

THE LETTER HOME

STEVE COULSON + MIDJOURNEY



In **1954**, The United States Navy detonated a hydrogen nuclear device on **Bikini Atoll** in the **Marshall Islands**.

But scientists miscalculated the yield. The resulting explosion was **1,000 times** more powerful than both **Hiroshima & Nagasaki**.

Soon after, the **Monsters** arose.

They began to **lay siege** to cities on both the **Atlantic** and **Pacific** seaboard.



Millions perished.

And the world changed **forever**.





♪ STOP... SOUND... ♪



♪ ...EVERYBODY... ♪



♪ ...FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH... ♪



≈ ... NUMBER ONE SONG... ONE YEAR AGO TODAY ... NATION ... COUNTING DOWN... ≈



≈ ... DEDICATION ... THE TROOPS ... SERVING OVERSEAS... FAMILIES HERE AT HOME... ≈



≈ ... PRESIDENT KENNEDY SPEAKING... UNITED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ... ≈



≈ ... SAYING HE BELIEVES... 1968 WILL BE THE YEAR THE TIDE TURNS. ≈



≈ GOOD MORNING, MARYLAND! ≈



≈ IF YOU'RE JUST TUNING IN, THIS IS W-VOB BROADCASTING AT 1520 KHZ. ≈

≈ W-VOB -- "YOUR HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!" ≈



⇒ AND NOW HERE'S JEFF WITH A SPORTS UPDATE. ⇒



⇒ THANKS, RICK! ⇒

⇒ WELL - AS WE ALL KNOW - OUR BELOVED COLTS UNFORTUNATELY MISSED THE POST SEASON. ⇒



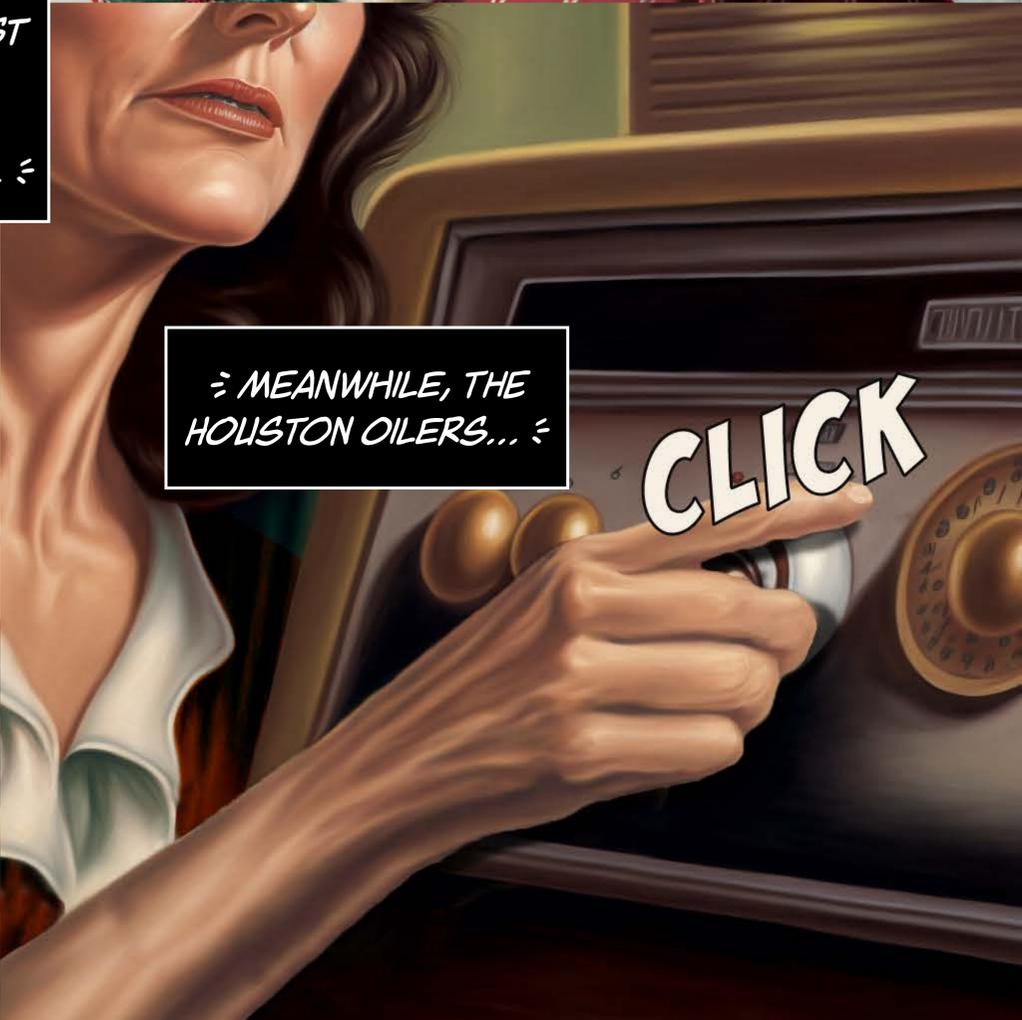
⇒ SO IT'LL BE LANDRY'S COWBOYS AGAINST LOMBARDI'S PACKERS IN A REPLAY OF LAST YEAR'S CHAMPIONSHIP. ⇒



