

The background of the cover features a warm, orange and red sunset sky. At the top, two hands are shown reaching towards each other, with the fingers just inches apart, creating a sense of tension and hope. The title text is superimposed over the center of the image.

GOOD EVENING, VIETNAM

The Aftermath of an Unknown Journey

HOA MINH TRUONG

Good Evening, Vietnam

*The Aftermath of an
Unknown Journey*

Hoa Minh Truong



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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO:

*The Vietnam veteran's allies, the ex-ARVN members,
as a tribute to those who sacrificed their lives to fight
against the communist in the Vietnam War.*

*I am grateful to AEG for introducing my two books,
The Dark Journey and Good Evening, Vietnam,
to the world.*

*Thanks to Mr. Nguyen The Phung for your computer
assistance.*

*To my wife, Thi Thu Thanh Nguyen, who has
supported me in writing since 1984.*

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Preface

The writing of this fictional story is based upon many real-world characters and experiences surrounding the Vietnam War (1955–1975). For those unfamiliar with the war, some background information may be helpful.

During much of the 19th century, France controlled large areas of Indochina, including the country of Vietnam. When France fell to Germany during World War II (WWII), Vietnam began to again pursue its independence. In May 1941, the “Viet Minh” Front was founded, and the avowed communist, Ho Chi Minh, became its leader. At the conclusion of WWII, France attempted to reassert control in Indochina. They had the support of the Allied Forces (i.e., much of Europe and the United States), as efforts were being made to “normalize” the world following WWII, and France had held control in that area for nearly one hundred years prior to the conflict.

However, the French were opposed by the Viet Minh Front, and also the Vietnamese people, but Ho Chi Minh who had two faces: previously, in the Fontainebleau Convention in 1946, he secretly invited the French to come back. Then, after the French had returned to Vietnam, he appealed the Vietnamese people to resist them. The acts of Ho Chi Minh became controversial among the Vietnamese people. The nationalist political parties inside the Viet Minh Front strongly opposed and condemned Ho Chi Minh as a traitor. He explained to his communist comrades, “The French are the secondary enemy; the non-communist elements are nearest and most dangerous enemies. By cooperating temporarily with the secondary enemy, we can use their

hand to annihilate the local enemies, which will create a stronger communist party.”

The Viet Minh Front by now had received considerable military weaponry from the vanquished Japanese, as well as from Russia and China. With the Viet Minh Front closely allied with various communist regimes, deep concern arose about the emergence of yet another communist nation that could destabilize democratic countries in that region. The world had barely emerged from the scathing losses realized when totalitarian- and communist-led nations had attempted to exert dominance during WWII, and thus most democratic countries opposed the idea of any further spread of communism.

On May 7, 1954, the Viet Minh soundly defeated the French forces deployed in the nation. Subsequently, through an international convention held in Geneva, Switzerland, the French negotiated a cease-fire agreement with the Viet Minh. At that same convention, independence was also granted to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. However, no formally established government yet existed in Vietnam, and many in the country were divided between the proposed communist leadership of Ho Chi Minh in the North and that of the anticommunist Ngo Dinh Diem in the South. Through the Geneva Convention Accords, the country was temporarily partitioned at the 17th parallel, and civilians were permitted to move between the two provisional states for a 300-day period. Elections were to follow in 1956 to establish a unified government. Eventually, the northern people recognized the real barbarious face of Vietnam communist party, so about one million people fled to the South for freedom.

In 1954, former Emperor Bao Dai, then national leader of South Vietnam, invited Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem to accept the position of prime minister. However, Diem also understood that the Geneva Convention was just set up by France and Russia, China, and the Vietnam communist party, so he announced in June 1955 that elections would not be held, having concluded that no free election would be possible in the communist North.

On the other hand, the security status of southern was in difficult circumstances. Inside, the Diem government had faced the pressure from U.S. General Collins and French General Ely about the numerous cabinet members each side recommended. Another serious problem was that the most of southwest provinces were dominated by the religious sect of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. They had their own armed forces, government, and legal rules (natural law). At the center of Vietnam, the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and

Phu Yen were controlled by the former of Fifth Corps of the Viet Minh Front and were a stronghold region of Vietnamese communists. In addition, there were the other nationalist political parties of Viet Nam, Quoc Dan Dang and Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang. But remarkably, Saigon and Cholon had been held by Binh Xuyen organization.

Security was not stable, but the both the U.S. and French sides warned Mr. Diem not to act strongly, as that might lead to a civil war. Actually, U.S. General Collins disliked Mr. Diem, although Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Senator Mansfield supported him. Nevertheless, General Collins had always wanted to replace Diem, so he returned U.S. to convince Mr. Dulles.

Around the same time, Mr. Diem launched a military operation against the Binh Xuyen force, led by warlord Colonel Le Van Vien, nicknamed Bay Vien. Headquartered at Cau Chu Y region, this organization had controlled the most powerful security force, named “fighting police,” and the gambling business and sex industry in the Saigon and Cholon areas. In this military campaign, Cao Dai cooperated. Unfortunately, Cao Dai Lieutenant General Trinh Minh The was killed in the battle. Mr. Diem also convinced the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects to unite to achieve a rebuilt southern country. He was successful, and most of the Hoa Hao generals (such as Tran Van Soai, Nguyen Giac Ngo, and Lam Thanh Nguyen) turned back to the government. An exception was Major General Le Quang Vinh, nicknamed Ba Cut, who remained in rebel status until he was later arrested and beheaded in Can Tho province. On May 2, 1955, when General Collins returned to Vietnam, national security was stable, and all went well. He was replaced by Mr. Federick Reinhardt, the first ambassador to South Vietnam.

Mr. Diem also faced Ho Chi Minh sympathizers, and broad-based opposition to his harsh tactics soon emerged. On October 26, 1955, Diem established the Republic of Vietnam (ROV) after emerging as the winner in opinion polling between former Emperor Bao Dai and Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem, and he became the president of the first Republic of Vietnam.

Because Diem was fervently anticommunist and socially conservative, he had the support of many democratic countries. However, in his home country, he was seen as part of the “elite” who had worked under French rule. Mr. Diem had previously been interior minister of the Hue Dynasty, but under the colonial government’s probation, so many people (especially former members of the Viet Minh Front) disliked his government. Furthermore, the Hamlet Stra-

tegic Scheme WAS applied (actually the act 10/59) and swept the communist rebels from the countryside. In 1958, 12,000 Viet Cong terrorists were killed and another 40,000 Viet Cong criminals were jailed after falling into the killing mission or having hard evidence linking them to Vietnam communist. The espionage agent network in the South that had been deployed after the Geneva Convention by Ho Chi Minh became disabled. He then had to send in replacement troops. (Most returned troops had a southern background, but some at the university level remained in the North.)

