

HEARTLINE

Written by

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A Vietnamese lady with an American father from the Vietnam War whom she's never met, struggles with debt from bad decisions in her life. Raised by her aunt and uncle, she is about to lose the house they left her when her American father shows up at the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM — 2023 FLASHBACK — DAY

PAUL WAYNE COOMBE (74) sits at a desk and lights a cigarette. He grabs a framed photo of himself age 24 in military uniform with his arm around a beautiful Vietnamese lady TIK TANG (21). There is a lock of her hair under the glass frame of the photo. Written at bottom of photo is "Paul and TIK. Valentines Day 1973. Saigon"

1973 flashback of Paul and Tik with their arms around each other walking through a field.

Return to 2023. Paul kisses the photo and puts it back on the shelf. TV newscaster catches his attention.

NEWSCASTER

Today Hacienda Heights lost another war hero. Richard Beeler served with distinction in Vietnam until war's end. A celebration of life will be held at Forest Lawn on February 14.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE — DAY

Paul sits on a bed. DR NGUYEN (42), female enters the room.

DR. NGUYEN

We got the results back on your test. The biopsy shows you have stage four lung cancer.

Paul stands up in anger.

PAUL

You know I used to tell my buddies in Vietnam I wouldn't make it to 30. The fact I've made it to 74 is a curse.

Paul angrily exits the room.

INT. — FUNERAL HALL — EVENING

JIM JENSON (74) and Mary Louise Beeler (75) stand behind Paul in a small room. Jim approaches Paul and puts his hand on Paul's shoulder.

JIM JENSEN

Semper Fi.

Paul turns around and looks Jim in the eyes.

PAUL  
Jim. Jim Jensen!

Jim takes Paul over to Mary Louise.

JIM JENSEN  
Mary Louise this is Paul. He was  
part of that mission in 'Nam with  
Rich and I.

MARY LOUISE  
Rich mentioned you so many times.  
Oh, Paul.

Mary Louise hugs Paul.

INT. BAR - DAY

Paul and Jim clang beer bottles.

JIM JENSEN  
You know it seems like Rich and I  
searched our whole lives for you  
after that helicopter crash, Paul.  
All these years we thought we were  
the only survivors, but looking at  
you now, brother I'm glad we were  
wrong. Those were tough times after  
that crash but it was our wives  
that allowed us to move on. How  
about you Paul? Never found a wife?

PAUL  
I had too many issues. To tell you  
the truth Jim, the only woman I  
ever wanted to marry was Tik Tang.  
You remember Tik?

JIM JENSEN  
Of course I do. You two were  
inseparable in Saigon.

PAUL (OS)  
I proposed to her on Valentine's  
Day 1973.

Flashback: Paul kneeling in front of Tik on Valentine's Day.

PAUL  
She even gave me a lock of her hair  
so I'd have a part of her with me  
until I came back to Saigon. But I  
never came back.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

I checked my mailbox every day for 50 years. I even got two DNA match accounts using her hair in case she ever joined DNA match or she had children or grandchildren that joined but to date, nothing.

JIM JENSEN

So you never heard anything?

PAUL

Heard what?

JIM JENSEN

Tick was on top of the US Embassy April 30, 1975.

PAUL

How do you know this?

JIM JENSEN

Richard and I were part of the last helicopter out. We could look down and we could see Tik there, but they wouldn't let us go back and Paul a VC sniper suddenly open fire and shot and killed Tik right in front of our eyes.

Paul is absolutely distraught. Carries his head in his hands.

PAUL

You know Jim the pastor made a good point at Rich's funeral today: To everything there is a season. A time for every purpose under heaven. There was a time and purpose under heaven for Rich and his family. There was a time and purpose under heaven for you and your family—but there was no time and purpose under heaven for Paul Coombe or Tik Tang, please.

Paul looks heavenward with anger, stands up. As he attempts to leave the bar, Jim put his hand on Paul's shoulder.

JIM JENSEN

Your time and purpose under heaven will come, Paul...

PAUL

When. In 6 weeks time when I'm 6 foot under.

Paul exits bar in anger.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Paul laying in bed with EKGs oxygen tubes and other medical equipment hooked up to him. Dr. Nguyen enters the room.

PAUL  
(Mumbles)  
Can I have my tablet?

DR. NGUYEN  
You want your tablet? Sure.

She hands him his tablet. Paul checks his DNA Match profile. He sees he has a new match with 50% shared DNA from the daughter he never knew he had with Tik named THU (49). He has a message from her.

Paul is stunned but after opening the message, his eyes go blurry and his EKG goes erratic. A heart specialist comes in. Paul flatlines. The specialist leaves the room.

Dr. Nguyen reads the DNA match message from his daughter over Paul that he tried to read when he flatlined.

