

Word of Honor Study Guide

Word of Honor by Nelson Demille

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Word of Honor Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 through 8.....	4
Chapters 8 through 20.....	7
Chapters 21 through 30.....	11
Chapters 30 through 35.....	13
Chapters 36 through 38.....	16
Chapters 39 through 41.....	18
Chapters 42 through 45.....	20
Chapters 46 through 54.....	22
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	28
Themes.....	30
Style.....	32
Quotes.....	34
Topics for Discussion.....	37



Plot Summary

Ben Tyson is on a train bound for his work when a book being read by a fellow commuter catches his eye. The book, "Hue: Death of a City," describes the actions of Tyson's platoon on a particular day during a battle in Hue, a Vietnamese city. The author, Andrew Picard, cites two unnamed members of Tyson's platoon and an unnamed nun as his sources of information. Tyson immediately realizes that the story is the account of the murders of several civilians by American troops under his command, and knows that under military law he can be held accountable for those crimes. The problem is that he can't be tried as a civilian for military crimes and so he is soon recalled to the Army and assigned to Fort Hamilton where he's placed under restriction to remain on post.

Tyson, who has established a rapport with the military investigator, hires an attorney named Vincent Corva. Corva, though seeming to be operating off-the-cuff, pours his heart into Tyson's defense even when Tyson himself seems despondent and willing to give in without a fight. Through the attention on Tyson, the media soon zeroes in on the fact that his wife, Marcy, is famous for her role in protesting the Vietnam War and that a nude photo of her had been printed during that era. The Tyson's son, David, catches abuse at school from those who read - and believe - the tabloids.

Tyson never really proclaims his own innocence. The situation was that his platoon had taken heavy casualties and was without effective leadership because Tyson was the only man among them with a leader's rank and experience. As they approach a hospital on the outskirts of Hue, the men effectively mutiny, killing civilians and holding Tyson at gunpoint. Tyson himself shoots one of his own men in the heart to stop his random killing but can't stop the massacre that follows. As Tyson continues to fear for his life and his men continue to mumble about killing the only commander on hand, Tyson files false radio reports and the men all eventually come to an understanding, each memorizing and offering details of a firefight that never happened.

Picard's book opens the way for a trial against Tyson. A medic who hated Tyson for taking a strong stand when the medic was caught raping a young girl testifies that Tyson gave the order to kill the unarmed people in the hospital. He's backed up by one soldier's testimony. Tyson doesn't call any of the men who had pledged to tell the story they'd all concocted and is found guilty of murder. Before he's sentenced, his former radio operator tells the entire story - as it really happened - and the jury panel of military officials decide that Tyson's only punishment will be to strip him of his rank and any pay due him.



Chapters 1 through 8

Chapters 1 through 8 Summary

Ben Tyson is on a train bound for his work when a book being read by a fellow commuter catches his eye. The book, "Hue: Death of a City," describes the actions of Tyson's platoon on a particular day during a battle in Hue, a Vietnamese city. The author, Andrew Picard, cites two unnamed members of Tyson's platoon and an unnamed nun as his sources of information. Tyson immediately realizes that the story is the account of the murders of several civilians by American troops under his command, and knows that under military law he can be held accountable for those crimes. Tyson, typically dedicated to his job as a corporate executive, arrives at the office after having read some of the book. He is preoccupied and tells his secretary to cancel his appointments for the day, leaves the office and picks up a copy of the book before stopping for a drink and going to his lawyer's office. Phillip Sloan asks if Tyson committed murder himself or ordered his men to do so. Tyson is somewhat evasive, as he will continue to be for the coming weeks with everyone. Sloan advises Tyson to sue Picard for slander and repeats the advice a few weeks later at a charity function both attend. Tyson fears that a civil lawsuit might bring unwanted attention to the case, which could set the stage for a trial.

The story of what happened at Hue is told through Picard's book and Tyson's memories. It is February 15 when Tyson's men - a rifle platoon - find themselves pinned down by enemy fire from a hospital. The enemy apparently leave, and the hospital staff drape a white sheet from a landing - an apparent sign of surrender. As Tyson and his men approach, they find that at least one sniper has remained behind and several Americans are killed, including Tyson's radio operator. Picard's book states that when the Americans entered the hospital and a doctor refused medical care to two American wounded because one was clearly past help and the other could wait for help, an American soldier "fired a burst from his automatic rifle," killing a doctor. He notes that the next details are unclear but it seems likely that the Americans wanted to leave behind no witnesses and killed many more.

Tyson arrives home to find his son, David, already there but that his wife, Marcy, not yet home. He reads a little of the book and drifts off to remember the details not included. The wounded rifleman who asks, "What are we going to do?" is told by Tyson that they were all going to die, and he believed it to be true. Then a bullet pierces a smoke canister giving Tyson an idea and he deploys his own. Other soldiers quickly catch on and they are able to pull back during under the cover of the smoke. They meet up with another platoon and dig in - literally - at a graveyard, dotting the edges of their foxholes with skulls. Marcy comes home and catches him napping. While she pours a drink, he shows her the book. He later realizes that he'd almost once told a psychiatrist - Dr. Stahl - about the incident at the Hospital Misericorde but feared that he would then tell Marcy and then his priest and then the military officials. He says that all those who were there that day made a vow of silence and that he simply kept that vow.



After two weeks, Marcy and Tyson seem to be considering the public perception of every move they make. When Tyson says they need a new car, Marcy says it's not wise while Tyson's job is "shaky." Tyson's company is owned by Japanese, and he says that his military items - including the photo of his father with the symbols depicting his successful shooting down of three Japanese planes emblazoned on the side of his own plane - seemed unwelcome in his office and were moved home. He has, at this point, had no official communication with his employers. At a party one particular evening, Tyson notes that he felt strange - "like the only Negro at a Liberal party dance. There wasn't enough of me to go around." Marcy says that for the first time in her married life she felt as if her own identity was overlooked and that she was "Ben Tyson's wife."

While Tyson has had no word regarding the military opinion of the actions of his platoon, officials are considering what should be done, beginning with who has jurisdiction. Lieutenant General William Van Arken, the Army's Judge Advocate General; Fraser Duncan from the Secretary of the Army's office; Herbert Swenson, aide to the Secretary of Defense; and presidential aid Thomas Berg meet officially to discuss interdepartmental communications but really are discussing what to do about Tyson. They come to several conclusions, including the fact that if they don't do something about the situation there will be problems from the Vietnamese and that the fact that Tyson is no longer in the military could pose a problem regarding jurisdiction. They end the meeting with Berg's admonition to remember that the fate of Tyson and his men are at stake because the penalty could be execution by firing squad.

Chapters 1 through 8 Analysis

Tyson has some clue of the turmoil that's going to come though he may not be prepared. As he heads home the day after discovering the book, he notes that nothing had prepared him for what he faced that February 15, 1968, in Hue, and that having lived that life had probably not prepared him for what he was going to have to face now.

The relationship between Tyson and Marcy is complex, and he notes that they seem mismatched but have survived longer than most couples have. They are physically attracted to each other though Tyson doesn't seem pleased with the way Marcy runs their home. Everyone is required to do equal shares of household work, and Tyson says that the fact that he works harder, longer hours and makes more money doesn't excuse him. He also notes that he "fought a war to keep a country from being run the way his house was run." The couple has had a second child, Jenny, who died less than a week after her birth. Tyson believes it could have been his exposure to the chemical Agent Orange and Marcy believes it could have been the LSD she took while in college. Either way, Marcy is unwilling to try for another child though Tyson hates the thought of David as an only child.

As Tyson realizes the storm that's to come following the publication of his book, he worries about David and Marcy as much as about himself. It's interesting that Marcy wants to know how he didn't tell her and concludes that he "blocked" the incident. He objects, calling that opinion "psychobabble" and insisting that he simply decided not to



talk about it. He says that he doesn't feel the need to talk about every aspect of his life, even with her. This seems to be an indication that Tyson does tolerate some quirks of Marcy - such as the sharing of household duties - but that Marcy also tolerates Tyson's quirks.



Chapters 8 through 20

Chapters 8 through 20 Summary

Tyson watches a television documentary about the "unfolding drama" created by Picard's book, wrapping up with a scene in front of a house. Tyson recognizes it as his own in which the reporter notes that the one person who can say whether Picard's book truly depicts what happened in that hospital - Tyson - isn't talking.

