

Girl in 'Nam (Part 1)

by Christine Rochelle

Licking my wounds.

That's what my mother calls it. I'm not really sure what that means or if it's true. Sure, losing your boyfriend, apartment and job in a matter of months can drive someone to do something impulsive. Something crazy. But I've always been one to push boundaries. Act now, think later. That's just how I am.

And to say I'm licking my wounds means that I was hurt to begin with. I'm not hurt. I'm strong. This will only make me stronger. I know that because when I packed my bags I brought only the essentials. Clothes, first aid kit, bug spray and just three photographs of my family. I signed up to do this alone, to see how far I can take myself. Even if I fail I know I'm that better of a person for even getting on this plane.

Attention passengers, we are going to land momentarily...

The one thing from home I am clinging onto is my iPod. Thumbing through my playlist, I've had the same songs blaring through my ears during this 23 hour journey. Janis Joplin, Bruce Springsteen and some Amy Winehouse. Powerful vocals, meaningful lyrics. Anything to pump me up for what I'm about to do. I am not licking my wounds...I am not licking my wounds...I can do this.

I glance over to the seats next to me to check on the three others I was traveling with. John was still sleeping, draped over his laptop so you can only see the top of his mohawk. Bria was clutching onto her carry-on, filled with memories of home and her new boyfriend who is spending time in Air Force boot camp. Kelly was wide-eyed and curled up onto her seat, tapping on her tray to the beat of whatever was playing on her iPod.

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I gripped the edges of my seat as the plane started to land. I tried to look out the window for my first glimpse of the country. It looked just like home from the air, except there was a heavy layer of smog hanging above the open land. I closed my eyes and turned my iPod as loud as it could go, just in time for Leona Lewis to hit the chorus:

So what if it hurts me?
So what if I break down?
So what if this world just throws me off the edge?
My feet run out of ground
I gotta find my place
I wanna hear my sound
Don't care about all the pain in front of me
I'm just trying to be happy

God, Christine, you couldn't have picked a cheesier song to listen to as the plane descends? Note to self: Stop acting like a girl. You think the lack of make-up, a shower and the fact that I'm wearing the ugliest cargo pants known to man would have cured that.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for flying with us. All of us at Singapore Airlines would like to welcome you to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

I tucked my iPod into my bag, slipped my Birkenstock sandals back on and pinned my hair back. Here goes nothing..or should I say, everything?

