

Fadiman – The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down – Ch. 9-12, pp. 106-170

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- Ch 9: A Little Medicine and a Little *Neeb* [“neng”]
 - Hmong culture includes constructions of causes of illness, appropriate healing practices, expected results
 - Animal sacrifices: offer soul of animal to dab in exchange for human soul (emic)
 - Lees spent lots of money (\$1000) on amulets with healing herbs from Thailand, plus many other *neeb* methods
 - Drove her to a famous *tsiv neeb* [shaman] in Minnesota, of Lee clan
 - Cow sacrifice for Lia: \$300 p. 109
 - Cow head sitting on front stoop
 - “Americans wouldn’t mind, because it was not the whole cow”
 - “Americans would not mind, because we had the receipt”
 - Changed Lia’s name to Kou, to fool the dab who took her soul, but doctors kept calling her Lia
 - giving away the trick to any dab that was listening, causing the method to fail
 - Lees felt that doctors were inflexible in insisting on lots of medicine and no *neeb*.
 - Lees assumed that the doctors took Lia because they were angry with them, as punishment
 - Lees recognized that Lia was cognitively damaged when she was returned
 - Thought that she was returned because this proved their care was better than foster care
 - Lia goes 3 days a week to Schelby Center for Special Education
 - Falls from swing and goes into status epilepticus p 116
 - Bad seizure, aspirates vomited food, intubated, pulled, intubated again, unusual trachea infection
 - 14 nights at hospital, very invasive treatment, oxygen, etc.
 - Lees see this as “they kept her there and she got sicker”
 - Another example of how what matters is what people believe about the other, more than what is actually true of them
 - False rumors that Hmong sacrifice dogs. They know that is illegal here, and don’t do it
 - They do often sacrifice pigs and chickens
 - as in beliefs about migrants in Chavez
 - Why was Jeanine Hilt the only American the Lees referred to by name?
 - She was more their size
 - Learned children’s names
 - Came to their home
 - Used May, the most Americanized daughter, to translate
 - “Consensual reality”
 - Lia has only one seizure in first 4 months back at home
 - Jeanine attributes it to consistent Depakene
 - Lees attribute it to the *tsiv neeb* in Minnesota
 - Remember Sukey Waller’s “consensual reality”

- what does she mean by this term?
- why might it be preferable to the “facts”, at least in some circumstances?
- ch 10: War
 - Hmong live in the mountains
 - Lao live on the plains 0-50m (0-160 feet) (Similar to Rohnert park: 106 feet)
 - Karen and Khmu live 50-400m (160-1300 feet)
 - Mien live 400-1000m (about 1300-3300 feet) (Mt. Tamalpais peak: 2570 feet)
 - Hmong live 1000-2000m (about 3300-6600 feet) (Yosemite: 4000-9900 feet)
 - Hmong grow many things, but their only specialty was opium poppies p. 121-123
 - By swidden (slash and burn)
 - Few addicts except chronically ill and elderly
 - Mostly used by *tsiv neeb*
 - To dull pain, stop diarrhea
 - Addicts work less, are stigmatized, along with their families
 - Sold 90% of crop
 - Easily transported, high value/weight, not perishable
 - Semi-sedentary: Live in one village for years, then move it to fresher land, without accumulated garbage
 - Houses easily dismantled and moved
 - History (as recounted by Fadiman)
 - 1954: French Indochina divided into Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam (divided temporarily into North and South)
 - Royal Lao government supported by US, as being anticommunist
 - Ho Chi Minh’s North Vietnamese Vietminh and Pathet Lao fight the Royal Lao government for control of Laos
 - Eisenhower, then Kennedy, believed the domino theory: if Laos goes communist, all the rest of the region will, too
 - But 1961-2 accords signed by US prohibit sending in any military
 - Communist North Vietnam running Ho Chi Minh trail to get fighting supplies and men to South Vietnam, through Laos
 - Clandestine Army: US recruits Hmong to fight the communist North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao, cut the Ho Chi Minh trail
 - Hmong had already resisted the Japanese, then the North Vietnamese (Vietminh)
 - Communist agrarian reform would not favor the Hmong’s swidden practices
 - Hmong had supported French against Vietminh, feared reprisals
 - Aiding victory would raise their status with the lowland Lao government
 - Supported by CIA “advisors”
 - Over 30,000 Hmong fighters
 - Ground fighters, pilots, intelligence, sabotage, etc.
 - Kept secret from US public
 - Continued by Johnson and Nixon
 - Paid \$3/month, fed rice, pilots flew indefinitely until shot down
 - General Vang Pao coerced enlistment