Berg, Truscott and Van Arken again meet, this time agreeing that only the three of them will continue to work on the issue of what to do with the Tyson case. They learn that none of the men from Tyson's platoon is still in the military and Van Arken suggests that all those men be offered immunity in return for their testimony against Tyson. Truscott responds that the reason for that is obviously that it would be more difficult to recall any of the enlisted men and that Tyson is "an easier catch." The following Tuesday, Tyson meets briefly with Sloan who provides copies of several tabloids with headlines that call for presidential action and tout stories from "Marcy's friends and lovers." Sloan finally puts the question bluntly to Tyson, asking whether Picard's book is lies or the truth and Tyson responds that he is guilty of murder. Tyson says that anyone can be a military genius when looking back on a battle but that the real question is how a leader responds in the heat of battle. Tyson later meets with a man named Chet Brown who quietly suggests that Tyson move to Sweden. The lengthy meeting includes a moment where Tyson slugs the man and the man says that Tyson shouldn't cause problems for the government. At another meeting including Van Arken and several other officials, it's decided that Major Karen Harper of the JAG program will conduct the investigation against Tyson. The qualifications that lead to her selection is that she's soon to complete her service time and doesn't plan a military career, that she's just returned from a trip in the Far East and so probably hasn't been inundated by information about the issue, and that she's known for her ability to gain the trust of male suspects.

Marcy, Tyson and David travel to Sag Harbor where they've rented a cottage for the summer. David soon blends in with some local boys and spends much of his time fishing and hanging out. Marcy and Tyson are soon at odds. Tyson admits that he feels angry over the extensive coverage of Marcy's youth and says that the fact that she continues to be in the spotlight will also keep him there. Marcy retaliates that she may have had sex with a hundred but that Tyson obviously killed that many. Tyson's employers tell him that they'd like him to take a post in Tokyo but Marcy objects, saying it's not fair that she have to give up her career, though she later says she will go with him if that's what he wants. Tyson heads back to the city to work and the two part on bad terms.

Marcy calls Tyson. He tells of his recall to the military. She says that she would go to Tokyo with him if he chooses to leave the country and that she realizes he isn't going to return to her in Sag Harbor. Tyson's employers have offered him half salary during his time in the military but he's refused it. Marcy first objects to this stand, and then agrees



that he should do whatever his conscience and pride dictates. Major Karen Harper contacts Tyson, informs him of his rights and that she's investigating the allegations against him, and they agree to meet. Though he declines to make a statement, he does agree to answer questions.

He lapses into memories leading up to the massacre at the hospital. While on march, the platoon under Tyson's command met up with many hostile situations and horrible conditions. At one point, they encounter civilians burying their dead and discover that the dead are enemy soldiers. Tyson's men throw the three unburied bodies into the water and take the shovels from those digging the graves. Tyson and his men then move forward toward An Ninh Ha - a "suburb" of Hue. They find there anti-American graffiti as well as banners and flags belonging to the enemy. Tyson says there are no civilians and no sign of a government presence. He makes the point that the hospital is not designated by "visitor parking" signs and asserts that there is no Red Cross flag marking the building. He says it could have been any kind of building. At this point, Harper says that Picard's book indicates that there was a white bed sheet hanging out of the window, evidently signaling either an all-clear or a sign of surrender. Tyson denies that he saw such a sign, that he was disoriented, had a worn map and had no idea the building was a hospital. Privately, he admits that he lied about knowing that the building was a hospital but doesn't change his story to Harper. It's as Harper begins to question why Tyson made certain decisions that he admits that the story is full of holes, but that it's the one he and the men of his platoon practiced after the incident. He says that it was standard practice in Vietnam that an officer have some enemy weapons to turn in with bodies of innocent civilians killed - an explanation of what could otherwise be called murder or accidental shootings of innocents. Tyson says that once inside the building, the Americans realized it was a hospital and that many of the staff and patients were killed, but that it was the unfortunate result of a battle rather than an intentional massacre by American troops.

Tyson notes that Harper is trying to scare him by saying that she's going to contact the Vietnamese government in an effort to find other survivors, but that she doesn't yet know that Sister Teresa is the only survivor. Tyson later travels to Washington, D.C., where he visits the Vietnam War Memorial and finds the names of several he knew, including Lawrence F. Cane who was the only of Tyson's men to die inside the hospital during the massacre. Tyson recalls the letter he personally wrote to Cane's mother, including his attempt at comfort with the assurance that Cane died quickly. Tyson realizes that it's probably the only part of the letter that he knew to be true, because Tyson himself had shot Cane through the heart.

Tyson meets Harper for a second interview in Washington, D.C. He takes time to visit the Vietnam Memorial prior to the meeting at the Four Seasons Hotel, during which Tyson learns that the medic, Steven Brandt, and a soldier named Richard Farley are the two sources cited by Picard. When a waitress recognizes Tyson, he insists that they leave, citing the possibility that she's calling a tabloid journalist to sell the information. Tyson refuses to go to a bar to continue the interview, saying that he'll meet her in his suite if she wants to continue the meeting. She does and they have an extensive discussion about potential witnesses. Harper says there have been two who confirmed



Tyson's account of events. Tyson refuses to call for those who remain alive to come to his defense, saying it must be their own decision to do so. Under her questioning, Tyson does admit that he knew Sister Teresa outside the hospital scene, that he had met her several times, as she did various duties with children and he was called on once to play Christmas tunes on the piano during a cease-fire. He also says that he had been reassigned and was to have left the platoon on January 30, but that he decided to take a chopper flight later in the day. By that afternoon, his platoon was embroiled in a battle and the site he was to have transferred to under siege.

Chapters 8 through 20 Analysis

Tyson and David discuss the situation and Tyson learns that David is being harassed for two reasons. One is the publicity around Tyson because of the book. The second is that Marcy was photographed in 1968, nude, at a fountain with a group of other nude students protesting the war. The media had discovered the photo and brought it to light after the publicity surrounding Tyson grew. The photo had made the cover of "Life," and journalists now were citing the fact that Marcy had been protesting the war while Tyson was fighting it. Tyson says that David should be taken away from the area as soon as school is out. Marcy has already suggested they put their home up for sale and other courses of action. One evening, Marcy returns from a late-night grocery shopping trip and she and Tyson have rough sex on the kitchen counter. It seems to be a normal occurrence for the two but this time Marcy feels that the situation was a foreshadowing of the bad times they're soon to endure.

As Major Harper interviews Tyson for the first time, he recalls the scene leading up to their arrival at the hospital. Tyson remembers that the soldiers were, for the most part, very young. He says that the conflict had become "a children's war" and notes that children were apt to become unruly. Tyson himself realizes that he is the last available to command the platoon and that if something were to happen to him, the group would be ordered out of the immediate area and into the company of a larger group. He cites mistrust but seems to believe that the men won't actually do him harm in order to accomplish this. He tells about some of the individuals in the platoon. Radio operator Daniel Kelly is close to Tyson and mistrusts the men under Tyson's command at this point. Steven Brandt was a medic who consumed some sort of nitrates to make himself ill to escape combat. Tyson tells Brandt that he'll someday be seeing patients in his own medical clinic and will be able to remember that he did something good during the war, urging Brandt not to miss the opportunity for that memory.

Tyson says that he realizes during the scene in which the villagers are burying the dead enemy soldiers that the men are "completely possessed" by the war in which they live. He seems to be searching for a "spark of decency" when he tells the men to have the villagers lie down in the open grave and to kill them all. None of the men obeys. Tyson says, "Okay heroes," and moves the men onward toward An Ninh Ha, on the outskirts of Hue. At this point, Tyson doesn't go further into his objective or what drove him to make that request of his men. It's left to the reader to determine the significance of this memory.

There seems to be an emerging relationship between Tyson and Harper. She admits that she's frustrated with the entire situation and asks that he simply admit to manslaughter, citing the fact that the statute of limitations has run out on that charge. He refuses, saying that the memories of those who participated in the war should not be tarnished by his attempt to get out of a court martial. He says that if he's guilty of mass murder, he should be punished. If not, that should be declared as well.



