FOUR CORNERS

TWO PIECES OF SILVER



For teens and adults (13+)

A Four Corners Catholic graphic novel

Written and produced by Corey Pearson

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Version 1, Color Edition

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Chapter One: The Trade | Chapter Two: The Long Night | Chapter Three: The Bench

Four Corners, a publishing ministry of 508 Ministry

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Scripture quotations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible, Challoner revision (public domain), checked word for word. Psalm numbers follow the Douay-Rheims.

Glenmore and every person in this story are fictional. The history around them is real. We wrote it with respect for the Catholic Church and for every family that has waited at a door.

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BEFORE YOU READ

For teens and adults (13+).

This is a story about war, a lie, and what one lie can do. It shows soldiers dying, a mother lost in a labor camp, men who drink, a marriage that breaks, and a sudden death at work. None of it is shown in a graphic way. There is no gore and nothing sexual. If you are reading with a younger teen, read it together and talk about it.

THREE TIMES, ONE STORY

1314 and 1969: Paris, Saigon, and a steel town in Pennsylvania. Warm sepia and gold.

1970 to 2025: the long years after the war. Faded colors and cold winters.

Today: a city full of screens. Cool blue light.

HOW TO READ

Read each page from left to right, top to bottom.

Words in boxes tell the story. Round balloons are people talking.

The story jumps between 1314, 1969 and today. The palette tells you where you are.

Slanted words are from the Bible (Douay-Rheims). The small name tells you where to find them.

TWO PIECES OF SILVER



One lie. Two pieces of silver. Seventeen doors. Three generations.

CHAPTER ONE

THE TRADE



Every story is really a lot of stories happening at once. Hang on. They all meet at the end.


Today. A city sidewalk. A bench outside a dress shop.


Forty minutes for one dress. June, you are a saint. A slow saint.


Nobody looked at the man in the army jacket. Everybody had a screen.


Can I help you, friend? Are you OK?


That question took fifty-seven years to answer. It started with a lie.

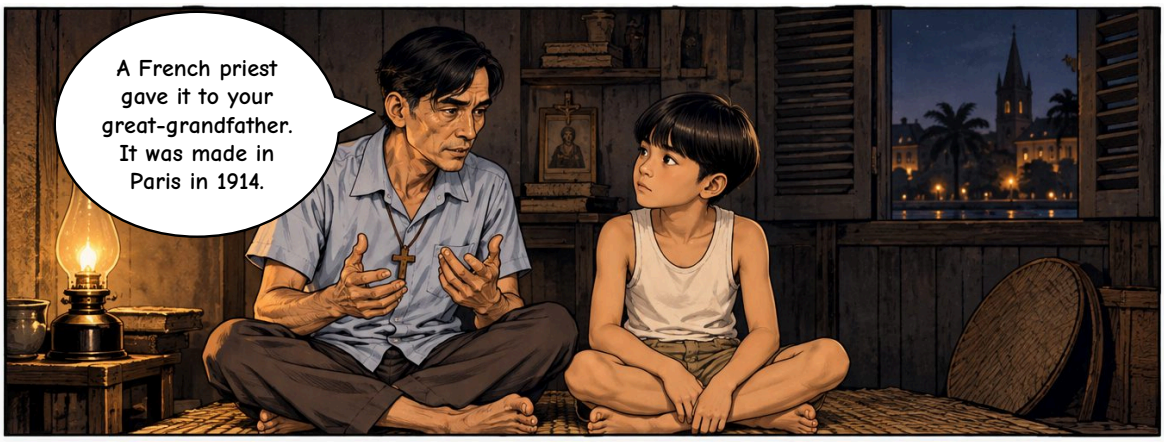

Saigon, South Vietnam. June 1969. The war had gone on for years.


That is a month of rice, Minh.

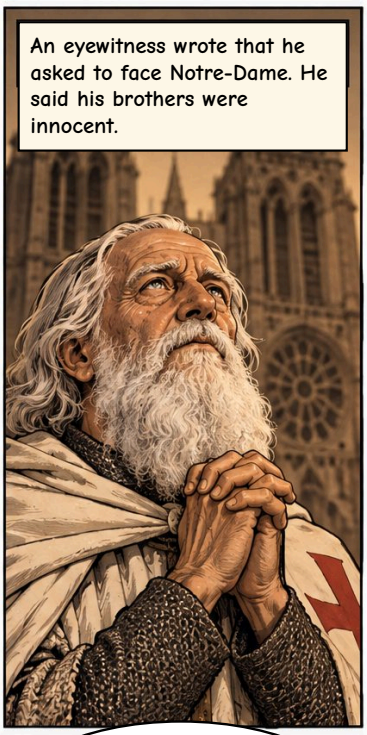

Mr. Vo promised. Two silver coins, and the medallion comes home.


The one Grandfather had to sell?


He sold it to feed us in the last war. Tomorrow we bring it back. It is our name.


A French priest gave it to your great-grandfather. It was made in Paris in 1914.


Paris, March 1314. Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, was put to death on a small island in the river.


An eyewitness wrote that he asked to face Notre-Dame. He said his brothers were innocent.

