

HÀ:

I don't smoke.

SMOKING MAN:

No cigarettes? Hmm. You have something you can trade?

HÀ:

I don't have anything.

SMOKING MAN:

You have noodles. Give me one packet.

HÀ:

I used them already.

SMOKING MAN:

You're from Sài Gòn?

HÀ:

I was born in the Mekong. You don't look Vietnamese.

SMOKING MAN:

I'm H'Mông.

HÀ:

You're moi\*? [\*pronounced moy]

*Smoking Mân bristles at the derogatory term. Moi means savage.*

SMOKING MAN:

H'Mông. You look Chinese: you're Hoa, aren't you? We have that in common. My ancestors came two hundred years ago.

HÀ:

Are they from the North or South?

SMOKING MAN:

They lived free, and moved freely. Now we live in the Central Highlands. But you're not interested in my heritage, are you? Go ahead. Ask me.

HÀ:

Are you a Communist?

SMOKING MAN:

I was fourteen when I fought for the South. Then Diem gave our lands to refugees from the North. A father shouldn't play favourites. After he was gone, the Americans were persuasive and I was loyal. But they never cared about Viet Nam, and one who drinks will drink again.

HÀ:

You became a Communist.

SMOKING MAN:

A liberator.

HÀ:

You fought for the Việt Công.

SMOKING MAN:

I wrote poetry for our brothers. Collected body parts - a foot, a head. And yes. I fought. I fought for the cause.

HÀ:

What about the brothers you killed-

SMOKING MAN:

-It was us versus them-

HÀ:

-innocent people-

SMOKING MAN:

-People aren't innocent. Not even your American bandits and their puppet troops. But does anyone deserve war? Nobody tells you about the horrors. Our countryside ravaged by Napalm and Agent Orange. The soldiers' cries, as the flesh is seared from their bones. And Mother Nature- she was the least forgiving, with her tigers and snakes. I'd rather a quick bullet. |

HÀ:

Tigers kill when they're hungry. They're not savages, who don't know how to stop.

SMOKING MAN:

You think we're the savages? My village, my *home* was nothing but mass graves and burnt ruins when I returned. Việt Công, Việt Minh, People's Army, Army of the Republic- what does it matter. We all did it.

HÀ:

Communism took everything we had.

SMOKING MAN:

Communism isn't the problem. When the tree is fallen, everyone runs to it with their axe.

HÀ:

You were the ones who invaded the South!