Chapters 21 through 30

Chapters 21 through 30 Summary

After Harper leaves, Tyson recalls his second meeting with Sister Teresa. He had gone to visit her in the convent, taking her a Christmas gift of soap, wine and other small luxuries. He had driven her to the Joan of Arc Church, arranging to meet her again the following day and to play piano for a children's party.

Tyson next goes to visit Picard, discovers that he doesn't like the man but can't quite dislike him either, and learns that Marcy has also been to visit Picard, asking questions about the truth of Picard's book. Picard confides to Tyson that he probably shouldn't have used the chapter about the hospital massacre unless he was also willing to use stories that showed himself in a poor light - light the day he met a little boy with his genitals blown off and ran away rather than helping the child. After leaving Picard's house, Tyson goes for a swim, gets a cramp in his wounded knee and almost drowns. He knows that if he does drown, everyone will believe it to be suicide and fights harder to survive. He's saved by a couple on a cabin cruiser called the Tranquility who returns him to the beach near the rented house. Tyson interrupts David necking with a girl named Melinda and discovers that Marcy is out to dinner with Melinda's mother. Tyson manages to make his way upstairs, though his knee is painful, and is almost immediately asleep.

Tyson arrives at Fort Hamilton where he is greeted rudely. Lieutenant Colonel Mortimer Levin takes Tyson's passport, orders that he live on base housing, and restricts his travel to a fifty-mile radius of the post, which means he can't travel to Sag Harbor. Tyson objects to the confinement but Levin points out that the confinement means that the military must complete the investigation and make a decision in Tyson's case within ninety days. Tyson ends his initial interview with Levin with the idea that he never quite felt that he'd fulfilled his obligation to the Army after his tour in Vietnam, but that he now sees a definite end.

Tyson is assigned as assistant museum curator on the post under a civilian named Dr. Russell. Levin says that Tyson will be held to a higher level of accountability for his actions in Vietnam than others will, because he is obviously a man of breeding and education. Tyson says that he came to feel during his time in Vietnam that he'd been abandoned by his own country. Levin says that Tyson's ticket out of the court martial is to convince the military that he is the product of a situation - that he'd been given the "rules of engagement" outlining who he could and could not kill and that he was surrounded by kids, armed and uncontrollable. He also tells Tyson that it doesn't matter if he refuses to sign a new military oath because the one he originally signed in 1966 remains valid.

Van Arken talks with Colonel Ambrose Horton, a noted military law professor who had been involved in the Nuremberg trials. Horton makes several points, including the fact



that Americans can't "start court-martialing lieutenants until we call the generals into account." He says that Tyson was sent to Vietnam to kill and the question is whether he did that appropriately. He poses the question as to whether it's fair that Tyson be tried when his men - the actual triggermen - are immune. The points are made that Tyson can be tried only for murder since all other charges would be past their statute of limitations and that an enlisted man will always say that he was following orders when he performed some atrocity while an officer will say that he never meant for his orders to be followed in that manner.

Chapters 21 through 30 Analysis

After his near drowning, Tyson is awakened by Marcy. They argue some, though with less fire than before their time apart. She wants to flee the country, citing her fear that he'll be found guilty. He wants to stay and fight the case. She says that he isn't fighting but he argues that the case against him isn't as strong as they'd want. She says public opinion is in his favor. They end the evening by having sex and Tyson wakes at dawn.

Tyson is heading up a tour of the museum when Harper appears. She says that she has sufficient evidence to convene a court martial but that she fears his rights have been violated. They each admit to an attraction to each other but know that nothing will come of it. They part with Harper suggesting that he get a qualified military attorney - a suggestion Levin also made. She drops by his assigned house later with information she plans to file. They take a walk together, return to Tyson's house in a rainstorm and seem to be on the verge of reaching for each other for an embrace when Marcy interrupts the moment.



Chapters 30 through 35

Chapters 30 through 35 Summary

Marcy has obviously been cleaning and there are some tense moments as Marcy and Harper size up each other. Marcy insists that Harper go upstairs and dry off and she does so. Marcy says that David will be joining them as soon as Marcy has the officer's quarters allotted to Tyson ready for habitation though Tyson tries to encourage her otherwise. Marcy says that she's purchased a new car, a Jeep, and they have a few minutes of teasing before they have sex. Later, Tyson and Marcy are dining at the officer's club where he introduces her to Reverend Major Kennard Oakes, a "Baptist chaplain" who Tyson says has "befriended me." Tyson is soon very rude with the man and it becomes evident that he doesn't believe that he's really a chaplain but someone sent to spy on Tyson and his family. Tyson excuses himself and steps outside, saying he's going to make a phone call. He actually has a meeting with the reporter from the "American Investigator" who has written all the nasty things about Marcy. Tyson says he's going to tell the reporter, Wally Jones, his side but actually begins to beat him up. Chet Brown, the man who met with Tyson much earlier with the information about a government offer, shows up and forces Tyson into his car, saying someone will take Marcy home with an explanation.

Tyson soon meets with Vincent Corva. Corva is certified as a military attorney and, after some discussion, agrees to represent Tyson. Corva served in Vietnam as well, though wasn't in Hue at the time Tyson was there. Corva agrees to take Tyson's case for whatever money has been raised for his public defense fund. Corva's attitude is that there are no true battle stories. Tyson counters that he once heard an account of Gettysburg that was true - that the soldiers all went to Gettysburg and some of them came back, and that's all there was to it except for the details. Later, Corva has dinner with Tyson and his family. Afterward, Marcy asks Tyson if he has faith in Corva. Tyson says that even though Corva's defense is different, he believes it might be the most defensive. Tyson and Corva then have a meeting with Levin. Levin says that Harper's report asserts that there is sufficient reason to bring charges. The charges read against Tyson are for murder of ninety "Oriental human beings" and "fourteen Caucasians." The noted difference between the Orientals and Caucasians is apparently made because the names of the Caucasians are known but the Orientals are not. Tyson zeros in on this point, saying that the charges would never have been filed if there hadn't been Caucasians killed. Levin then tells Tyson that the terms of his arrest have been modified and that he's no longer to work at the museum, will now check in at Levin's office daily and will not be allowed to leave the base without permission.

Corva objects to the terms and indicates that he's going to file the objection formally. As soon as Corva and Tyson leave Levin's office, Tyson leaves the post, seemingly just to prove that he can. Corva says he wonders what Sister Teresa will say if she were found. Corva says that cross-examining a nun or priest is never a good idea. Corva says that their best defense is to create sufficient confusion in the minds of those judging Tyson



so that there's no option for them to return the not guilty verdict. Corva says one thing they have in their favor is that no one can accuse them of having coached any of the witnesses because Tyson coached them all twenty years earlier when they all pledged to take the details of that event. Tyson returns to base a short time later.

At one point, Tyson goes home, driven by a limousine driver named Mason Williams. He takes care of military memorabilia at his house, calls Marcy and says he wants another baby and a dog to fill up their empty house, takes most of his savings out of the bank, resigns his memberships in local clubs, and then pays off all the credit accounts and cancels accounts. Mason notes that they're being followed which Tyson knows. Mason also says that he believes public opinion was on his side, that he could have stuck closer to his friends, and they would have stuck by him.

Chapters 30 through 35 Analysis

The incident involving Tyson and the man he knows as Chet Brown provides extensive information regarding Tyson's situation. Brown takes Tyson to a deserted building, says that he knows about Tyson's near-drowning experience and that he'd been watching when Tyson and Harper ran back into the house to find Marcy there. Brown tells Tyson to climb up on a wall and to simply slide over backwards. The act would have taken Tyson to his death, which is apparently Brown's intention. Brown says that any death Tyson suffers must be either suicide or an accident. It's then that he says an "accident" would have to appear like what happened to Harold Simcox - one of the witnesses from Tyson's platoon who turned up dead after the investigation began. Brown doesn't further threaten Tyson but simply leaves him at this location, telling him that he should be able to find a taxi back to the base.

Tyson and Marcy are arguing over the situation, including the fact that there is nothing for David to do and it's nearing time for him to return to school. Marcy says he can't return to a public school and Tyson wants to send him to his grandmother in Florida and suggests that David attend school under a false name, but Marcy says no. The situation between Tyson and Marcy seems to be deteriorating though they have their moments of teasing. Their jokes seem a bit on the rough side, with rude comments including Marcy telling Tyson to "fuck himself. The problems between the two seem to be escalating as the situation comes nearer to a conclusion.

