Phở

When I was young, in those times when radio did not yet exist,  
I heard wonderful stories from my relatives — who came to visit us from distant Vietnamese  
villages.  
They told of places where, while cooking food,  
a miracle touches you — as if a kind spirit touched you and awakened the gift given by the Creator.  
And maybe, once in a lifetime,  
someone — tired of the world’s rush  
or someone lost and alone in this vast world —  
will find that place...  
Or vice versa — a place will call them, and completely change their life.  
You won’t read about it in any guidebook.  
There are no reviews, no maps.  
But I think you won’t pass by.  
You’ll just walk in — maybe drawn by a smell on the street, like a warm thread of fate.  
Or maybe you’ll hear a quiet voice inside you…  
the one you rarely listen to.  
There, an old mistress with a silent smile  
will serve you a bowl of phở —  
and quietly leaving you alone — with the “touch.”  
Why it happens — no one knows.  
Maybe it’s the kind of place where ancestral spirits awaken the best in a person — memory, talent,  
grace — through food.  
Or maybe it’s sacred energy, cleansing the soul from the residue of the material world.  
I don’t remember.  
I’m too old to remember… and to recall where that place was.  
But if you ever find yourself in those lands —you won’t walk past it.  
I promise.