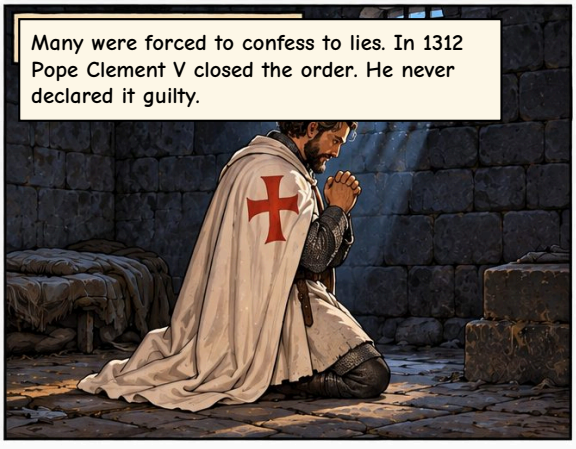

Why did they kill him?


A king told lies about good men. Remember this, Tuan. The truth can cost you. A lie can kill.

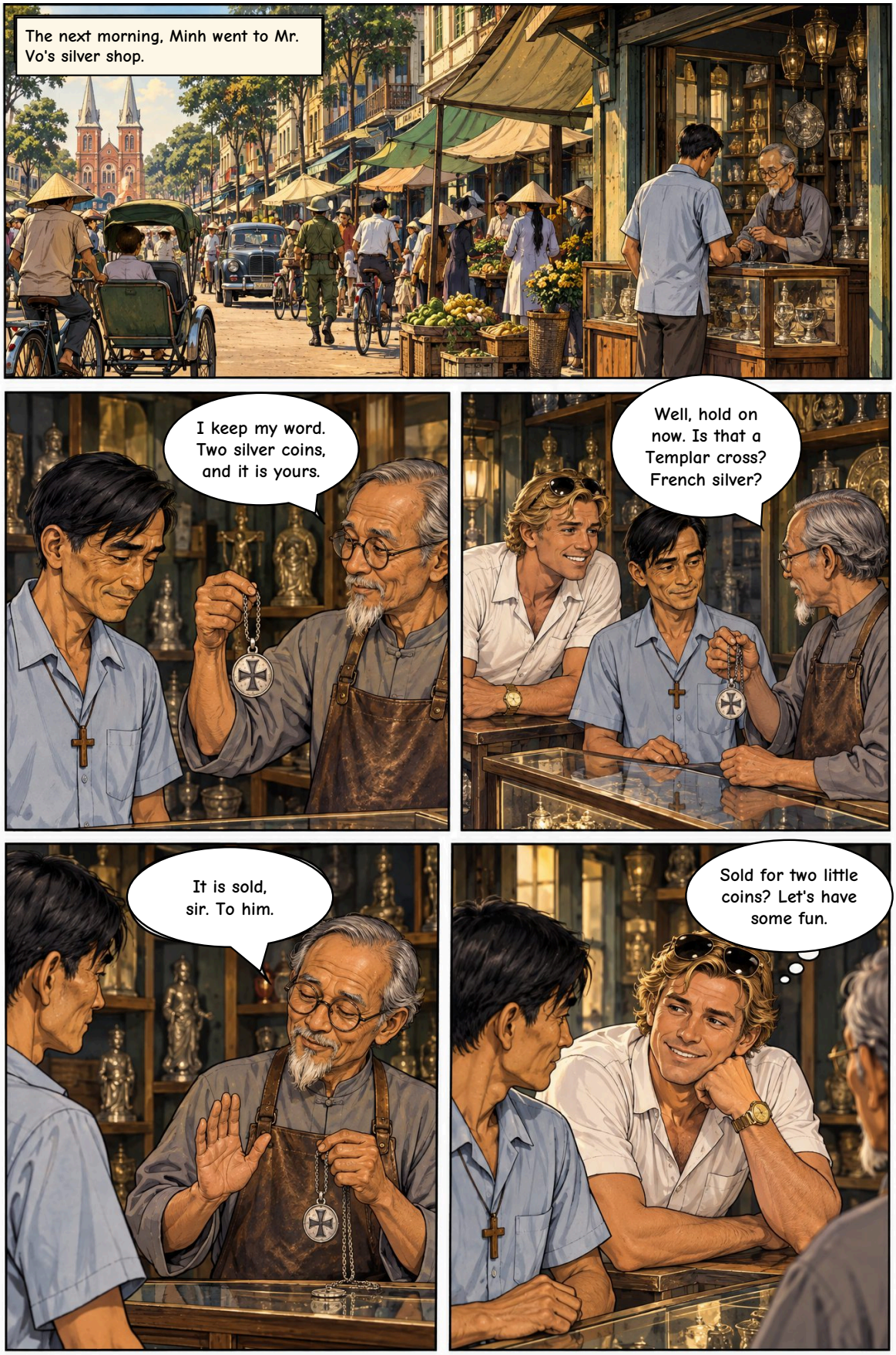

Around 1119, a few knights in Jerusalem made vows to guard Christian pilgrims on dangerous roads.


In 1129 the Church gave them a rule and a white mantle. The red cross was added in 1147. They owned nothing of their own.


On October 13, 1307, King Philip IV of France had the Templars arrested. He owed them money.


Many were forced to confess to lies. In 1312 Pope Clement V closed the order. He never declared it guilty.


Six hundred years later, a Paris silversmith put their cross on one side and Notre-Dame on the other.


