

Last Night I Dreamed Of Peace

By: Ellie Barber

**Note to reader: This is a letter to the American people in the perspective of Dang Thuy Tram; a doctor who served for the Vietcong during the Vietnam War. This was her experience of her perspective of the war from her diary, Last Night I Dreamed of Peace.*

Dear American People,

Heartache is something that can last a lifetime. I understand what love is, I feel it every day. Yet love has been something that has been robbed from me...along with many other things. It is almost funny how much love can break a person to pieces. I have seen horrible things. I see brave men fight to their death every day. I see sons, friends, and brothers, bleed out and die before my eyes. Yet it isn't the screams of the mothers watching their sons die, the men wailing at the sight of their limbs severed, or the bombs that continuously haunt the clinic that pains me the most. What pains me the most is love. My pride would never allow me to admit it, but my heart bleeds every day for the man named "M". A man who will never be able to love me back as I do him.

My name is Dang Thuy Tram, and I joined the resistance like most of my friends and family. I have a duty to help my country achieve its liberation and independence. But oh, why must we go through this torture? I grew up in the North in a well off middle-income family. Growing up in Hanoi is just a memory now. A memory I cherish deeply. I miss my mother and brothers and sisters. I miss normal things like playing and laughing as a child. I know I am beautiful, smart, and I have a lot of integrity. I went to medical school to become a physician. I have always known it is in my heart and soul to help people. My brothers went to the South to fight in the war. I was also sent to the South to help run a clinic for the soldiers injured in battle. The whole nation is throwing itself into battle. We must certainly defeat the American invaders to bring ourselves to the joyful days of independence and freedom. This is the reason why I, along with thousands of fellow citizens, joined the war.

I am loyal to the communist party, and everyone seems to think I am fit to be a member. We have all sacrificed so much to this war. If it is not our actual lives that we give up, it's certainly our youth we sacrifice. I was such an ambitious girl with dreams and goals. I feel as if though that girl left me, and I live everyday feeling the pain and sorrows of my patients and myself. In this era, young people in their twenties throw their dreams away. Their dreams are now in the hands of American soldiers. The enemy blood is everywhere but everyone bears loss. Everyone knows the look of death and blood on their hands. Our families mourn our losses yet the fight is strong with optimism.

I lost another patient today during an amputation. I had to cut off his arm after being wounded in battle. I knew he was struggling and might not make it through the night. I was right, and he lost too much blood and he died during the night. I watched him die in my powerless hands. I go back and think of every step I made during his procedure. Sometimes, what haunts me the most, is thinking of all the things I could have done differently and maybe this man would still be alive. In his pocket was a picture of a pretty woman and writing on the back that said, "I'll wait for you, my love." No one can avoid of the troubles of this war. We will not stop pouring blood until every last evil American is gone. Until then can we find happiness and our dreams back.

On September 27th, 1968, I was finally admitted into the party. I am finally able to bear the title "communist". I am willing to give my life to the party and fight for the Vietcong. On June 11, 1969, the Provisional Revolutionary Government is formed which is a major step in the revolution. The hunger for

this battle and to see an end is growing. Although the blood-thirsty Americans won't let up and all day and night the sounds of bombs and jet planes circling above are deafening. Something I also do for the party is I am teacher at the clinic with many medical students looking up to me. Yet I do not know how well of a teacher I am in these conditions. The things that make you successful in life like love, a family, and a prideful career seem so out of reach when my brothers are dying on the table before me every day. It is not like love is so far-fetched, for some reason I do not feel like I could love anyone to the extent I loved M. But how silly of me to even think about love when my people are out fighting every day in battle. Some even being tortured by the blood-thirsty Americans.

I'll get letters from my brothers telling me about their experience. These letters bring me so much joy and pain all at the same time. I hope every day that they will return alive and safe. But from what I have seen this is probably a miracle I am asking for. Death seems so simple sometimes. Sometimes I feel as if though that would be easier. I get upset I feel this way. I need to stay strong and help my brothers who need me here at this clinic. One night we were woken by more bombs than usual. Empty is something we all feel but it sinks deeper in our minds when we see the new destruction every day. People fleeing their homes and places burnt to the ground everywhere. The evacuation scene feels like it even makes your memories empty. Perhaps no one on earth has suffered more than the courageous citizens of this South. Why, American people, do you torture these good citizens who want freedom and happiness just like you? Last night I dreamed of peace.

In conclusion, I am just one of the many that had everything taken away from them during this battle. Yet I am just like you, and I love and want to be loved. My heart aches the same as any human would if they went through this life. The love I carried died on June 22, 1970. I died at the hands of an American soldier, shot in the head, effortlessly. But my love died in this beautiful country, my home, Vietnam.

-Dang Thuy Tram