⇒ AND IT LOOKS LIKE DALLAS MAY HAVE THE ADVANTAGE THIS YEAR. ⇒



⇒ THE CURRENT FORECAST IS PREDICTING UNSEASONABLY MILD WEATHER FOR THE GAME. ⇒



⇒ MEANWHILE, THE HOUSTON OILERS... ⇒

CLICK



THE BESTIARY CHRONICLES
PRESENTS

THE LETTER HOME

Story & Art by STEVE COULSON + MIDJOURNEY



"Hi Mom,



*Thanks for your letter,
which I received today when
we returned to base.*



*News from home is just
what I need right now.*

*Tell Jenny I said congrats
on her midterm scores. I
knew she could do it.*

Try not to worry about me.

*I'm not going to sugarcoat
things, it's hard. But I'm making
the best of a bad situation.*

*They keep saying it could
all be over soon, so maybe
I'll even be home before
this letter gets to you.*



I'm sorry it's been a few weeks since I last wrote.



My squad's been out in the field.



Command are keeping us pretty busy.

At least that makes the time pass quicker.



These first months seem like a blur - the guys here say that's how it is on your first tour.

Sometimes it's hard to believe that I'm 9000 miles from home.



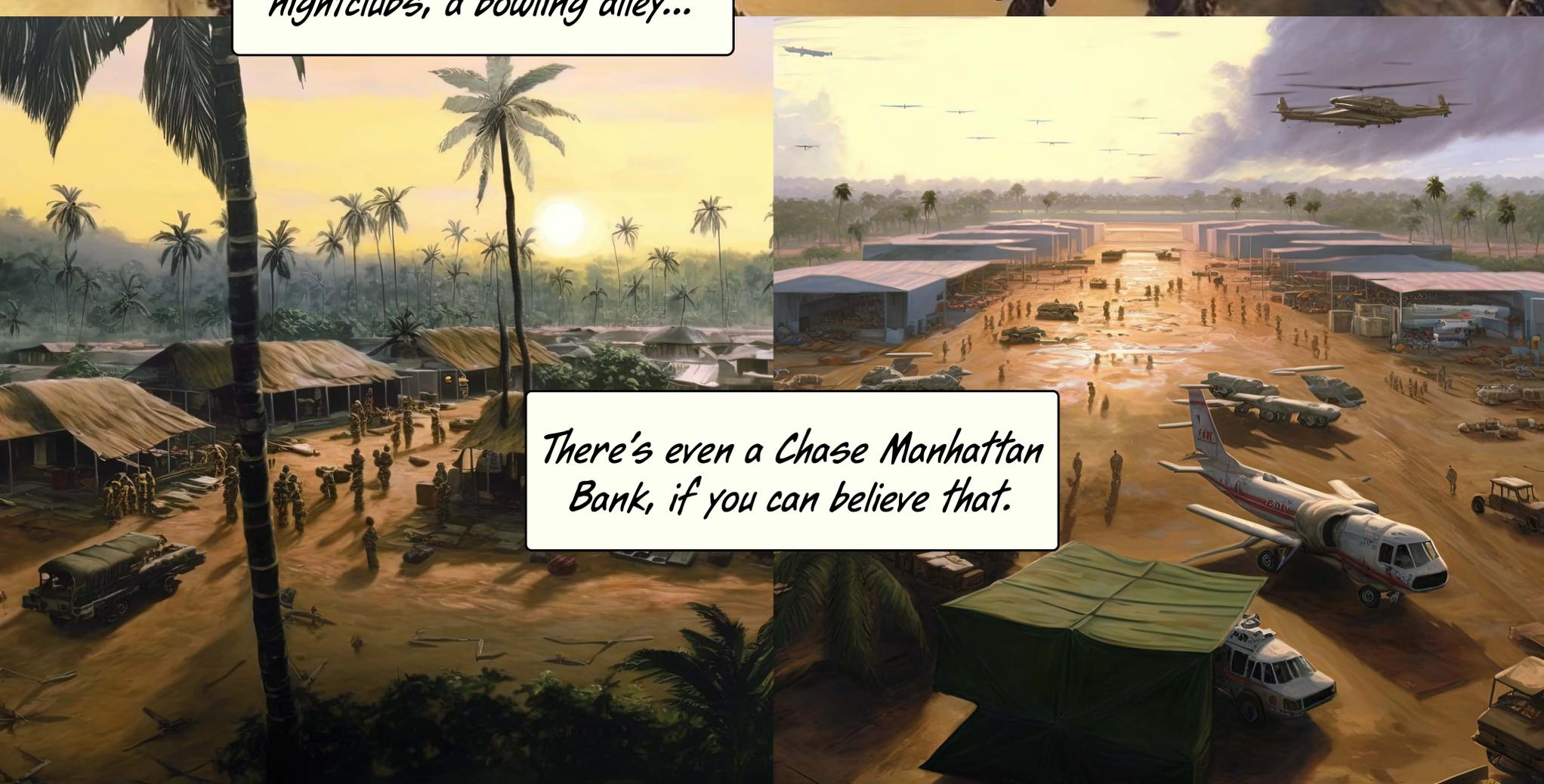


We're staged out of Long Binh Post about 13 miles northeast of the city.

