

The Girl in the Picture. Denise Chong. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Chapter FOUR

“The living better convey the horror of war; the dead have no expression.” [65]

Kim Phuc actually being hit by the napalm [66-67]

“Oh, Ma, it’s too hot, too hot!” [67]

“But rarely do casualties come walking into view, while journalists, like an audience, are waiting for something to happen.” [68]

“... nong qua, nong qua!” / “... too hot, too hot!” [68]

Her brother, seeing soldiers, “changed from issuing curses of ‘Fuck the plane that dropped the bomb to try to kill my sister!’ to ‘Em too chay! Cuu em toi voi!!’, a plea to ‘Help my sister!’” [68]

Nick, the photo-journalist, drove 2 victims, including Kim Phuc, to a hospital. “Not even the rush of air through open windows could dissipate the gut-wrenching stench of burned flesh.” [70-71]

Nick appealed to Buddha: “*Please, let my pictures be in focus...*”

The picture almost wasn’t submitted. “The AP’s policy was clear: no frontal nudity.” [73]

“In the muddy field, the living and the dead of the family awaited the morning’s light.” [75]

“The picture would win every major international photographic prize for that year, including the Pulitzer.” [76]

Regarding the bomb’s crater: “For years after, every rainy season, the crater would fill with water deep enough to drown in.” [77]

Two journalists got Kim Phuc transferred from a Vietnamese hospital to an American one. [80]

On hearing of Danh’s death: “Through a haze, Phuc formed a single thought when she heard of her cousin’s fate: ‘... to die is better.’” [83]

Dr. Arthur Barsky had established the foundation which operated the hospital to which Kim Phuc was taken. He “had first come to public prominence in 1958 when he brought to a New York hospital for surgery seventy-five disfigured victims of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.” [84]

“As America’s war effort in Vietnam waned, the horrors of the war receded from the public’s mind.” [86]

Senator William Proxmire sponsored a bill to provide \$550,000 to build another Barsky hospital in Vietnam, mentioning Kim Phuc in his statement. “The appropriation bill went nowhere.” [87-88]

Chapter FIVE

Napalm burns at 800 to 1,200 degrees Celsius. [89]

Napalm burns were to the Vietnam war what bayonet wounds had been to the First World War.” [89]

Phuc had sustained third degree or worse burns on 30-35% of her body surface. [90]

“Even the smallest napalm burn is intensely painful.” [90]

On returning home Tung and Nu found 3 Viet Cong bodies, which they buried – and suffering pigs, which they put out of their misery. [91-92]

“So haunted was she by how the animals had suffered that she vowed never again to raise pigs for slaughter.” [92]

“Nu and Tung scrubbed the walls and floors of the house of spattered human blood and guts.” [92]

Visiting Phuc, “Nu found she could hardly bear to stand at the door of her daughter’s room for the stench of dead and rotted flesh.” [93]

“The daily cleansing of a burn patient inflicts pain that defies description.” [94]

Loan “fainted at her sister’s screams.” [95]

“... day in and day out, Tung sat beside Phuc’s bed, focused on listening to her breathing.” [95]

He spent nights outside the hospital on a bench, or hid himself under Phuc’s bed. [95]

At Phuc’s first spoken word, Nu “wept to hear that her daughter’s spirit had chosen to stay with her body.” [96]

When first shown the photo, “Nu cried until she thought she would go blind.” [97]

“Their wounded daughter, the picture, and the ideals and rituals of Caodai swirled together, lending singular meaning to Tung and Nu’s earthly existence.” [97]

“There was but one way to sway Caodai in their favor, and that was for all of them to become better disciples.” [98]

Nu was tortured by government officials to confess that she knew the identity of the Viet Cong who had bombed her shop. [103]

“... physiotherapy, for which increasing pain is a measure of success.” [105]

Nixon’s December 1972 bombing campaign to force the North Vietnamese to return to the bargaining table: “Public reaction in America to what became known as the ‘Christmas bombings’ was muted; internationally, it was one of revulsion.” [107]

Journalist from *Stern* takes pictures of Kim Phuc. [110-111]

“With America out of the picture, foreign news agencies lost their appetite for daily coverage of the Indochina conflict.” [112]

“To Americans, Vietnam was not so much a country as a war.” [112]

“... the American public was sick and tired of hearing about it.” [112]

Life's year-in-picture review featured only one Vietnam picture: a smiling Kim Phuc at home. [113]

Chapter SIX

“That the child who came home had the same happy and uncomplaining personality as before she was wounded was a testimony to her strength of character.” [116]