DR. NGUYEN  
After America pulled out of the war and the north invaded the south my mother Tik gave me to her brother's family to protect me because I had an American father. After that, she went to the US Embassy to find you. We never heard from her again, I've searched my whole life for you. Can we meet?

Doctor Nguyen looks at Paul in awe, puts his tablet on the table, salutes him, exits the room. Paul's flatline continues unabated in monotone sound until there is a heartbeat.

INT. NEWS STUDIO - END OF 2023 FLASHBACK - PRESENT - DAY

NEWSCASTER  
Today Hacienda Heights hospital is investigating a huge mystery. Paul Wayne Coombe flatlined, but after the doctor left the room to sign his death certificate, the orderlies arrived to find an empty bed with the EKG unplugged. Dr. Nguyen was his bedside physician.

DR. NGUYEN

Since he had no family, I decided to read the Message he was trying to read at DNA match when he flatlined as his only eulogy. I was shocked to see his message was from the daughter he never knew he had with his Vietnamese fiancé. He was very weak when he died and couldn't have walked far.

NEWSCASTER

Authorities are investigating, who and how Paul Coombe's corpse could've been removed from the hospital. 6 weeks prior, Paul had met one of his Vietnam friends at the funeral of one of only three people to survive a top secret helicopter crash 50 years before.

JIM JENSEN

I had no idea Paul had been looking for his Vietnamese fiancé his whole life. I had to tell Paul the bad news that his fiancé was shot and killed on top of the US Embassy in April 1975. He was absolutely distraught. But I'll tell you, if there's anybody that can beat a flatline, it's Paul. He flatlined 3 times after our helicopter crash.

INT. FINCNIAL ADVISORS OFFICE - DAY

THU TANG (51) sits in a chair. She is a very pretty woman that looks years younger. FINANCIAL ADVISOR sits at a desk in front of her.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

I'm glad you're sitting down: If you don't pay your medical bill soon, the hospital is going after your house.

THU TANG

(slight Vietnamese accent)

I had stage 4 breast cancer, but no healthcare insurance. My Aunt and Uncle leave me that house. They could not have kids so loved me like their own and I them...I wish they'd shown me more discipline.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Name Thu Tang on mailbox 312. For Sale sign in front yard.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thu puts For Sale stickers on various sporting memorabilia. On framed Leroy Neiman Ali-Foreman and Tyson-Spinks fight posters. On framed 1994 "By George" sports illustrated magazine and 1968 Joe Namath and Nolan Ryan rookie cards.

The doorbell rings. She walks to the front door and opens it to see Paul standing there.

THU TANG

Sorry sir I don't have anything to give you today. I'm about to be homeless myself.

Tears start rolling down Paul's face.

THU TANG

I'm sorry, sir those crocodile tears aren't gonna work.

A torrential flood of tears pour down Paul's face until they fall to the ground. Thu pulls cellphone from her back pocket.

THU TANG

If you don't leave right now, I'm going to have to call the police.

Paul slowly raises a photo of he and his fiancé/Thu's mother Tik Tang with a lock of hair under the frame until Thu sees it. Thu faints.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thu lies on the sofa. She wakes up to see her father sitting in a chair near the sofa.

PAUL

You look just like your mother.

THU TANG

I read in the paper that you died.

Thu gets up off the sofa. Paul stands. Thu runs for Paul and puts her arms around him. Paul returns the embrace. Thu shows Paul the same photo of he and Tik but this one has a strand of much shorter hair with red blood stains on the roots. Paul smiles.

PAUL

I forgot I gave her that.

Paul points to sports posters with for sale sticky pads.

THU TANG

My uncle was a sports fan. We came  
over on John McCain bill in 1992.  
He served 5 years as POW.

(Paul salutes)

I'm trying to save my house. I lost  
my healthcare plan due to drug  
addictions from a bad marriage. I  
should've guarded my heart.  
The only part of my heart I guarded  
was trying to find you and my  
mother, my entire life. Did you  
ever hear anything about my mom?

PAUL

You'd better sit back down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thu sits on the sofa the tears not fully dried from her face.  
She is silent for a moment, then speaks.

THU TANG

Did they ever find a body?

PAUL

I don't know. I only found out her  
fate a couple of months ago.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

A 1990 blue Honda Accord pulls up in front. Paul gets out of  
the car, gets his mail then enters the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Paul sits on sofa. A letter from the VA gets his attention.  
It reads "we regret to inform you that we cannot add the  
person you call your daughter named Thu Tang to your medical  
insurance. The VA do not recognize DNA Match as legitimate  
proof of relationship." Paul buries head in hands.

INT. FINCNCIAL ADVISORS OFFICE - DAY

Thu sits in chair in front of financial advisor.



FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
No new news on the financial front,  
Thu. What brings you in today?

THU TANG  
Do you know anyone that works on  
missing people?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
I know the best in the business.

THU TANG  
Even missing people in Vietnam  
during the fall of Saigon?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
For the right price.

THU TANG  
I'll mortgage the house!

Financial advisor smiles.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits on a table. He opens a new letter from the VA.  
Voiceover for letter: "We are happy to inform you that your  
daughter Thu Tang has been approved for full VA medical  
benefits effective immediately. Thank you for your service  
in Vietnam. PS Her medical bills are now paid in full. 47"

Paul smiles. Dr Nguyen enters the room.

DR. NGUYEN  
Well Paul. We got the results of  
your biopsy back. Your stage four  
lung cancer is back.

Paul smiles and stands up.

PAUL  
You know, Dr. Nguyen, If this is  
the time God wants me back so be  
it. Did I tell you I have a  
beautiful daughter?

Dr Nguyen smiles. They exchange salutes. Paul leaves.

INT. FINCNCIAL ADVISORS OFFICE - DAY

Thu sits in a chair in front of financial advisor's desk.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Glad to hear you've got health care  
...and that you're medical debts are  
paid in full.

(Thu smiles)

As for your missing persons case,  
no record of anyone fitting your  
mother's description were found  
during the fall of Saigon from the  
U.S. embassy...

Thu is disappointed.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

However there was a lady admitted  
the same day to hospital with  
bullet wounds and severe head  
trauma, but 400 miles north. My  
experts are telling me it is highly  
unlikely that someone could've been  
moved that long a distance in that  
short a time during all the turmoil  
surrounding that timeframe.

THU TANG

Would I have access to this lady's  
grave if I flew there?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

She's still an inmate there.

Thu's eyes open wide.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

But she can't talk and is described  
as little more than vegetable.

THU TANG

Does she have a DNA Match account?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Her caretaker facility does not  
allow DNA samples.

THU TANG

Do they have a photo of her?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

They don't allow photos either.

THU TANG

How much would it cost to pay for  
her to move here?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
You'd have to mortgage the house.

THU TANG  
How long would it take to get her over here?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
The better part of a year.

THU TANG  
I can't wait that long. My father could go at any time.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
My partner has put together a plan that would streamline all the government bureaucracies and immigration costs and get her over here in a week.

THU TANG  
How much would that cost?

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
\$500,000.

THU TANG  
You said my house's worth \$750,000.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
It is but it would take half a year to put it on the market and sell it for that much. However, my partner can transfer the money today and have this lady here in a week if you'll sell your house to him for \$500,000 today.

Thu opens her mouth to respond but financial advisor holds up his hand.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
Before you consider signing, I must advise you that our latest AI shows that there is a 97.835% chance this woman is NOT your mother.

EXT. THU'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul walks to his daughter's front porch and sees a realtor Sold sign.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Turns to Paul.

THU TANG

Okay if I live at your place until  
I find a new place to live?

PAUL

I oughta be asking you that  
question.

Paul puts a Manila envelope on his daughter's coffee table.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Just as my parents left their house  
to their son, I'm leaving my house  
to my daughter.

THU TANG

You didn't have to do that.

PAUL

My cancer's returned.

THU TANG

But Dad, I just met you.

Thu and Paul put their arms around each other.

PAUL

I guarded my heart for 50 years and  
never looked at another woman but  
your mother. Then after I couldn't  
find her and learned she was dead,  
I was so angry at God for it and  
even that He kept me alive. But all  
this doesn't matter now. We found  
each other. God brought me back for  
a reason-to Save my little girl.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Paul in a hospital bed. Dr. Nguyen and a trauma RN stand.

PAUL

Where's my daughter?

DR. NGUYEN

She's picking someone up at the  
airport. Said she'd be here soon.  
(Privately to trauma RN)  
She'd better get hurry!

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

An OLDER LADY (72) is lead out hobbling to Thu.

THU TANG  
Are you my mother? Are you Tik  
Tang?

Older lady looks at Thu but does not speak nor react, little more than vegetable as advertised.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Paul is virtually comatose. Thu walks in. Paul smiles when he sees her.

PAUL  
I'll tell your mother what a  
beautiful daughter we had.

Paul flatlines. Dr Nguyen closes his eyes.

THU TANG  
But Dad! I wanted to you to meet  
someone!

Older Woman bursts by Thu with unexpected vigor, eyes wide open in awareness, puts her hand on Paul's heart.

OLDER WOMAN/TIK TANG  
PAUL!

Paul takes a huge gasp of air, bolts upright eyes wide open. One heartbeat seen on the EKG in back of him.

FADE OUT

