

From Version 2013

Paul stands in his kitchen with the small of his back against the kitchen counter keeping his wife Sharon company as she cleans up after the supper of which he ate next to nothing, listening to the stories of what all happened during her day, of her delight at finding Tide on sale at the Safeway and the stray cat that's been using the redwood chips in the front yard as a litter box and Oh yes the air conditioner repairman called today, telling her nothing of his own day, his own thoughts drifting to a scene that happened to him years ago in the mountains of Vietnam when he was living with the Montagnards, a scene that had begun to occur to him earlier today but which he allows to come back fully to him now, After I had been there a few months and led them in their first firefight they invited me to climb the tall ladder and join them in the community house, they were all sitting around on the floor and made a place for me in front of the urn, it was full of rice wine with banana leaves floating on top and the one I called Toothy because his name sounded something like that and because he didn't have any handed me the straw and said "Drink, Green Pau, it will take your dreams away and make you strong," and later the shaman took off my boots and socks and placed an old axe head in front of me, placed the bracelet on the axe head and placed my bare feet on the bracelet and began chanting, painting my feet and the bracelet and the axe head with rice wine and then I don't remember anything until I woke up the next morning in my own hut, and without realizing he is doing it leaves the kitchen in the middle of another of Sharon's stories and goes through the house to their bedroom, rummaging around in his sock drawer until he finds at the very back the dull brass bracelet and slips it on over his wrist, holds up his arm to look at it and wonders what happened to that young man who did all those exciting and dangerous things, where did he go...?

