
Cultural Daily

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John Nguyen: “The Secret”

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The Secret

by John Nguyen

The visible world is only a minuscule fragment of its entirety. These more elusive realms are only perceivable with an invitation. The most sought after is the domain of secrets. These mysteries thrive in a faraway land. This territory cannot be located on any artificial, synthetic map. Gaining knowledge of a secret is enviable, but to comprehend its intricacies is rare indeed.

As a youngster, I loved roaming around my home. Every bit of the world was new and exciting to me. An endless stream of eccentric individuals immersed themselves within the sections of this enormous house. However, on this particular day my father was not amongst them. I remembered that he had to leave abruptly for work a few days before. Despite missing him immensely, the constant commotions distracted me. A soft breeze carried the pulsating voices through the air soothing my spirit. My miniature stature granted me entry into the most private conversations. Words flowed ceaselessly from the guests’ rosy lips. Giggling as I moved from one space to the other hoping to hear something extraordinary.

After wildly wandering my home for endless hours, I became exhausted and fell asleep in a distant room. Suddenly, I awoke amidst a haze of confusion. Peering into the shadows, I noticed the thin outlines of three characters. Eventually, I realized that one of them was my father. My first instinct was to run into his arms, but I realized that he was conversing with my uncles. The feeling of joy was overpowering until I saw a look of distress upon my father’s face.

For a moment, I dismissed my concern and extreme curiosity overwhelmed me. Their soft whispers under the moonlight did not help much; I had to move closer somehow. Inching nearer, I began to hear my first secret. In a saddened tone of voice, my father was telling his friends what had happened to him during the few days he was away. On his journey home, a massive tempestuous storm began, so he took shelter in a small inn. I remembered how my father once disclosed to me that Vietnam is a dangerous place, especially if you are in an unfamiliar part of the countryside. A person should never enter an unknown dwelling. Nevertheless, the huge rainstorm forced him inside the inn. The structure was mostly deserted. There were only suspicious men inside. As he spoke to them, he saw the malevolence in their eyes. My father excused himself and tried to slip out the back.

Although he seemingly was successful, panic set in when he saw them follow him. They surrounded him and there was no hope of escape. In the ensuing altercation, they deprived him of his possessions. My father was fortunate that the situation did not escalate.

During their conversation, I managed to move closer to him without them noticing. Hiding behind a large, dusty chest, I saw the numerous bluish, purple marks on his body. Tears began to stream down my adolescent cheeks. My father was not concerned regarding the money that was stolen, what he prized most was his gold wedding ring, the one my mother loved so much. They agreed to keep these dreadful circumstances confidential. With a sorrowful heart, I also promised him that I would protect his secret forever.

Society encourages honesty, but this notion is a misconception. Safeguarding intimate details is the highest form of loyalty a person can aspire to. For an individual to confide in you, it means that this person has an extremely elevated opinion of you. This level of trustworthiness exists only within the confines of the warmest friendships. This mysterious realm of love and respect does not reside between strangers and mere acquaintances. Secrets are the unseen fabric that keeps the world intact.

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