

*They had all become violently ill after eating the ripe melons. Dysentery. Shitting everywhere. Later, he had contracted malaria as well, which would surface again years later as he tried to crawl on his belly from his bed to the bathroom. He remembered the Red Cross train that had been bombed, and the carnage and pieces of flesh adorning the windows and littering the ground. And the smells. That was what made a man retch. The smell of burning, rotting flesh that had lingered and permeated every fiber of his being. Out of his entire platoon, he was one of twenty men that had returned to the United States. They had been awarded the Bronze Star. They had been decimated.*

*There had been times though that hadn't been so bad. Korea was a beautiful, lush place. And the people of South Korea had been pleasant and kind. He remembered riding through one village and passing out gum with fellow soldiers. The children had loved it. The mountains, the ocean, the rice paddies-these had a beauty outside of the horrors of war.*

“How is it Dad?” A question from Dave brought him back. He looked up into his son’s expectant face.

“Very good son, thanks,” he murmured. More drool. He reached for the napkin again. He could feel his dentures floating too. Damn it.

“Great, Dad. I’ll put the rest in the fridge, there is plenty more.” His son paused a moment, as if unsure of something. “I’m glad it tastes good to you.” He walked away again to wrap up the remaining watermelon.

Looking out the window the man’s eyes focused on the trees outside. He wished he could go back to Korea. Now. And see it how it was meant to be seen. Interact with the people as himself, without the stresses of war. To eat the food and cross bridges without worrying about holding them. To experience the culture and way of life. To just exist among the trees, mountains and ocean there. Just once.

But it was too late. Returning to South Korea was no longer a “someday I will.” He was ninety, and if he couldn’t make it to the grocery without being exhausted, he couldn’t make a