends started from early morning until 10:00 p.m., but they were glad.

Saturday morning Jung came to Chung Mei Temple to take charge of temple work after she was absent for two weeks since she made a pilgrimage to Taiwan.

When she met Venerable Rose, she bowed to her. She exchanged with Venerable Rose stories about the storm and how it pounded Northern Taiwan. The conversation between Jung and Venerable Rose was nearly finished. Venerable Rose told her that there was a gentleman who asked her to hand to Jung this small package. "I accepted and kept it in the office of the temple. Now I give it to you." Jung received the package from Venerable Rose and said thanks to Venerable Rose.

As soon as Jung came home from the temple, she quickly changed her clothes then opened the package. She found a very long letter along with two photos in the package. It was a very long letter. She had never received any long letter like this so far.

She tried to skim through the letter from the first to the last page, and at the end of the letter, Vu requested her to respond to him as soon as possible. He said that he would wait for her

response until the end of September. If she made no response to him, that meant his letter was sent to the wrong person.

She was moved by the deeply felt words in his letter. She proved respect of his behavior and knowledge.

She had a strange sensation of warmth wrapping around her soul. Her heart overflowed with joy; a lovable and gently feeling started and loomed in her mind. His words and his image made a strong impression on her, and the first meeting had left deep impressions to her that she wanted to have a strong attachment to him.

The man she had met in glimpses of the time this morning. She thought that between her and him they had a close relationship in bygone days. Actually, he had walked into her life. She had reserved for him a position in her heart.

She remembered his special note at the end of his letter. She didn't want to make him to wait in palpitations. She replied to him immediately; she wrote him a letter via e-mail to reciprocate his kindness. In her letter she explained clearly her feelings about him. She said she loved him, and she had never made any secret of it.

After two weeks since the day she returned home from Taiwan, she started the project to organize the Sounds of the Ganges River music festival that would be performed in front of large audiences on October 16 and 17 at the Houston Theater.

She dedicated all her time going to many places in town and to the Buddhist temples to call for their help. Sometimes she came home very late at night. The project was making much progress. All tickets for the performance have sold out in a short time, and they didn't have any more empty seats.

The Buddhist Music Festival was very successful as expected, and the audience heartily applauded.

One day, before Jung went on a pilgrimage, she drove to the park to look for Vu. He was walking around the parking lot. When he saw her, he came next to her car to give his regards to her. She lightly nodded and let him know everything was normal. He stood close to her. He talked loud enough for her to hear only, "You break my heart." She looked straight into his eyes. Her eyes displayed emotion of remembering him with love.

He left Texas a couple days after she left for Taiwan. Before he left Texas, he wrote her a letter to let her know that, as a matter of fact, he will leave Texas on December instead of today, but after she left, he felt very lonely.

On October 15 he drove back to Houston to see her. He drove about a thousand miles on his journey. Every stop he had received her e-mail to remind him that he must stop when he was all sleepy. She also let him know that every morning after she finished her exercise, she sat on the table as usual to be undisturbed in her mind to pray for him to be safe and sound in his journey.

At this very table was the first time they had met each other on the day of June 2004. Both had opened their hearts to each other to mark the first day of their love. He drove seventeen hours on the very long journey.

He arrived in Mason at two o'clock in the morning on October 15. Mason is a small town. The distance between her home and this town was about twenty miles. He stopped at a coffee shop on the highway to buy a cup of coffee and some snacks. He was hungry and tired because he had driven all night nonstop. After he finished his cup of coffee and some piece of crackers, he was of sound mind and felt much better now.

He left the coffee shop at 4:40 a.m., and he was driving to the rendezvous with her. Both were very happy to meet each other again after a few months of living far away from each other. They have exchanged greetings with each other by a long kiss that they thought that was as long as a century. This unforgettable moment will always be in their memories.

In this meeting they exchanged gifts. He handed her an audio CD with a lovely melody, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." She gave him a blue jacket and a bolster. She reminded him that when he has trouble sleeping, he should hug the bolster tightly and imagine that is her body. Then he will be in deep sleep.

Their love has grown deeper and deeper according to time. Their soul fell in line with each other such as the cloud and the wind. They have left many deep remarks in their heart that were unforgettable memories for the days they lived close to each other.

He made a date with her, and they had affection for each other. In an autumn morning, Jung walked in a heavy rain at Eldridge Park by herself. She wished Vu was there with her. She waited and waited, but he didn't come. Suddenly, she was moved and she burst into tears. It broke his heart when he was told by her. He loved her very much, but he thought that she didn't understand him.

He had planned to come back to Houston after he timely participated in the Buddhist music festival. He left Arizona on October 13. He wished to see her at 5:30 a.m. on October 15 at the park. On his journey from Arizona to Texas, both regularly contacted with each other by e-mail. At any stop to refuel, he read her e-mail, and he replied to her e-mail before he continued his journey.

She always reminded him to never drive when he felt sleepy. When he felt sleepy, he must stop at the gas station to get some refreshment and wash his face to get out of sleep. He didn't need to hurry as it was very dangerous. What if something happened to him?

She kindly suggested that she book airplane tickets for him instead of him driving on such long roads. But he refused her offer; he said it was not necessary. If he flew to Houston, he wouldn't have transportation, he must rent a car. He didn't care about the costly rent of a car, but it makes him uncomfortable. So he had better drive instead of fly. He told her to set her mind at rest; he would drive with great care on his journey. "So don't worry, and there is nothing to be afraid of!"

In the autumn morning, it was Friday, October 15. The weather dropped down to 45 degrees Fahrenheit. She handed him a blue jacket. At first she intended to take a gift for him in red, but later she changed her mind to take the blue one. She thought he might be fonder of blue than red. Verily, what she has predicted was true. He didn't like red so far.

She hoped that when the weather becomes cold, he should wear this jacket and he shall imagine that he was warming himself by the heat of her body that was wrapped around him.

One month before he returned to Texas, he tossed and turned in bed all night. She had bought an aroma lotion to help him fall asleep easily. He was moved by her nursing him with all her heart.

The meeting lunch was on October 15, and it also was Friday. She took half the day off. She worked until twelve noon then she met Vu at Vargo's Restaurant. Vargo's was a very nice restaurant. Its landscape was dreamlike. Their menu had authentic French dishes, and the customers almost were businessmen, educators, and anyone else who had a lot of influence. At lunch customers can wear shirts, but no shorts and T-shirts. Dinnertime will be served formally. Customers are always to wear a tie and suit or a sports coat.

The restaurant was nestled in the big garden, the rows of trees gird by the lake. The peacocks displayed their long and beautiful tails with many colors. It was a very beautiful scenery and a dreamlike place for those who wanted to fall in line with nature.

Customers walked along the path to the huts in the woods, enjoyed a view while they sipped their wine.

Inside the restaurant customers can see a large pond outside the window. There was a zigzag gravel path to a small house on the high land. It was called a paradise hut because the cottage was nestled in the woods; trees were clothed with leafy splendor. The lake lay below the cottage; the water was so blue and clear that they can see fish swimming deep in the pond.

“Where is the fairies’ home, or is this very place paradise that we didn’t know?” Vu asked.

The date was meaningful. Three days before Vu left for Arizona, he called the restaurant manager to reserve for a special dinner. He ordered a bouquet of roses, cake, and French wine and invited the pianist who was contracted with the restaurant to play the classical melodies for the dinner.

As usual the pianist played at the dinner only, but Vu wanted to invite him to play for his early dinner. While Vu and Jung were enjoying their time, the pianist played the song “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face.”

The pianist played continuously during the two-hour dinner. The songs played were “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” “Unchained Melody,” “Sleepy Lagoon,” “Power of Love,” “Eternally,” and much more. But the main melody for their dinner was “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face”; this song has gone down in their love’s history.

Both looked into each other's eyes. Jung's eyes were sparkling to prove that she wanted to say some words with her lover. They were pressing against each other, they held each other's hands. She softly said, "I love you from the very first moment I met you."

When he was a college student, he had read these words in novels, but he never thought that he would hear these words from her today. However, they had the wonderful moment with each other, the voice from their hearts. Really, he didn't think that today he had heard his lover's tender voice like that to him. He was in a happy moment, but he hoped that the spoken word wasn't soon forgotten.

Vu got the impression that like that of the Earth stopping to rotate around its cycle, everything in this world would be meaningless if Jung was not in his life. A famous French writer wrote, "Man doesn't have love like the earth without sun."

Indeed, this world has prettified their love with deep meaningfulness and beauty, like the lyrics "The first time ever I saw your face."

Jung put her soft hands around Vu's neck, and she kissed him on the lips. At the moment they lost their head. They just only heard of their heartbeats, and their breathing was repeated.

He forgot everything. He just remembered one thing that was in this world: there would only be him and her, and they were passionately on their kisses.

The alcohol yeast and love caused their love to burst into flames. They called their names in their hearts' rhythm of love.

Jung invited Vu to have dinner with her at Perry Steak House Restaurant at Colony Square at 6:00 p.m. on the next Friday evening. On that Friday evening, it was lightly raining with a light gust of wind.

As usual, in any rendezvous, he always arrived on time. He arrived and waited for her fifteen minutes before the time. When her car arrived and stopped in front of the restaurant, he came close to her car. He held the umbrella to shelter her from the rain. However, it wasn't heavy rain. With his other hand, he opened the door and held her hand to take her out of the car. He escorted her into the restaurant. The dinner beyond Jung and Vu also had the presence of Edison and Theodore.

There were two more days left. The performance of the Sounds of the Ganges River Festival shall start on Saturday, October 17, at Cullen Theater at 6:00 p.m. Jung took four days off before the festival started to help the organization committee.

She had worked very hard such as she had contacted with many communities to ask for their help. Otherwise, she had helped the committee in welcoming the VIP guests from Taiwan and other countries in the world.

On the day of the theatrical performance, Jung reminded Vu to come to the theater at 5:00 p.m. About 3:00 p.m. Vu called and asked her if she had eaten anything. He also reminded her that

she should not let her stomach be empty because hunger would cause her to lose consciousness.

The temple had supplied plenty of food, but Jung was too busy to eat. Vu told her that he would bring her something to eat. She said OK. She reminded him that when he entered the parking lot, he should observe to remember how to get out when the performance was over so he won't be lost because it was a very large parking. As soon as he finished the conversation with her, he drove to La Madeleine Restaurant at Colony Square to order the French deep, a bottle of honey tea, and a cup of Victor's coffee; Victor's coffee was made by him.

He left the restaurant to Highway 59 north to downtown. Today was the weekend; the volume of traffic was less than the weekday.

When he arrived at the theater parking lot, he parked his car close to the hall of the theater. He was looking for the way to enter the theater. Suddenly, he saw Jung walking out to his direction. She smiled upon seeing him. Both returned to the car. He handed her a cup of Victor's coffee; she tasted it and said it was very tasty. She was fond of this kind of coffee since the time they had loved each other. She ate the French deep deliciously because she was hungry. He had served her a good meal today. After she finished her field-combat meal, both walked into the theater. Her father, her brother, her sister Linda and her husband, Edward, Theodore, and Edison were already in the theater.

When the performance was over, she had a special mission to take the VIP guests from the theater to the temple in Stafford.

On the same day the festival opened, he ordered a French family cake for her parents. He also bought an icebox to keep the cold air and to prevent the cake from melting in the heat. When the performance was over, she told him to drive to follow her. When she was approaching the temple, he stopped outside the temple to wait for her. She will be going out after fifteen minutes.

