

# Quel Bordel

*by* Steven Gowin

Our friend, M. Dieu-Juste partnered in a used car business with a Vietnamese mechanic, Mr. Tran. Cars however, were not their only venture.

Mr. Tran practiced a blend of mechanical skill and automotive voodoo. He ran four shops in the metro area as well as a "gentlemen's" club and was able to patch our Subaru when the dealer told us repair would be impossible.

Although exorcising the Subaru's sparky demon, an electrical problem, took weeks and weeks, Mr. Tran had loaned us a nice little Civic in the meantime. Having escaped Việt Nam, he understood hardship.

M. Dieu-Juste, Haitian in origin, was an executive at a Silicon Valley technology firm and husband of my mother-in-law's best friend, Mme. Saraphina Christelle Dieu-Juste, also Haitian.

Monsieur had come to the states, New Orleans specifically, from Port-au-Prince, on a greasy fishing trawler. He'd eventually gained citizenship and degrees in electrical engineering and business.

From there he'd climbed technical and corporate ladders to the position of global trouble shooter. He'd travelled a great deal before semi-retirement, and although he still travelled, he disclosed only selected destinations to Madame.

The Dieu-Justes treated us as family. Over the years, Monsieur had developed impeccable taste in food and drink, so we'd trusted him to choose the wines for our wedding reception, all reds, mostly Rhônes.

Having had no children of their own, the Dieu-Justes were particularly kind to ours. Monsieur and Madame even helped with childcare. Madame looked after our youngest every day from three pm to six, after preschool, until I finished work and took him home.

When Saraphina Christelle was unavailable to collect him, Monsieur picked him up. On those days, sixty-five-year-old Louis and three-year-old Patrick, tooted around in monsieur's Citroën Xantia,

sunroof open wide “trying to pick up girls,” according to M. Dieu-Juste.

During their rides, he'd taught Patrick simple French phrases and children's songs, even a couple in his patois. Monsieur claimed, and rightly, to speak Creole, Spanish, Portuguese, a little Italian, and of course English. He was always working on a new language.

When Madame sued for divorce claiming Louis was seeing other women, Louis had just graduated to intermediate Vietnamese. At the time, not coincidentally, he and Mr. Tran were developing a brothel and beach resort near Nha Trang.

Before he could move out, Saraphina Christelle stole and hid 12 cases of Monsieur's best wine and champagne in our garage. We agreed but were extremely uncomfortable with the ruse. However, Madame had suspected correctly.

Louis had married a young widow in Nha Trang, and the new wife was pregnant. Her existing child, M. Dieu-Juste's adopted son now, about Patrick's age, was a fine-looking boy already speaking French.

Monsieur did not move permanently to Việt Nam however. He was studying Swahili and traveling a great deal now to Nairobi. But, according to Mr. Tran, Louis did treat his Vietnamese family well and saw them often.