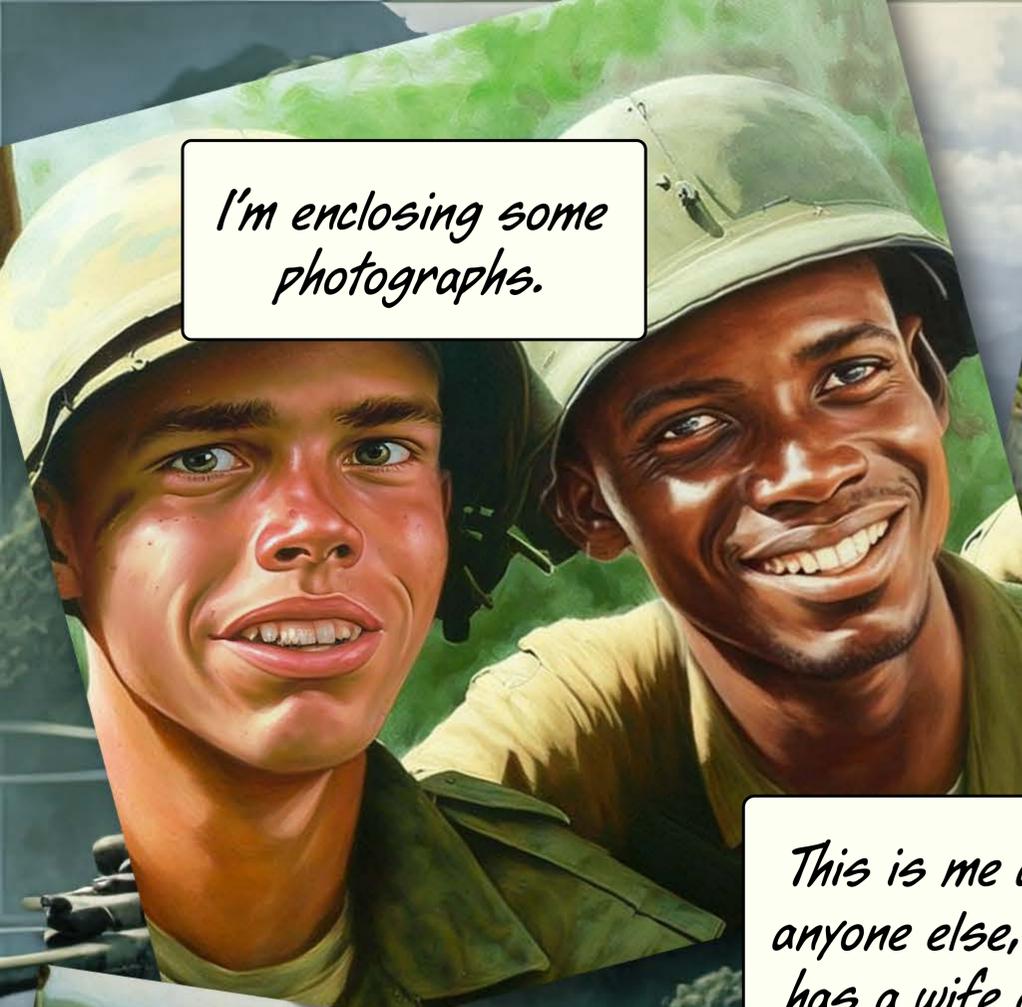
Mom, you wouldn't BELIEVE the size of this base.

They say there are 60,000 troops stationed here.

It's like own small town. We have our own restaurants, nightclubs, a bowling alley...



There's even a Chase Manhattan Bank, if you can believe that.



I'm enclosing some photographs.



This is me and Donny. More than anyone else, he's got my back. He has a wife and kid back in Texas.