Tyson goes home and burns most of the items from his military trunk locker, giving his locker and the remaining items away. When Tyson arrives home, he discovers that someone has gone through his home. He sits and reads his military log, including the final entries. The day of the hospital includes the words, "Filed false radio report" and "Investigate," which Tyson notes could be extremely condemning if presented in court. Tyson also finds the entry after being taken onto the USS Repose that indicates the doctor had determined that Tyson doesn't tolerate morphine. Tyson notes that he doctor also wouldn't have tolerated it well if he had "been given a triple dose." Tyson then thinks back to the day of his injury. He recalls specifically saying that he didn't want morphine as Brandt was tending him, but Tyson soon begins feeling woozy. Brandt



writes "NM" on Tyson's forehead, meaning "no morphine," and assures Tyson that they'll give him morphine on the chopper. Aboard the ship, it's regarded as an accident, that Tyson might have injected himself with morphine and received one dose in the field and the other on the chopper. Tyson admits that Brandt almost committed the perfect murder and doesn't tell of his theory.



Chapters 36 through 38

Chapters 36 through 38 Summary

With only a week before the hearing, Marcy drops the news that she's returning to work. She says they need the money and that she's going crazy. Tyson points out that if she goes on a business trip she has planned, she'll have to read the results of the hearing in the paper.

Tyson recalls additional details of the massacre. While the hospital building burns, a woman steps through the door with an infant in her arms, and throws the child's body to the side just as Richard Farley shoots the woman. A young boy leaps from a second story window and is hit by a grenade thrown by Lee Walker. Hernando Beltran shoots a man who makes it from the building. They kill several others who try to escape. As they leave the area, Tyson feels relieved that he has Crane's body to back up the story of a firefight and hopes no one can tell that Crane was killed by Tyson's weapon. As they head out, the radio operator named Kelly asks Tyson where they're headed and he responds, "Hell."

Harper tells Corva that she found Beltran and Kalane, talked to their attorneys and was told they'd be witnesses for Tyson. She also says Walker, who has no attorney, will be Tyson's witness. Beltran is now a successful Miami businessman, Kalane is involved in the Honolulu tourist business, and Walker is a mechanic. Corva reminds Tyson that if he's convicted he'll be ordered to tell the truth of what happened and that the truth will be sufficient to convict all those who testify for him of perjury. Tyson says he'll worry about that when the time comes. The two men drink together and Corva eventually says that he believes Tyson is guilty but that he doesn't want him to have to pay - again. Corva himself says that he had a sharpshooter who kill three people rushing to get home before curfew, and that the man's excuse had been that his watch was fast. Corva questions why he allowed it to happen three times before putting a stop to it. Tyson realizes that even those who seemed to return from Vietnam intact probably had lost their honor there.

Corva comes to Tyson's for another visit and tells Tyson that General Farnley Gilmer is taking over the case where Harper left off. While Corva's impression of Gilmer is that he's a good JAG representative, he says that Gilmer is apparently feeling the pressure because he's "so cautious that when I say 'How are you?' he says, 'Allegedly fine.'" Corva, who hasn't won any cases, says that he's "due a miracle." Gilmer hasn't lost any. The other persons on the JAG team are Colonel Graham Pieve, Major Judith Weinroth and Captain Salvatore Longo. Corva points out that the two stages of the battle are to be fought. He says that Gilmer will hear the initial testimony and decide whether Corva should be court-martialed. Unlike a Grand Jury, Gilmer's is the only vote, which means that if the case isn't held over for court-martial, everyone will know it's because Gilmer decided that fact. Corva says that means Gilmer is almost certainly to hold the case over for court-martial. With that in mind, Corva recommends that they keep those



witnesses who will speak up for Tyson until the court-martial so that they don't have to show their hand ahead of time. Corva knows that there's some level of hatred between Steven Brandt and Tyson though he doesn't know the details. He says that he believes Tyson intends to show the details of that deep hatred during the trial, but doesn't push Tyson for the details even now. Once Corva is gone, Tyson says aloud to himself that the trial will be the point at which both Tyson and Brandt go down, but predicts that only one of them will rise from the rubble.

Chapters 36 through 38 Analysis

Corva tells Tyson that the FBI has located several members of his platoon, though he believes they were known all along and the information withheld until formal charges filed. Corva says the men will be witnesses for Tyson and questions the loyalty factor. He says that it could be argued that they would tell Tyson's version of the story out of loyalty for him, but that if they told the story of a massacre, they'd also be telling that they themselves were involved. Regardless of the fact that they have been promised immunity, Corva says they probably won't change their testimony to publicly indicate their involvement in a massacre. Corva asks Tyson why he is loyal to them and points out that Tyson has been charged for their crimes. Tyson says the Army ingrains that kind of loyalty. He says that all the men had wished him a fond good-bye when he was lying wounded and preparing for transport. He says it was a small thing, but that it impacted his decision not to turn the information over to military officials.

Corva and Tyson meet again and it's obvious the two have become more than attorney and client. Corva says that his wife pushed him into doing something and Tyson teasingly says that Corva should stand up for himself, that he did, after all, fight a war. Corva tells Tyson that he doesn't believe anyone "gives a shit." Corva tells Tyson that he'll become a case history, that there will be "millions of words written" about the case against Tyson, and reminds Tyson that he and his family are under scrutiny during the time leading up to the trial. Tyson says that Marcy went a bit crazy a few days ago and slung a glass ashtray through a window. Corva says that the family can't show any signs of weakness. He shows Tyson some new media coverage of the case and says there is apparently some interest in excavating the hospital site to search for evidence.



Chapters 39 through 41

Chapters 39 through 41 Summary

Corva tells Tyson that there's a conference room set aside for them and directs Tyson inside while he says he has to retrieve paperwork. Tyson goes inside to find five of the men who will be his witnesses - Tony Scorello, Paul Sadowshi, Louis Kalan, Lee Walker and Hernando Beltran. Tyson wishes Corva had come in with him, not to share the moment but so that Tyson could "beat the shit out of him." The men all pledge their loyalty to Tyson, though several admit that they're doing so for their jobs, family and public image. They also discuss the reasons Brandt and Farley gave them up and someone suggests that they'd like to kill them both. When the conversation turns serious with Kalane saying that he'll pay for it if Beltran can arrange it, Tyson interrupts saying that he covered for them once but won't do so again. Tyson's thoughts then turn to the night following the hospital massacre. He notes that he fears for his life and wonders if he would have time to defend himself if he were attacked. Then Kelly - the radio operator - begins the story that they would all tell as the truth. He says that they approached the building but didn't know it was a hospital and that's where two of the men were hit by sniper fire. Tyson takes up the story, offering one sentence at a time and having each of the men repeat it in turn until each has the same story in almost the same words. At the conclusion of their concocted story, the men gather, each pledging an oath to never change the story.

Corva returns. Beltran proposes a toast to the dead and says that though he can't remember their names he is certain God can. He also says that he never told anyone - even his priest - and that he carries the murder of the nuns on his soul with the hope that God will forgive him the deed. The five agree to wait, in case their testimony is needed, though Corva doesn't plan to call on them. As Corva and Tyson leave the room, Corva says that it's good to see "unit pride" and Tyson responds that it's somewhat remarkable after almost two decades. Corva says they seem like good men and Tyson points out that they're murderers, which prompts Corva to respond that it might be true, but that they "are our murderers."

As Tyson and Corva enter the room where the hearing is to be held, Harper tells Tyson that he might want to consider clearing up the details of Larry Cane's death. Corva asks what she means but Tyson doesn't provide him with the details until later when he calmly says, "I shot him through the heart." As the hearing begins, Corva announces that he isn't going to call any of the five men waiting in the building, which prompts some criticism for having brought them - at taxpayer expense - to the site. Corva sarcastically replies that they were sent to Vietnam at taxpayer expense and that they deserved this reunion. It's pointed out that three are missing - Kelly DeTong and Sister Teresa.