Her eyes were red rimmed from lack of sleep. He reminded her go to bed early to regain her strength for next day's performance at Stafford Center. She also wanted a deep sleep, but because her duty was heavy, that pressured upon her. Because of this reason, she was concerned about everything, from the smallest to biggest. If the performance was unsuccessful, the first person who would be criticized from all hands would be her. Therefore, she was like a cat on hot bricks.

If you are not a member of the committee, you can say there was nothing difficult, but you were a member in the governing body. You know how difficult it was. But luckily the performance was successful, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

She was a modest and respectful lady; she never showed off she was an important person. But it would be just to say if the committee did not have her, the performance wouldn't be splendidly succeeded like that.

12

HOW TIME FLIES. Time passes as quickly as an arrow. Vu participated in the Buddhist Music Festival last month. Thanksgiving Day was coming very soon. It was just only in one week.

On Saturday afternoon, Vu, Jung, and Edison visited the Best Buy Center on Highway 6 at Westheimer. They walked together to the electronics showcase. Suddenly Vu saw some gray hairs on Jung's head; he told her if she knew that she had some gray hairs.

"Is that true?" she asked.

"Why would I lie to you? For what?" he answered.

She asked him to remove the gray hairs from her head. He removed the gray hairs and showed them to her. She seemed

to worry about the old age that was coming to her. Gray hairs which were an ominous sign of old age coming.

He relieved her mind. He said, “However, you have some grays hairs, but you are not old. Your body lacked some nutrition, and that causes gray hairs.”

He encouraged her not to worry because worry made her prematurely old. “Forget worries, and enjoy yourself. The more you worry, the more you become older. So better forget it. You have some gray hairs, but you are good looking, and you still are an attractive woman.”

She and he entered the showroom to watch a short film. In the showroom there was only one armchair. It was large enough for one person, not fit for two persons. She must sit on his thigh. She put her left arm around his head. Edison wanted both to be free. He didn’t want to disturb them with his presence in the showroom. He walked around the center while they watched the film.

In the evening after she left her parents’ home, she asked him if he wanted to go swimming with her tonight. At first he thought she told him frankly she really wanted to swim.

“Why do you want to swim at night?” he asked. And he refused her proposal. “We need to go to bed early,” he said. “Because we are tired.” He didn’t know she was playing a trick on him.

Suddenly, she laughed, and she put her mouth close to his ears and said, "I don't know why today you are slow on the uptake! You didn't know what I meant. Once you told me, 'Swimming on the sand' I was stupid for not understanding what you said. After you explained to me, I began to understand. Today you proved that you aren't as clever as you were. You used to be crafty, but today you are as meek as a lamb."

They started their race. After they finished the swimming-on-the-sand contest, he was defeated, as always in any contest. She knocked him out at the end of the first round; he breathed hard. They were bathed in sweat. They used bath towels to clean each other then dropped off to sleep.

One afternoon in January, she called him and said, "Today I felt very sad." He asked, "Why you are sad? Let me entertain you with a funny story, you will be happy." While he was telling a story of a blind girl, he unintentionally talked about the relationship between him and the girl who was his classmate when they were in high school. There was an expression of great sadness on her voice.

Her sad tone let him know there was something wrong, so he asked. He knew that she misunderstood the story. He cleared up her misunderstanding by discontinuing the story, and he changed the topic of the day.

She was endowed with intelligence, beauty as well as sensitivity. Honestly, she was flying into a passion that he didn't know, and he continued telling her the story. The more

he went on telling the story, the more she lost her temper because the name of the girl in the story caused her to fly into a passion.

The sad story that he talked of was a very old story. It was about thirty years ago, but it still made her angry. That proved a woman can be angry with somebody for very long.

On January 9, she was hospitalized for a minor surgery. She didn't notify him that she was going to have a surgery. However, her surgery was minor. She was an outpatient; she just stayed in the hospital for four hours after the surgery, and she will be released when she wasn't still under the anesthetic. He waited a couple of days later; he asked her, "Why didn't you tell me you were going to have surgery?"

"I didn't want to stop your trip because you have already booked your air ticket. The reason I didn't tell you was because I knew you are a reasonable man, and my surgery, that was very minor. I didn't want you to worry about it when you are away from me. That was the reason I didn't let you know before you leave home."

She had taken two weeks for sick leave. She returned to work on Monday, January 19. Everybody at work came to her and asked her what problems she was having, and was she feeling better now? She thanked all her workmates for they gave their regards to her.

One week after having surgery, in the early morning she called Vu to let him know that she was bleeding. He reminded her to see the doctor to examine what problem caused her to be bleeding. In the afternoon of the same day, she called him to inform him now that her doctor had prescribed her to buy medicine. Her doctor also reminded her that if the medication didn't work well, she must return to the doctor's office to be reexamined, and in case of a serious event, she would be hospitalized. But she was lucky her bleeding had stopped a couple of hours after she took the medication. She understood that Vu cared about her health. She did exactly what he reminded her to do.

She had lived with innermost feeling and was easily touched when she heard a sad story or the heart-rending plight of children. Her life was very simple. She talked gently with everyone. So she was felt with deep affection from many people.

In the evening when she came back home from her work, she had *Today News* on her hand. Vu opened her car's door and hugged her then both walked in the house. She asked him if he wanted to hear a very interesting story.

“Of course I want to hear about it. Can you tell me now?” he answered.

She began to tell him about Prince Charles's love story; it was really interesting because it was the burning question of the day.

She started with Prince Charles's love story. Camilla's love story was she was Charles's first lover. She was the principal character in the love story. Their love story caused quite a stir. She felt in love with him when she was twenty-three years old. He was younger than her by two years.

He married Diana in 1988. This wedding ceremony was monumental. Charles and Diana rode the horse-drawn carriage to Buckingham Palace. Their wedding had been watched by eight hundred million people around the world. He was dressed in the England Royal Navy ceremony uniform, and she was dressed with a long silk skirt. The VIP guests included presidents and prime ministers of the European countries and the United States. Special there was the presence of Mrs. Ronald Reagan, the First Lady of the United States of America. The newly married couple exchanged their kiss on the balcony of the Buckingham Palace while millions of people watched them, and they won tremendous applause from the audience, who admired them.

Twenty-four years later on the Saturday of May 9, 2005, Charles remarried Camilla with a simple wedding ceremony with thirty-two guests participating in the ceremony, including Charles's sons and Camilla's son and daughter. The wedding ceremony did not have the presence of his mother, Princess Elizabeth II, to prove that their wedding was a common-people's wedding, not a royal wedding.

There are a thousand love stories in the Palace that are kept secret. Vu said, "You were telling me in complete detail, and you tell it much better than me."

"But I just wanted to add one word to wish them happiness and good luck."

13

JUNG PUT HER head close to Vu's shoulder and said, "Charles's wedding, that was his business. Can you tell me about our business now?"

"Our love is much beautiful and more romantic than theirs," Vu answered.

Both looked at each other and they amorously kissed.

Every evening when she came home from work, Vu was waiting for her in front of the house, on her car stop on the driveway. He came out to open the door for her and escorted her into the house. He had never forgotten to exchange a kiss with her before they walked into the house. This seemed to be their habit. Before she changed her dress, he often asked her how did she feel today, and was she tired or was there anything that bothered her at work?

He was always reminding her that anything belonging to her work, whether it was happy or not happy, she should leave it at the workplace before she went home. Don't take along in her mind to home so she could enjoy with her family without worrying. They gave smiles to each other with sweet words, and this made her life meaningful.

Since they loved each other, she recognized his humanity, and he had treated everyone equally and was willing to help. His conduct proved that he was a capable man and a man of firm stuff.

When he was a teacher, he was devoted to his teaching career. He stuck to his ideals rather than pursued power. He had a high spirit of respect for himself. He improved his behavior and listened. If he made a mistake, he was willing to accept his fault; he didn't pass the buck to somebody to refuse his guilt. Besides, he knew how to be satisfied with what he had, and he always refused unsound pleasure as it was easy to conduct one to sink into vice. He would like to use his intellect and knowledge to serve society. The position just was a vehicle for him to serve people better. He wasn't an opportunistic man to affect by stratagem to aim at his high position.

This evening, on the way home from school, he stopped by Jung's house to ask her to eat out with him. While they were eating, he let her know that he would be transferred to another college in Philadelphia. He had nearly a month and half left. He'll give her all his time, and they grew closer since that day. At this time, every day they often went to eat out together and went to a

French coffee shop that they used to come to enjoying their time until midnight. For her part, she also devoted her time to him after she came home from work, especially on weekends. They have been close together to compensate for the forthcoming days when they will live far away from each other.

Jung felt very sad since the day he told her he will be transferred to teach at another college. She concealed her sadness by giving a reluctant smile, but she was desolate deep in her heart. Vu recognized her sadness especially when she was deep in thought. Her appearance proved that she had been thinking of an important thing. He did understand she thought lots of her love's future when they were apart, and that made her feel unhappy.

He often poured comfort into her heart. "Don't be sad." Although he lived far from her, he always thought of her and made phone calls to her every day. Every four weeks he flew back home with her for two days on weekends. "So why are you sad? And after two months my business is stable. You will be with me daily." She smiled for a moment then the sadness penetrated her mind again.

She took two-week vacations; he and she went to Sausalito, a small town northern of San Francisco, California. Although it was a small town, it was a beautiful place for visitors. Its location was southern of the Golden Gate Bridge. Every day they were at the beach to enjoy the sea breeze and observe the boats pass by. In the evening during sunset, they enjoyed the glow of sunset in the sky with a red sunbeam, which reflected on the sea.

At night the waves crashed onto the shore, the trees whispered soft and low and created a special sound like the sound of the La Palomar melody. The mountain and sea scenery made their soul fall in line with nature.

There was a merchant ship anchored in the distance that paused temporarily in its itinerary on the transoceanic. The sailing boats were surfing, looking like the leaves sliding on the water. Vu's business became an obsession to her that caused her to sit sad and silent. He had explained to her several times, but she couldn't forget it. She sighed and looked forward, faraway to the horizon then she slowly became disheartened.

He thought that the more he explained to her, the more she felt sad. So it was better if he took her to the ice cream parlor to have a refreshment.

“What kind of ice cream do you want?” he asked.

“We just ate. I still feel full. So I just want a cup of ice cream,” she answered.

As usual he used his spoon to spoon up ice cream and put it in her mouth. She also did the same for him as he did for her. He held her hand, and he laid it on his cheek. He kissed her hand in a caressing manner.

However, that night they slept on the same bed but had different thoughts. At night the sound of the waves crashed onto

the shore mixed with scream of the night birds fighting each other in the sky to break the silence of the night.

Still of the night he dropped off to sleep unheeded. The scream of birds fighting with each other made him wake up with a start. He stretched his arm to touch her, but she was gone. He panicked when he didn't see her on the bed. He got off the bed and walked toward the window that faces the beach. He saw her sitting on a big rock on the shore; she looked forward to the lighthouse flashing with concentration that turned in a left-and-right direction to light up the sky at night.

He took a small blanket and hurriedly walked out toward where she sat. He used the blanket to cover her shoulders, then he sat down beside her. He said, "Why did you come out at night? You didn't let me know. We could go together." He embraced her in a caressing manner to his chest. She leaned her head against his chest to flock together for warmth.

Suddenly her shoulders shook. He raised her chin up, and he saw her tears were out. He asked her, "Why do you cry? I don't know how to explain for you to understand and trust me. I guarantee you, after a short time, I'll be stable on my job and about two weeks later, I will pick you up to live there with me."

She had a feeling of losing him, of him leaving her forever! She said, "I have nothing beyond my heart I've given to you. I am waiting for you and loving you forevermore. The time to me now one day is like a year in missing."

He sighed and told her, "Why don't you believe me? Day and night haunted you with anxieties that make threats against you. I promise you that after a short period of time, I'll be stable in my job and you will be close to me, and we will look for a house for a newly married couple."