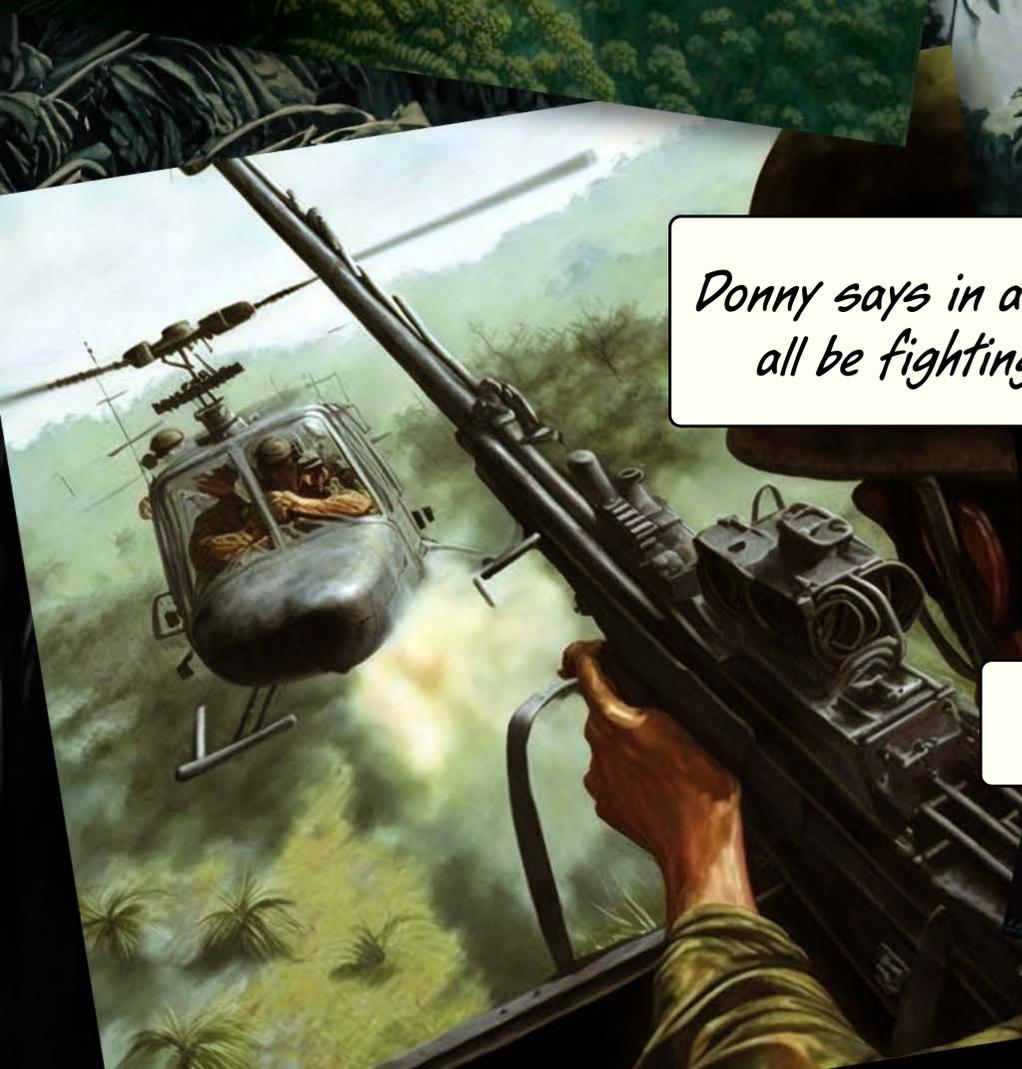
There are guys stationed in the SRV from all over the World.



I guess there's nothing like a common threat to bring people together.



Donny says in another life we'd all be fighting each other.



He's probably right.



Despite everything, I can't begin to describe how beautiful this country is.

Mountains and jungles and ancient temples...

Sometimes I forget why we're here, like this is some kind of exotic vacation.

Then, of course, it all comes crashing back.

When we're out on S&D, we go three or four days without being able to take a shower or sleep in a bed.



We wash our clothes in the river, forage food from the abandoned farms and villages.



When you hear the sound of the chopper coming in over the mountains to pick you up...