“Sometimes when Phuc was visiting her cousins, she would come upon her aunt lying on the bed and chanting herself into a trance. Her voice would change into one not her own as she received news from the spirit world of Danh and Cuong, her baby.” [117]

“... her siblings had become schooled in the manner and ways of war.” [117]

The Cao daist ‘Holy See’ became a sanctuary for Ngoc to avoid serving in either the South Vietnamese army or the Viet Cong. [119]

Vietnamese proverb: “A house leads from the roof.” [123]

“The war bred in Phuc a belief that during wartime there was little use in calculating one’s steps. Life, it seemed, was either chance or destiny.” [126]

Phuc had “recurring nightmares of war.” [127]

“There was only one way to live with the insidiousness of war: one had to adhere to the normal habits and tempers of one’s life.” [127]

“Her endurance would always fall short of her desire.” [128]

Chapter SEVEN

Caodai temple “bore even more scars, inflicted by every weapon of war – napalm, bombs, mortar and gunfire – and yet it stood.” [143]

“The Vietnamese rely on an ancient proverb to stem worry about how they will survive upheaval in their lives: ‘Heaven created the elephant; heaven will make grass.’” [148]

Communist “reeducation” process. [150-151]

“False thinking can take forever to correct.” [151]

U.S. refused to recognize the new regime, and imposed an embargo.

“One effect of America’s isolation of Vietnam was to hasten Hanoi’s resolve to march the capitalist south down the socialist road.” [152]

Hanoi ignored the starkly different conditions in the South than had prevailed in the North thirty years earlier at the time of communization. [152]

“What had worked in the north would, over the next decade, sow chaos and hasten the deterioration of the southern economy.” [152]

“... under the Communist regime the charade of presenting one thing publicly and believing something else privately was enacted even by the children.” [156]

“In the new social order, the state was, in theory, supposed to replace all other emotional attachments: family, school, work and play, religion and tradition.” [156-157]

“The only acceptable culture was revolutionary.” [157]

“School was dramatically different in purpose and practice.” [157]

“Where once high school had been a place to meet friends, it had become another arena for public scrutiny, criticism, denunciation and bullying.” [158]

“The single influence [Phuc] sought in her life was religious.” [159]

“Ngoc’s distrust of the Communists hardened at the same time as his adherence to his religion deepened.” [159]

Chapter EIGHT

As Vietnam endured new war with Cambodia: “In her own reaction to war, Phuc recognized a deepening sadness.” [169]

Boat people: “... those without a future in Vietnam preferred to risk death at sea rather than remain behind.” [178]

Stern’s Krest seeks and obtains an interview with Kim Phuc. [196-199]

“... a good citizen under Communism asks nothing.” [198]

Talking about the napalm bombing “stirred up memories so vividly that her nightmares returned.” [198-199]

Kim Phuc’s propaganda minder “had a smile he could switch on and off at will.” [200]

“... she could make as much as she liked of her physical suffering from her napalm burn endured in the American war, but she was *not* to portray the people as having suffered under the new regime.” [201]

Regarding Agent Orange: “... vast forests of the province denuded by American herbicides” “... a display of large jars of pickled fetuses, typically missing mouths or chins.” [207-208]

“Rapidly, Phuc slid deeper and deeper into unhappiness until she was mired in a severe depression.” [212]

“Phuc found solace the only way she knew how, by turning inward to her Caodic faith.” [213]

Kim Phuc reads the Bible and encounters a Christian missionary. [214-217]

“With forgiveness there is renewed hope of a future, where there was none before.” [219]

Chapter TEN

Having seen news video-footage of the napalm bombing: "She understood why she had emerged alive from the fire of the napalm - to be a living symbol of the horror of war." [255]

"The church was the only recognizable signpost in Phuc's confusion." [267]

Chapter FOURTEEN

"t the university, hunger and fatigue diminished energy and dented enthusiasm for both teaching and learning." [334]

Chapter FIFTEEN

"It's a picture that doesn't rest." [364]

"Pain keeps you conscious." [364]

"In the voiceless cry of the girl in the picture is the silence of guilt, of public and private flaws. War, any war, not just the Vietnam war, has dimensions of moral ambiguity. This picture is itself ambiguous: who or what the girl is running from is unclear, the extent of her burns is not evident, and whether she will live or die is unknown. But the state of anxiety conveyed by the camera's eye concentrates the minds of us, the viewers, simultaneously dispatching each of us into our own personal history of darkness. We privately flail at our human limitations, failings and self-indulgence in the face of the chaos and wrongdoing of war. We who live in places that are 'safe' feel chained by our individual helplessness to aid those who live in places that are not." [364]