He clasped her in his arms. Both were silent in their lightly sighs and looked into the vista of the future. A light wind made her hair roll along the wind; her sadness was unable to part from her face.

He had worked for the university for nearly five months. He called her every day, and every two weeks he flew back home with her for two days on weekends. On the graduation commencement of the class last week, he had an opportunity to speak with the president of a local bank in town. On the conversation between him and the president of the bank, the president told Vu that his bank was looking for a person who was rich in experience in banking to fill the vice president position because the current vice president would be retired soon. Vu told the president of the bank that he knew that Jung was currently vice president of the bank; when she moved to this town, what would she do?

Vu asked Jung how she felt and if she wanted this position, he would talk to the president of the bank to arrange for an interview. "The bank would pay all expenses for you while you were interviewed. I thought it was a good opportunity for you to take the interview for the job while you come to see me. It is to cut two trees with one saw."

After work, she stopped by her parents' house instead of going home. She had dinner with her parents. While she was eating, she told her parents about the conversation between her and Vu about the bank position in the town where Vu is working. Her parents proved to be happy. She also let her parents know that Vu would marry her in a very short time after he had settled down. Her parents praised Vu. He was a very good person. Her parents' praise warmed the cockles of her heart even though Vu was living far away from her.

Vu told her he was looking a good house to buy through the real estate agent. If the house had enough criteria that he looks for, he will ask her take a one-week vacation to see the house. If she agreed, the real estate office will do the financial process.

She also told her parents that she had just received the invitation letter from the bank for her interview for the position in the bank. That included the air ticket for round trip, and she will fly to see Vu next Friday.

14

TODAY JUNG MADE
spring rolls that Vu liked

best. She made a special spring roll dish for dinner because spring roll was his favorite. Anytime she and he ate out at a Vietnamese restaurant, beyond pho, he reminded her always to order two dishes of spring rolls. Since then she understood spring rolls were his favorite. So whenever they ate out, she always added two more dishes of spring rolls in her main order. The spring rolls she made today were different from the restaurant. She put lots of spices in the spring rolls, which the restaurant didn't do. The spring rolls from the restaurant couldn't compare with her spring rolls.

While they were eating, she asked him how he felt of the taste of the spring roll she made. He said it was excellent. She told him she had spent thirty dollars for one hundred pieces of spring rolls. She bought the best quality spices to make it. He understood that

if the restaurant made it like hers, the restaurant would be out of business soon.

Today was Sunday. The weather was lightly cold. She told him if the weather was cool like this and if we ate pho, it would be terrific. Pho is the most popular Vietnamese food. “We eat it while we blow it, and it brought pleasure to us.” He said she had a good idea. “Let’s go have a hot bowl of pho.” Then they drove to the restaurant.

On the way to the restaurant he was full of praise for her, how she always had good ideas. When she talked of going to have pho with him, he had gotten hungry.

He suggested that she stop by her parents’ house to invite them to go along. She agreed with his suggestion. She said today was a very nice day, and she was assured that her parent would go with her. From her house to her parents’ house, it took about twenty minutes of driving. Before she came to her parents’, she bought a six-pack of yogurt for her mother because she used to have it every day. That day only her dad was going. Her mom didn’t want to go because she had pain in her leg.

Her father rarely eat beef, so she ordered a bowl of noodle soup served with pork. Jung and Vu both liked noodles served with beef. She also didn’t forget to order two more dishes of spring rolls, and fresh orange juice for her father.

She had seen her parents last Saturday. She had dinner with them. The conversation between her and her parent, her

father, was about praising Vu for having known Chinese history better than some Chinese. Her father said Vu was a modest and respectful person. Twice a week Vu and Jung's father walked together in the subdivision. When they came home, they drank while they talked idle words. Vu told about the battle using fire as an offensive weapon on the Xich Bich River between Tao Thao and Luu Bi. Tao had lost the battle, and Tao's soldiers were burnt to death, nearly finished.

Jung asked Vu to repeat that story for her, but Vu refused because she had read a lot of Chinese history books. She had blamed him to be hard to please, and she pretended she was younger than him and did not have wide experience in this area as he was.

He asked her again, "Today you want to test me, didn't you? You said you're younger than me and had no wide experience, but from my understanding, however, you aren't as old as I am, but you are a young lady of great learning than me. You agree with me, didn't you? It is a simple answer on why I did not tell you about the Chinese history. It's because I am not a history teacher, that's all, and everything comes to a full stop."

Jung had often put pressure on Vu whenever he refused her request. She made threats against him to sleep on the sofa at the living room at night; she locked her bedroom and didn't let him in. He had lots of experience in this woman's strategy. He didn't care much for her empty threats because he knew she feared ghosts very much. He held the secret key. He remained calm and told her a ghost story in an empty house. The more he talked

about ghosts, the more she sat closer to him. Thus, that night she feared ghosts and she could not sleep by herself. She entreatingly invited him to sleep in her room instead of on the sofa at the living room. So he had neutralized her strategy.

15

SUMMER WAS NEARLY coming to an end; autumn was in to replace summer. Autumn was bashful coming, shy like a new bride at the family of her in-laws. However, she was bringing the cool air, and it was much more comfortable than the heat of summer.

These days the weather was pleasant to the eyes. People were joyful; the natural landscape was affectionate and sweet. That was why writers and poets always eulogized autumn as the most beautiful season of the year. Autumn was the season that was giving the writers and poets a great source of inspiration to create their works. Really, the glorification of the autumn season as the best season of the year is deserved.

Autumn brings us remembering with emotion. The trees in the park are stationary in the sun and rain, which liked to throw down a challenge at times and stormy billows of the world. And

that was the witness of the love that has come and gone. This place had recorded the footprints of a couple on the park's trail. They left here their love memories. Their memories in this place won't fade away in their mind.

Jung suggested that she and he should stop off at her parents to invite them going together to the Sugar Creek Park for doing exercise before they go to lunch at a French restaurant. The holiday fell on Friday, and the following were Saturday and Sunday. So in total they have three days off. She said at the weekend her parents needed to unwind after such long weeks at home. Vu said, "You have a good idea. I completely agree with you that our parents should have outdoor activities that help them buoyantly."

On Saturday morning Jung and Vu dropped by her parents' home. Her father told both of them to have coffee and some snacks before going to the park. They had coffee while they chatted with her dad. Jung's father said, "Today is a very beautiful day. How about sauntering down a couple of laps at the park?"

After they have walked two laps in the park, Vu told Jung that her dad should stop. Two laps were enough for him because the elderly should not be overwork. It will be dangerous.

The Sugar Creek Park is also home of much-picturesque landscape, especially the winding path with big shadow trees. The creek circles around the park with trees and bushes. The neon lamps were set up along the path to help the walkers to avoid stumbling and falling.

Vu and Jung often come to Creek Park in the summer for jogging in the morning. They were walking long and fast steps until they were tired and wet to the skin with sweat. They sat down on the bend along the path for refreshment. Vu gave her a water bottle that he brought along with him. She drank down half of the water bottle. He took a napkin to dry her sweat while she was drinking.

After she finished half the bottle, she gave it to him. He finished the rest of the bottle, and he felt comfortable because he was thirsty. They finished the bottle of water, and both felt refreshed in mind and body. They were hand-in-hand together going to their car.

They went to the restaurant to have breakfast at Colony Square. Her dad said he felt better after he did exercise. He suggested next weekend he will go to the park to do exercise again. Vu respected his suggestion, and Vu added exercise was the best medicine for health.

According to the weather forecast, it would be cool in the afternoon. Vu reminded Jung to take a jacket for her dad in case he needed it.

In the restaurant Jung ordered a special bowl of vegetarian soup for her father because he didn't eat beef. She ordered noodles served with half-cooked beef and spring rolls for her and Vu.

While waiting to be served, Vu took some pictures. Jung's dad smiled cheerfully. If an occasion comes, Jung wanted to take her

mother out somewhere to change the atmosphere because her mother was at home all the time.

Her mother's wheelchair was always in the car's trunk. It was ready for her to use whenever and wherever she went out to the beach or shopping center. She sat on the wheelchair instead of walking.

Outside activities such as going to picnics helped put her mind and body at ease. Whenever they went out for a picnic, Jung well prepared the special necessary drink for her mother because she had diabetes. Jung gave thoughtful care to her mother. Among her mother's daughters, Jung was the best of all. She spoke softly and politely to her parent.

This evening the weather was very nice. After having dinner Vu and Jung went for a walk around the lake in Orchard Lakes subdivision.

They returned home when it was completely dark. Before they walked home, she lay down on the bend. She asked him to give her a massage on her shoulder, low back, and down to the calf of her leg. She felt well and followed his hand wherever his hand moved on her body; she praised him as having magical hands.

Every day in summertime, after they came home from work, they walked around the lake for a couple of laps before they had dinner. Sometimes they stopped by the Subway sandwich store that was closest to the Kroger shopping center to have dinner.

Especially on Saturday evening after having dinner, they took along a cup of Victor's coffee going to the bend at the bank of the pond in the Orchard Lakes subdivision to chat until it was dark. Jung and Vu rode on the swing chair that was fit for two persons in the quadrangular tower.

At that time, in this area, there were a few scattered houses and many vacant lots haven't been built houses yet. In the late evening it was the time for the bullfrogs and other amphibians racing against each other to send much-different sounds like a symphony in an orchestra. But a couple of years later, houses have been built, and there was no more vacant lot.

On weekends Jung and Vu exercised earlier. After they finished exercise, they went to the Starbucks coffee store that was closest to the park where they used to exercise and had a morning cup of coffee to wake them up. They enjoyed cafe latte; that was their favorite.

On some days the weather was cool, they liked to have pho, the Vietnamese noodle soup served with beef. It was interesting when you see a hot bowl of pho while outside it was cold. Pho must be served when it is hot; you eat while you blow the heat coming up from the hot soup. The food looked delectable. Especially the hot and crispy spring rolls. When you put a spring roll in your mouth, it is crispy, and you feel yourself enjoying it.

Every day Jung left home to work at 8:30 a.m. She came home from work at about 6:00 p.m. After she changed her clothes,

she went to the backyard to feed three geese and a flock of wild ducks. Jung gave them food every day to make them having over a habit. They knew what time she is at home. Day in and day out, wherever they were, but at 5:30 p.m. they automatically gathered together at her backyard to wait for her. She had fed a flock of wild ducks and three geese for three years. After their stomachs were full, they dispersed to the many directions where they came from.

For feeding three geese and a flock of wild ducks, she spent a remarkable amount of money to buy food for them. When she just moved in this house, the gooses were very small. After five years, now they were taller than her when she sat to give them food. Among her clients were beyond three white geese and a flock of fifty wild ducks, and they were clanging for food like a drone of bees broken from the net.

Jung had five small dogs; she spent lots of money to buy food not only for her pets, but also for the three white geese and about fifty wild ducks. She was the only woman in her neighborhood to daily feed the wild birds.

One day her neighbor asked her if among the three white geese she knew which one was male and which one was female. “Your question is very interesting to me. From my experience, the female is always smaller than the male,” Jung answered.

The neighbor lady asked her another question. “This is a very difficult question. If you do not have experience, you could not

answer it correctly. The question is, do you think the goose is jealous of his lover?"

"Sure. Man, woman, and animals, anyone of them is jealous," Jung answered. "You see, when one goose makes love with the female one, other one cries and runs around with anger. But when a man or woman becomes jealous, they fly into a temper. Sometimes they can kill each other. A jealous human being is more dangerous. Scenes of terrible bloodshed normally happen."