Since 1954, Russia had become more involved, leading to the “Sino-Soviet split,” which reduced the influence of communist China. Russia insisted that the Viet Minh accept a division of the country. By 1956, Ho Chi Minh pretending to be seeking the reunification of the nation, had begun a low-level insurgency movement in response to Diem’s “Denunciation of Communists” campaign. But in fact, Ho Chi Minh created the war on orders from the Soviet Union and China’s. In this effort, Ho Chi Minh was careful to garner favor with the populous wherever possible, saying:

Do not engage in military operations; that will lead to defeat. Do not take land from a peasant. Emphasize nationalism rather than communism. Do not antagonize anyone if you can avoid it. Be selective in your violence. If an assassination is necessary, use a knife, not a rifle or grenade. It is too easy to kill innocent bystanders with guns and bombs, and accidental killing of the innocent bystanders will alienate peasants from the revolution. Once an assassination has taken place, make sure [the] peasants know why the killing occurred.

Although Ho Chi Minh increasingly tried to gather popular support via lies, propaganda, and threatened terrorism, under Diem’s government, most of the territory remained in a good security situation. However, after the coup d’etat on November 1, 1963, General Duong Van Minh and his colleagues were not able to manage the country. Its so-called “general revolution committee” unconditionally released almost all of the Viet Cong espionage agents. Among them was Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Ban, nicknamed Muoi Huong, highest commander of the Southern network.

Soon, the South's guerrilla fighters—the Viet Cong—were engaging in open conflict under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. As the conflict escalated, multiple military organizations became involved. The anticommunist South Vietnamese government soldiers served in the “Army of the Republic of Vietnam” (ARVN). Combatants from the North included (1) the Vietnam People's Army (VPA), which was also known as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), and (2) the Viet Cong, or National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF), which was a South Vietnamese communist army.

Concerned about a communist takeover, the United States was increasingly drawn into an alliance with Diem, but the involvement was limited to aid and advisors. But after the coup d'état 1963, the new government allowed the U.S. to send in troops, with a high tide of up to half million soldiers. In 1967, following a series of coups, General Nguyen Van Thieu became president of second republic, based on the Constitution of April 1, 1967.

The withdrawal of the United States military from Vietnam was completed on April 30, 1975, by the last president, General Duong Van Minh. He appointed a Prime Minister, Mr. Vu Van Mau, expelled D.A.O. Vietnam communists then claimed an unpredicted victory.

The war exacted a terrible toll in the loss of human lives. It is estimated that between one and three million Vietnamese civilians and including soldiers both sides were killed, along with some 200,000 to 300,000 Cambodians, 20,000 to 200,000 Laotians, and 58,159 U.S. soldiers. After the United States reduced the aid, the ARVN was quickly overcome, and later the country fell into the hands of the North Vietnamese communist. The consequence of the Vietnam War cost so many lives. Particularly, the North Vietnam communists and Viet Cong killed about 1,500,000. Even today, about 300,000 troopers remain missing. But the ARVN lost about 300,000 soldiers, and 100,000 ARVN and public servants were never returned home after being imprisoned in reeducation camps after the war ended.

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The writing of this fictional story was begun in January 2006 and was finished on November 18, 2010. The story could have happened anywhere in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and after the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975.

In the United States, the Civil War ended when both sides recognized their mistakes, after which the winner took no action of vengeance on the loser. Each side endeavored to treat the other fairly, and all contributed a hand to help rebuild the country together.

However, the Vietnam War was not followed by similar mutual cooperation. After the new South Vietnam government took over, following their unprecedented victory on April 30, 1975, the winning Viet Cong took an entirely different approach. They imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Republic of Vietnam military personnel and public servants under the guise of “reeducation” through a so-called “tolerance policy” of the revolutionary government.

To calm those being imprisoned, and the public, the Viet Cong first responded with propaganda telling the people involved that they would be sent to a centralized location for only about a week. After learning revolutionary policy, they would then return to live with their families.

Unfortunately, most of prisoners were kept a few years to two decades in these long-term jails without any justice at all—not even a court appearance to hear the charges that had been brought against them, or to allow them some word of defense—unlike the legal systems of the democratic countries in the rest of the world.

There were hundred of thousands of people who never came home, having died from the harsh treatment they received during their many years in the reeducation camps. Nevertheless, the Viet Cong still dug up graves and destroyed many cemeteries (thereby dishonoring the dead) and smashed the statues of South Vietnamese soldiers after winning the war.

Whether still alive or dead, past South Vietnam government members and sympathizers, along with their relatives, would face the same harsh circumstances from the discriminatory and revenging policies of the Viet Cong regime; even the children would face retaliatory treatment in their schools and society.

This story tells of a young U.S. soldier who came to Vietnam on his “tour of duty” and was later captured by the Viet Cong after a failed mission. He endured great suffering and harsh treatment while in the custody of the enemy. Fortunately, he was eventually released, and he returned home through a prisoner exchange scheme agreed upon after the Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 27, 1973. However, the war was not over until April 30, 1975, ending with the unexpected victory of the Viet Cong.

After the Soviet Union and the East European communist nations collapsed, the Vietnamese communist regime opened its doors to international commerce for economic survival. In doing so, they applied a so-called “free market under control of socialism” approach. During this period, the former U.S. soldier of our story returns to Vietnam and finds the child he left behind after he was captured by the Viet Cong following his failed mission.

1

The Decision Needed

Winter had arrived a couple months before and much of the United States of America, including its capital in Washington, D.C., was covered by the snow. Thus, the entire surrounding area was blanketed in white. Millions of snowy flakes had fallen and built up the ice even thicker than before.

Along the roadsides in the surrounding area the houses, trees, and lawns were all covered in the same sparkling white.

The sun seemed to have little opportunity to appear, as clusters of gray clouds continually crowded the sky. Despite this, there were still some patches of sunlight that spread a fleeting glow over small spaces on landscapes elsewhere. As the sun set, however, the heavy clouds left passersby unable to recognize between evening and night, and most of the area sank into dark shadows. A cold wind began blowing through the scene, making it even more melancholy than before.