- Near-mythical figure pp. 129-130
- US encouraged collaboration by flying Hmong opium to Vientiane
 - Refined and sold to 30,000 US troops addicted to heroin
 - In Laos, one US bombing raid every 8 minutes for 9 years!
 - 1968-1972, more tonnage of bombs on Plain of Jars than all American bombing in WWII.
 - Huge losses to Hmong: 10% to 50% of population
 - Villages collapsed or were evacuated
 - Refugees jammed into the southern Plain of Jars
 - Complete social upheaval
 - Dependence on US food drops
 - 1973: US agrees to withdraw from Vietnam
 - Pathet Lao plan to exterminate the Hmong
 - Vang Pao gives up, lets a few thousand Hmong be evacuated by US planes to Thailand
 - Over 10,000 left at Long Tieng
 - They begin to walk to Thailand...
- Vietnam and Laos war history (compiled from various sources)
 - This is history that you should know about, but not a major focus of this course.
 - Note the bit about the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which is a striking example of some of the concepts from this course
 - 1729: China outlawed opium use
 - 1764: **British East India company** moved into large-scale opium production in Bengal, recently captured by the British
 - 1840-2: **First Opium War**. British forced China to accept opium imports
 - 1874: Treaty of Saigon granted Saigon to France, opened the Red River (Hanoi to Yunnan, China) and two other ports to French traders and missionaries
 - 1880s: The local **Black Flag militia** harassed French traders on the Red River
 - 1882: A French force was sent to eliminate the Black Flag. It captured Hanoi
 - 1884: Rising tensions led to **Franco-Chinese War**
 - 1885: War ended with French holding the beginning of their new colony, **French Indochina**
 - 1893: France annexed **Laos** to French Indochina
 - 1940: **Vichy France**, controlled by Germany, allowed Japanese military into French Indochina
 - 1940s: Communist group **Viet Minh**, under **Ho Chi Minh**, fought the Japanese, with US support
 - 1945: With France liberated by Allies, Japan tried to take full control of Indochina
 - 1945: End of WWII, Japanese withdrew from Indochina
 - 1945: Ho Chi Minh declared independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam, expecting US support
 - 1945: Now fearing communism, French, British, and Indian forces re-established French control
 - 1945: The Viet Minh found themselves fighting the French for independence
 - 1950: Ho Chi Minh declared independence again; China and Soviet Union recognized Vietnam

- 1954: Viet Minh defeated the French at Battle of **Dien Bien Phu**; French military withdrew
- 1954: **Geneva conference** divided the former French colony into **Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam**
 - with Vietnam divided at the 17th parallel (latitude) into communist **North** under Viet Minh, and **South** (Republic of Vietnam) with French, British, and US support
 - they were scheduled to be united in two years after free elections
 - neither North nor South signed the election clause
- 1957: Communist **National Liberation Front (NLF, Viet Cong)** began guerilla actions in South Vietnam
 - hoping to drive out colonial powers and unite with the North
- 1957: Soviet Union and China supported communist NLF (Viet Cong)
- 1957: US supported South Vietnam, to contain spread of communism
- 1957: US gradually got more and more involved
- 1959: North Vietnam established the **Ho Chi Minh trail**
 - a supply line to the communist NLF forces fighting in South Vietnam
 - ran through Laos and Cambodia
- 1960: CIA arranged with Hmong to fight NLF and Laotian communist Pathet Lao
 - to impede the flow of supplies on the Ho Chi Minh trail to the communist NLF (Viet Cong) in South Vietnam
 - because a treaty prohibited US forces in Laos
 - and Hmong were cheaper and cost no US lives
- 1964: **Gulf of Tonkin incident**
 - A US destroyer was attacked by 3 North Vietnamese gunboats in international water, escaping with one bullet hole
 - 2 days later, a US electronic spying boat off the coast of North Vietnam reported being under attack but escaped unharmed
 - Two US aircraft carriers launched air reprisals on North Vietnam; overt war began
 - North Vietnam acknowledged the first attack, but denied the second
 - The US today acknowledges that no North Vietnamese vessels were in the area during the second supposed attack
 - Although the nervous sailors apparently really did think they were under attack
 - Analysis of the intercepted communications (remember, this was an electronic spying vessel) seemed to confirm that there had been a real attack
 - An October 2005 NY Times article revealed a 2000 National Security Agency report that found that the signal analysis was intentionally falsified by mid-level intelligence analysts
 - There was no attack; these analysts faked the evidence to suggest that it had happened
 - this faked evidence justified the US going to full-scale (but undeclared) war in Vietnam
 - No higher-ups were implicated
 - this is not some journalist's theory; it is an official government report, no longer disputed by anyone
 - Does this remind you of how the US justified any other recent (but undeclared) war?
 - Consider how is this an example of
 - the social construction of knowledge
 - by the crew of the signal ship