Finally, they all agreed with each other that female geese are smaller than males and that human beings or animals are the same, not much different, and even if, man or animal gets jealous.

Because of that reason Jung determined among the three geese that there were two males one female. One neighbor said if there were two males and one female, when one male makes love, the other male can't stand to look at the other one making love. He loses his temper, and they fight against each other. Otherwise, one female can make love with two male at the same time. Jung proved that she has had experience in sex psychology, and she said in this world there is a law of balance of the female: when making love, she always gets orgasms longer than the male.

The neighbor lady who lived opposite Jung's house was a white lady who sometime fed the geese and wild ducks at noontime. But their regular meal was the evening meal, when Jung came home in the evening. When they saw Jung open the backyard door and go out with a bucket in her hand, they sound

noisily like children who are very happy to see their mother come home from market.

Jung said when she came home, she saw the geese and a flock of wild ducks that were waiting for her. She went out to feed them and play with them to clear away her pressure from her work.

16

THIS EVENING WHILE she was speaking to Vu on the phone, she broke the news to him that next Friday she will fly to Philadelphia to discuss with a local bank authority her position. She will stay in Philadelphia for one week; she will be closed to him while the bank was interviewing her.

While she spoke with him, she interrupted their conversation now and then. She wanted to tell him something, but she stopped and didn't want to tell.

“Can you tell me what happened? I do understand you wanted to tell me something, but you hesitated to tell me,” Vu asked.

She was afraid he would feel sad if she told him the truth, she answered.

“Please tell me. I promise you I won’t be sad,” he said.

She regained her self-control, and she was very careful with her words then she started the subject. She told him last Saturday she went to the park. She took the laptop with her to the park. While she was playing at the laptop, her old neighbor came. She left the laptop on the table then she walked around with her neighbor. She had forgotten her laptop on the table. About fifteen minutes later, when she and her neighbor came back to the table, the laptop had disappeared. She didn't know who had stolen her laptop.

When she spoke with him, she did not have any news about the laptop. She understood that he had installed in the memory lots of information and projects that he had designed. Because of this reason, she daren't tell him about it.

He told her the laptop was not important to him. What was important to him was her, not the laptop. If someone stole it, he will buy another one to replace it for her. So she should forget it. She didn't want her to think of it anymore as that caused her to be unhappy. She should not worry about the information and the projects he had stored it in the memory because when he stored the information and the projects in the computer, he had also saved them in another disk in case the computer broke down. He won't lose any information. So she should set her mind at rest!

He told her, however, the laptop was expensive, but it was not more important than her. He said to her, "You knew I loved it very much, and I treated it as my best friend, but I couldn't love it more than you. It is a material thing. If we lost it, we can buy another one to replace it. But if I lost you, never in all my life will

I have you anymore. So forget it as if it had never happened to us."

His face never showed any sadness when she told him the laptop had been stolen. He had always comforted her to forget it and not to think of it anymore. He was not only sad but also afraid she felt sad.

She respected him because he was kind and had a generous heart. When she informed him now about the laptop being stolen, his attitude was uneventful and with a calm voice consoled her. He never showed he was furious or grumbled against her unpremeditated. He considered the laptop beneath his notice, it was a small thing. In addition he was afraid she was sad.

Harrisburg is distant from Philadelphia on the east at 110 miles. This town was small, but it was a beautiful place, and the residents were meek. The city was encompassed by the mountains. Looking from the far distance, it was dreamlike.

Especially in the evening when the sunset was in the horizon, standing at the backyard, looking toward the mountain peak, which was wrapped in mist, it looked like the Dalat City in Vietnam that reduced him, made him long for Dalat in the old days.

Otherwise, Harrisburg had special characteristics, such as an Amish community who lived isolated with their religious custom. They refused to have modern conveniences such as automobiles, air-conditioners in summer, heaters in winter, washers, and dryers.

Clothes were washed by hands, and the means of transport was only the horse-drawn carriage. Their life was very disciplined, and they lived a hard life.

Jung received an invitation letter from the bank for an interview for the bank's vice president position, which will be void in the next couple months. The interviewing schedule would be on Tuesday and Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The bank had confirmed to pay all expenses, including board and lodging during the time she was there. Jung would be with Vu on Friday. She had three days to be with Vu in advance before her interview.

On Friday Vu didn't have classes; he lived in a small town, and the distance between his house and the airport was not very far. It took about twenty minutes of driving. According to Jung's flight's schedule, she would arrive at the airport at 4:00 p.m.

Vu left home at 3:00 p.m., and he arrived at the airport at 3:45 p.m. He waited for her at the arriving gate; her plane had landed exactly at four o'clock in the afternoon. He rushed to her when she got out from the gate. The cheer appeared on their faces when they met each other. He embraced his lover and they exchanged kisses. He asked her if she was tired. She said of course, because last night she could not sleep well. She thought of him a lot and was bursting to meet him. But now after she met him, her utter exhaustion had gone. She embraced him with her soft hands and with her caressing manners; she put her head against his shoulder.

He put her baggage on the luggage trolley. He was pushing the luggage trolley while he was talking with her. He told her that yesterday afternoon Mr. Paul, the president of the bank, invited him and her to have dinner with them at La Soirée Restaurant on Friday evening.

On the way to his house, he drove through the university where he was teaching. He had rented the house as its location on the pine hill was not far from school. From the house the whole city came into view; at night it was very beautiful with a hundred thousand stars twinkling in the sky.

The three-bedroom house had a huge backyard and pine trees; it was close to the school, so he usually spent about fifteen minutes driving from home to school. The architectural style of the house was contemporary in style. Except the for the master's bedroom, the second bedroom he has used as his home office, and the third one was the guest room. The living room had very simple decoration with a sofa facing directly the big screen TV. On the wall of the living room was a canvas drawing with a landscape of an autumn evening hung on it; the decoration made the living room look like a very peaceful room.

He rarely cooked at home, except in winter, when the snowfall was too thick to go out, and he usually heated canned food only. Normally he ate out, so the electric stove was seldom used. Since the day Jung was present in this house, there was a smell of burning in the kitchen; the house became nicer and warmer, the scene of a united family.

Jung got up early every day to meditate and pray for world harmony and peace and for every people to be in peace and happiness. This morning, after her praying was over, she went down to the kitchen to make two cups of coffee, one for herself and another one for him.

He was surprised when he got up. There was a strong fragrance of coffee. The faint aroma of coffee's pervasive smell was over the whole house, and the scent of coffee woke him up and made him feel at ease.

After he finished his personal hygiene, he put on his kimono and went to the kitchen. He was as happy as the day was long when he saw breakfast was ready on the dining table for him and her.

Before she made two cups of coffee, she went out to the garden. She plucked some roses to arrange ikebana style in a vase with the subject the rule of three: heaven, man, and earth, and the vase was put in the middle of the dining table. The dining room was very nice and warm and compassionate.

He was touched by the solicitude of Jung. He rushed to her to embrace her and gave her a kiss on her lips. He was very proud to have her in his life, he said. He had promised to fulfill his obligation as her husband, and he deserved her for her expectation. She raised her eyes and looked at his eyes to wait for his kiss. He hugged her close against his chest and kissed her on her lips; neither of them thought that was as long as a century.

He was led by her hands to the dining table to have breakfast. He tasted the coffee and praised her for making good coffee. “If without this cup of coffee, I feel as lonely as if I’m missing a valuable thing.” She was moved when she heard him say that and loved him so much.

Vu had an uncle who was living in Paris, France. After graduating from medical school, he had stayed and practiced in France. He invited Vu to travel with him to Chen Mai, Thailand, but Vu refused his uncle’s invitation because he was busy for his own business; his uncle was very sad, and a couple of years later, he passed away.

17

WHILE HAVING BREAKFAST they took interest in several issues that related to their real life. "We were very lucky to meet each other in this life. That was the greatest happiness of us," Jung said. "To look into our current life, we are luckier than many people. We have lived in comparative comfort than others. Our material lives are fairly enough. Did you know this moment we have food to eat while many unfortunate children and adults in the world don't have a piece of bread and cheese? Many nights I couldn't sleep when I think of their situation. I have a suggestion to you, what do you think about it?"

"Please tell me, I am listening to you," he answered.

Jung said, "We'll have a family, have children. Of course we have an obligation to bring them up, and we want them to receive a good education, which is given top priority. When we are going to early retirement and still be in good health, we must do a

meaningful thing with the remainder of our life by going to any poor place in the world. It is not necessary that it is our country. We lend the poor people a hand to lessen their sufferings. It is my aspiration. What do you think of it?”

“I eulogized what you were thinking of, and we have some similar points of view. Did you remember I have told you about this? I felt exactly how you felt, we are on the same boat.”

“Indeed, we are walking the same way, we are looking toward the same direction, and we have same thought and same ideal. It is oneness, and it is not different between us.”

“Especially about your suggestion, I completely agree with you. I have thought of it several times. Now you explained to me now your intention. I admire your unselfishness. I understand that you have done many acts of charities, such as to give a precious donation to the temple but you didn’t want to have your name on the donors’ roll of honor with a big sum of donation money. You asked the temple to give you just only one word, *Unknown*, that is all. It is your act of kindness that makes me respect your dignity above all others. You have told me once before, you just wanted a word, *Unknown*. That is the greatest honor for you. I didn’t expect any more. You wanted to do with your open heart. That is better than the name. If we just wanted to have a name but without sincerity, that act is just meaningless. Your act of charity that I’ve known, I heard with my own ears and I’ve seen with my own eyes. That made me strongly believe that we are able to fulfill our hope. But the modality to execute a plan, we must research the work field, and the volunteer agencies related to the

field. Otherwise, we must come up on the spot what we are going to do. After we have collected enough information, then we set to work immediately. Like this plan must fit the actual situation, and our project is realizable. We must prepare ideas step by step for the time being, and then when the time comes, we can start our project immediately, we don't have to wait. That's my opinion."

After she heard of his explanation, she was satisfied with his practical presentation. She had known that he had the capability of doing this job well for other people.

"You are right, we won't be lonesome on the Sunset Avenue," he said.

It might be Jung and Yvonne are about the same level of ability. They've just met each other for the first time, but they made strong impressions on each other. They were like friends in the past. Paul, the president of the bank, and his wife, Yvonne, were French Americans. Sometimes Vu and Paul spoke French with each other. For this reason they were in friendlier relations with each other.

Otherwise, Vu asked the real estate agent to lead him and Jung to see the house on Sunday afternoon, which he had showed to Vu on last week.

The house was located on the pine hill on the southwest of the city. Vu also had been provided information about that subdivision security by the city police department. According to the information from the police department, the area was very

safe. Most residents in this area were of middle class and up. This area seldom has any robbery. If compared with other areas, the houses priced in this subdivision are relatively higher than others.

The most priority that Jung was concerned with is safety. Because of this reason, she was satisfied with the contemporarily design floor plan of this house, and its landscaping was cool and charming.

The Susquehanna River divided the city into two parts, northern and southern, the same as East Germany and West Germany when Germany wasn't unified yet. The east and west parts of the city were connected by a suspension bridge.

Jung's point of view of the house was not to give shelter to protect them against weather conditions, and having a natural landscape helped reduce pressure after a hard working day. "We need to have a few quiet minutes in the evening to sit and contemplate, enjoy, and be in harmony with nature."

The five-bedroom house was of mixed design with several figures in European and Japanese style. The house was a one-and-half store. The first floor had three bedrooms and two full baths. The second floor or the basement had two full bedrooms and two full baths, with the kitchen, dining room, and study room. The rooms were fitted with all modern conveniences. The basement was cool in summer and warm in winter.

