

# Girl in 'Nam (Part 2)

*by* Christine Rochelle

Let me start from the beginning.

It was November of 2008 and I was 7 months out of college and 5 months into an entry-level job at a big TV network in NYC. I had an apartment in Brooklyn that I shared with three other girls and was living paycheck to paycheck. I worked 12 hour shifts, eating fast food and barely sleeping. A life in NYC was one I always dreamed of but I found myself turning into a bitter, sarcastic person who was losing the ability to see the silver lining in just about anything.

Then there was Bill.

My college boyfriend who I thought was perfect in every way suddenly had more flaws than half of the bachelors in Manhattan. He had a tight grip on my life, telling me I was better off marrying him in NJ and living as a housewife instead of working a low-paying job in NYC. Some days this was easy to believe because I was so down on myself. But I'm also incredibly stubborn and refused to just give up on this dream.

As per usual, I thought maybe I would shake things up a bit. If I can't be a real journalist in NYC then maybe I can go somewhere else. I dreamed of traveling the world and reporting from the battle lines of Iraq. I thought I would look awesome with a red bandana around my head while discovering a long lost village. For a moment I thought of all the orphans I could save in Africa with the 20/20 segment I was going to produce.

I started off on this adventure for all the wrong reasons, but once my mind is set on something there is no turning back. Samantha, a friend from HS, was teaching English in Vietnam. It certainly wasn't my country of choice but she couldn't stop gushing about the

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Vietnamese people, the food, the scenery. The stars in my eyes suddenly got a little brighter.

Bill didn't like any of this. I was suppose to move to NJ. We were suppose to get married. I was suppose to be there when he became Fire Chief of our local town. I was ruining everything. But I didn't want anything of his everything.

We broke up the night before Thanksgiving. On Thanksgiving both of our families had dinner together, no one knowing what happened.

For the next month we called one another constantly, always dramatic and filled with tears on both ends. He thought I was crazy for moving to NYC and for getting this Vietnam idea in my head. He thought I was going to get killed by land mines or captured by the Viet Cong. I saw his concerns as ignorance and thought he was holding me back. More tears, more heartbreak.

I spent all of December in bed. I would come home from work and crawl under the covers, covering my ears from the screaming kids that run up and down the alley next to my window. On the weekends I slept until noon, woke up to eat breakfast and then fell back asleep until well after dinner. Crawling out of bed to shower, I would tell my roommates I was just "tired" and get right back into bed to start it over again.

Family and friends didn't understand what was going on and started to tell me that this "Vietnam" idea wasn't the answer to my problems. Little did they know the idea came before the break-up.

I tried to date again to distract myself from the fact that the person I had built a life around was now gone. Anyone from Manhattan was just not my type. Sure, a fancy dinner in Little Italy is romantic but I would much rather go for a beer and eat Irish Nachos. Right when I stopped looking I had another date set up for the week before

Christmas vacation and decided I couldn't bail on yet another guy. So I decided to just go for it and agreed to lunch at a place called Burger Joint.

It was there I met Steve.