- by the intelligence analysts
- by the politicians who used it to go to war
- “useful” knowledge
 - consider whose position benefits from any given bit of “useful knowledge”
- the importance of belief, as opposed to truth
- 1964: **Lyndon Johnson**, facing reelection, used the Tonkin Gulf incident as justification for military action
- 1964: Congress passed authorization for the President to use any necessary force in defense of Southeast Asian nations that requested help in defending their freedom
 - War was never declared
 - It was a “conflict” or “police action”
- 1964: US entered ground fighting in South Vietnam
- 1964: US bombed North Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, especially to break up the Ho Chi Minh trail supply line
- 1966: US forces were up to 429,000 people
- 1968: **Tet offensive**: North Vietnamese attacked every major South Vietnamese city at once
 - Unsuccessful, but showed that the US was very far from winning
- 1968: Beginning of gradual reduction of US forces
- 1968: **Vietnamization**: Control of the fighting was to be shifted to the South Vietnamese
- 1968: Nixon’s diplomacy with China and Soviet Union succeeded in reducing their support for North Vietnam
- 1970: **Heroin** (made from **opium**) was flowing into Vietnam and world market
- 1970: Largely produced by Hmong, and flown by CIA to support Hmong forces in Laos
- 1970: Some estimates as high as 10% of all US soldiers addicted to heroin
- 1973: Paris Peace Accords: US agreed to withdraw from North Vietnam
- 1974: US Congress cut off military support to South Vietnam
- 1975: With US out of the picture, North Vietnamese forces took over South Vietnam
- 1975: US evacuated US personnel and some supporters from Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, by helicopter
- 1975: This left the Hmong in Laos surrounded by enemies, with no US support
- 1975: 300,000 Hmong escaped on foot to Thailand
- 1976: Vietnam united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Human cost:
 - US: 58,226 dead, 153,303 wounded
 - Vietnamese: 3 to 4 million dead
 - Cambodians: 50,000 to 300,000 dead due to US bombing
 - Cambodians: 1.7 million more died from from 1975-1979 under the nationalist communist Khmer Rouge (some estimates up to 3 million dead)
 - Laotians: estimated 184,000 dead, a large fraction of which would be Hmong
- Ch 11: the Big One
 - took 20 minutes for ambulance to deliver her
 - they didn’t carry her the 3 blocks because it takes an ambulance delivery to get attention
 - They don’t notice her fever, diarrhea, signs of infection; no antibiotics given

- 2 hour seizure
- as for all critical pediatric patients, Lia had to go to Valley Children's Hospital in Fresno
- Neil and Peggy left for a previously scheduled week off
- Lees thought Lia was sent to Fresno because Neil and Peggy wanted to go on vacation
- She had septic shock (blood infection)
- Lees felt that spinal tap is what did her in
- Lees lived in waiting room for nine nights, relatives brought rice, no money for a room or food
- Lia brain dead
- Jeanine Hilt drove relatives to Fresno, foster parents also came
- Doctors removed IVs, ended meds, assuming Lia would die
- Foua thought they were taking medicines away to give to another patient
- Lia was returned to MCMC, then to the Lees
- Ch 12: Flight p 154-170
 - Escape to Thailand
 - P 160: notes on Vang Pao Foundation
 - founded in 2000, with just 2 officers (both Vangs), no board, collected half million dollars... no accounts
 - shut due to court order in 2005
 - Vang Pao was arrested by the US in 2007 for plotting to overthrow the Lao government; released a few months later; charged dropped in 2009
 - Vang Pao died January 6, 2011
 - Escaping: some kept babies quiet with opium; some died of overdoses
 - Had to leave their dead without rituals
 - Crossing the Mekong p. 163
 - People suffer guilt for saving themselves while seeing many others die; psych problems...
 - Most were stuck in Thai camps 5-10 years, like Ban Vinai (main, consolidated camp)