On the first floor there were three bedrooms, a huge living room, and a guest dining room. All glass windows are big in size

and were of double glass for anticold weather. The landscape of the backyard was designed in a Japanese-garden style. Jung was very pleased with the design of the house.

Vu asked Jung under his breath, "What do you think about this house, are you pleased with it?"

"This house has many specific characteristics, I am very pleased with it," Jung answered.

"When the house belongs to us, with your very skilful decorating, definitely the house will be the ideal place for us, won't it?"

"I hope so, and I'll try to do my best to make you happy, and it also was my pleasure," she said.

She came to see him on the week that he was off duty between two semesters. He was entirely free to take her go around the city to enjoy a view.

While it was a small town, the city view was very beautiful. She stayed in town for a week. She liked the place and its people. Especially the house she was going to buy.

Jung and Vu were invited to join the dinner with Paul and Yvonne at La Soirée Restaurant. Today Jung was very surprised about Vu having good communication skills. He brought the pleasure to Paul and Yvonne. Jung was very proud of Vu. They

had just met for the first time, but they already had a good, friendly relationship with each other.

Paul and Yvonne were fond of Vu's witty jokes. He made Paul, Yvonne, and even Jung split their sides with laughter.

Vu's daily activity was a paragon of virtue. So Jung had difficulty knowing his special talent in being in contact with someone. But when he was attending the meeting or conference at that time, every people recognized his professional manners and attitude. He was an outstanding landmark.

As with the law of balance of the creator, Vu has a talent of communication, but just because he wasn't a wealthy man doesn't mean you can't have it both ways. If he had both ways, wealth and talent, for sure he will be worldly wise. To make good the shortage of the mammon, he has thorough knowledge in all aspects. He has a sweet voice and spoke with soft manners. He has a sweet voice and spoke in a soft manner to make a strong impression on everyone.

As for Jung and Yvonne, the wife of the bank president, they treated each other like close friends. The dinner was over, and everyone prepared to take their leave. Vu asked Yvonne, "How did you and Jung communicate with each other? One speaks French, another speaks English." Yvonne cracked a joke in French. "French is not necessary to communicate, we communicate with each other by language of our thought." Then all over them was laughter, and they shook hands together to say good-bye; the meeting had an abundant meaning.

This evening after she came home from work, Jung was preparing to go to her parents' house when the phone rang. She guessed it was her love calling, and she guessed exactly right. She picked the phone up. On the other end of the line, Vu spoke up. "How are you doing, my dear, and is everything OK for you and your family?" he asked.

"Everything is OK, and I am going to leave home when you called," she said. They were very pleased to hear and talk to each other, and especially he sent his best regards to Jung's parents.

In any conversation with Jung he was always interested in her parents. By way of consequence, she appreciated and respected him for it. After the conversation was over, she drove to her parents' house to have dinner with them. While they were eating, she told her parents that she just spoke with Vu on phone and he gave his regards to her parents. She also let her parents know that Vu suggested to marrying her in a couple months after his job settled down.

Her parents were very pleased with Vu's proposal. Her father looked up from the astrology book to find out what date will be the best date for her wedding. She also explained for her parents to know that her interview for the position at the bank had good news. She and Vu have decided to buy a house. The house was quite beautiful, and that she liked it very much. She understood that her parents only wished the best for her.

While her father studied the stars' moving to find out which star was good for her and which one wasn't appropriate for her

fate, her mother was also mumbling to calculate in her head what the evil hour was and what the good hour was for her marriage.

About fifteen minutes later, her father closed the astrology book. He slowly said that according to the astrology and her age, everything was perfect for her marriage, and the lucky hour to meet the bride and bring her home was from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The wedding ceremony that starts during this time will be lucky and happy in life.

Her father added, “You are all educated people, and have wise knowledge in science. Furthermore, we are living in the United States of America. The United States is a civilized country in the world, and we are in the digital age. We shouldn’t be small minded to strengthen ties with wordy and unsound customs. As my thinking, the ceremony should be simple and solemn.”

They still have six more months left for them to keep their word. In the letter she sent Vu, Jung said, “I love you with all my heart, and my body and soul are for you. You are the man I have reserved my love for. Your image is always in my mind, and just only you dominate my soul and my heart. I gave you all my passionate feeling.”

Time passes very quickly. Only a couple of months more, and Jung was going to leave this town to a new place with her husband, a college teacher. He was a Western-educated man. They live with a simple life showing humanity and a liberal life. But their focus of interest is a virtuous life; she was proud of

herself for being a virtuous wife, a model mother for her children in the future.

They treated each other with a deep feeling of gratitude. They have never talked with each other with a gruff voice. He always came home with a smile on his lips; his smile brightened her face. They always teased mischievously with each other.

He told her that he was doing his best to fulfill his obligation to her as her husband, lover, big brother, and best friend. He attached himself to her; he treated her with kindness and consideration and never let her be in the blues.

He had transferred to this university nearly a year; time had gone very fast. He called her to inform that he will take a two-week vacation next week. He planned to go somewhere with her to buy a special gift for her birthday on August 9.

Today Friday after leaving her office, she drove to the airport to pick him up. His flight will land at 7:15 p.m. After she picked him up, she drove to her parents' house to pick up them to the restaurant to have dinner together. When the dinner was over, she took her parents home first then she drove home.

She used the remote control to open the garage when her car turns on the driveway. Her car entered the garage. They got off the car. He closed the garage door then they entered the house.

As soon as he stepped in the living room, he was so surprised because the living room was decorated similar to having a big

party. A big vase with full fresh roses was set on the dining table. Several kinds of liquors were ready on the wet bar where he usually liked to drink. He turned to Jung and asked her, "What did you buy liquor for?" "Nothing to do, I just bought them for you to enjoy," she shortly answered. He continued to ask her about the flowers. She said, "You didn't remember what day will be tomorrow, did you?" Then she composedly told him tomorrow was her birthday.

"You forgot it, didn't you?" she asked him.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I came home with only one purpose, and that is to celebrate your birthday. How can I forget it? When I met you, I forgot at all about it. I am so sorry, my dear!"

The forgetfulness might be a symbol of Alzheimer's, he said. Her sadness all of a sudden appeared on her face. She told him, "Don't say that! Enough of your doom talk. I am afraid! Forget or remember you like, as long as you are back home with me tonight."

"Of course, I am here with you," he said. He embraced his lover and kissed her on the lips then said, "I love you and miss you very much. In fact, in this world I didn't notice anything beyond you."

"I have prepared everything ready for the birthday. We still have one more order. It will be picked up tomorrow morning."

Guests attending her birthday included her parents and some close friends of hers only. The birthday was celebrated at

her house at 11:30 a.m. with some special French dishes such as pâté chaud, Vietnamese egg rolls, and a French cake. A family reunion dinner will be held at the restaurant in the evening of the same day. On this occasion, they would receive from her parents admonition about their wedding.

On the way home from the restaurant, he praised the way Jung had prepared for her birthday which was very thoughtful, and everything was impeccable.

He told her she was exactly a skilled housewife who was doing a perfect job being a wonderful wife and an exemplary mother for the children to follow her example.

She was moved by his praise. She said, "I didn't know. Am I worthy of your word or not? But I tried to be as good as my word."

"You did not believe me didn't you? You thought that was I kitting you," he said. "You are worthy to receive my command and reward, there is nothing excessive." She looked at his eyes as she was waiting to receive his kiss on her lips.

He said, "I am serious. I am not joking. Do you know anytime I saw your picture that was taken on October 17 at the Cullen Theater downtown? I was deeply touched with this picture."

She told him go ahead to take a shower. She had already left a bath towel, which was put on the bath towel shelf. He was taking a shower while she made a glass of orange juice for him when he finished bathing.

Both were making a schedule where they were going to go and what to buy on the next days. They were busy with their schedule for the whole two weeks. They were physically exhausted when they came back home in the evening.

This evening they ate out at a French restaurant where they used to eat there when he had worked at this city years ago. As matter of fact, the dinner tonight must be their cheerful night because tomorrow night he will take leave with her to go to his work; but she couldn't stop the sad feeling that always appeared in her mind.

She was probably destined and related to unfortunate things. While they had a cup of coffee, he put his arms around her neck. Suddenly he saw tears were rolling down her cheek.

He clasped her in his arms and pulled her body closer to his chest to pass his emotion and love to her. Their heads bent down close together and they clasped their hands to share the sadness to each other because he would return to his work the next day. She would be here alone.

He asked her if she remembered the day they newly met each other in an early misty morning. Both of them have clasped their hands to take a walk around the lake for doing exercise. While they were walking, she had asked him, "What aspect do you love of me?" "You have a gifted beauty from heaven, your beauty you have reserved for me."

Of course it was her fascinating beauty that charmed him. He loved her not because he was crazy about her seductive beauty.

But he loved her because she was on her best behavior, especially her amorous eyes. He pointed his finger to her eyes then he said, "It is these very sentimental eyes." He had seen sadness in her eyes somewhere. Behind her smile there lies a deep melancholy.

Today, as a matter of fact, they have planned to have lunch at La Madeleine restaurant, but when she drove past the Beltway Eight Park, she changed her mind and instead went to La Madeleine restaurant. She bought some food at a Vietnamese restaurant nearby the park then drove back to the park to eat there to save much time. Going to the Madeleine restaurant took about forty minutes, and she had only one hour for lunch. If they buy food from a Vietnamese restaurant and take it back to the park, it took about fifteen minutes. They still have forty minutes to eat and talk.

Of course, he has agreed upon this because there was rational basis for her decision. He stayed in the car waiting for her. After five minutes she got out of the restaurant with food on her hands, and she drove back to the park. The distance from the restaurant to the park was just about a mile and a half.

Before they begin to eat, he wanted to offer her astonishingly. He told her to close her eyes until he finished counting from 1 to 3. When she closed her eyes, he took out a small box from his pocket. It is a diamond ring inside the box then he told her opened her eyes. It was astonishing for her because she never heard him say anything about it. He showed her the platinum diamond ring. The majority of buyers bought white gold because platinum is more expensive than white gold. She has been extremely touched when she received the ring from his hands.

On Sunday noon she and he took a siesta because tonight he has the night flight to Philadelphia. The alarm clock woke them up exactly at 3:30 p.m. She told him to take a shower for health then went to the restaurant for dinner. The restaurant was close to the airport; from the restaurant to the airport it takes about fifteen minutes. So they won't be hurrying.

"You are right," he said. "Was it a tasty dish?"

This new restaurant has just opened a couple of months ago. I have been there once before. It was very courteous to customers and had very good food." She didn't know why the restaurant was named Tears. She had seen its name on the advertising billboard. She wondered about the name; she queried and had a sensation of falling. That was a question she has been asking herself for a long time.

"We came to have dinner at this restaurant. We thought that would be a special meaning, do we?"

"Of course, we do," she answered.

He took a night flight because he wanted to have much more time with her. A night flight would reduce lots of time. It is a direct flight and it won't have many stops. The plane will be landing in the Philadelphia airport at 1:30 a.m.

While they had dinner, he talked to his lover that they would go to Europe for a honeymoon vacation after their wedding ceremony. They will visit the famous places in Europe, such as

the Waterloo Bridge in London, the foggy city of England, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Louvre Museum, and the Lascaux Cave in France. “There are lots of pictures of the famous painters in the cave. If you travel to Europe and you don’t visit the Lascaux Cave, that is a big mistake.”

When they take the European tour, the countries they will visit will include England, France, Belgium, Italy, and Germany. They have visited all the places of the scenic beauty of Europe’s block.

Their dinner was nearly finished when a pianist played the “Last Date” melody. The sound of the piano awakened reminiscences in the bygone days when he studied in Virginia for years ago. He was very surprised, and he didn’t know why the pianist played this song this evening.