The next morning, Minh went to Mr. Vo's silver shop.
I keep my word. Two silver coins, and it is yours.
Well, hold on now. Is that a Templar cross? French silver?
It is sold, sir. To him.
Sold for two little coins? Let's have some fun.


Mind if I look? I run supply for the PX. I see fake money every day.


His hands were quick. Nobody saw the swap. Nobody but you.


Lead. Painted lead. Sir, this fellow is trying to cheat you.


No! Those were real! I saved them for a year!


In my shop? You bring me lead?

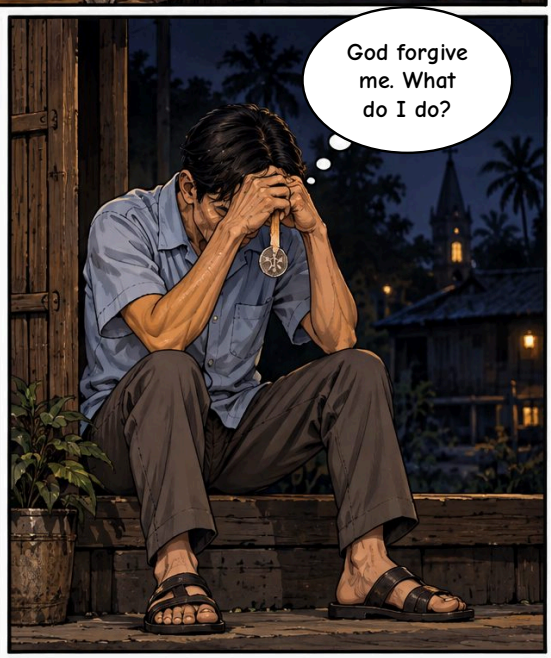

Please! It belongs to my family!
CRACK!
Out! Take your half and go!
Didn't even want the thing. The silver's worth more anyway.
Two pieces of silver. To Dale Pike, it was a joke. To the Pham family, it was everything.

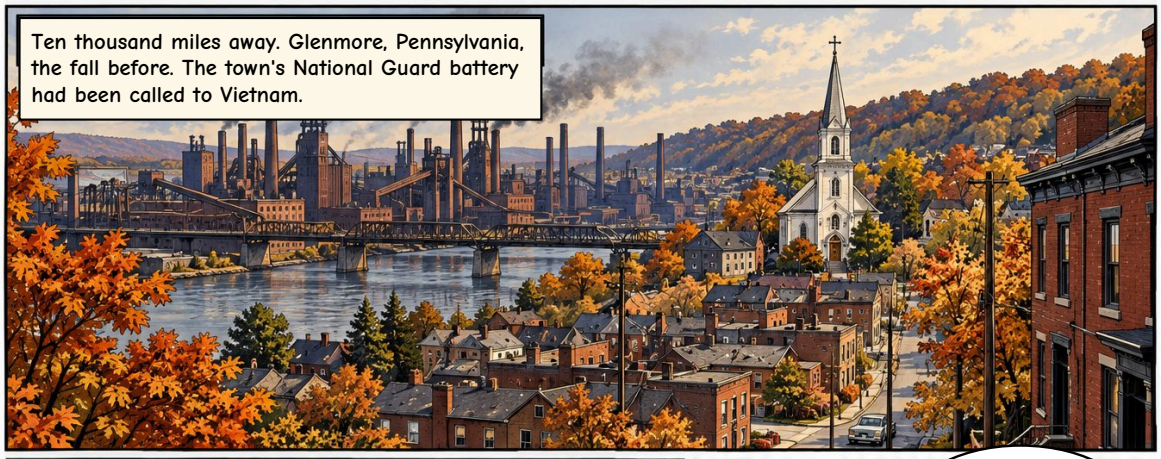

Take my earrings. Give me the other half.


Minh's sister Lan kept the other half. Now the medallion lived in two houses.


But the rice money was gone.


Tuan, my stomach hurts.


God forgive me. What do I do?


Ten thousand miles away. Glenmore, Pennsylvania, the fall before. The town's National Guard battery had been called to Vietnam.


In Glenmore, Saturdays meant football, and the whole parish yelled at one TV.


Go with God, boys. Come home to us.


Back by next Christmas, Mags. Keep him out of trouble.


Don't you cry, Rosie. Kellys always come home.


June 1969. Every afternoon, the wives on Liffey Street watched for the mailman.
He says the hill is quiet. He says pray anyway.
On Tuesdays the wives prayed the rosary together. One name at a time.
Everybody knew what a slow car could mean.
Not today. Thank you, Jesus. Not today.


Three days later. Minh worked in a laundry for the American base.
Clean shirts, quick? I drive north tonight.
Cigarettes. Maybe a radio. Something I can sell for rice.
Thou shalt not steal. I know. I know.
That night the captain stopped to sleep. The satchel stayed in the jeep.


Hunger is loud. Conscience is quiet. That night, hunger won.
He did not know what he was carrying.
Papers. Only papers.
Minh. What have you done?
I will put it back. Tomorrow. I swear it.
Tomorrow was too late.


That same night. A hilltop firebase. The Glenmore battery.
Dear Mags. It's quiet up here tonight.
The report in the satchel said the enemy would attack the hill that night. It never arrived.
INCOMING! GET DOWN!
By morning, seventeen men from Glenmore were dead. Eddie Kelly was carried out alive.