Soon the evening sky became darker with the normal waning of the day that came earlier and earlier in the deepening winter season. The snow was now falling heavily enough that most people didn't want to leave their homes to go anywhere, at least not unless it was an absolute necessity. In the worsening weather, everyone knew to stay indoors with their heaters on, unless they had to go to work, or encountered an emergency, or had to shop for food.

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Throughout most of the United States the living standard is the same, with few giving much thought to obtaining their daily food. There are plenty of well-stocked supermarkets in each local area, and most homes have amply stocked cupboards, so there would be little reason for concern. However, in most Asian countries people must shop for food daily. Further, most people do not have enough money to buy more food than they will eat that same day, and they certainly cannot store any in the home. Even a refrigerator or freezer would be a luxury for them.

Therefore, during times of war or when facing natural disasters, such as storms, tsunamis, and earth quakes, the residents of the Western world would still be much better off than many of the people in Asian and African countries. No matter what happens, the governments of the Western world will do the best as they can to avert disaster, as the next election will be lost if they do not.

There is yet another profoundly significant difference between non-democratic and democratic countries of the world. In the U.S., the most important place is White House. However, they don't call it a "Palace" or a "Mansion" as they do in other countries. Instead, the name "White House" has a clear meaning for this democratic country—particularly because the nation's President is living in that House only because the choice of the people allows it. Thus, the country is truly free, being governed only by the voice and consent of the people.

Such is not the case in many parts of the world. Yet, the people in countries with oppressive governments are not always aware of their oppression. For example, short-sighted people from communist nations have been blinded by the lies of propaganda from their own governments. Although they see the protection of all people in free countries, even those who oppose the government, they also see furious debates inside of Congress or Parliament, in both the lower and upper houses, and they then predict that these free countries will soon collapse. However, they are quite wrong.

Freedom of speech is the key freedom of any democratic country. It is freedom of speech that helps governments obtain more ideas, exercise greater caution, and avoid or reduce corruption. So, the free nations are stronger because of the people's voice, and everyone has the right to speak—even those who oppose the government. Anyone can openly protest whatever happens by writing to a newspaper, or by

airing their views on the internet, or by speaking on radio or television. Because the power in government often changes between the main political parties, the party with the best policy to take care of the people will be credited by the people in the next election.

But in dictatorial regimes, such as those in the communist nations of China, Vietnam, and Russia, the government is formed by the communist party without the voice of the people. Consequently, they don't care about the lives of the people. When a natural disaster occurs, most people have to suffer considerably more hardship, as the government does little or nothing to help them. In some communist countries the government leaders will even reduce or otherwise limit the distribution of foreign aid received for the people, in order to transfer much of it into a "comrade's" pocket. In this way, the leaders of a communist regime remain happy and comfortable even when many in their country are facing hardship through natural or man-made disasters.

The leaders of countries in the Western world, and other the non-governmental organizations, readily turn to shippers, programmers, charitable organizations, and others eager to help reduce the misery of people facing hardship throughout the world. Unfortunately, most dictatorial governments have usurped charitable organizations as private, for-profit endeavors by which to enrich their regime's members.

Amazingly, communist regimes almost always condemn free countries as "capitalistic and counter-revolutionary," and consider them to be their real enemy. However, when natural disasters or famines strike, these same communist governments often ask for "capitalist help." Yet, the "dear comrades" such as China, Russia, and other East European communist countries produce very little, beyond weapons to make war and kill people.

This is the real face of the communist world. So, any aid to a communist regime that was intended to help their people over difficulties, usually goes only earn more profit for government officials and their cronies. The people receive only a little bit of what had been made available. Yet, in spite of such help from the free world, after the difficulties have passed, there follows no "changing of the mind" for a communist regime. They simply return to their manner, "Capitalism must be annihilated," as the core of Karl Marx's teachings.

Thus, there are radical differences between communist regimes and the governments of free nations. Because of this, in large part, the living standard in democratic countries such as the United States is even less affected by weather and other events.

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The winter snowfall had reduced the number of vehicles on the roads, even in the capital of the United States of America, though there were still some cars moving. However, most drivers took great care on the slippery highways, and of course their headlights would be used early on.

The light poles along the roadsides were just lighting up, but the lights were not able to illuminate much between each other. Even so, they were sufficiently bright to allow the drivers to see the cars ahead of them in the bad weather.

A quiet, two-storey townhouse seemed to be sleeping in its location, with its small front lawn whitened by the deepening layers of snow. Some old pine trees were becoming iced, and looked like the wax of candle melting. If there had been no light from inside the house, spreading onto the ground outside, no one would have noticed anyone inside.

In the dining room, entered via an arch under a stairway, a long table was being prepared for the last meal of day. Waiting, most of the family members were still surrounding the wood-burning heater in the family room. It had most likely been operated all day and night in order to keep the inside of the house warmed up, fighting against the chill of winter.

A medium-size of television had been switched on ceaselessly from early morning to bedtime, and there was a display of the daily programs still on the screen. It revealed the multiple shows available, including some business advertising that no one cared to watch.

The light on the ceiling illuminated most of the dining room area. At last everyone assembled around the long table covered with hot food dishes. There was a delicious aroma of roast beef, baked potatoes, and the other favorite foods. Everyone took their seats as they waited patiently, eager to eat and fill up their tummies. Actually the cold weather served to make them all even more hungry than usual, and most of the family members had also been waiting for at least half an hour for the final meal preparations to be completed.

The time finally came, and an elderly man at the head of the table stood up. The last dishes were put in place as they all looked on with hungry expressions. The elderly man looked around the people then spoke, saying, "Now let us pray together. Join hands, please."

As short bible prayer was recited and repeated by every one present. Their heads were bowed respectfully until the prayer was ended

by the single word, "Amen." Then everyone picked up their fork and knife, all began eating and talking quietly. Seated opposite the elderly man was an aged woman wearing a cooking dress. She had taken off her apron and joined with the family. Even so, throughout the meal she seemed to remain busy, often looking around the table and refilling food in the dishes as they were emptied or providing drinks for everyone as needed.

Soon the glow of headlights appeared at the front window, and an engine's sounds stopped. Everyone noticed and began to mention it, even as the elderly woman smiled and told everyone in a low but happy voice, "He's come home! But it is very late, isn't it?"

The elderly man looked at a clock hanging on the wall then confirmed, "It is 8:00 p.m."