The pianist unintentionally played it, or maybe he did it on his fellow diner’s request, or maybe it was pure chance that he played it. The story of the song described the last dating of a couple before they bade farewell to each other.

They left the restaurant to the airport at 8:45 p.m. She parked her car at Park & Ride and took the shuttle bus from the parking to the airport terminal. After they checked in the luggage, they sat close together in the waiting room. He embraced his lover in his arms and fondled her hair with his caressing manners. Sometimes, he whispered in her ears. The sound just was enough for her to hear only.

The voice of air-ticket agent announced on the speaker it was time for boarding. All passengers were asked to prepare their boarding pass on their hands. The air ticket agent reannounced that they had fifteen minutes left.

“Please, everyone, line up for check in.”

As soon as Jung heard the voice of the air-ticket agent, her eyes suddenly turned caroty. She couldn't hold back from tears. He got his handkerchief out of his pants pocket to wipe the tears from her eyes, and then he hugged her tightly in his arms. He kissed her eyes several times and told her, “Don't be sad, honey. It's just a couple of hours when I'll arrive there, I'll call you immediately.”

Now it was his turn to show his boarding pass to the agent for checking in. He didn't forget to kiss Jung before he stepped on the ramp going toward the entrance into airplane. When he came close to the airplane, he turned around to bid farewell to his sweetheart! She had followed him with her eyes brimming with tears.

On the way home, she looked up to the sky; it was a starry night, the stars performed dances in the sky, but her soul was blanketed with a feeling of sadness.

18

THE TREES AND hedgerows in bud

signaled a change of weather. Spring was coming to take fresh air along, a vital force with happiness and with new hopes for everyone.

Every morning Mr. Huynh goes out to the backyard to breathe in fresh air while he does some light movements to help his blood circulate properly. At the same time, he enjoyed the flowers that he planted. He has planted several kinds of roses that were multicolored; many flowers open in the morning. It is as big as a small bowl that looked very beautiful. The flowers have gone with the wind and looked as beautiful as young girl who had reached the age of puberty.

The flowers showed off its beauty, and the faint aroma of flowers was spreading all over the garden. Butterflies and bees

were circling round the flowers, flirting. They were spreading their wings and bowing their heads to the flowers, asking for permission, and they perched upon the flowers then sucked its stamens.

As usual, a flock of white-eyed birds flew in and sat alight on the tree at backyard every morning. They have sung the same song every day as if they saluted the house owner and welcome the glow of dawn. The organic vegetable plots that he had planted three weeks ago now grew up and were verdant. That provided for the family a bowl of soup; it was both delicious and helped recover one's health with good care and nutrition.

There was a very strange thing that took place since Mr. Huynh passed away. A flock of birds gathered together in the tree at the backyard in the morning as usual, but they absolutely didn't sing any song as they did before. Possibly, they also missed him and were too sad to sing.

Life is not unlike a daydream. We just met each other, but a couple of minutes later, we won't have the chance to meet each other anymore. Life is short, and it is not permanent. Vu reminisced about three months ago; he usually came to see him at this same house and at this same sofa he sat. After he and Vu finished walking around the resident subdivision, they walked back home to enjoy a cup of coffee while they talked with each other in the drawing room.

Anytime Vu came to see him and his wife, he used to sit in the middle of the sofa in order for convenience to talk with both

of them. His wife sat on the left side of the sofa close to the TV. He sat on the right side of the sofa opposite to Vu's position.

Except during rainy days or when Vu was busy with something, he couldn't come visit them. Next morning when Vu came, they asked him why he was absent yesterday. He must explain for them know that he was busy because of this reason or that. They treated Vu well as a son; Vu was moved and fired by their solicitous care.

Vu often had a friendly chat with Huynh, who told Vu many useful stories, which helped Vu learned new things from his stories that he knew nothing of. He said, "People worship the mammon, which always followed the delusion of money that one didn't know money has two faces then forget benevolence and righteousness to betray each other because of money. Money and defraud are the causes of suffering. But people close one's eyes to follow it as the ephemeras following the firelight, and finally they were burned by fire."

Spring's fresh air blew this morning. Vu happened to remember in bygone days a tea talk. Huynh and Vu were drinking tea while they were talking.

How time flies! Time has gone like a flying arrow. Huynh and Vu were talking at this room not long ago, but it will soon be a hundred days since he passed away on March 25. There was a thing till now Vu didn't understand. He let his imagination run away with him. Why was the month and year of Huynh's death the same as the month and year he was born? He was

born on March 12 and died on March 18, 2008. He was born in spring season and died in spring season too. According to the physiognomy and astrology, people who did not do an evil thing when they lived always died in the same year and month of birth.

On his ninetieth birthday anniversary, Vu wrote painstakingly a few words on a birthday card to wish him a happy birthday. Unexpectedly, six days later he was dead, he left this world eternally.

On March 22 Vu was stunned by the thunderlike effect of this death news. His corpse was lying in state at lich house. Vu came to the lich house in a hurry; he arrived there while the mass praying for the deceased person was in session. The Buddhist monk opened the cage to release forty-nine birds. After they got out of the cage, they flew into the sky while they sung to prove they were praying for the dead person.

Jung, Lien, and her niece sat on the floor in front of the coffin to kowtow whereas the mass praying was going on. Vu sat on the chair behind the chair of Jung's mother.

When the incense on the burner was nearly burned out, Jung stood up to burn another incense to replace the old one. She walked back to her seat; she was surprised when she saw Vu behind her mother's chair. Lien talked in whispers with Jung then Jung got out of the room and did not return.

The service was over, and Vu asked Lien's mother to give him permission to pay his last respects to her husband. Lien guided

Vu to her father's coffin. Vu made his bow twice and bid farewell to her father then he returned to her mother to offer his sincere condolences to her about her serious losses when her husband departed. Vu turned to Lien to share his grief with her about her father's death. Lien had always disliked Vu, but today he felt she had sympathy for him and that appeared on her face. Vu looked around the hall to find out where Ngoc and Linda were.

The mass was on Monday, March 24. It also was the mass for cremation with the attendance of four Buddhist monks who belonged to the Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Houston and its vicinity. Today Vu came to the funeral home a little earlier than when the requiem would begin. Vu had an opportunity to talk with Jung a few minutes in the corridor before the service started.

The coffin was moved to the incinerator from the hall. The monks and members of family followed the coffin. The monks walked while they chanted to see off the death going to the pure land. The special mass to cremate today was a private family funeral for children and grandchildren only. Neither visitors nor friends were invited.

The coffin was laid in front of the incinerator; the coffin was slowly moved inside the incinerator while the deep hollow note of the chanting prayers went on. When the chanting prayer was over, a senior monk made a sign for the operator to slowly close the door of the incinerator.

In this sorrowful moment, how heart-rending was separation in life and parting in death. Jung's mother suddenly lost

consciousness when the door of the incinerator shut down. She understood that from now on she would never find her husband anymore. She had lost him forever.

Children and grandchildren were grieved to say adios to their loved one.

Vu tried to hold back his emotion, but he was moved to tears.

The sky was clear and roomy, but suddenly it was covered by dark clouds, and all of sudden it poured. It seemed heaven and earth deeply sympathized with the family in bereavement.

On March 26 at two o'clock in the afternoon Jung's father's ashes was moved to the Buddhist temple for worship and was being in his seat at columbarium.

Jung's father was a good-natured man who never harmed anyone when he was alive. He was respected by his friends and neighbors. He has been enthusiastically donated gifts to temple, the charitable organizations, and he has cut down his breakfast once a week to use this money to help the homeless people.

His attitude toward his children, he gave his wholehearted instructions to them with all his love. Jung was a daughter who most cared about her parents' life. Anytime her parents wanted to enjoy food, she met fully immediately her parents' taste. They mostly enjoyed Vietnamese food because it was less greasy; she always picked the tastiest dish for them.

Jung wondered why on Monday, March 17, after she left for work. As matter of fact, she drove home, but she didn't know why instead of driving home, she drove to her parents' home. While she was giving her regards to parents, her dad suddenly carefully recommended to her, "You should lead a pious life to deserve to be an exemplary mother to your kids in the future."

Her dad was very pleased about her, his daughter's conduct. Jung thought that her dad was joking to her as usual. But she didn't expect her dad's admonition to her today was his last word to her before he left this world.

Jung was a daughter he loved most. Since she was seven years old, he always took her along with him to go anywhere when he was doing business in Saigon and other cities in the west of South Vietnam. The purpose he took her along with him was to aim at training her step by step on the job training for her to have experience doing business in the future.

He seldom took showers in early morning. But on March 18 he stood contemplating the roses in the backyard to breathe in fresh air and listen to birds singing in the morning. Later he came in house and took a shower then had breakfast.

He seemed to know in advance the time he would leave this world. This morning he woke up very early. After he finished freshening himself up, he wore a ritual robe. He came to the Buddha altar, burned incense then he fell on his knees and gave thanks to Buddha. He prepared for his restful mind before taking his departure to pure land.

He and his wife had lunch at 11:30 a.m. After he and his wife finished their lunch, he cleaned the table, put dishes from the table into the kitchen sink then he told his wife, "If you wanted to watch TV, you go ahead. I want to go to bed to rest a little while." He took a siesta, and then he peacefully left this world in the long sleep.

The Chinese believed the number 8 is a lucky number, but the year of 2008 was a great suffering to Jung. Within six months she has lost three loved ones. Her big brother died after his father's death three months later then the next three months her mother died at the age of eighty-eight.

As soon as he heard of Jung's father's death, Vu wrote Jung a letter to remind her to give special care to her mother because she was in a sorrowful situation after her husband passed away. If possible she should take her mother to her home for at least twelve weeks to help her to reduce her sadness because her husband just had gone. This was to prevent illness from happening suddenly.

Since Jung's father's death, her mother was melancholic because she had lost the image of her loved one. Daily he was always side by side with her, but now all of a sudden he disappeared. She couldn't find him anywhere. That caused her to be low spirited.

Everyone in the family didn't pay attention to her psychological aspect. They thought that she has had three meals

a day as usual, and she had nothing to complain. But in fact they weren't interested in their mother's innermost feelings.

The final week of July, 2008 in Saturday morning Jung's friend Jeannie and her two sons came to see Jung. Jeannie was invited going to visit Jung's mother, and by the way, all of them went together to Sam's Club for shopping. Jung took her mother to go shopping with her with the purpose of relieving her mother's anxiety, but she didn't expect that the market time today it was her last time. While she was walking in the Sam's Club building, she suddenly fell down on the floor of the building.

If today Jung had taken the wheelchair along with her, her mother would have sat on the wheelchair, and for sure nothing would have happened. But Jung regretted she didn't take the wheelchair along with her, and that caused her mother to fall down.

Her mother was ailing the whole year and not able to walk by herself because the diabetes caused her feet to be very weak. When she fell down, as a matter of fact, Jung called the ambulance to take her to hospital for x-rays for her head injury. Instead of taking her mother to hospital, she took her mother home. A month after her mother died from a wound on the head. Vu was heavy-hearted when he heard the sad news.

Vu couldn't come back timely for attending her burial service because he was far away from home. As soon as her burial service was finished, the Ike storm pounded Galveston Island that

caused heavy damages. The city authority announced trying to rescue people who were missing. The town Jung was residing in did not have much damage. Some areas were without electricity for month. All public activities were limited and there was much disorder.

After the cremation service was completed, Jung's mother's ashes were deposited at Marigold Garden, which belonged to Stafford Buddhist Temple, where her father had worshiped. Her oldest brother's ashes, the one who died three months before his father, have been deposited in Hempstead, Texas. It is far from Houston, sixty miles on Northwest Highway 290 to Austin.

