

VIETNAM VENGEANCE

ONE Divided TWO
by



KEITH KLUIS





Vietnam Vengeance

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Sample Download Chapter

This book is dedicated to the men and women of our armed services: all who sacrificed some and many who sacrificed all.

To their family and friends: many who lived each day praying their loved one would make it home, and then lived (or tried to) with the fallout as their soldier came home, trying to adjust to life after war. Many times, this adjustment is much harder and longer lasting than most people comprehend.

Please take the time to read and care about the struggle and difficulty our returning soldiers experience. Nearly every day there are stories to be found in any major news source.

*He who thinks all wars
are bad has a blind eye*

*He who thinks all wars
are good has a blind soul*

-K Robert Kloos

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SEPTEMBER 15, 1973
ELLEN

Ellen had picked a fantastic Saturday for her day off. The golden yellow morning sun streamed through the open curtains painting a halo around the deck furniture. She yawned, stretched, threw off her light blanket, and padded sleepily past Missy, the fierce-looking lion statue guarding her bedroom door. She had planned to go right back to bed, but was now pretty much awake. *It's only 7:00 a.m.*, she noted as she glanced at the clock, *but let's make it a day*. Shuffling back to her bedroom, her eyes were drawn to the lion by the sun's rays hitting Missy's head and mane. . She laughed. *Wonder what Paul would say if he saw this thing?* "Now you be good." She patted the lion's head.

Missy the lion was a gift from Steve. It was a constant reminder of her brother, not that she needed one, but it was special. He bought it for her when they were together in Japan. She had fallen in love with it at a native art show, although it was outrageously expensive and she had no thoughts of really owning it. Without her knowledge, Steve bought it and arranged shipment to her apartment. It was delivered the same day she was notified of his death.

Now, after a satisfying, leisurely breakfast, Ellen was enjoying an invigorating walk. It helped, she found out, to be physically active. Stimulation for the mind and body forced the memories temporarily into the background. She entered Hiawatha Park, a favorite of her and Steve's. It had a clear lake, ducks, a playground, a picnic area, baseball

fields, a wooded area, plenty of grass, and a walkway winding through the gently rolling landscape.

The bright and welcome sun was melting away the coolness of the autumn morning. It was time to rest and take off her light jacket. The brisk walk had given her a sense of well-being. She looked down the walkway from her bench just in time to see a young man dressed in his army uniform skipping down the steps of an apartment across the street. He turned and waited for a young lady who was headed for his waiting arms. After a light embrace, they got in their car and took off. Something in her sense of strength and well-being started to shift.

She heard the swings squeaking their rhythmic song at the top of the little hill in the park, and it became too much. She put her head down and brought her feet up on the edge of the bench. Her arms clasped her knees, pulling her legs in tight, and she buried her head between her knees. The jog suit's polyester fabric soaked up her tears. She sobbed heartily for two or three minutes, oblivious to any passersby. She took a deep breath, released her knees, laid her head back and raised her face to the sun. *Let the tears flow*, she thought. They responded by flowing back past her ears into her hair. Yet, she remained, allowing this cleansing action; cleansing her eyes and soul.

After five minutes, she wiped up a little, got up, and walked slowly to a small valley between two hills that was somewhat isolated. The grass was dry, but she spread out her jacket underneath anyway. *Let's have a good think, right here, right now. I don't have to be ashamed of my feelings for Steve. We were close. I guess we were normal until our parents died, but even that alone does not account for our closeness. Adversity brings people closer together, they say. I guess being a close family when our parents were alive, plus also having to fight against*

being split up to relatives who were only after what little life insurance there was, made us especially close. Now that might be unusual for siblings, but it is not unnatural.

Ellen rolled over on her stomach, searching the grass for a four leaf clover. *How old was I when Steve and I had so much fun in this park, 16 or 17? I don't know, maybe about a year after mom and dad died.* There hadn't been much to be happy about during that time. "Don't you do it, Steve! If you swing me any higher I'll die, and when I get off I'll kill you!" They were too old to be playing on the swings at that time. But, they did it anyway. Steve coaxed her onto the swing and pushed her higher and higher. The legs of the whole set raised each time she reached the top. Finally, he stopped, then took off running with Ellen in hot pursuit. He was acting very smart until he tripped on a branch, did a couple barrel rolls, and ended up in the lake, ducks quacking and flying every which way. She laughed so hard she couldn't stand up, and oh how her side had ached from laughing. Steve fished his way out and fell in a soggy heap on top of her, laughing just as hard.

"Missy, I'll get even with you." *Missy...* he was the only one who ever called her that. Finally, their laughter stopped and they looked at each other, eyes filled with happy tears.

"Missy," Steve said, reaching behind her, stroking her hair. "Missy, you are very precious to me." She could remember how his blond hair seemed to glow as his head eclipsed the late afternoon sun. "I know you'll have other men love you in a different way than I, but none more. We've been through a lot this year, you and I, and you have made me very proud of you." He removed his hand from her hair and was holding both her hands in his. "I want you to know that you can call me anytime in your life. I'll be there."

He looked down, let go of her hands, and in a lighter tone said, “This is fun—we needed a good laugh.” He tweaked her cheek as they got up. “But, enough is enough. I’m soaked! Last one to the car is a turkey.” He was leaning just enough so her light push toppled him over as she raced to the car, one step ahead.

“Okay turkey, give me the keys. I got here first, and besides, turkeys can’t drive in this state!”

“Okay, you win, only you pay your own fines!”

Ellen slowly came back to the present. Still in memory-mode she thought, *we complimented each other like few people do. He was even supportive when I had my first date, she recalled. He even stayed up until I got home. He didn’t pry, but I told him all about it anyway, just as he knew I would. He never did violate my trust in him.*

“Hey!” A collie pup surprised her by licking her lower leg. “Scram! Oh...come here, boy, c’mon. It’s okay...” The pup obeyed with its tail between its legs. She petted the friendly pup as it stepped all over her. She was reading its collar tag when the owner appeared and apologetically claimed him.

She hopped up and started the walk home. *What about now? I’m lucky to have found Paul. I like him a lot. He treats me as somebody special. He’s intelligent, hard-working, good looking and, yeah, fairly well-to-do. Why can’t I let myself fall head over heels in love? Maybe it’s because I feel I would be betraying Steve. It’s almost like I need him to release me from a bond. Weird. Well, give it a little time, right? I hope so!*

Chris worries me. He always seems preoccupied. He’s nice. He needs help. It wasn’t easy for him in Vietnam. The least I can do is be a friend. She was nearing home now. *He’s such a loner that if I abandon*

him I don't know what he would do. He's a likable guy most of the time, though he is a bit possessive. I don't know how far he would carry it. I've got to find a time to tell him about Paul and me.

She walked down the hall towards her bedroom to change clothes and shower, past the fierce golden lion, past the memories.

AUTHOR BIO:



Author Keith Kluis' career included traveling the United States as a seminar leader associated with residential housing. While serving in the US Army Reserves in the 1960's, Keith saw no action, but his stint in the military and living through the Vietnam War era inspired him to write this novel. *Vietnam Vengeance: One Divided by Two* is his first work of war-related fiction.

Now retired, Keith enjoys his grandchildren, Tanner, Makenna and Kaedin, playing tennis, walking, traveling, and reading. He and his wife live in both Minnesota and Arizona, splitting their time between the two.

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