Moments later the main door opened and a young man stepped inside. Behind him entered a young girl with a black leather coat still wet from the melting snow. The young couple walked into the dining room, smiling, and the elderly woman quickly brought two more chairs to the table as she said to them, "David and Jenny, have a seat, there is plenty of warm food and we only began to eat a couple of minutes ago."

The young man named David was still a high school student. He was a tall and good looking fellow, with thick brown hair and dark eyes. Today he came home a little late, but he quickly joined the meal when invited. He sat quietly without talking, and ate slowly.

The immediate family members consisted of an elderly man named Neil, his wife, Leanne, and Julia and Fiona, who were the two younger sisters of David.

Most of the family were looking at David's face, noticing that it had changed rather strangely. It seemed abnormal, and somehow oddly affected by the alcoholic smell in the air.

He ate a little and then said to Leanne, "Mum, I'm so full. I just came from a party, and they had a lot of good food there."

His youngest sister, Fiona, a pretty fourteen year-old asked, "What was the party for?"

David smiled and replied, "My classmates held a farewell party for me, because I enlisted in the army today."

Neil looked up with surprise and said, "Oh! Why didn't you tell me about that?"

David looked at his father and responded, "Sorry Dad."

Leanne is looked anxiously from her son to her husband and back again. Her eyes were opened wide in extreme surprise. Finally she

said, “David, you are so young. You must continue your schooling. You have a bright future ahead of you. Please do not join the army. You need to complete your university education first. Then later you can do anything you want to.”

David looked over at his mother and confidently said, “Please don’t think like that, Mum. I’ve grown up and I’m not a baby anymore. I turned eighteen last month, so I can legally do what I want. I’m a man now, Mother, so I have to make my own decisions.”

Neil shook his bald head back and forth, and then said, “No, son, you’ll be sent to Vietnam if you enter the service now. It’s too dangerous. I don’t want you involved in this controversial war.”

David smiled and said reassuringly, “I know about that, Dad, but I’ve made up my mind. This is what I want to do right now. I am a man, not a little boy anymore, and I have to live my own life. Now, please let me alone about it.”

Leanne wasn’t quite so ready to give up. She continued, saying, “But you need to attend to your studies right now. The government has a policy that allows you to continue your studies if you are enrolled in a university. Why would you want to leave school early? Your future, your life as you now know it, will change dramatically. Do you understand this, son?”

David replied firmly, “I know, Mum, but it is the duty of every U.S. citizen to serve in the armed forces. Why would anyone refuse to do their duty? So I enlisted in the army as a volunteer soldier, and I will serve our country. The majority of Americans have done their duty, and I must too. I don’t like anyone calling me a coward, and avoiding military service could leave me feeling ashamed of myself.

Julia finally spoke up and said to her elder brother, “No, David, your future is only just now opening up. You’re among the top students at your senior high school, and you’re already eligible for entrance to a university! I hope you’ll change your mind. Please don’t involve yourself in the Vietnam War, or in any war in the world for that matter. It’s not your concern, David. It’s the government’s job—or, actually, the politicians.”

David responded strongly but firmly, saying, “Don’t oppose my decision, please, Julia. When our country calls, and when the world needs our hand to fight for freedom and democracy, how can I refuse? I have to contribute something for peace in this world. You do understand, don’t you?”

“But Vietnam is so far away,” Fiona replied. “It’s a strange place and a small land far away on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

There's not even any United States territory there. Actually, Vietnam is dangerous place. I already know that many U.S. soldiers have been killed, or are at least missing in action there. I just don't want you involved in an unjust war. Do you understand what I'm trying say?"

Neil nodded his head in agreement and started to speak, but his son interrupted him.

"Dad, I'm sorry," David said, "but I think if we don't fight today, then very soon the communists will invade our own land. If they ever do, they'll set up huge prison camps and massacre people *en masse* without any reason. In particular, they'll be looking for property owners, or anyone who has even a few assets. Those people will become the main targets of the killing and confiscating of the communists." David paused and then asked, "May I ask you one question?"

"Yes, you can," Neil replied openly.

David then asked, "Why did you enlist in the U.S. army to fight against the Germans in the Second World War? Germany was located in Europe, and Japan was far away in Asia. Both places were really far from home, and neither included any U.S. territory. So, what did you really join to fight for?"

Neil abruptly replied, "You don't understand anything about the Second World War, son. If we didn't fight back, then Germany and Japan would come over here; Japan had already bombed Pearl Harbor. So we had a right to fight and protect our country before the enemy came to our shores. But today is a very different circumstance from before. The world we know has been at peace for some time, and the World Wars have long since been over. You're right, I joined the Second World War, and I'm lucky to still be alive. Lots of my fellow soldiers weren't so fortunate. No, son, I don't want you to follow in my footsteps. You are my only son, do you understand?"

David smiled and replied, "You're quite right, Dad, I am your only son. But the communist threat is even more of a danger now than at any time before. The communists are trying again to threaten the world, and the communist countries are not only greater in numbers, but they are better equipped than ever before. The Soviet Union, China, and even Cuba, are very real enemies today. If we don't fight against them there, the day will come when they will come over here. But by then, it will be late for regret."

Neil listened to his son, but he saw only a young man who, in his view, did not have enough knowledge to truly understand the world's conflicts. So he asks, "How do you know about that?"

David replied without any hesitation, “Dad! Do you think I’m some kind of a baby? I have read a few books in library about the communists, and even about Karl Marx and his philosophy—the folly theories of a long-term jobless man. Marx was a terribly dishonest person; he hated everybody who was richer than him. So, he designed a model of socialism that was called the “communist paradise,” but it turned out to be nightmare. At the same time he was creating these theories, his close friend, Mr. Engels, who came from a wealthy family, was supporting him and covering his living expenses. Karl Marx hated rich people and saw them as his enemy, and he condemned “capitalism,” which means that Karl Marx also theoretically hated Engels. But he was still willing to use the friendship to create what he wanted. Unfortunately, Karl Marx’s theories were applied by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who gained control over the government of Russia through the ‘The October Revolution of 1917.’ Lenin was a crazy man, too. He, and people like him, have always wanted to transform the world from democratic governments into dictatorships. Many of these people formed small groups that became the communist parties in their various countries. They have planned to control the national economy, to dominate the minds of people, and to destroy all religion. So, today we have Mao Tse Tung in China, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and Fidel Castro in Cuba. Other communists have taken over other countries in the same way. Communists are massive killers, and they manage their countries by force and policies of terrorism. The communists have become the new enemy in the world after Hitler, and they are just as barbarous, if not more so, than other enemies of the past. Can’t you see that all communist regimes are the same?”

