

Coda

The chapter "Sang Linh" from *Coda* captures a pivotal moment in 1997 New York, where the narrator reflects on the success of Orkideh's art exhibition *Why We Put Mirrors in Birdcages*. The narrator, a gallery owner, works alongside their oldest son, Duy, and the artist Roya to dismantle the show. Roya's meticulous nature shines as she oversees the handling of her paintings, particularly *Odi et Amo*, a piece evoking mixed emotions in the narrator due to its unsettling yet nostalgic imagery. The scene underscores the collaborative yet tense dynamic between the trio, blending professional pride with personal connections.

As they prepare the artworks for shipment to collector David J. T. Swartzwelder, Roya's anxiety about the paintings' safety contrasts with the narrator's calm reassurance. The narrator experiences a fleeting but profound moment of gratitude, recognizing the rarity of their happiness—a stark contrast to past hardships. This introspection reveals a life marked by both trauma and triumph, where joy is cherished as a temporary reprieve. The narrator's awareness of life's impermanence adds depth to the scene, framing their contentment as both precious and precarious.

The chapter lightens with playful banter between the narrator and Roya, who jokes about buying a Cadillac car door with her earnings. Their affectionate exchange, set against the backdrop of a pop ballad, highlights the intimacy and humor in their relationship. Roya's eccentric whimsy and the narrator's fond exasperation underscore their deep bond, even as Duy interjects with logistical questions about the artwork. The moment captures the balance between their professional responsibilities and personal joy.

The chapter closes with a sense of culmination, as the narrator reflects on this period as a high point in their marriage and career. Despite anticipating future successes, they recognize this moment as uniquely fulfilling—a "climax" in their shared journey.

The interplay of memory, emotion, and mundane tasks creates a rich tapestry, blending the ordinary with the profound. The chapter leaves readers with a poignant reminder of how fleeting happiness can be, even in the midst of achievement and love.