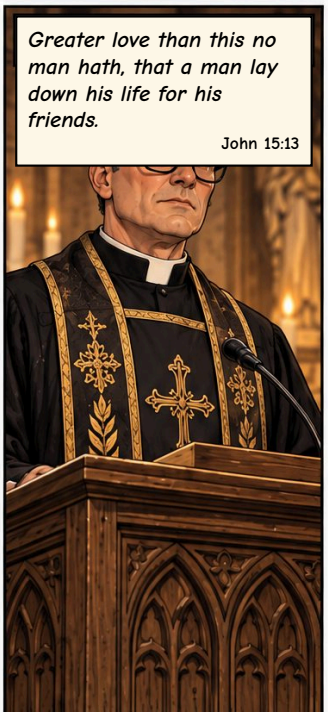

Glenmore. Three days later.
Maggie. I'm so sorry.
Seventeen doors on four streets. Seventeen families who never got to say goodbye.
Rose Kelly's telegram said wounded. Alive.
Why mine and not hers? God, why am I ashamed to be glad?

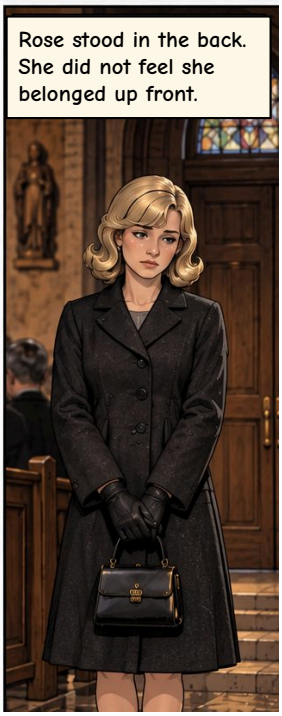

The Army searched every worker at the laundry.
MP
MP
Here. Under the rice.
MP
Tuan! Take care of your mother!
MP
MP
Keep it. And always tell the truth. Always.
Minh never knew exactly what the papers said. He only heard that soldiers had died.


Glenmore buried its sons. The whole parish walked behind the cross.

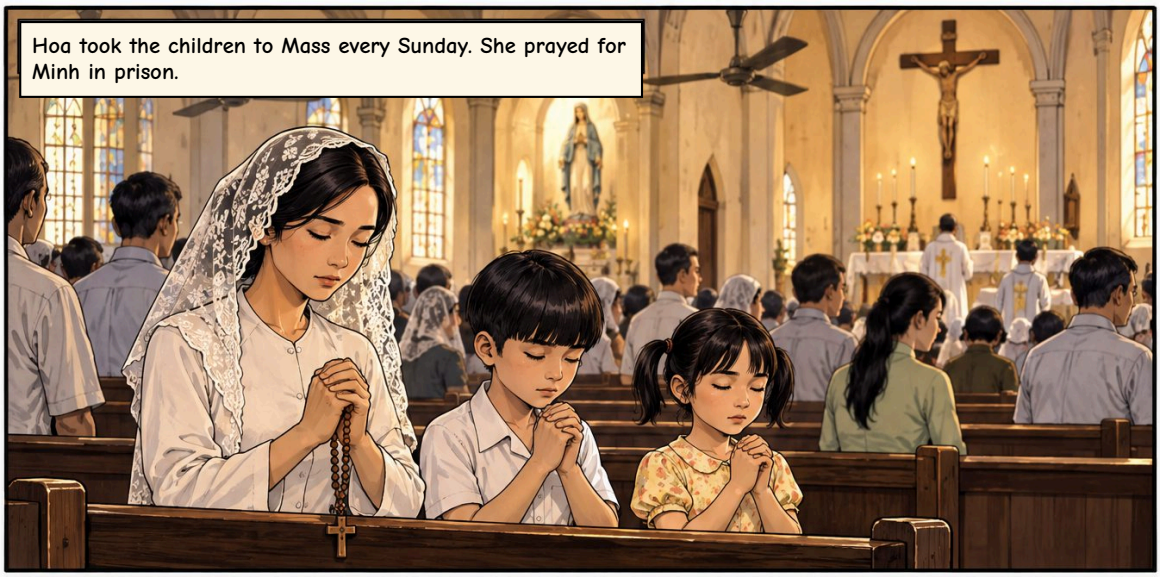

Seventeen coffins under white palls. Father Kearney read every name out loud.

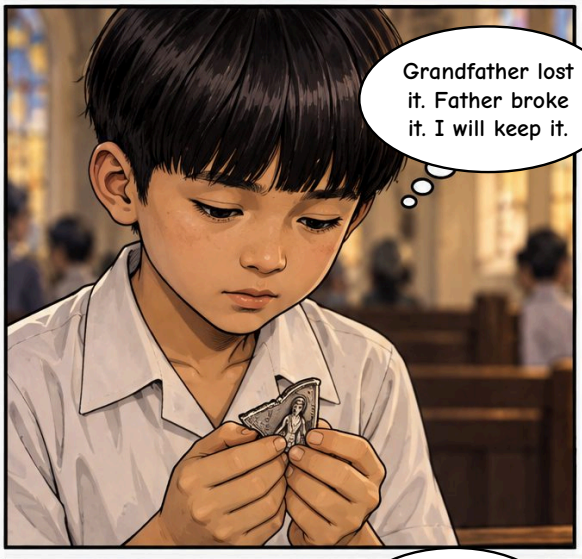

Lord, I don't understand. But I won't let go of You.


Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:13


Rose stood in the back. She did not feel she belonged up front.

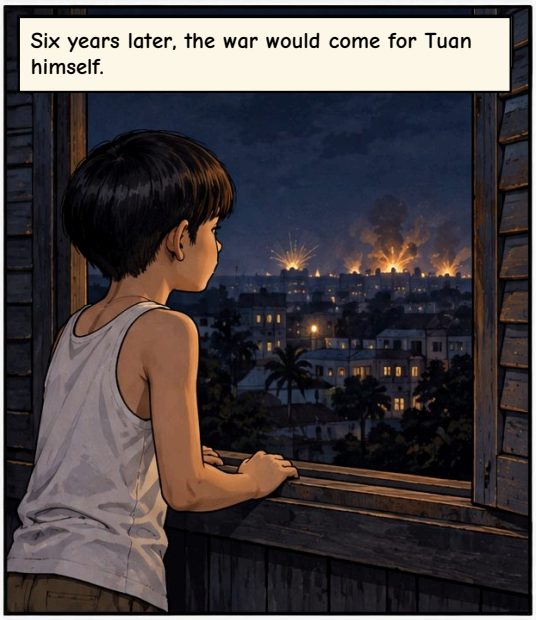

Dale Pike finished his job in Saigon that summer and flew home.
Home was a peach farm in Georgia. His father gave him forty acres.
My lucky coins. Best joke I ever pulled.
He married June. He was charming. Everybody said so.
He never heard about a satchel, or a hill, or seventeen doors. He never asked.
The bread of lying is sweet to a man: but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.
Proverbs 20:17


Hoa took the children to Mass every Sunday. She prayed for Minh in prison.


Grandfather lost it. Father broke it. I will keep it.


Hoa washed soldiers' clothes from dawn until dark.


We are family. Half of what I have is yours.


Six years later, the war would come for Tuan himself.



The war ended. The ripples did not.

