

Attention!!

Writer's experiences lacking 'Alice in Wonderland' fantasy

I like to think that I am an "aspiring writer," because I like to write. Mostly, I write about my home, my country and my people. My writing is centered around my own experience during and after the war. I often dream that one day I will be "discovered" and my stories will appear in those prestigious journals.

Naturally, when a literary friend visited me, I showed him a sample of my writing.

After 30 long minutes waiting for him to read through those pages, he looked at me and said, "It's OK. But it's so sad." He paused, briefly. Then he looked at me in a strange way, as though he was waiting for me to give some sort of explanation. I didn't. I still looked at him, directly into his eyes.

He said, "You know, it's too sad. People don't like sad stuff. Imagine: all the sadness going on around the world today, do you think that they would waste their time on a sad story like this? You know, lighten it up. Put some humor in it. Some action. And some fantasy. Oh, people love fantasy. Like 'Alice in Wonderland.' "

I appreciate his honest criticism, but Vietnam has never been a wonderland.

He was right that my stories are sad. But what else could I project when all that surrounded me were nothing but sorrow and ugliness—the ugliness of bombs passing over our heads; the ugliness of fire burning down cities' trees, houses, schools; the ugliness of the destruction turning playgrounds into graveyards.

At any instance, at any particular

time, I can think back and the whole image, the entire picture of my experience unfolds right in front of my eyes. For instance, I can remember clearly New Year's Day 20 years ago. I was walking on the street watching the parade. Suddenly, a gigantic explosion hit about 10 meters ahead. People screamed. They ran wild. I slipped away from my mother's hand and got lost in the crowd.

I ran away, away from the explosion. Only the bombs kept falling, one after another. Each time, they sounded louder and nearer. I had nowhere to run. No matter what direction I took, the bombs seemed to hit there before me. I wasn't crying—not that I was brave, but for some strange, unexplainable reason, I couldn't cry. Then, I fell down. People stepped on my legs, on my hands. A body fell on top of mine.

Down on the ground, I could hear the loud screams of the wounded ones, the cry of the lost children, and the explosions which overpowered all other noise. I could feel the blood from the body on top of me dripping down on my face and dropping onto the concrete.

Gradually, the thunder sounded less and less, until only the crying could be heard. The street suddenly was quiet. I struggled out from under the motionless body and looked around for my mother. I didn't see her. I walked alone on the street. Only then I began to cry.

I am sorry. I wandered into my homeland. I guess my friend had a point about my story being sad. I

guess I could have written something happier, like how happy I was when my school was closed for an entire month. I could have written about that, but that story to me is not real. My people have gone through many tragedies. I am fortunate enough to be able to come here, to America, the dream land, the land of the free. I am fortunate enough to be able to go to school, to study and to write freely, whenever I choose to write.

But there are still many of my own people suffering each day, in the Communist's jails, the concentration camps or in numerous refugee camps. There are many misconceptions about Vietnam, about the war from such movies as Rambo, Mission in Action, etc. I owe it to my people to voice a Vietnamese's voice, to express a different point of view about the war.

As for my literary friend, maybe one day, when my voice is heard, and when there is nothing else to be said about my home, I will write about humor and fantasy. Like you, I also have dreams and hopes. Like you, I also love fantasy. I would fantasize about a wonder world of sunshine on every corner, of flowers blooming in every garden, of all different colors of birds singing, dancing and harmonizing together on every peaceful song . . .

This week's Attention!! article was written by Thanh Cong Nguyen, who graduated as a petroleum engineering major last year.

Mental homicide

Reflections in the mirror
Of a lost and lonely world
Collection phone numbers and
names
Soon disposing of them all
Keeping some longer than others
For the false warmth they provide
Are these friends or merely faces
To guide one through the night
For though deceive ourselves we
may
Are we not always alone?

For no one knows us
Like we know us
Even then — so much unknown!
And as clay our form does change
The years oh how they erode us
We don't stand the test of time
For we humans think we're
stronger
Than the hands that manage time.
But in truth we're merely prisoners
Our prison's earth
Our sentence life.

Just living out a sentence
Each enclosed in cells of steel
Unable to even reach out
And know what others feel
Thus from day to day we struggle
Each thinking no one shares our
plight
Unaware that all the others
Are also caged and locked up tight.

So onward we do struggle
So lonely in our cell
Falsely believing no one can relate
To a life enjailed in hell.

Yet all we really need to do
Is reach out through the bars
Turn our gaze outward
Instead of inward
To see the other's cries
For we're really all together
Our loneliness we create
By turning faces inward
Which turns to loathing and self-
hate.

But if only we would realize
That our islands all connect
That our cells are all so similar
The differences we create
We could live together united
For all instead of one
There would be no isolation
One for all and all for one.

This week's Attention!! poem was written by Julie Minerbo, a senior psychology major.

Editor's Note: This *Attention!!* page will be used each week as a forum for you, our readers. We encourage you to submit any original work that would be suitable for publication in *At Ease*.

Opinions expressed on the *Attention!!* page are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of *The Battalion*, Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

Pictures for the *Attention!!* page should be black-and-white shots that are unique either in content, angle or technique. Columns, essays or poems should be no longer than 500 words and should be either printed or typed.

Don't forget to put your name and phone number on anything you send us. Then drop it off at *The Battalion*, Room 216 of the Reed McDonald Building. Be sure to specify that it is for *At Ease*.