Neil asked, “What do you mean?”

David answered by asking another question, “Dad, do you know what a pirate is?”

Neil becomes somewhat upset and says, “We are discussing communism, not pirates! Are you trying to change the subject?”

David shrugged his shoulders and said, “Alright. I just wanted to tell you about the communists, that’s all.

“Well, go on,” Neil responded uncertainly.

David continued, saying, “Most pirates use the skull and crossed bones symbol on a black flag background. Where ever you find pirates, the symbol is the same. Well, most of the communist countries are the same too; they always use a Red flag and the symbols of a hammer and peasant knife. But they are more dangerous than pirates ever were. The communists have become well organized, and

they also love violence and bloodshed. They work to occupy key positions in government so they can't easily be overthrown. In this way most communist regimes rule through a fairly small group of "comrades" who are more dangerous than the Mafia. Most communist regimes have used Karl Marx's philosophies and explanations as justifications for massacres, confiscation of property, and transforming people into slaves."

Neil and Leanne were initially shocked by David's decision, but after listening David speak about the communists, they were impressed by his knowledge. However, Julia and Fiona know nothing about the politics involved because they were so young that their minds were still limited to their school lessons. Even so, after listening to David speak they both reacted with surprise and looked at their elder brother admirably. Without thinking Julia suddenly said, "Really? I don't know much about the communists."

Fiona quickly agreed and added, "I think David's right. Germany was in Europe and Japan was in Asia, but the U.S. still had to get involved in the Second World War even though the enemies were far away. If we wait until our enemies come here, it may be too late. We must stop them before they come into our homeland. It is the best way to protect our homes, people's lives, and also our way of life."

David responded happily, "Fiona, you're a real smart girl! You recognized the danger of Hitler and the Japanese in Second World War, and now you can see how it applies today. The communists are even more dangerous to us than Hitler and the Japanese were back then. For example, Cuba is not far from our mainland and Mr. Fidel Castro and his communist regime are often threatening us. I remember when, during the term of President John F. Kennedy, Russia's communist leader, Mr. Nikita Khrushchev brought intercontinental missiles with atomic warheads and deployed them in Cuban territory. If President Kennedy hadn't responded with a strong enough decision, the Soviet Union would have never withdrawn those missiles. Are we really in danger? Well, just look around the world. The communists have appeared in many parts of the globe. In every case they have been massive killers and war makers. They are the real criminals in the world. So, we have to fight against this evil for peace and safety at home. Everyone hates war, but we have to crush these war makers for the sake of future peace whenever they become murderously aggressive with their neighbors who ask for our help."

Leanne deeply loved her only son. Certainly she never wanted to see him go away anywhere—not even so much as moving to another

state. Her hope was that one day David would become a teacher and have a wife and children. She had expected him to set up a normal life, just like anyone else. So, after hearing the news, her expression became quite serious.

However, she knew nothing about the world today, and she knew she couldn't convince David to stay home and enter a university the next year. She was an aging woman, and was always busy with home-making tasks such as cooking, shopping, washing, and cleaning, etc. Even so, she now felt an intense desire to convince her son to change his mind, particularly as she recalled the daily television reports about the grave dangers involved in the Vietnam war.

At last Leanne looked at David and asked, "David, do you really want to leave our beloved family?"

"Not really, Mum," David replied. "I will always love our family, but I also need to grow up. I understand very well that one day I will leave our family and set up another family of my own, and become a meaningful member of society. But first I want to do something to help other people who desperately need my contribution before I do things only for myself."

David looked over at his girlfriend, Jenny. She had been very quiet since their arrival, perhaps because she didn't want to become involved in any argument with her boyfriend's family. But after David explained his views, many of the family members began glancing toward Jenny as if silently seeking her opinion.

Jenny suddenly felt very shy with everyone looking at her, even though she knew that David's family had accepted their relationship a long time ago. Their two families lived in the same suburb, and they had known each other for at least five years. David often went to Jenny's place for dinner or a party, or to join in some family activity, and just as often she accompanied him to his home. They spent their most beautiful times together during their annual school holidays, at either her place or his. Sometimes they went elsewhere in Washington, D.C., and together they shared many wonderful memories.

Leanne realized this, and knew how important assistance from Jenny could be at this difficult time. Carefully measuring the situation, she asked, "Jenny, how do you feel about David's decision?"

Jenny smiled lightly and hesitatingly replied, "I don't know yet, Leanne. It's his own decision. I only heard about it myself in the last couple days, from his friends, but I didn't believe it until I met him at a party in this evening—it was a farewell party from his schoolmates.

However, Leanne's expression remained firm and she then said, "David, I think you ought to change your mind. I suggest that you just stay home and go to school next year. We will take care of everything for you, and I promise to do anything you need. You can just stay in our house and pay nothing, and that way you won't have to worry about living on campus or anything else. If you want a brand new car, I will purchase it for you straight away. This is my last offer.

David quickly responded, "Mum, I can't. It is my final decision. Everything has already arranged, and next week I will be going to attend the training at boot camp. I will be a G.I. soon, and I feel very proud of it. My friends have enlisted, too, and they will be there with me.

Neil said nothing, but he knew only too well the dangerous situation awaiting David if he went on to Vietnam after his military training was completed.

Leanne continued to feel hopeless and shocked, so she just looked at her son quietly.

At just that moment the television program being broadcast was interrupted with a flash news update. The lead bulletin showed a crowd of a hundred or more protestors struggling violently with the police. In the crowd, some slogans were displayed: "Stop the Vietnam war right now," and "Bring our boys home," among them. Others displayed the flag of the communist Viet Cong, with its half red-half dark blue background and yellow star at the center. Still other waived the red flags of communist North Vietnam. Clearly some of the protestors were people with left-leaning tendencies, or even pro-communist elements such as friends or comrades of the Viet Cong (VC). Indeed, in the crowd of people, there were even some protestors carrying portraits of the North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, further suggesting the possibility of pro-communist agents arranging the protest rally. The scene was very exciting, with everyone watching.

Leanne turned back to her son and said, "David, is this really what you want? To fight in a war that is widely condemned by people? Don't you see that the majority of people are protesting against the Vietnam War?"

David replied without thinking, "It is just the communist and pro-communist members, Mum. They set up these peace movements to distract us from doing what needs to be done. Those opposed to freedom and democracy are only the bloody communists! We cannot accept what they say. They are very dangerous people, but they are also a minority in our society. Among the more than one hundred and

seventy million Americans, there are very few willing to protest freedom in Vietnam, It is not a majority.