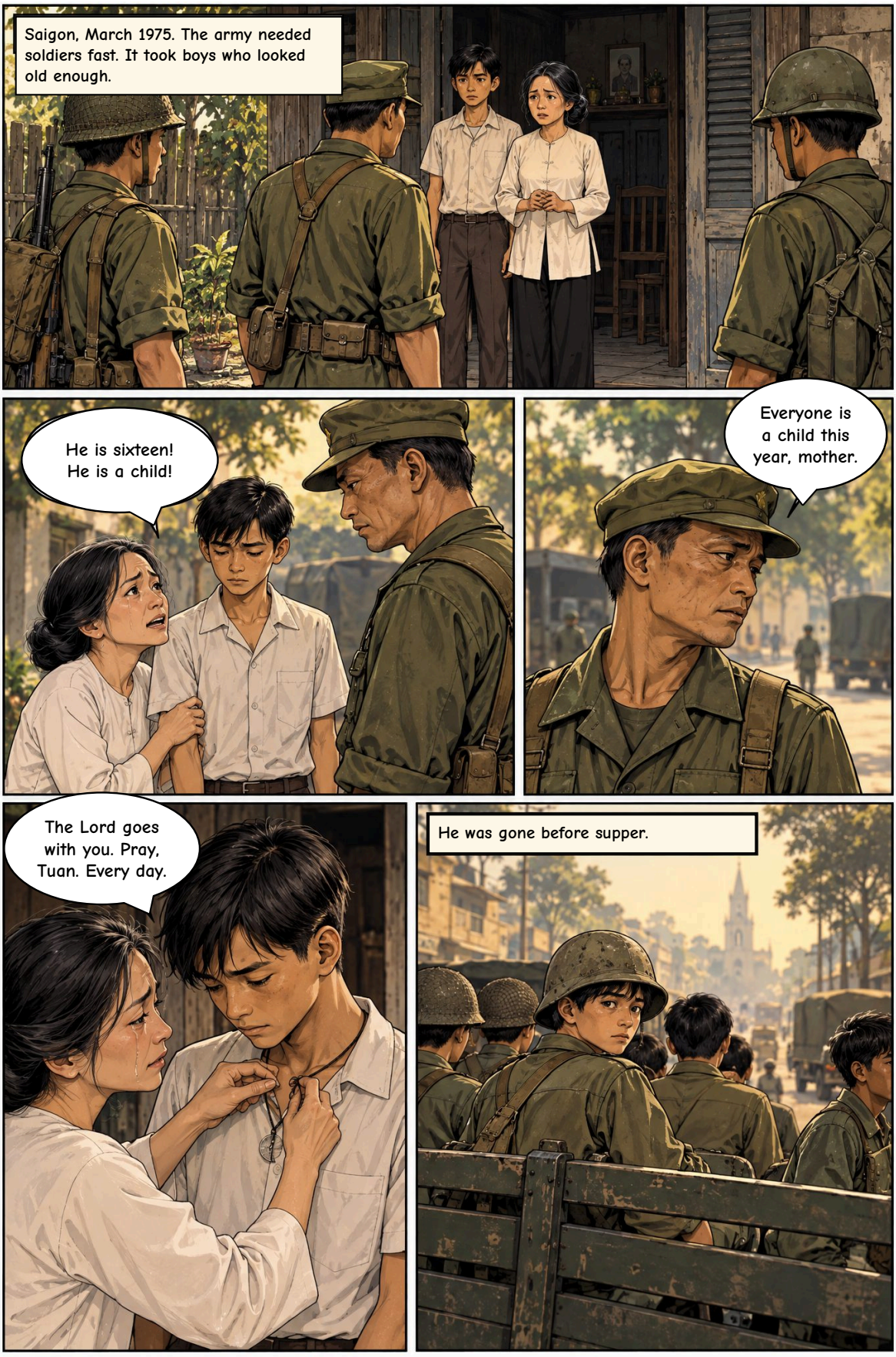
CHAPTER TWO

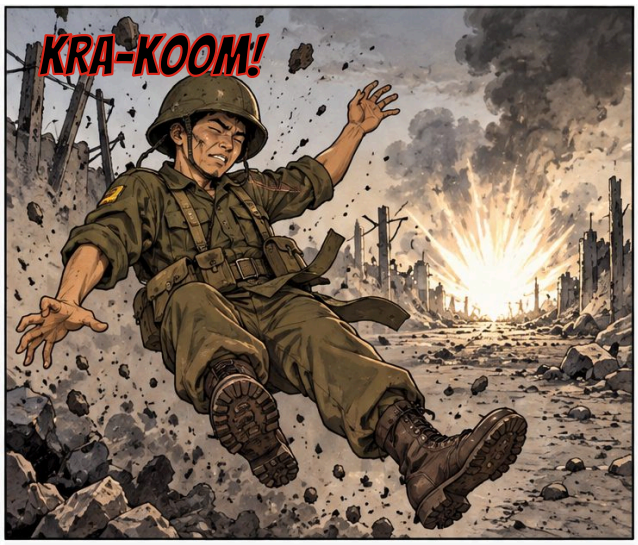
THE LONG NIGHT

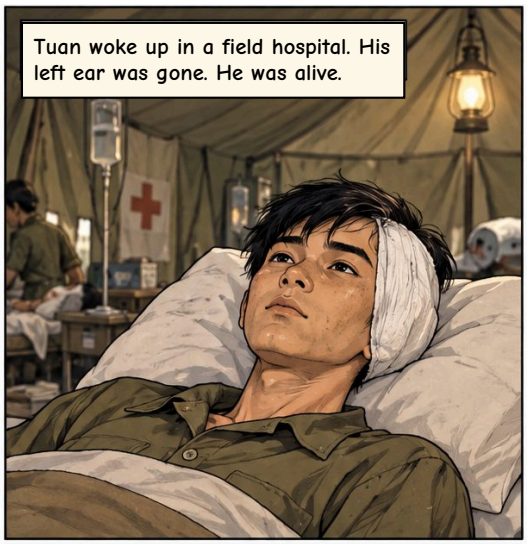


Some men came home. Some had no home to go to. Some came home and were still lost.


Eddie Kelly before the war. Eddie Kelly after.
Eddie, come to bed. Please.
Leave me alone! You weren't there!
In 1974 Rose went back to her mother's house. The divorce papers came in the spring.
Seventeen friends lay in the Glenmore cemetery. Eddie felt like the eighteenth.


Saigon, March 1975. The army needed soldiers fast. It took boys who looked old enough.
He is sixteen! He is a child!
Everyone is a child this year, mother.
The Lord goes with you. Pray, Tuan. Every day.
He was gone before supper.


KRA-KOOM!


Tuan woke up in a field hospital. His left ear was gone. He was alive.


On April 30, 1975, Saigon fell. The last American helicopters flew away.


Don't let them see it. Don't let them take it.

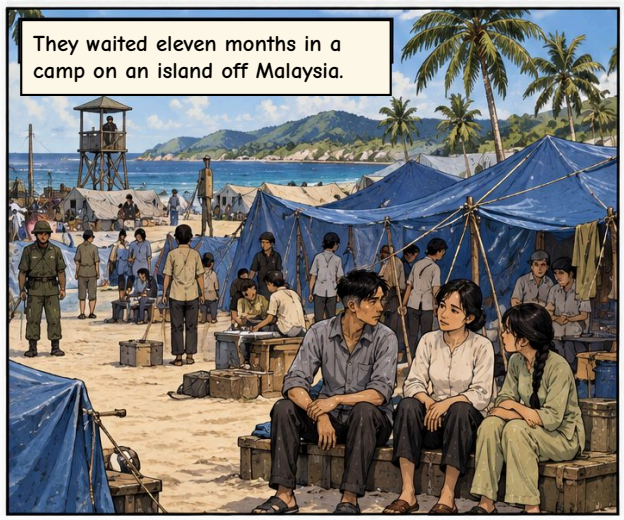

My son. My son came home.