Picard begins his testimony by explaining that he encountered Sister Teresa by chance at a hospital where he was a patient and she was working, and that her story of the hospital massacre had piqued his interest. He placed locator ads, finding Brandt right



away who gave him the address for Farley and Tyson. Picard says that he - as a Marine officer - knows what Tyson's responsibilities were but that the current trial is "a travesty." Picard also says that he believes Brandt lied on an important point - that Tyson issued a direct order to kill enemy wounded in the hospital. When it's Tyson's turn to make a statement, he says that he wants the charges dropped only if the military plans to issue a statement restoring his good name. He says that a trial is preferable to simply dropping the charges with no resolution. Colonel Pierce, JAG prosecution attorney, says that whatever problems Tyson has is neither his concern nor that of the court and that there will be no apology.

Chapters 39 through 41 Analysis

Corva reminds Tyson before going in to the hearing in the Stonewall Jackson room that he doesn't need to salute Gilmer. It's an apparent attempt to have an emotional advantage. Corva makes other tactical maneuvers, including objecting to the use of the word "doctor" when referring to Brandt. Corva points out that Brandt was nothing more than a medic at the time of the incident and that assigning the title "doctor" now may encourage those listening to his testimony to give it more credence than it deserves.

Time passes with Tyson largely confined. He does run often though is typically followed and watched. Then he receives notice that he's to be court-martialed. Prosecution will be Colonel Graham Pierce, Major Judith Weinroth and Captain Salvatore Longo with Colonel Walter Sproule acting as judge. The trial is set for October 15. Levin says that the one point about the charge that concerns him is that there's no note limiting the punishment. He says it's standard to have a statement that "capital punishment will not be considered" or something similar, but that those words don't exist on Tyson's file. As part of the new restrictions, he's confined to house arrest.

At the officer's club the following morning, Tyson and Corva have breakfast and see that the JAG team is also having breakfast. When Gilmer and Harper arrive, there's a brief discussion with the waitress over where they are to be seated and they find a "neutral corner" which prompts a discussion between Corva and Tyson about the fact that Tyson must go out of his way to be friendly when he encounters any of them. Tyson is somewhat angry that Marcy has gone back to work and is traveling on this particular day rather than being on hand for moral support. As Corva and Tyson prepare to leave, they are approached by the staff and the hostess says that they have appreciated serving him, that he is "an officer and a gentleman," and that they wish him the best, which obviously touches Tyson.



Chapters 42 through 45

Chapters 42 through 45 Summary

The trial is held in a church. When Corva arrives, he says that there are mobs of people outside the gates, most with signs ranging from support for Tyson to "shoot the bastard." Corva and Tyson are using the office of Rabbi Weitz who says he didn't volunteer the space but drew lots, "and mine said defense." The church has been altered for the proceedings.

Sproule goes over the purpose of the trial, which, he says, is first to provide fair and impartial information and warns the prosecution not to allow that to override their zeal to win the case. As the case is about to begin, Picard is ushered out of his seat because he could be called on to testify. Corva tells Tyson that he doesn't plan to call Picard, but says the man shouldn't get a front-row seat to the trial after having been the catalyst for the entire situation. Tyson and Corva have the option to eliminate one member from the seven-member panel that serves as the jury. They discuss the option at length and Corva says that since there are none of the seven with anything particularly negative, it comes down to which one Tyson doesn't like the looks of. They finally each write a name on a piece of paper and find that they agree to excuse Colonel Laski.

Farley is the first witness called and Corva is faced with the decision whether or not to cross-examine him. Farley appears in a wheelchair and seems to be down-and-out. Pierce begins by taking Farley through the incident at the burial mound where Tyson and four men - including Farley - strip-searched the Vietnamese who were burying enemy soldiers. Farley says that while there, Tyson told the Americans to force the Vietnamese into an open grave and shoot them. He then moves on to the hospital with Pierce using the burial mound incident as a way to point out Tyson's state of mind that day. Farley tells a complicated story that includes Tyson's presence in an operating room. Farley says that Tyson ordered the men to shoot enemy soldiers in the hospital. Farley's story varies from one point to the next, sometimes changing points or making new ones and it's easy to see that he's having trouble keeping the details clear in his mind. When Farley is questioned by one of the panelists about his own role, he says that he did shoot at a couple of people but denies having hit anyone. He also admits that Tyson seemed frightened of the men of his own platoon during the events in the hospital. It's evident that Corva could completely tear him apart but Tyson suggests that they don't, preferring to hold their key elements as a surprise for Brandt. As they adjourn for the day, Tyson tells Pierce that he has no ill will toward Farley and asks him to carry a message to Brandt that "it's payback time," to which Pierce responds that he's certain Brandt already knows that.



Chapters 42 through 45 Analysis

Tyson says the entire proceedings have a sense of surrealism. He says at one point that he keeps "waiting for someone to call this off." The waiting seems to be difficult for Tyson and it's difficult for the family situation as well. The people - in both number and their identities - also seem to amaze Tyson. He says that his former secretary, Miss Beale, is there. He'll later discover that Mason, the driver who chauffeured Tyson around that final day in Garden City, his CO Levin and his former bosses are all present in the audience. Picard is there and is talking with Tyson's friends, the Sloans. His mother and sisters are also present.

Pierce begins opening remarks, saying that it isn't necessary that the prosecution prove that Tyson himself pulled the trigger, only that he was responsible for his men who committed a crime. He continues that the case against Tyson won't include any testimony that Tyson himself committed murder, but only that he encouraged his men to do so and took no action to stop it. Corva counters that those judging Tyson must keep in mind the conditions in a warfare situation and reminded them that the events will unfold through the eyes of men who have seen too much of war. In some ways, the court-martial is very much like any other criminal trial. There are, however some subtle differences, including the fact that the panel of "jury" members are all-military.

During the lunch break, Tyson returns to the officer's quarters assigned to Corva where he finds that Corva has papers detailing points of the case all over the walls and scattered on tables of the room. Tyson seems somewhat surprised and it does seem in direct conflict to how Corva has acted. In Tyson's words, that he has tried the case "out of his hat." In truth, Corva is taking the situation very seriously and will show his commitment to the case when Tyson doesn't seem to want to defend himself.

Tyson actually runs into Brandt on the walk between Corva's assigned quarters and the house Tyson and his family are assigned to after trial lets out that day. They chat for a few minutes though Brandt is obviously worried about Tyson. Tyson tells Brandt that his "photos of field work" could still present him with a problem. He doesn't yet elaborate but says that the photos of "female anatomy" could present a problem if discovered.



Chapters 46 through 54

Chapters 46 through 54 Summary

Marcy is in the audience but Tyson notes that they have effectively put the "marriage on hold" until after the trial. Brandt takes the stand and there is soon an argument as he's questioned about Tyson's concern for the mental health of his men during the tour in Vietnam. During the lunch break, Corva asks Tyson about Brandt, and Tyson says Corva probably wants to finish his lunch before being subjected to details of Brandt's time with national police. Back on the stand, Brandt says that Tyson had pumped up the troops with the stories of a possible blowjob at the hospital. Brandt's version of what happened includes the information that Cane was shot, in the heart, and died instantly. He attributes the shooting to a sniper and says that there was no resistance from inside the hospital. Pierce's questioning of Brandt continues for twelve hours. When Brandt says that he had the impression that Tyson was "more interested in imposing his will on that doctor and the staff of that hospital than he was in helping Arthur Peterson," Tyson stands up abruptly. He's instructed to take his seat and Corva later says that Tyson "scared the shit out of old Sproule."

Brandt's testimony continues with details of the men running wild while Tyson stood by, doing nothing. He ends his testimony with the story of the men in a small bunker, repeating the details of their fabricated story repeatedly until they were all able to tell the same details. Brandt says that he'd always thought he should have reported what he'd seen and that he considered giving the details to Picard as a way of putting the story into the hands of those who might bring Tyson to justice. Brandt then faces Corva's cross-examination. Corva jumps from one issue to another, seemingly at random, and soon scores a series of points by catching Brandt in small discrepancies. When Brandt says he feared retaliation on the battlefield, Corva says that he should have known he wouldn't be returned to that platoon after reporting a mass murder. The following day, Corva - at Tyson's insistence - calls no witnesses and does nothing further to counteract the details given by Brandt and Farley. Pierce and Corva offer closing remarks with Pierce saying that it's evident that Tyson participated in the massacre simply by his inaction and Corva saying nothing is clear. He goes so far as to point out that there's not even any way to prove that Tyson didn't file some report as his commanding officer was killed just days later before there was any lull in the fighting.