This is a branch of the Buddha Temple in Houston. This location is about fifty acres in the area that was developed to make a center for Buddhist youth's activities.

Vu came to the Stafford Buddhist temple. He was guided to the columbarium by a Buddhist nun. She showed him how to burn the yellow candle to prostrate Jung's parents' altar. Before leaving the columbarium the nun turned off all candles, and she led him out of the columbarium.

October 17 was the forty-ninth day of her mother's death. He sincerely prayed for Jung's mother's soul in pure land. She had led a devotional life since she was young. She devoted whole her life for her husband and children from meals to clothes. She fulfilled her duty to her family and educated her children to succeed in life.

When Jung's mother was alive, every weekend and especially on lunar New Year occasion, she had taken her mother to the Asian markets to buy food and other stuff for New Year.

After finish their shopping, she pushed the cart, which had plenty of food to follow her mother to the parking lot.

But on this year-end days, Christmas and Lunar New Year occasion, Vu came to the Asian market with a purpose to find an old mother and her young daughter who often came here to shop on the year-end days. But on this year-end day, he could not found them. The market was still here, but the old mother and her daughter were gone.

However, although Jung's parents' were gone, they left a highly valuable heritage, a good example that children followed their example. Their physical bodies had disappeared, but their images were still in their children's memory.

On Mother's Day, Jung had compassion for commemorating her parents by burning incense and praying for their soul. She understood that her parents' love to their children was boundless and her parents had an unlimited power to protect their children.

In anywhere, any circumstance, her parents' love always overflowed like the sea. Her mother's laughter, her sweetly singing a baby to sleep in the noontime in summer when she was still living in Vietnam and Jung still was very young.

She loved her mother very much when she was seven years old, anytime her mother was absent from home. But to understand how immense was a mother's love, she must wait till she grew up to the age of discretion. When she understood how much she loved her mother, she shed tears. When she couldn't keep back her tears, it is too late. If she really loved her mother, she must treat her well when she was still alive. This evening she missed her mother very much! She asked herself where her parents were.

This evening I left my work to home,
On the way home, I drove through my parents' home.
The house my parent has resided for many years,
There wasn't anybody in and out.

I stood in front of the house waiting for you,
But I couldn't see my parent.
I entered the house by the back yard's door,
I looked round and round,
But I couldn't see them.

I stood silently for a period of time,
Suddenly I burst out crying.
I still heard birds were singing in the back yard,
But where did my parent were?
And when can I see you?

Last night I heard the phone rang,
I stated at the sound of my mother voice to call my
name Jung.
I suddenly stood speechless when I pick the phone up,
My mother's voice was as sad as the raindrops.

Mom! You were very far from me now,
How can I come to you?
When can I see you, mom?
If I can change the time, I change a thousand years to
hear my mother laughing.

My mother's voice that like the voice of autumn was
falling,
I just silently have missed my mother.
You've brought me up for 45 years,
I remembered forever your sweet voice to lull me to
sleep . . .

19

IT WAS JUST a glimpse of a dream, but the nightmare brought him sinking into the suffering. His love had died; suddenly he heard the bad news from Linda, Jung's young sister, who notified him of her sister's illness and situation. Jung was seriously sick and had been hospitalized. She didn't feel well. She wanted to see Vu as soon as possible.

Vu heard the sad news from Linda, and he was very melancholic because of Jung's sickness. He was worried about Jung's illness because she lacked red blood cells. The hollow of her hands were whitish and cold like ice. Destiny was severe. Once she escaped death when she was in an Asian refugee camp. The fatal shears still were hanging around her.

That was an unfortunate thing that came to her. Her life was in hardship when South Vietnam fell into the hand of North Vietnamese communists. She had dropped off school and lacked

everything, from material to spirit. After she fled the country and arrived at an Asian refugee camp, her spirit life was relatively stable, but her material life was deprived.

Every day she and her young sister went to the nearby edge of the jungle to find some vegetables and dried wood to bring back to her refugee camp. And every night she had to go to the well far from her tent about a couple of miles to get good water for drink and cook. She carried two buckets of water on her shoulders by a wooden shoulder pole. Her shoulder muscle was black and blue because of the water buckle pressed upon her shoulder.

She stood sacrifices and hardships for her better future, but she didn't expect the fatal shears hanging around her. The bad luck has attacked her repeatedly.

Love of the constellation of the cowherd and the spinning damsel during four year long. She understood that sooner or later the suffering will come to her. What had begun? Which will have the end? In the meeting, the moment of separation had begun. He was her last solace. She hoped someday she and her lover will live together to fulfill her eager wish.

But she had not expected this moment. Everything was becoming foggy. Today was the last moment of her love.

Vu read her letter, and he felt dumfounded. He hurriedly came to the academic office to ask for four weeks off without pay. After his request had been approved, he booked an online air ticket

immediately, and he took a flight in the afternoon on the same day.

When he arrived at the airport, he took a taxicab to the hospital where she was treated. He was guided by a nurse to Jung's room, then the nurse returned to her station.

Through the fluorescent lamp, he looked at Jung who was in a coma. Her face was very pale. He looked at her, and he was moved to tears. His heart was throbbing with pain. He couldn't see anything because his eyes overflowed with tears. He could not hold back his tears that were continuing to roll down his cheeks. He didn't know what to do. He held her skinny hands with many black nervure interlaced on the back of her hands.

She breathed with difficulty by an oxygenic tube in her nostrils. She was very tired and lost a lot of weight. If without a miracle, she seemed to find it very difficult to escape death.

Vu put his mouth close to her ears and whispered he had come back with all his love to her – what he and she had talked to each other in the first moment they met each other, the dating, the moment he clasped her body in his arms, and a dream of living together.

But what they expected for their life, all of it now was just a fantastic dream. She left him an immense sadness to go along with him forevermore.

After his word, she weakly opened her eyes then she slowly closed her eyes, as if to close a thousand years to bring a part of his life along with her.

Everything had gone; from now on, we lose each other forever. It still is a song, it still is an echo, and it still is with a recollection.

He put his head down to her chest, and he burst into a convulsive sob. His tears dropped on her chest and he felt pain like his heart was being stabbed.

Meanwhile, her doctor walked in the room. Vu didn't know. The doctor came close to him and lightly put his hand on Vu's shoulder to console him to bring him back to reality. Vu turned to look at the doctor, and he made his sentiments known and said thanks to the doctor.

The doctor said, "Treatment for a patient is my professional conscience and the obligation of a doctor. I have tried to do my best, but her illness was in a serious phase. Because of that reason, I tried to lengthen her life by inserting oxygen to her brain to wait for you to have enough time to come back to see her. My expectation is I could not lengthen more than tonight. All that was my conscience, you don't have to thank me."

That night Vu was very sad. He had nothing in his stomach for the whole day, except for some bottles of water. He sat on the side of her bed; he looked at the blood bag on the hanger. It was dropping slowly drop by drop into the blood vessel in her arm.

The oxygen machine was working continuously. She was still unconscious, except her chest went up and down.

On the other side of the bed, Linda sat at the opposite end of the bed. Sometimes she gave a sigh of sadness for her sister. Linda was skinnier than before her sister was struck with a disease. Perhaps she had spent sleepless nights to take care for her sister. There were dark rings around her eyes and hollow cheeks. Vu understood her feeling of sadness as well as his hidden sadness that he could not make his sentiments known to her.

The atmosphere in the room now was very soundless, except for a sutra chant “Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hum” from the MP3 machine. Om Ma Ni Pad Mi Hum is a popular chant of Tibetan Buddhists. These six words filled with the miraculous of the foundation of great compassion from Bodhisattva. The Tibetan monks and Buddhist believers were daily chanting these six magic words to leave behind sickness, for retribution by karma, to overcome fear, and have peace in mind.

Vu held Jung's hands while he whispered to her, but she was unconscious, she knew nothing. In the next morning, Linda came to see her sister. She told Vu what was happening two weeks before Jung hospitalized. Her sister was full of a sound mind, but she had an immense sadness. She handed Linda a letter and made careful recommendations to Linda to hand this letter to Vu. Linda took a letter from her purse and gave it to Vu. He forced a smile when he received a letter from Linda, but behind his smile there lies a deep sadness.

Vu called Jung's name and said, "What you have told me, we will go along with each other to the end of our way, but now suddenly you turned to another way then you left me alone with my mystery sadness. You came to me and gave me a wonderful time then you quietly left. That caused me a great suffering. I won't and will never forget you. Wherever, I will always think of you and call your name even in my dreams. No matter what I was always grateful for your coming to my life. Remember for the past days, however, without your presence on my side, your image was always in my memory."

He was experienced in observing life. He understood life is a chain of suffering and losses. That life just was going round and round in ups and downs, the wheels of life.

Since then, he had begun a self-contained life. He was finding a way for him. Afterward he came to a Buddhist Soto Zen Center on Shasta Mountain in northeastern California to practice Soto Zen.

This temple was located on the mountainside with sixteen acres on four thousand feet from sea level. It shared the same border between California and Oregon state. The mountain was blanketed with snow year round. The temperature in May was still cold at 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Autumn arrived, the season of falling dead leaves. The leaves changed color from green to yellow chrome or ruddy. The yellowish leaves were stormy, falling with the wind here, there, and everywhere.

He had come back to Eldridge Park to see the vestiges of his passionate love memory. These vestiges caused him deep sadness in his soul; his lover's image appeared and disappeared alternately in his mind.

On the park's trail they have walked side by side with each other in the bygone days. He couldn't find it anymore.

In the rainy evenings they clasped their hands and walked together on this path, and their footprint were printed in bold type that was difficult to erase. He had been suffering very much when he thought of his lover's image. His love has gone quickly like wind, and the sunlight hurriedly set down in the autumn evening.

He walked to find her image till sundown, but he didn't know. He had continuously walked to such an extent that he forgot the way to go back home. He was able to forget everything except her.

Sometimes in his dream, he heard she was laughing, but when he was awake, he learned that was a dream, not reality. Her image was unstable like a mist in autumn morning, but it was engraved in his memory.

She was the most beautiful flower and was a symbol of the Sasaki flower, which had a perfect perfume and beauty that gave him the scent of love.

And then he recalled how she spoke in a low voice and whispered sometimes at midnight. This caused him deep pain, and his tears rolled down his cheeks.

He had never forgotten the day before she left Philadelphia. After him and her finished dinner, they sat in the living room to enjoy tea and to view the backyard landscape. He asked what she thought about the house she saw in the morning. This house had a lot of trees and he was afraid she would dislike it, but in the contrary, she liked it very much.

The reason she liked this house because she liked to live in harmony with nature. Of course, nature included the forest, sea, mountain, birds and beasts, flowers, and butterflies, etc.

She said a house without trees looked like a person without clothes. In the morning it would be nice to go out to the garden to breath in fresh air, do some movements for blood to circulate properly.

He listened while she talked and that gave her a source of inspiration to talk. She explained the beauty of trees, such as pine. Pine, as it grew older, was more valued. Pine was a symbol of nobility, elegance, and solemnity, like Buddhist monks who live in seclusion.

On that night she talked about the beauty of flowers, the art of drinking tea that Japanese called *chado*.

Nature was in harmony and is a collective beauty that gave mankind a great gift. If one wanted to come in for a share of nature's products, one must have done one's bit. If one wanted to come in for a share of nature's beauty, one must have the spirit of loving the nature. Nature gave us a healthy life. If one wanted to come in for a share of birds, one should not put them behind bars because they have lost their freedom. If someone really loves birds, one should let them gather together on the tree at your backyard. They are to freely fly and freely sing the song they want to. If to compare with a man was in custody, was he free or not? The answer is no, he has lost his freedom.