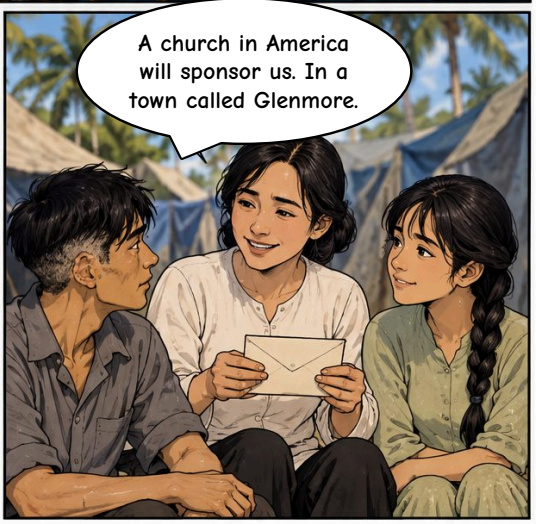

Pham Thi Hoa. You worked for the Americans. You will go to a camp to be re-educated.
Lan will keep you. Pray for me.
The camp was in the hills. Hoa worked the fields and shared her rice with the weak.
She prayed on a string of knots. She died in the second winter. She was not afraid.
God, where were You?


1979. Lan, Tuan and Mai paid everything they had for a place on a fishing boat.

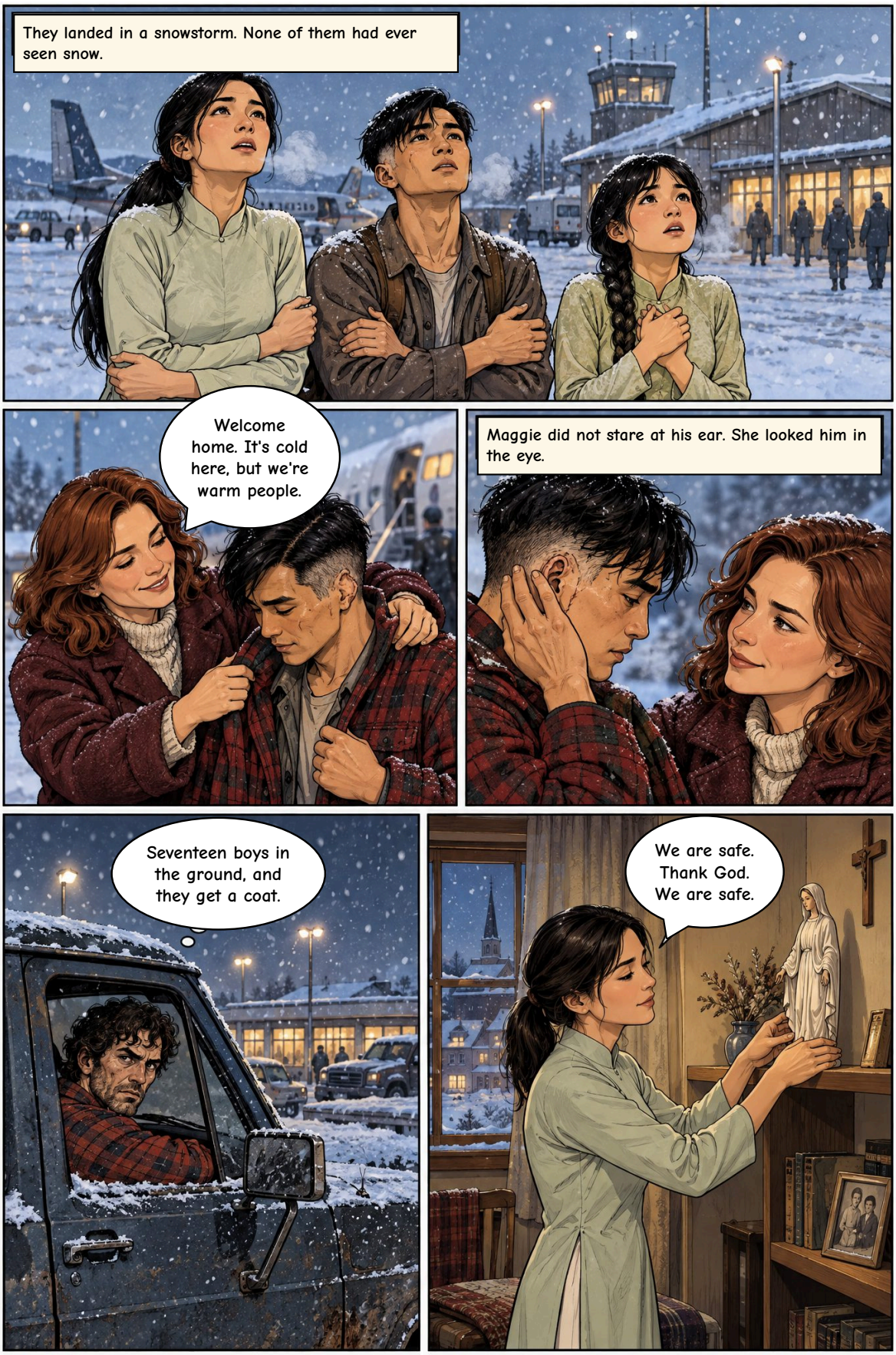

Hail Mary, full of grace...


On the fourth day, a ship stopped for them.


They waited eleven months in a camp on an island off Malaysia.


A church in America will sponsor us. In a town called Glenmore.

