

Vietnam, a place where I found beauty

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Looks of horror and dismay are what most people's faces reflect when I talk about Vietnam. When I asked why the look they all reflected the same thoughts: horror, misery, suffering, the loss of life and limb. This I could comprehend, because I walked through that valley of horror for almost three years. Many times I stepped cautiously through villages in ruins, the smell of death hanging heavy in the air, the cries of mourning pierced both ears and heart, the hollow eye sockets of young and old burned into my heart with "why," the maimed and the scarred victims begging for an end to the suffering. Yes, I remember all of this and more gory things than I would ever want to put into words, but yet the name Vietnam to me means beauty. Let me try and explain where and why I found this place of horror, a place of beauty. It wasn't the people or a city, or a building nor, a scenic view—What morning was it? I couldn't say, because there were so many mornings I watched the sun rise in South Vietnam while waiting to leave an ambush site I had been sitting in all night. One of these mornings I did a foolish thing- I let my mind play at its fancy-Mr. Sun, the conductor walked out on to his stage, tapped his baton on the top of the mountains. His orchestra and chorus started to harmonize along with the rhythm section of chatting monkeys, all to the slow beat of the water buffalo's hooves while pulling his plow through the muddy rice patties. The warm breeze through the jungle's canopy made up the wind section. The chimes and the morning drums of a near by pagoda joined in. What selection were they playing? I don't know, but its sounds were soothing to the ears.

All Hell Brook Loose-the sounds of gunfire filled the air, my peace of mind was broken by the sounds of war which was reality. The seconds became minutes, the minutes like eternity. The phantom struck, the horror was there again-The silence fell as fast as the horror started. Like the conductor, Mr. Sun waited for his mde audience to clear their throats, he stood high on his platform, waited patiently and raised his baton. The orchestra started to play again, as if nothing happened no death-no horror, just a small delay.

This is where I found beauty in Vietnam. Mother Nature in all her glory waits on no man, nor his deeds, but creates beauty in the mist of anything, if only you let your heart and mind search and find it.