Neil disagreed, saying, "How can you talk like that? Look at the news!"

David answered, "Certainly I see the news. But the protestors are a minority. Besides, who are they?"

Fiona joined in, saying, "David, you are wrong. There are plenty of people gathered up there. You should watch and listen to what they have to say. Take a look, David. They are crowded around the White House, and hundreds of policemen are fighting with them. The protestors are right, they want to peace, not war at all."

David looked at his youngest sister and responded, "Fiona, you are so young and you don't know enough about it. Take a closer look at the scene. There are actually very few protestors, and they are withdrawing steadily. Look, someone was just arrested by police. Look, too, at how they dress and act. They are just rubbish people, the bastards, of all of them."

Leanne interjects, "David, the protestors are not a minority, as you say. You are not being objective or impartial, and you are just taking the government's side and ignoring the people's view."

After a pause David replied, "Mother, they are so a minority. If not, then presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and anyone else wanting to be president would lose the election by deciding to remain involved in the Vietnam War. Most of the U.S. presidents have had the right policy in Vietnam War, so they have strong support from the majority of the people. The U.S. people voted for them to protect the peace by fighting against the communists. We must either defend the peace by fighting against the evil communists, or we will eventually be destroyed by enemy and all will be lost. The U.S. people have always strongly supported our Armed Forces in the Vietnam War. It is true, freedom is at stake, and we must to open our eyes widely to realize this.

The eyes of everyone in the room remained drawn to the television screen, but David continued to explain his thoughts. "We all love peace, of course, and we also hate war. I have read some books in the library, so I know that the peace movement has around for a long time, ever since the First World War from 1914 to 1918. Then, in 1932 these peace lovers held a General Congress in the city of Amsterdam, in Holland. Their focus was to stop any war that might occur from the various conflicts in the world. However, they could not stop dictators like Hitler, Mussolini, and others. So, the Second World War began among the European nations and spread throughout

the world. Today, the peace lovers are still seeking their goal. But, unfortunately, communist espionage agents from the communist world have transformed the peace movement into a tool for their own use. Today, the peace lovers are only serving communist interests. They are made up of childish people, and some left-wing politicians who act as the donkey's head. The politicians are simply using the peace movement to further their ambitions for the next election. I don't trust anything about the peace movement. They are wrong!"

As David spoke, no one raised any opposition to his opinion. Perhaps they lacked enough knowledge. Regardless, he continued, saying, "You'll notice that the peace movement is not active in the communist states, such as Russia, China and other East European nations. Clearly, this is because even those in the peace movement are not allowed to express their opinions by taking any action. No, they just continue making trouble in the democratic countries. It is unfair."

Having largely expressed his views, David grew silent.

Jenny looked around at everyone else, and then she broke the silence by saying, "I think David is right. For myself, I always hate war. But we have to fight for freedom and democracy anywhere it exists in the world. Only by doing that can we keep a lasting peace, and make sure that our own homeland stays safe. Only if the world is safe can we hope for our peace to last. We cannot live in peace if war is all around us and our homeland being threatened by evil. It looks like a fire around us now. You cannot be safe if you don't fight against the fire. My cousin has been fighting in the Vietnam War, and I met him before he enlisted in the army. We talked with him just the same as everyone here is talking with David..."

Neil interrupted Jenny to ask, "How is John?"

Jenny replied, "He's alright. He has been serving in Da Nang province. Last month I got a letter from him. He wrote to our family about the Vietnam War, but he also told us how the country is so beautiful, and that there are many good people there. Actually, they have a wonderful culture, and there are lots of lovely foods available. The people there don't like the war either, but the communists have been bringing the war from the north to destroy and terrorize those who live in the south. So, millions of lives are being threatened and put in dangerous circumstances by the communist warlord Ho Chi Minh—he is the Vietnamese communist leader. However, the 'peace movement' has launched false propaganda. They have misled the public about the Viet Cong by suggesting that they are different from the North Vietnam communists. They have had some success with this, because the

Viet Cong are gorilla fighters who live in South Vietnam. In truth, the communists up north and the Viet Cong in the south are one and the same. Both are terrorists, and both use weapons that the Soviet Union, China, and East European countries have provided—AK-47 assault rifles, CKC carbines (a kind of shorter, lighter rifle), and B-40 rocket launchers, and such.

Jenny paused for a moment. Seeing that everyone was still listening, she continued, saying, “John told me about the enemy of peace today. The North Vietnam communist party, led by Ho Chi Minh, uses the name “Vietnam Worker’s Party” to confuse the Vietnamese people. And it usually works. In the south, many of the people are uneducated or poorly-educated peasants, and most live in rural areas. There they know nothing about the communists—not even Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin or the so-called “Marxist-Leninist philosophy.” Not knowing any better, they just join the guerilla troops for the promise of a better standard of living or a high position in society if the communists win the war. In this way uneducated peasants have joined the Viet Cong in carrying out orders from high ranking leaders to conduct terrorism against innocent people.”

Nodding, David adds, “When the communists moved into South Vietnam, they used yet another name, “The Vietnam People’s Revolution Party.” Under that new name they convinced the peasants in South Vietnam to help them, because they know nothing about the communists. In the typical way of communist rule, all property in the nation has been centralized into the hands of a small group—which is the communist party. But the poorly educated and the uneducated peasants don’t know better, so they join the Viet Cong troops. In the communist regime people have to work very hard—much like slave laborers—and they get nothing for their work. If the communist calls themselves by their real “communist” name, even the peasants would fight against them, too.”

Neil shook his head and said, “I know. The Vietnam War is very much like the Civil War that was fought long ago between the north and the south in our country. In those days, our people fought over slavery, but after they listened to the debates and recognized how wrong slavery was, support for the slave states in the south weakened and they finally stopped killing each other.”

Turning to his father, David disagreed, saying, “The Vietnam war is quite different from the U.S. Civil War, Dad. Don’t confuse the two.”

Neil then asked, “How are they different?”

David explained, "Our country had a civil war, it is true. But a Vietnam War it was not. For example, during the Civil War, our citizens were not given communist propaganda intended to cheat the world, not just our country. Further, while the 'peace movement' in Vietnam is based on propaganda and lies, the views of the North and South during the Civil War were very open, direct, and honest. Where people disagreed, they disagreed on principles, not on propaganda."