At 10 a.m. the following day, Sproule releases the panel to deliberate. It takes them most of the day to return a verdict of "guilty." In fact, Corva considers the fact that they take longer than a couple of hours a point in their favor - that it obviously indicates that at least some members of the panel are arguing for a not guilty verdict. The military law requires that only two-thirds of the panel agree and that only one vote is taken by secret ballot, meaning those with an opinion must take time to try to sway others to their side before the vote. Later, Tyson and Corva debate which of the two panelists voted against the guilty verdict but can't decide. Upon reading of the verdict, Tyson is arrested.

There's open sobbing in the courtroom and Tyson is taken, in handcuffs, to the post



lockup facility. He's driven there by Chet Brown, who still offers no real details of his role but says that if Tyson is willing to promise to say only good things about the military, his sentence will be commuted by the president. Tyson refuses.

On Monday, the sentencing phase of the trial begins and Corva calls Daniel Kelly to testify. Kelly is apparently involved in some sort of espionage though the details are never given. He is calm, self-assured and - according to Corva - insistent upon taking the stand at this phase. His purpose is to be in a position to tell the truth in an effort to mitigate Tyson's sentence. Kelly relates the situation on the burial mound, saying that he knew Tyson's reason for instructing them to kill the Vietnamese was simply to call their bluff. Kelly said the men were constantly bragging about what they planned to do but it was well known that they weren't going to, and that this was Tyson's way of putting a stop to that kind of talk. Kelly then relates the story of Tyson finding Brandt raping a young Vietnamese girl and the ensuing bitterness on Brandt's part because Tyson pushed him down in front of the other men.

Kelly then moves on to the situation at the hospital but Pierce objects, saying the trial is over and accusing Corva of trying to retry the case. Corva says that he has the right to use every means available to get a lighter sentence for his client and that he's not trying to change the guilty verdict. Sproule agrees with Corva and Kelly tells about the situation in the hospital. He says that tensions were high and then corrects the testimony of Brandt and Farley regarding Cane. Both said that Cane was shot outside the hospital but Kelly now says that Cane is in the building with Tyson. When an Australian doctor enters the room and begins screaming at the Americans, the situation quickly escalates out of control and Cane shoots the Australian. When Tyson calls for him to put down his weapon, Cane refuses and Tyson shoots Cane through the heart, killing him. Then the men turn on Tyson and he's held at gunpoint while the situation continues to unravel. Kelly says that he eventually pistol-whips Tyson to remove him from the situation so that the others won't feel the need to kill their commander. Kelly next describes the following hours. Tyson continues to offer false radio reports to his commander about sniper fire and enemies and the men continue to threaten but don't kill him. Kelly says he wasn't certain that Tyson wasn't going to be killed. Kelly called the events a "collective nightmare" and said he wrote up the commendation for Tyson's Silver Star as a finishing touch. Pierce declines to cross-examine Kelly. When he is excused, he walks directly to Tyson, saying that DeTong is "still there" because there's a need for continued intelligence in Hue. He leaves, saying he'll look Tyson up again sometime.

Tyson learns from Corva the following day that Teresa was whisked away from her post by the Catholic Church and sequestered in an effort to protect her from the publicity. Tyson takes the stand on his own behalf and says only that he knows he's responsible, that he should have reported the incident but didn't, and that he wouldn't do anything differently now. He says that he can talk about loyalty to his men, but that means little balanced against the lives lost at the hospital. Tyson would have ended there but Corva won't let it rest. He asks Tyson if he sought the services of a psychiatrist, if the events haunt him, if he feels remorse. Corva has to goad Tyson into responses and later says that he's determined to save Tyson even if he won't try to save himself. Then Tyson is



dismissed while the panel contemplates his sentence, with instruction from Sproule that they may consider the circumstances, Tyson's age and civilian achievements, and the elapsed time. When the verdict is returned, Tyson is stripped of his command and all pay and benefits currently due him from the Army. There's an expectant pause as everyone digests the fact that this is the total punishment. Tyson, Marcy, David and Tyson's mother leave the church-cum-courtroom together.

Chapters 46 through 54 Analysis

It's as Pierce is winding up his testimony that Tyson suddenly realizes that he can't call any of the five men who had promised to serve as his witnesses because they would be forced to recite details of a battle that never occurred. He says as much to Corva who responds that they'd never really had the option to call on those men. Corva later tells Tyson that their respective lawyers are advising them not to talk anyway. He reminds Tyson that he'd always predicted that everyone who knows Tyson will - at some point - betray him during the trial.

When Corva asks Brandt whether he had any animosity against Tyson, Brandt denies it. At Corva's prompting, he says that Tyson was a good leader. Corva follows up, pushing Brandt to say which days Tyson was a good leader and which he'd allowed massacres. Brandt doesn't at this point admit that there was bad blood between himself and Tyson because he would have had to admit the cause. At one point, Corva asks Brandt if he saw Richard Farley shoot anyone and Brandt says "no." Corva then asks if Brandt saw Cane shoot anyone and Brandt again says "no," to which Corva reminds him that Brandt himself had testified that Cane was shot outside the hospital. This is actually an excellent example of what Corva has already referred to with regard to war stories. In this case, Brandt has elected not to remember that Tyson himself shot Cane in the heart or he's lying about the fact that Cane was shot outside the hospital. Either way, the stories - as Corva says is always the case - are either selective in the remembered details or self-serving.

When Corva visits Tyson in jail, Tyson points out that he doesn't want to be in jail and demands that Corva do whatever is necessary to assure his freedom. It's interesting that he takes this stand but continues to refuse Brown's offers. It also seems that Tyson began with a determination to remain stoic but now, faced with the reality of jail time, only wants to go home. Tyson and Corva are later talking and Tyson admits that Brandt overdosed him on morphine. When Corva seems angry, Tyson says that men can only be expected to handle so much and that it's not Corva's job - or anyone else's - to judge them.



Characters

Benjamin Tyson

Tyson is a former Army Lieutenant who is in charge of a platoon of nineteen men on February 15, 1968, when the men of that platoon effectively hold Tyson hostage and kill a large number of civilians in a hospital, including women, children and medical staff. Eighteen years pass before the incident comes to light through the publication of a book, "Hue: Death of a City." Tyson is a complex man, devoted to his family, friends and career. He does, however, become humanly self-absorbed as he is recalled to the military and faces the distinct possibility of jail time or even the death penalty. The charges against Tyson don't accuse him of physically pulling the trigger himself but only of standing idly by while his men carry out the massacre. In one version, Tyson actually urges his men to action, prompting the massacre.

Tyson has a dry wit and seems to often use that as a shield against his true feelings. He meets his match in Vincent Corva, his attorney for the case, in that Corva himself can match Tyson word-for-word and is always ready with a snappy comeback. Tyson's emotions become obvious as he stands trial and he goes so far as to plead with Corva to get him out of jail after having spent only a night locked up. He does, however, refuse to have his wife take the stand on his behalf as the military panel considers his sentence, saying that he wants to keep some level of dignity on the proceedings.

Vincent Corva

Corva is himself a former military leader, having also served in Vietnam. He is qualified as a military attorney though he admits that he has yet to win a case. It seems that Corva is a capable attorney and the likely cause of the extensive losses is that he tends to take the hopeless cases. In the case against Tyson, Corva is seldom seen as working on the defense. However, as the trial is about to begin, Tyson visits a house on the base that was set aside for Corva's use. There he finds papers scattered everywhere and taped to the walls, indicating the level of commitment Corva has established for Tyson. In fact, when Tyson takes the stand on his own behalf, Corva questions him and forces some admissions from Tyson, including that he is remorseful for the massacre. For the most part, Corva's dry wit is much more in evidence than his concern.

Corva himself seems to develop a relationship with Tyson. He mentions that his wife is spending time with Tyson's wife as the trial begins, seeming to indicate that the two families have become acquainted on some level that is deeper than the typical attorney-client relationship.