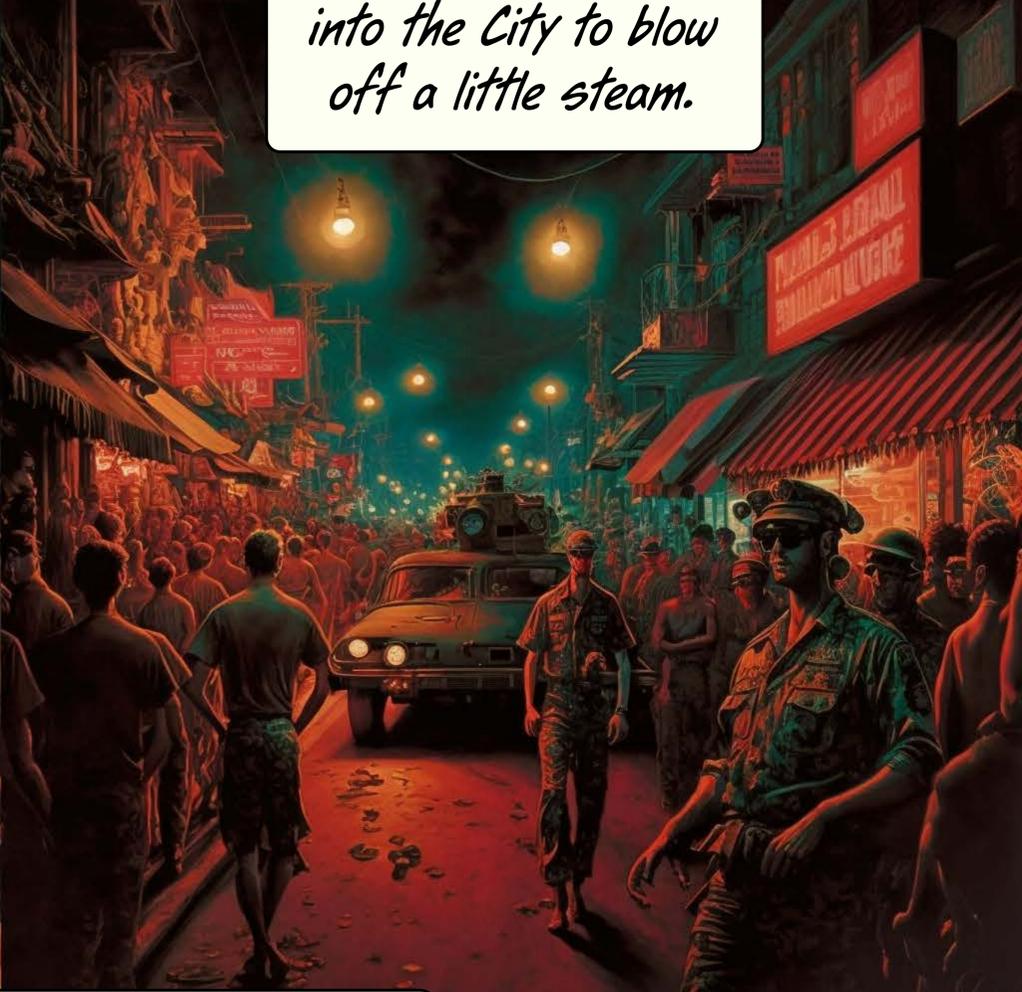
...you feel this wave of relief. Which is crazy.

Every rotation, we get 24-hr off-base passes.



Me and the guys head into the City to blow off a little steam.

It's supposed to be half empty by now - especially since they began the airlifts - but it doesn't seem that way on a Saturday night.



Don't worry, we're all very respectful, being invited guests and all.