Leanne tried again to convince her son, saying, "David, you are wrong, the Vietnam war is still a civil war, because the two sides of Vietnam are fighting each other, and they are of the same ethnic background."

Julia agreed with her mother's opinion. "That is right," she said. "North Vietnam fights against the south. Let them do their own fighting for themselves. It is better that we don't get involved with them. It is not any of our business."

David glanced toward his younger sister and replied, "Julia, you don't have enough experience or learning to fully understand the Civil War, the First and Second World Wars, and the Cold War and communism to draw that conclusion. Take the Korean War, for example. Now, it is much more like the Vietnam War. So why do we accept the Korean War as necessary, but conclude that the Vietnam War is not?"

With some exasperation Julia blurted out, "But the Vietnamese are fighting against their own people. It is clearly a civil war."

David turned to his younger sister and said, "Julia, you must to learn more about world history! Your view of the world is as small as a window frame."

Neil objected, and said, "But Julia is right, and so am I."

Fiona also agreed with Neil, saying, "Dad is right."

With a strong voice David stated, "All of you know nothing about the Vietnam War, and that is a terrible mistake."

Jenny supported David, saying, "David is right. I know well what my cousin John has learned in Vietnam. Before he went there, he didn't realize what was happening, but he still went when he was drafted into the army. Once there, John didn't desert as some cowards did. He respected himself and his country. After about three months in Vietnam, he sent a letter and told us that he now understood the Vietnam War. He explained to us that it is not civil war, as some would have us believe. Instead, it is a war driven by the communist world. Through it, they are threatening whole the world, and our homeland is also one of their targets. Actually, the Vietnam communists have also

launched a propaganda campaign declaring that ‘the American Empire is the number one enemy of the people.’ Clearly, if we do not defend ourselves, the communists could attack other countries and even us after they have successfully occupied the South Vietnam territory. Why are we so blind? We must not listen to the cowards of the peace movement! They are all liars.”

Feeling somewhat defensive, Neil asks, “How do they lie?”

Jenny responded, “If you have not worked on a farm, you couldn’t know of the hard work and sweat necessary to produce the grain, fruits, bread, meat, milk and vegetables that we eat. You have to do the work yourself to fully understand that. In the same way, we need to at least hear ‘the work’ and the suffering and hardships in Vietnam to even begin to understand what is happening there. So, let me share John’s experiences with you, and then you can understand the lies.”

“Jenny, do not go so far, please!” Leanne said anxiously.

Jenny looked at Leanne and said, “Oh yes! I am going to tell you everything about John’s thinking since he went over there. You need to know. Before going he misunderstood the Vietnam War, but after going to Vietnam, he told my family and friends the truth from his personal experiences. He explained to us that if the communist Vietnamese from the north had not invaded, the Vietnamese people in the south would have lived in peace. This is because the South Vietnamese government is a Republic, with freedom and democracy much like anywhere else in the world. The North Vietnamese Communists, however, must obey and comply with orders from the communist empires of Russia and China. Their leader, Ho Chi Minh, accepts this because he has never been willing to give up his ambition for power. The Soviet Union, China, and the other East European communist nations continue to provide weapons to the Vietnam communists using the invasion road to the south. It is the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, which runs from north to South Vietnam, with much of it across the Laotian and Cambodian borders.

Astonished, Julia exclaimed, “Really!”

Jenny continued, saying, “If someone doesn’t come over here who clearly understands the Vietnam War, the American people will remain ignorant of what is actually happening. In the absence of better information, they can be easily misled by the communist propaganda being spread into Western society. The enemy in our country has never revealed their real face, or the communist’s hand directing them. In many cases they have hidden as the ‘peace movement.’ Given the communist elements inside the peace movement, many

may well be espionage agents. My cousin has spent time there, and he has been an eye witness to what has occurred in Vietnam. In the Second World War, if Hitler hadn't attacked other European countries or started killing the Jews, the world would never have gone to war. The Vietnam War is the same. If the communists didn't make the war, we would not have become involved.

At this point Julia asked, "I've heard people talk about the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail,' but what exactly is it?"

Neil answered this question. Drawing from his limited knowledge he said, "It is just a long road, like one of our highways."

Jenny shook her head and clarified, saying, "The Ho Chi Minh Trail is not like any highway in our country, neither is it like a road in a town or between cities. The Ho Chi Minh Trail has not become famous because of its size, but because members of the media have referred to it nearly every day on television, in newspapers, and on the radio.

David confirmed this, saying, "I've heard of the Ho Chi Minh's Trail, as well."

Leanne then also asked, "What is it?"

David replied, "Well, from the books I read in the library, the Ho Chi Minh Trail is collection of paths, roads, and river routes. It is more than 2,200 kilometers long, and it crosses the borders of three countries: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It wends its way through the deep jungle, and on into the high mountains of the Truong Son mountain range. It has become the single most important route for transportation, troop movements, and supplies for the Vietnamese communists.

Excited to learn more, Julia exclaimed, "How interesting! I never knew about that."

David continued as every one listened with rapt attention. "Parts of the Ho Chi Minh Trail have existed for centuries as trade routes in the region. After the Vietnamese war for independence against the colonial French, from 1945 to 1954, the long road was abandoned. However, in May of 1959, Ho Chi Minh ordered the creation of a special unit known as "Special Task Force 559." This task force gathered workers together to reopen and upgrade the trail. There would often be more than 100,000 laborers building and repairing that collection of roads at any given time."

Surprised, Leanne exclaimed, "Really!"

David continued, saying, "That's right. North Vietnam really needed this network of roads to further its goals against South Viet-

nam. In 1959, the Communist Party of Vietnam, or CPV, issued a secret resolution to begin invading South Vietnam. At the same time, the CPV began denouncing the U.S. and all other allies of the South Vietnamese including Australia, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Further, Ho Chi Minh and his communist party launched the propaganda campaign of “fighting against the American Empire” long before the U.S. ever came to the aid of South Vietnam. They were simply militantly against any and every democracy in the world, and the U.S. in particular.”

Now it was Neil’s turn to be surprised at what David was telling them. “Really!” he exclaimed in amazement.

David nodded as he looked at his father and said, “That’s right. Although we had not yet come to Vietnam, the communists already considered us an enemy; so the communists wanted to destroy our homeland and they declared war. If they could have they would have attacked us, just like when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in August 1941. This is a lesson that we must learn.”

Fiona was growing even more intrigued, and asked, “David, could you tell us more about the Ho Chi Minh trail, please? It is very interesting.”