Andrew Picard

Picard is a writer and author of the book, "Hue: Death of a City." Picard and Tyson meet and Picard admits that he wasn't honest in his book or he would also have revealed a situation in which he ran away from a boy, grossly injured who needed his help. When Picard is called on to testify, he says that he stands behind his book, that it is presented as he understood the facts to be. He adds that trying Tyson for the crime is a "travesty of justice" and that the charges should not be pursued.

Steven Brandt

Brandt is one of the two men who served as sources for the book written by Andrew Picard. Brandt was a conscientious observer who served as a medic under Tyson. Tyson recounts an incident in which Brandt apparently consumed some sort of nitrates in an effort to be sick enough to avoid combat. Tyson berates him for the action. By the time Brandt gives the interview to Picard, he's an orthopedist in Boston. When Brandt takes the stand, it's to tell a distorted version of events, including the fact that Tyson ordered the massacre of the civilians in the hospital. Brandt was the medic who treated Tyson when he was injured and the man who overdosed Tyson on morphine, almost killing him. When Kelly testifies that Brandt hates Tyson because Tyson caught Brandt raping a young girl, Brandt abruptly leaves the court and isn't heard from again.

Richard Farley

Farley is the second of Tyson's soldiers who served as a source for Picard. Tyson describes him as below average on every front. Farley suffered a spinal injury after the incident at Hue and becomes a paraplegic who lives in New Jersey at the time of the book publication. Harper describes him as being "drug dependent" and suffering "emotional disturbances." Farley has trouble testifying to facts without becoming confused and Corva declines to cross-examine Farley because Tyson says he would rather use the discrepancies to discredit Brandt.

Marcy Tyson

Marcy is the wife of Ben Tyson and mother of David. She spend much of the 1960s protesting the Vietnam War and, at one point, did so in the nude. The photo of that incident became much published and was brought out when Tyson's role in the hospital massacre began to be examined. Marcy seems dedicated to her family and understanding of the strain they are all under as the trial nears.



Michael DeTonq

DeTonq is the man from Tyson's platoon who is listed as missing in action but who Tyson feels may have deserted and even made it out of Vietnam. It's Kelly who tells Tyson that DeTonq remained behind, posing as a Frenchman, and that good intelligence of this type is always in demand. Whether this is true is never fully confirmed in any other manner, and it's left to the reader to decide DeTonq's fate.

Daniel Kelly

Kelly is Tyson's radio operator. In this capacity, Kelly was typically very near Tyson's location at any given moment. Kelly is not located as the trial against Tyson gears up but is found before its conclusion. Kelly testifies a truer version of what happened at the hospital than did either Brandt or Farley. Kelly says that Tyson shot Cane in the heart and that Tyson was held at gunpoint by his own men as they carried out the massacre. Kelly's exact status at the time of the trial is unclear. He says only that he is in the import/export business, and insinuates to Tyson that he's some sort of secret agent.

Karen Harper

Harper is the military attorney who is assigned the task of looking into the massacre to determine whether the military has a case against Tyson and whether there's sufficient cause to take the case to trial. Harper and Tyson are attracted to each other but fight that attraction. There is a point at which it seems they might take the attraction an additional step but they are interrupted by Tyson's wife. Harper does make the recommendation to try Tyson and then remains in the courtroom to watch the proceedings. Harper is one of those who tells Tyson that he needs a lawyer.

Colonel Walter Sproule

Sproule is assigned as the judge of the military trial against Tyson. He's an elderly man and is clearly showing signs of fatigue by the end of the trial. As the trial begins, he reminds the prosecution that while they are to try to show the evidence, they are not to get caught up in the need to win the case at all costs. He tells them that a fair representation of the facts is more important. He also allows significant leeway as Corva puts Kelly on the stand prior to sentencing, then reminds the panel that they are allowed to consider extenuating circumstances in arriving at a sentence - including Tyson's achievements as a civilian.



Objects/Places

Hue

Pronounced "way," the city where Tyson lost more than half his platoon and where the murder of the civilians occurred.

Hue: Death of a City

The book about the actions of Tyson and his men while serving in the Vietnam War.

Queens

Where Tyson is when he first learns of the existence of the book.

Hospital Misericorde

The hospital where the massacre occurred.

Sag Harbor

Where Tyson, Marcy and David rent a summer cottage, and where the author of the book lives.

Fiort Hamilton, Brooklyn

Where Tyson is notified that he's to be stationed upon his recall to the military.

An Ninh Ha

A "suburb" of Hue and the city where the hospital massacre occurred.

Four Seasons Hotel

Where Tyson stays in Washington, D.C. He notes that the Army is not likely to pick up the tab for the room there but that he feels he paid for the extravagance with his three hundred twenty-two nights in the jungles and swamps of Vietnam.



Phu Cam Cathedral

Where Tyson first sees Sister Teresa.

USS Repose

The ship Tyson was taken to after he was wounded.

Tranquility II

The cabin cruiser that saves Tyson after his near-drowning off Sag Harbor.

Strawberry Patch

The place outside Hue where Tyson was injured.



Themes

The Desire to Survive

The battlefields of Vietnam are a very real and continuing nightmare to most who were there. The men faced horrendous conditions and were often in constant danger from any array of situations. Those who did survive often exhibited a strong will to survive and this is certainly true of the men in Tyson's platoon. It's evident from Tyson's recollections that the men were fatigued and desired only to survive. Some, including Brandt, faked illness in an effort to be taken off the battlefields. The fact that they all realize that they could be killed at any time makes them nervous and edgy, and it's this desperation that contributes greatly to the massacre. Had Tyson's men not been so desperate to survive and fearful that they would not, the entire massacre may have been avoided.

On a smaller scale, this desperation to survive is seen in Tyson's fear as he realizes that he's truly going to face a military court-martial. Tensions mount in his marriage as Tyson takes steps apparently aimed at emotional self-preservation when he tells Marcy that he doesn't expect her to wait for him to be released from jail. Tyson himself demands that Corva get him released after spending only one night in lock-up. It's interesting that that will doesn't extend to putting those on the stand who might testify on his behalf during the sentencing phase and Tyson allows only Daniel Kelly to take the stand.

Loyalty

There's little doubt that an Army unit is a likely place for loyalty and that loyalty is evident to a great degree among Tyson's platoon. The men who served together act as something of a fraternity, though Tyson says that it is in some ways very unlike any other group. It soon seems apparent that loyalty played an important role in the cover-up that occurred after the massacre. It seems that a loyalty for each other was the reason the men created - and upheld - the false story of the firefight that never happened. However, Tyson says during his testimony on the stand that he fully admits to having shirked his duty and that loyalty can be cited as the reason. However, he says that loyalty should never be taken to that point.

The loyalty of the men who swore that they would stand by Tyson is also an interesting study. Though five of the men promise that they'll do whatever is necessary to corroborate Tyson's story, they later cite the advice of respective attorneys and decline. Tyson doesn't call them though it seems it's more an act of self-preservation than out of any loyalty he feels to protect any of them because Tyson realizes that they simply can't be called on to testify truthfully about an event that never happened.

Duty

Tyson feels a strong sense of duty toward his men during his tour in Vietnam. He notes several points related to this theme, including his disgust for Brandt who attempts to fake an illness in order to escape the battlefield. When Tyson realizes what Brandt has done, he points out that Brandt will some day have a physician's office and that he can look back on his tour in Vietnam and feel good about what he's done. Tyson ends the conversation with the admonition that Brandt must be certain that he can be proud of his actions.

Tyson is the kind of person who seems to feel that same kind of duty to everything that he does. When the time comes for him to face the trial, he feels that it's his duty to do so alone. It's pointed out to him that he had friends who would have stood beside him, but he shut them out. He does his best to shut out Marcy and David as well, though they refuse to be pushed completely away. The duty Tyson feels seems to be ingrained. At one point Marcy asks if he would serve his country again, if he were called. He says that he would.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in third person, limited largely to Tyson's point of view. While it would have been possible to take a broader perspective, this method actually works out for the reader. Because of the limited point of view, there are some surprises. For example, Tyson discovers the massive paperwork created as Corva worked on Tyson's case when Tyson visits Corva at the quarters he was assigned on the military post. Tyson himself says that he'd thought Corva was probably just pulling his defenses out of his hat, but that look at Corva - though it's presented through Tyson's eyes - is important.