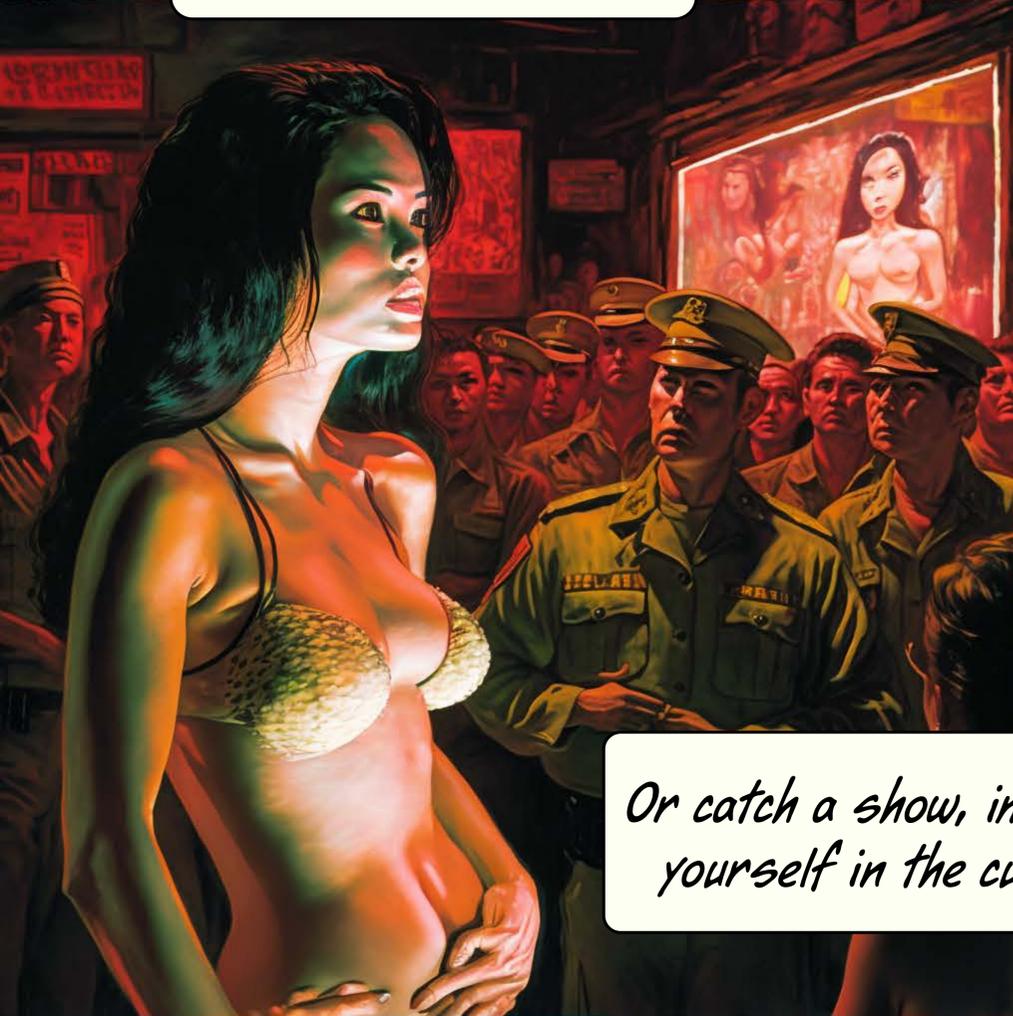




Once you're there, it's easy to lose yourself for a few hours.



Just to recharge, enjoy a quiet meal with the squad.



Or catch a show, immerse yourself in the culture.



I've made some good friends here.





As for the mission - well...



For the first two months, we were running rescue ops.



Local people who had ignored the evac orders, and refused to leave their homes.

Almost always, we got there too late. That starts to gnaw at you.

We always seem to be one step behind.



The enemy - they're smart. They only attack at night and then melt back into the jungle.



*But you can never be sure
they're gone for good, that
they're not watching you, waiting.*



So you're always on guard.



Always on edge.



*But occasionally
you're reminded of
why we're here.*





*And why it's so important
to keep going.*

Despite the odds.



*It wasn't until this last
week that we finally engaged
the enemy and saw combat.*



There's been a new offensive in the North, a series of attacks that seem co-ordinated.

So last week, Charlie Company was sent in to reinforce.

Turns out, we were going to the worst place in the world, and we didn't even know it yet.



We were expecting them, we'd trained for them, so I guess we should have been ready.



But truthfully Mom, I wasn't.

Because despite the briefings, the newsreels, the photographs, even that documentary we watched together about London...

..nothing can prepare you.



I know they say we brought this on ourselves, but nothing about this will ever feel right.



*The troops we're
embedded with have their
own name for them.*

"Giao Long"

*When they whisper
that name, their
eyes grow wide.*



*It's fear, of course, but
also something else.*



*Robbie says it's reverence.
Worship.... almost like Gods.*



*But they're not Gods. You
and I both know that...*



They're Monsters.



≡ THERE'S SOMETHING
HAPPENING HERE. ≡



≡ WHAT IT IS AIN'T EXACTLY CLEAR. ≡



≡ WE GOTTA STOP NOW, WHAT'S THAT SOUND? ≡



≡ EVERYBODY LOOK
WHAT'S GOING DOWN. ≡



*And even if we're lucky
enough to stop one, it
seems like two more rise
to take its place.*

And bigger than ever.

*Like a weed we can
never stamp out.*

Or maybe a virus.

*Donny says Oppenheimer's
bomb poisoned the Earth,
gave it cancer, and this is
how it's fighting back.*

That they're not monsters.

They're antibodies.



I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm laying all this on you.

The only thing that makes it bearable is when I think of home, and how it must almost be summer there.





Do you remember that trip we took to Wildwood to see Aunt Joan?