How happy you are when you wake up in the morning, you hear birds sing a song in the tree of your backyard to welcome the glow of dawn, and they salute you for your benevolence toward them while you are taking a cup of coffee while you watch them to jump from this branch to another one. If you caged birds, that joy sure won't come to you.

If you want to make the most of a mood of peace and contentment, your conception of life should be harmonious. You let go everything and you will find a great happiness for your life.

Hanado, chado, and kendo in Japan are related to Zen and Buddhism. Generally people thought of practicing martial arts to attain one's aim to offense or defense and come to the goal that is to defeat the opponent.

Practitioners who get the highest ranking understood that the philosophy of martial arts is to gain a victory over oneself.

Who has attained the highest level of arts and to impregnate with philosophy of Martial Arts; his desire to triumph over somebody has gone from his mind because in one's mind there is no more room for ego. He was indifferent to other people's envy, praise, and blame. He lets go everything to return the mood of peace in mind. He opens his heart with true love to everybody.

Millions and millions of flowers with different colors and stature were present before the presence of mankind in this world. Their presence from the deep forest, in the pond, on the desolate mountain blanketed with snow, in the field, on the lake, and they have conserved their exalted beauty.

Flowers were always present and join with the breath of mankind in all activities such as birth, growth, old age, and death.

Flowers have been present in this world thousands years before mankind, but however, flowers were treated frostily by mankind. But flowers are content with their life, and bringing the most beautiful for human life without noise – no more changes, only the sweet scent spreading over wherever.

People use flowers in most cases such as to use up in worship, courtesy visit, funeral service, brings flowers to the cemetery for a loved one who had passed away, parties, etc.

Totally, when people are angry or happy, people always use flowers to beautify one's life. According to Buddhist history when the monks saw the flowers tumble down on the ground by

rainstorm, the monks picked flower petals up and put them on a water bowl with the purpose to lengthen flowers' life. Since then monks has used flowers to worship Buddha. The reason monks used flower to worship Buddha was because the character of the flower is pure, fresh, and bright, like a mirror, no more dust stains of life.

How cheery it is when we drink tea while admiring and beholding the beauty of flowers. When we enjoy liquor, we should not admire flowers to prove one is not an eminent person, and a flower hangs its head in shame.

Watering flower also is an art. We can't use chloride water to water flowers because the chlorine will shorten its life. We must use the pure water, and when watering, we take a dip our fingers into a water bowl then lightly flip water on flowers like grass wet in dew. Absolutely don't touch the flower. For this reason, the Japanese called the flower way or *hanado*.

When you talk about flowers, you wouldn't forget about butterflies because flowers and butterflies couldn't be apart from each other. When you talked about mountain, you couldn't not talk about the sea. If you talked about the rock, you couldn't not talked about moss.

As a result when we admire flowers, we should sit with a beautiful woman. When we enjoy liquor, we should sit with a poet. And when we watch snow fall, we should sit with an anchorite. So that it is suitable to each circumstance.

A flower and a beautiful woman cannot be apart from each other. There is another kind of flower that is more valuable than regular flower. That is a kind of flower that knows how to talk the human sound.

If you really love flowers, you should take care them carefully. Don't let it die in the prime of youth. If you love the moon, you should not let the moon be sunk deep in the water. And if you love a beautiful woman, you had better not let her die prematurely.

In admiring flowers, you should admire when the flower is blooming. To admire the moon, you should admire when the moon is full. If you want to admire the beauty of a woman in the morning, you should wait after she when she finished her makeup.

A woman is more glamorous than a flower because she knows how to talk. But a flower is more precious than woman because a flower smells good.

If you cannot have both beauty and flower, you should pick up the talking flower, but normally a beautiful flower doesn't have an aroma.

She said, "I told you many things, now it's your turn to talk whatever you wanted to." "You have already talked everything, I have nothing more to talk," he said.

He wavered a little then he told her, “I have only one thing that I wanted to say, you must listen carefully. Having a flower without a butterfly is just like the earth without the sun, and if having me without you, how can I survive in this world?”

She said, “You are very clever. You wanted to hook me and you together at any time, I surrender to you.”

People generally say what's become a thing of the past. Let's forget the past. But sometimes we could not forget it whether it was happy or sorrowful because we had a part of our life in it.

However, we cannot take the past back, but if we want to lead a happy life, we must have a dream and hope that someday we will meet each other again.

An early morning on the Shasta Mountain, Vu looked out to the garden through the window. The cherry flowers on the tree yesterday evening still were showing off its beauty, playing and smiling with wind, but last night, the wind had blown the cherry flowers down and scattered them everywhere on the ground.

He was suddenly awakened and understood that the human life was the same as the life of cherry flowers, no more and no less. Everything in this world was like a dream and it is changeable.

He has never felt more lonely and void as tonight. She has come to him then she walked away from his life. She went

through his life and left it bitterly to him. He recalled the past remembrance that caused him to remember his lover. He imagined she stood in front of him with her passionate eyes. She was as beautiful as the yellow flower that was waving adios.

There was a dead star disappearing from the sky tonight. Tonight he looked up the sky, and a star appeared in the dark sky. The star was bright like a torch. Suddenly it was crossing through the sky to somewhere over the rainbow. He opened his arms and was approaching toward to catch it, but it was too late – and he was lonely.

From now on, no more dating, and all have been closed. The tearful leave taking moment, he felt tears in his eyes!

The final letter:

October 15

My darling,

I am writing you this letter while I am preparing to be hospitalized. When this letter arrives in your hand, it also will be too late. But anyway at the moment I will be soon, and it's heartrending having to leave you. I wanted to tell you something from the time we have lived near each other until now. At this time I was very tired, but I tried my best to use my last moment of my life to write you this letter that I wanted to tell you what I have been hiding deep in the bottom of my heart.

This letter it may be the last word that I will confide in you then there will be no more chance to meet and talk to each other. Please forgive me if I have unintentionally or purposefully offended you, causing you pain. Today I wanted to confirm with you that "I love you forevermore."

At the moment I had nothing left to wish, I am completely satisfied with your love that you reserved for me. However, it is an inconclusive love affair. Before everlasting leaving you, I felt proud of you, and I was very much contented about it.

It was three months already since you left home. My daily life was the same as the days you were at home, not much change. Beyond daily activities, I spent all my spare time writing you, recalled our souvenirs in bygone days.

My darling, every day after I came home from work, at night in my dream I always called your name. I was always thinking of you, the sofa in living room we have sat side by side while we were talking with each other. The picture you hung on the wall, the books you left on the night table in the bedroom – these things caused me to reminisce about you. I felt very sad when I looked at the surroundings without you.

I remembered in the afternoon I picked up you in front of the Chase Bank building. I turned onto Corporate Street at Bellaire Boulevard to the restaurant for lunch. While I was driving, the CD player played the “Teardrops” melody that caused us to hold our hands while we shed tears.

At Sugar Creek Park one morning you and I walked together in the heavy rain. We were as wet as drowned rats before you travelled to Vietnam. You stayed in Vietnam for four weeks. You bought a very beautiful gift for me. That was the Vietnamese robe with different colors.

At Eldridge Park, the first day we met each other, we clasped our hands to walk together on the park's trail in the early morning. You were walking while you were massaging my finger with oregano Tibetan hot oil. Relying on your massage, my finger's pain has gone.

We had lunch at Vargo's Restaurant on October 15. The moment of our first meeting was attached to us, and we couldn't forget it.

On Saturday afternoon of October 13, that was an unforgettable day; this day was also the last day we walked together. After we finished lunch at Sea Food Restaurant, we went to see movie *Rush Hour* at Cine Mark, Brazos Town Center. We were watching the actors who performed their actions on the cinema screen. You put your mouth close to my ears and whispered you love me.

All images of that day now just were vestiges of bygone days, and not to be found. The beautiful days have gone and never come back. It appeared and disappeared alternately somewhere.

How could we found our images, the streets we have walked through in the windy evening? If we wanted to find them, perhaps we must smash the mirror to look for them.

My darling, in this moment I just wanted to see you, and I wish I was embraced by you in the last moment. Like much I felt very happy before I leave you. I just wanted you to understand me, I still be yours and forevermore.

I did believe that you and I were expressive to each other by phenomena of telepathy. Therefore, this moment I knew you have been loved me very much as the first moment we met each other.

Did you remember my manner when I walked? Did you remember my voice when I talked? And the feeling of kisses and cuddles each time you slept with me? You told me you have come to me, and love me with all your heart.

Maybe you remember once I have asked you did you think you love me forever. You have proved your love to me, and I believed your true love to me. I was so happy I have found a right man that I have seen him many times in my dreams. I was very touched to hear you say you love me for your whole life. My ears were heard your vaguely sweet voice from a distance. I was so happy to tears.

I regretted that I am not a writer or a poet to express completely how my heart was stirred to you. I just had a word to you as same as thousands of other women in this world, and that word is “I love you.” The language

is so simple, isn't it? But you left many footprints in my heart that I could not forget.

I did not have any doubt about your love to me. The moments I have lived near you, I asked myself why you came to me, why we loved each other, and why you did not find me in previous years.

As you said there was love that didn't need much time to have a strong attachment to each other. Indeed, the happiness has come to me as a bolt, a love at first sight, and then when it has gone, it also was as a bolt, the parting moment. But its repercussion was always going along with us until the end of life.

My darling, I remember you, remember you until my last breath. I always remember your word that we met each other in a harsh situation, but it was a destiny that we must accept.

I love you very much. At this moment I did not want anything but to meet you, and I wish I was in your arms because I am going to leave you soon. I will bring all remembrances of our love along with me.

There were some nights I have met you in my dreams. I remembered of each your gesture, each word you said, each corner of your eyes when you smile. When I woke up, I did not see you anywhere then I wept my sad fate.

Your images always appeared in my mind. My head was in a whirl.

Now autumn has come, autumn brought us come together. Our love is going to winter. The previous autumn we met each other. This autumn I'll be going to leave you, but autumn will be eternally in our love and soul.

All ways you and I have gone through, the dead leaves still are falling when autumn came. But our images are sure not to be found anywhere. The dead leaves will always be falling on the park's trail in autumn that we used to walk on it. From now on I am going to lose you forever. I will eternally call your name in my sleep.

The long days and nights waiting were very lonely. Any minute was as long as a year in waiting. I didn't think of anything but you. Your image was very big. It dominated my soul.

If without you in my life, I could not live. I wanted you to come home with me. I wanted to see you, hold your hands, and talk with you the last word. That was my wish.

My darling, when you come back home with me, tomorrow, next month, next year, or forever in my waiting.

Really, I would not dare to think of it, but it is only one thing, and just is only one thing. I wanted you to come home with me by and by. Although I just see you in my dream, I wish you took me in your arms. Come home with me, my dear, your body in my side that made me feel I was not lonely in a quiet night.

My darling, I have lost the most valuable thing of my life, we permanently lose each other from now on. It's heartrending having to leave you.

We were in love for four years, the parting moment has come, and I would be off your sight forevermore. The love suddenly came, then all of sudden, it has gone.

My darling, I am crying, tears continue rolling down my face. I could not sit down under suffering. I wanted to tell you more, but I was too tired to write you anymore. I didn't know if you could come back timely to see me. I must stop writing right here. My last word that also is my last saying, adios, you! It's quite lonely without you.

I am grateful to the parents who gave us this physical body. I am grateful to you who have come to my life with all your heart and love.

We gave our life for each other,
But the life was no longer.
We gave our dream for each other,
But our dream did not come true.
It much remained to be a singing.
It much remained to be an echo.
And it was merely to be reminisced.

Love you.

End