

Dear Ed Dodge,

My grandpa would tell me about Vietnam when I asked. But his eyes would always mist over, and he would get that far away sound in his voice. Now I know why.

Dau changed my perspective on everything. Dau made me realize that I have been selfish. I am not proud of that, but I must admit it. I have been thinking I had it bad, while kids in Vietnam had to look out their window and see the bodies laying around their village. I made myself finish the book, just to force the truth into my brain.

The part when Morgan lost his friend, Bruckner, made me cry. No other book has made me cry. But I did more than cry. I feared that my friends could die, and I would have only mom and stepdad left. What then? What if they died, like my dad did? Just left me alone. What if? What if? What if?

Dau is Vietnamese for pain. That is what this book brings out in me, pain. Pain, the unimaginable pain the soldiers had to go through. Pain, the pain of the Vietnamese people. Pain, the pain of the loss, the soldier's death brought to the family. I have always approached death warily. The unimaginable, unsolvable subject. What happens when you die? I ask myself that question all of the time because I am agnostic. What is the scientific explanation of what happens when your life ends? I don't know, but this book made me feel comfortable when speaking of death, able to deal with the pain the subject of death brought me. I just got told that my grandpa, Dale, is dying from cancer that has spread to pretty much every part of his body. Brain, liver, kidneys, bladder, and his lungs. He doesn't have much time left. When I was told about this, I spent the better part of an hour weeping hysterically. Then my mom walked in and she told me that everything that lives, dies. That has always calmed me down, because then I know that there is nothing I can do about it. But still the pain is hard to cope with. Ever since my dad died, I have had days that brought me wave after wave of sadness. When people came to me and told me about petty things they were bawling about, like losing a boyfriend, it made me want to say, "trade you my pain for yours any day," but I didn't. I comforted them, told them it was going to be ok, and went home and cried. It was one of those days when I picked up your book, and it has been my savior.

Your book also brought out good things in me too, like kindness, cherish every moment, and live while you can. I believe that YOLO is an understatement, and I prefer saying "live with no regrets." That, my friend, is one thing I have always had. Regret, that I never got the chance help the homeless people on the street, give them money, at least, before my grandpa would usher me away saying to "avoid people like that." In my head I would be screaming, "REALLY! Did you just do that to a homeless man?! Someone who needed help, a person you could have given help to! You fought in a war, and you just did THAT?!" I asked why, and he said it brought back memories, memories that did not need to be dredged up. That, honestly, never occurred to me. But what is good about my grandpa is that he lives in the moment, and is always happy, and that improves my mood so much. It amazes me that someone who came out of the war, is happy enough to listen to my problems, while never saying a word about what he is feeling. My mom, on the other hand, is the one person (not counting my stepdad) who is always honest with me. She tells me how she is feeling while listening to my problems. I feel like I am the luckiest child alive, to have the honesty that other kids don't have in their lives. And I feel like I am rambling on and on so... I am going to end this letter.

In the end, your book has made me think more about other people, become more comfortable about the subject of death, and to live in the moment. You are honestly a sensational writer, and I hope that other people read your book to experience the change that I went through after reading this book.

Toi cam on (Vietnamese: I thank you)

--Jessica Kelly