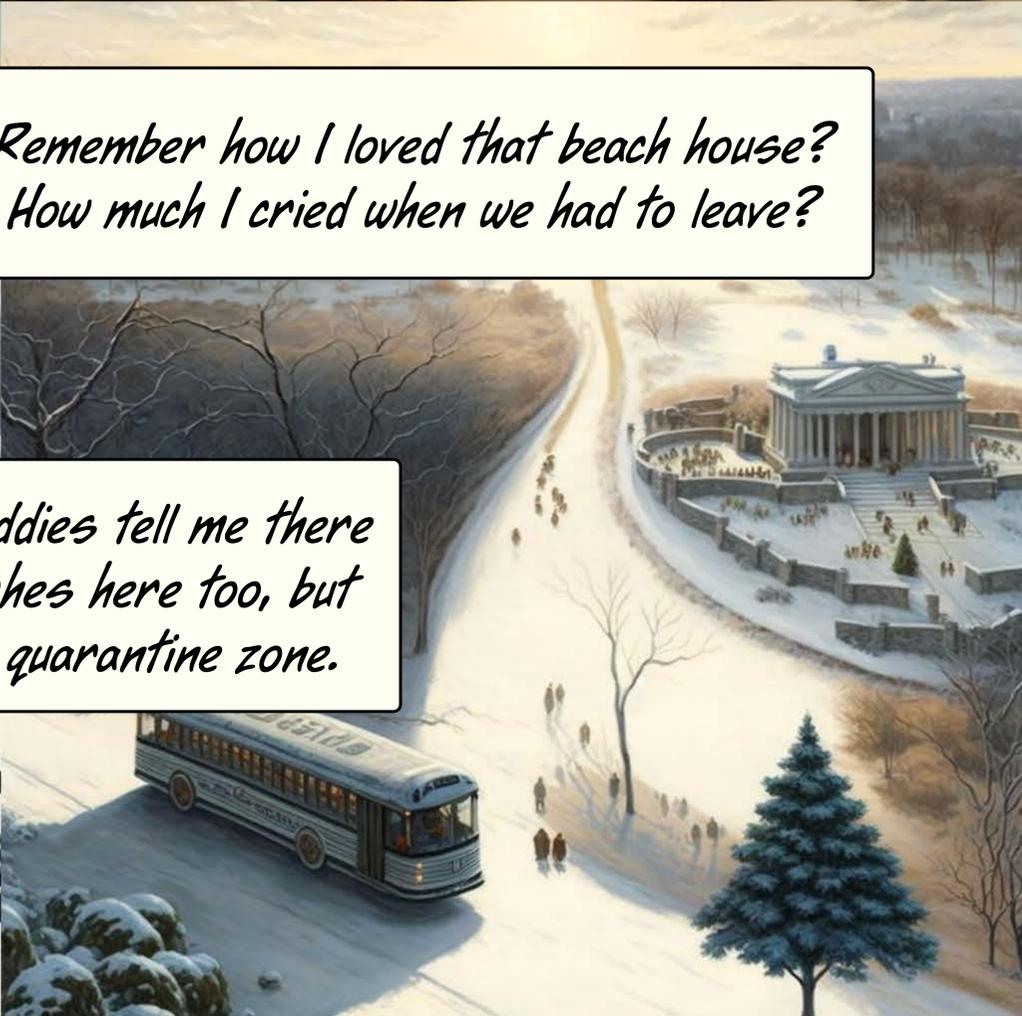


I can't have been more than seven.



Remember how I loved that beach house? How much I cried when we had to leave?

My Vietnamese buddies tell me there are beautiful beaches here too, but they're all in the quarantine zone.



So I guess I probably won't get to a boardwalk this year. Haha.



If you visit Aunt Joan, please say "Hi" for me.



Ask her to send me some biscuits.



I have to wrap this up for now.

We head back into the Zone tomorrow and I want to mail this before first light.

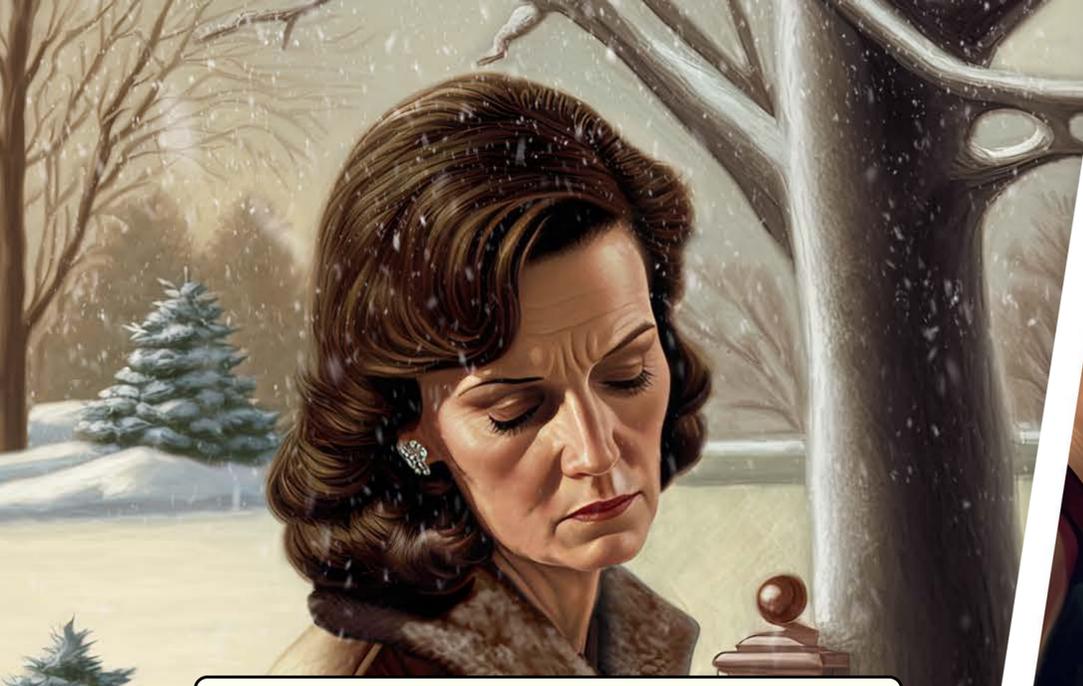
Like I said, there's a rumor going around that we could be home by Christmas.