The point of view was not always completely limited. Early in the story, Tyson and Marcy have a brief interlude in which he is brutally rough with her during sex and then abruptly leaves the room. The reader remains with Marcy, seeing her reaction, which is actually a foreshadowing of what's to come in their lives as the Army's case against Tyson develops.

The majority of the events in Vietnam are also seen through Tyson's point of view though alternatives to that are presented through other means - including testimony during the trial against Tyson.

Setting

The book has two major settings - Vietnam in and near a town named Hue and the Northeastern United States, largely in the New York area. The United States settings are, at least for the most part, real and believable. Hue is also real as is the Battle of Tet that is often referred to in the story. In fact, historically the fall of Hue was an important battle and is well documented, though the massacre at the hospital seems to be a figment of the author's imagination. The fact that the places actually exist make the story more believable.

The time frame is also a dual setting. The story is set in the modern day but there are flashbacks that take the reader to 1968 and the Vietnam era. Both the current day and these flashbacks include true and accurate details, making the times also believable. For example, there is extensive discussion of Marcy's participation in anti-war demonstrations. In one instance, she was apparently arrested for protesting nude. The tendency of the youth of that era to protest the American presence in Vietnam is a fact and the possibility of a group of young people choosing to do so in the nude is completely believable. By the same token, the dedication and willingness to serve exhibited by Tyson and others under his command is also believable and true to the time and place.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a fairly straightforward style and any reader with an adequate vocabulary will be able to read and understand the story. There are a few military words used, including those used in conjunction with military justice, but these are typically understood from the context of the story or are explained in detail by one or another of the characters. These explanations typically occur in the form of dialog and do not become tedious or monotonous.

There are several versions of the events of the massacre in the Vietnamese hospital and these are related in two specific ways. Tyson thinks back to the events of the massacre and those thoughts are presented to the reader as a method of having the reader understand Tyson's role and his memories of the events that prompted the court-martial. Other perspectives of those events are related through testimony. As is the case of testimony in most trials, the wording, questions and details may become somewhat tedious for some readers. There are few surprises and some may say that the ending is trite or overly predictable.

Structure

The book is divided into three parts and additionally divided into fifty-four chapters. Each of the three parts begins with a quote. Part one cites Juvenal, "It is easier to find false witnesses against the civilian than anyone willing to speak the truth against the interest and honor of a soldier." Part 2 cites Seneca: Troades, "He who does not prevent a crime when he can, encourages it." Part 3 cites Camus, "I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day." Each of the three quotes effectively foreshadows the events of that particular section. For example, Part 2 includes the filing of charges against Benjamin Tyson. The charges are that he allowed his men to massacre the civilians at the hospital though there are no allegations that Tyson himself pulled the trigger on a single person.



Quotes

"I tell you, my friend, war is hell, but take heart: When a soldier goes to war everything is pre-forgiven." - Psychiatrist Dr. Stahl, Chapter 6, Page 46

"In the meantime, keep in mind that we are not dealing solely in abstract law problems or public relations problems, but with human beings. Specifically, with a man named Benjamin Tyson who may end up in front of a court-martial board, on trial for murder, for which the maximum penalty, if convicted, is death by firing squad." - Presidential Aide Thomas Berg, Chapter 8, Page 72

"Berg snapped, 'An Army induction notice in the mail is about as welcome and merciful as a public health notice regarding your last sexual partner.'" Presidential Aide Thomas Berg, Chapter 10, Page 90

"This war, Tyson thought, had become a children's war. And children, as any schoolteacher would tell you, were capable of astonishing acts of brutality if left unsupervised." Chapter 17, Page 170

"Yet it seemed like a good story when it was first fabricated. It was standard Vietnam cover-up. Whenever a few IC - innocent civilians - were killed by mistake - or in less blameless ways - you came up with a hair-raising story of a firefight. No one questioned you. No one said anything about your lack of casualties. And a good officer always made certain his men carried a few enemy weapons to turn in along with the bodies of old men, women, and children. It was that kind of war." Chapter 17, Page 198

"What they wanted was a final offering to Mars, a last scrap of flesh, because 57,939 sacrifices weren't enough, and the soothsayers had somehow divined that 57,940 was what was required to put the war to rest for all time. But, Tyson thought, since he didn't recall having started the war, he saw no good reason for sacrificing himself to end it." Chapter 20, Page 229

"Me, I am like a little cork bobbing on a raging yellow sea. You and your Army are ... well, like the Titanic." -Monsieur Bournard on American occupation in Vietnam, Chapter 21, Page 256

"Oh, look, Major, my rights were violated from the day the obstetrician slapped my ass without provocation." - Tyson, Chapter 27, Page 339



"I'm the one who has to live with Ben Tyson after this is over. I'm going to try to beat this thing, but not by deception, compromise, or name-calling. I want a clean verdict on this, even if the verdict is guilty." - Ben Tyson on his ability to discredit Brandt, Chapter 28, Page 351

"Tyson was sent to Vietnam to kill. Any court-martial that is convened will not have to determine whether or not he killed, but if he killed the right people in the right way." Colonel Horton, Chapter 29, Page 363

"I would not have been much of a warrior before gunpowder, but God gave us little squirts M-16 rifles and lightweight field gear and made us all equally dead." Vincent Corva, Chapter 31, page 392

"Would I be here now, twenty years later, if it was just a village of a couple hundred gooks? Slopes? Dinks? Zipperheads? Slants? What else did we call them, Vince? What did you call them? Anything but Oriental human beings. But I fucked up good. I zapped fourteen real people." - Tyson upon hearing the charges against him, Chapter 34, Page 417

"He came finally to the entry for 15 February and read the last lines: Platoon on verge of mutiny. Overheard death threats. Filed false radio report re: hospital battle this A.M. Investigate. God -" -The final entry from Tyson's military log, Chapter 35, Page 428

"Tyson had the impression everyone wanted him to know they were doing him a favor. Or repaying the favor he had done for them. But if they hadn't obliterated a hospital full of people in the first place, there would be no favors to repay." Chapter 39, Page 498

"We give our word as soldiers, as brothers, as comrades in arms, as men, as friends, as fellow sufferers, and maybe as Christians. And we know what we are giving out word about. And it is forever." - Tyson eliciting an oath of silence regarding the massacre, Chapter 39, Page 505

"It is not necessary to establish that Tyson himself committed any of those murders with his own hands; and in fact, the government will not establish that fact." Pierce for the prosecution, Chapter 43, Page 568

"But if the accounts of that action seem to differ, I ask you to remember your own war stories or those you have heard. I ask you to consider that when the soldier comes home, what he remembers is a fraction of that he forgets, and what he forgets is what



he chooses not to remember. Ultimately, all war stories, all the war stories you will hear in sworn testimony, are as true as they are false. The details are as clearly remembered as they are fabricated. And the motive for all testimony is as noble as it is self-serving." Corva for the defense, Chapter 43, Page 572

"Medics are always suspect, aren't they? They are never fully initiated into the psychotic circle. Medics, Army scout dog handlers, chaplains and chaplain assistants, artillery forward observers ... all those people who joined up with us from time to time ... they looked at us funny, didn't they? Like they were visiting a traveling psycho ward where all the patients were armed to the teeth." Corva, Chapter 47, Page 635

Topics for Discussion

Describe how Tyson came to know that someone had told about the massacre. How did Picard come to know about it? What is Tyson's initial reaction? How does that change?

Describe Tyson's relationship with Sloan. Compare that to his relationship with Harper and Corva.

What piece of information from Marcy's past is brought up as Tyson's case moves forward? What is Tyson's reaction to this? Marcy's? David's?

Explain the strategy used by Tyson and Corva with regard to putting witnesses on the stand who will back his version of events at the hospital. What happens to their plans on this point? Why?

What does Corva say is true of all war stories? Provide three examples that support his statement.

Describe Tyson's personality. What are his reactions when he is being recalled to duty? When he realizes that capital punishment hasn't been removed from the possible penalties? When he is testifying prior to sentencing? While waiting for the verdict?

Who is Andrew Picard? Brandt? Sister Teresa? Farley? Kelly? DeTonq? Levin? Sproule? Harper? Give an opinion of what happens to each following the closing of the case. On what do you base these opinions?