“Sure,” David replied. “The Ho Chi Minh trail is a long collection of roads, paths, and waterways used to move people and supplies across the 17th Parallel that divides north and south Vietnam. The trail starts in Ben Thuy, in the Quang Binh province, and moves on through to the Mu-Gia hill. Then it crosses into Laos territory. There are two main supply bases along the road named Tchepone and Muong Nong. These bases are known only by the code numbers 611 and 613. The road winds through central Vietnamese territory and on into Cambodia. The North Vietnam communists have used the Ho Chi Minh trail to invade South Vietnam with well armed military divisions supplied with military surplus goods and weapons. All these supplies and weapons are transported by Russian-made Molotova brand trucks.”

At this point Julia interrupted and asked, “Why did the Vietnam communists create two supply bases in Laotian territory?”

David explained, “If the Vietnam communists set up any base in North Vietnam, it would become a target for airplane attacks, and the world would also recognize the huge weapons and the army surplus stores being provided to the North Vietnamese by the Soviet Union, China, and the other communist countries. So, the North Vietnamese

communists kept these materials hidden outside of Vietnam. This was a very malicious and dishonest way to wage their war.”

After hearing David’s explanation Fiona and Julia didn’t have any more questions, but Leanne was still hoping that her son would change his mind. Turning to face David, she said, “Anyway, I hope you will still enter a university next year. That is my final hope.”

David did not intend to change his mind, but he didn’t want this to be upsetting, so he did not respond directly to his mother’s comment. Instead, having shared his knowledge about Ho the Chi Minh trail, he continued by saying, “I recently read a book about Vladimir Lenin in the library. He wanted to dye the whole world red and transform people into slaves. Then he wanted to take the world’s riches and annihilate the intellectuals and religions of the occupied lands. The power-hungry ambitions of communism are ceaseless, so we must stop them as soon as possible. Do you want to be a slave forever? Or do you want us to live freely?”

Leanne said nothing, and instead looked down quietly.

Seeing this, Jenny continued by saying, “John was in the furious battle known as the ‘Tet offensive’ during Mau Than 1968. He wrote to us about the things he actually saw, and he also sent photos...”

Fiona interrupted, saying, “I heard one of my classmates say that her father had died in battle 1968, but I didn’t know much about it.”

Jenny replied, “I was just like you, not knowing much about the war either. But my cousin, John, has lived and fought in Vietnam, and he wrote letters and also provided photographs as hard evidence of what was happening. John told our family many things about the ‘Tet Offensive,’ called the ‘Tet Mau Than battle of 1968’ in Vietnam. ‘Tet’ referred to ‘Tet Nguyen Dan’ which is the Vietnamese New Year, and ‘Mau Than’ referred to the ‘Year of the Monkey’ as that was the Chinese zodiac designation for 1968. John particularly discussed the horrible massacre of the South Vietnamese people at that time by the North Vietnamese communist soldiers.”

Leanne now looked up and said, “I heard about that, but I didn’t believe it was true.”

Jenny responded, “Neither did I, when I first heard of it. But when I read John’s letters and saw the photographs, I cried. I wondered how the Viet Cong could do that to their people! They are all the same ethnicity, and all from the same country as well, but the Viet Cong massacred the South Vietnamese barbarously.

Neil then asked, “How?”

Jenny continues, “In Vietnam, people love peace and they also celebrate the Lunar New Year as a sacred day, along with several other surrounding days. For them, this time is as important as Christmas Day or New Year’s Eve over here. In 1968, the Vietnamese communists announced that they intended to celebrate the lunar holidays, as they had in the past; so both sides declared a two-day cease-fire order as before. However, on the first day of the new lunar year—‘Tet Nguyen Dan’ fell on January 31st that year—the Vietnam communists violated a cease-fire agreement, and over 80,000 troops attacked more than 100 towns and cities in South Vietnam. The armed forces used heavy artillery and armor units from the north and guerrilla forces from the south. During this time, per routine, a portion of the South Vietnam government and many army personnel were on their annual holiday. These are holy and special days for all Vietnamese people, including the Viet Cong, and it was expected that having mutually declared a cease-fire, the peace would be respected. John’s unit was located at Da Nang, a city that was attacked heavily by the crowds of Viet Cong troops, as most the U.S. soldiers were also on holiday. The Vietnamese communists opened fire with their heavy artillery, firing right into army bases, government buildings, civilian houses, and even hospitals. The Army of the Republic of South Vietnam and the allied forces had to open fire in self defense. All the towns and cities were being attacked. The communist troops destroyed the homes of innocent civilians and then killed the inhabitants in cold blood.”

Julia felt a wave of sadness coupled with anger, and said, “Really? How barbaric!”

Jenny continued, saying, “It was unbelievable. The communist troops occupied Hue city for 25 days, during which they killed more than four thousand civilians, and the victims’ bodies were buried in mass graves around the city before the troops withdrew. John came to this place personally, and while he was there he took photographs. It was a horrible scene.”

Fiona couldn’t restrain her emotions any longer and exclaimed, “Those cruel communists!”

David spoke up and said, “Maybe now you can understand why I believe that the protestors who oppose the Vietnam War are either communists, or just stupid people who know nothing about the Vietnam War. They have it all wrong, and they are probably being unknowingly led by someone in the shadows—perhaps by a communist espionage agent.”

Neil looked down, thinking, without saying a word.

Then Jenny said, “I will bring the photographs over to show everyone. We have to do the right thing, and not just listen to someone working in the enemy’s interests. I know David will be facing a dangerous situation in the Vietnam War, but no one should undermine his decision, not even me.

The dinner conversation fell silent as the family members realized that they could not change David’s decision, though they were still worried about him.

David looked around at his family and finally made one last announcement of important news. “Mum, dad, and everyone,” he said with a smile, “Jenny and I are going to get married before I go to the boot camp.”

Leanne looked up in surprise and asked, “When?”

Jenny looked around at David’s family and said, “On Sunday, next week. We have no time, so we’ll have to get married in hurry before anything has been arranged for our important day.”

Julia and Fiona looked at the happy young couple with shining eyes, but Neil asked, “Are you sure?”

David replied, “We’re all ready for our day. We’ll celebrate the wedding with a party after I return from Vietnam.”

Neil looked at the young couple, clearly so in love, but he was not happy about David’s decision. He then said, “I accept that, but you two will be parted soon.”

David replied, “I will come back.”

Julia confirmed her commitment, saying, “I’ll be here waiting for you...”

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