I hope that's true, but it doesn't seem likely. They're just too strong.

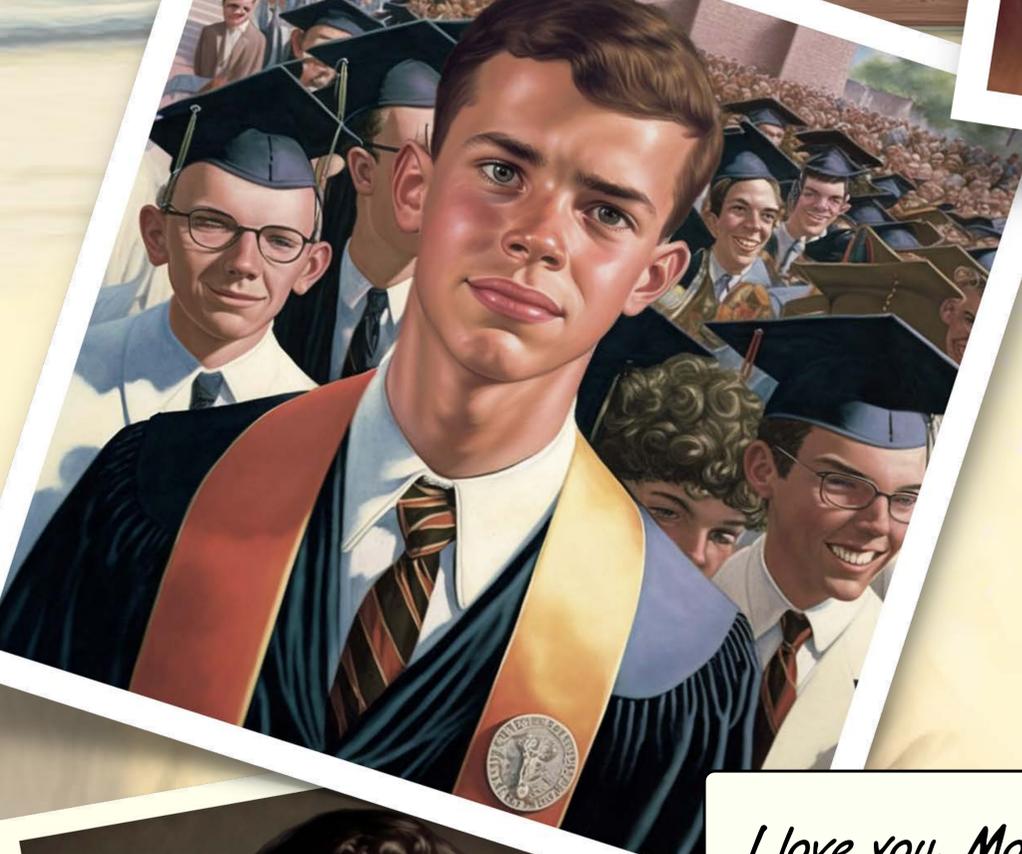


But whatever happens, I want you to know I'm in the right place.

We're saving so many thousands of lives, just by slowing the enemy down, giving people more time to evac.



We just have to hold them off a little longer. Or at least try.



I love you, Mom, and miss you.



I can't wait for all this to be over.

I can't wait to be home again.



**THOMAS RAY
WILSON**

1948 -1967

**PRIVATE
US ARMY**

**BRAVELY DEFENDED
THE PEOPLE OF SAIGON
BEFORE THE CITY
WAS DESTROYED**

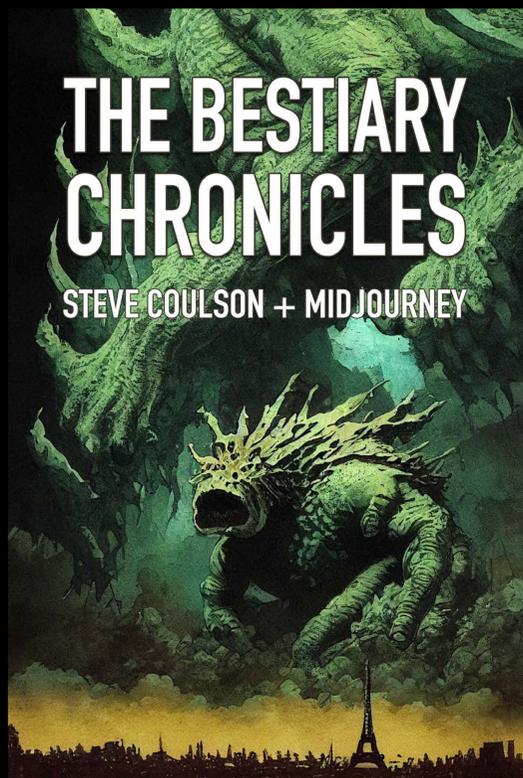
"We live in the flicker"

Love, Tommy Ray."

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