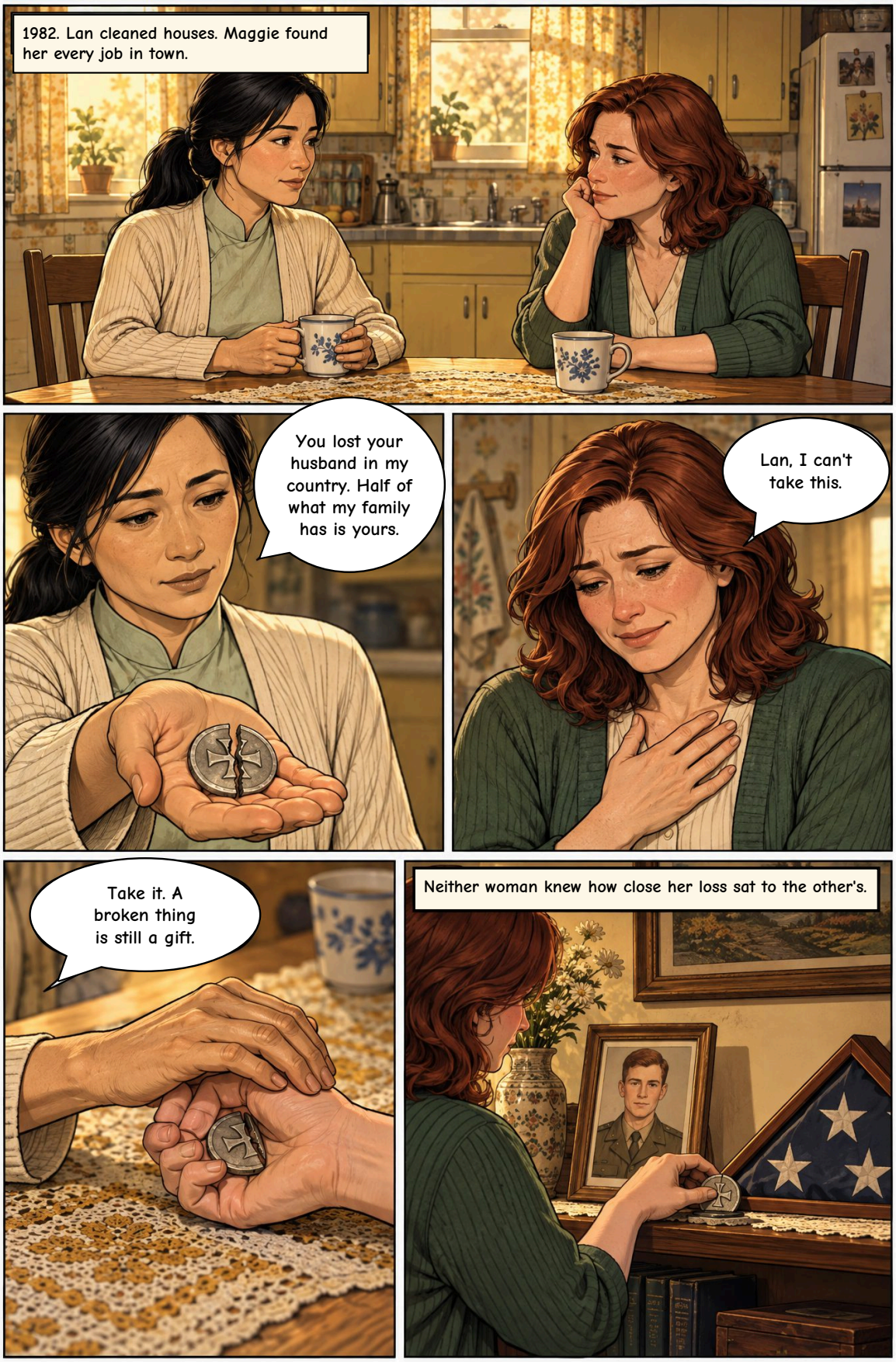

Glenmore, January 1980. St. Brendan's parish hall.
Sponsor them? Those people killed seventeen of our boys!
He's right. Send them somewhere else.
My Frank died fighting for people like them. I will not hate the people he died for.
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
Matthew 22:39

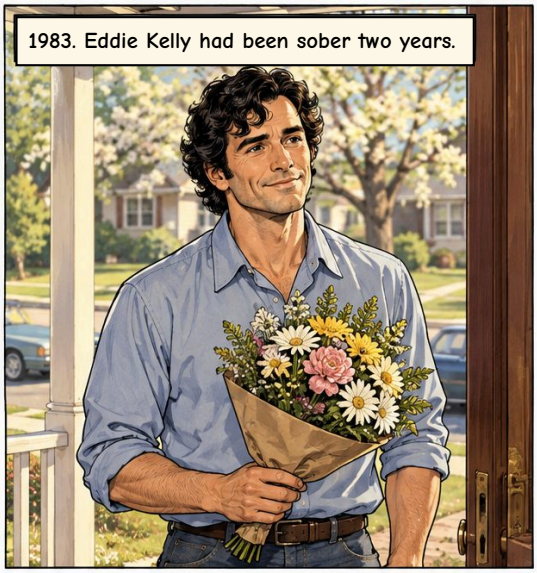

They landed in a snowstorm. None of them had ever seen snow.
Welcome home. It's cold here, but we're warm people.
Maggie did not stare at his ear. She looked him in the eye.
Seventeen boys in the ground, and they get a coat.
We are safe. Thank God. We are safe.


Tuan worked at the scrap yard. He did not talk much.
At night, the war came back.
So he started drinking. Like Eddie.
You don't belong here. My friends died for your country.
I lost my ear for my country. My mother died for it. Don't tell me what I lost.


February. Eddie took the shortcut home across the frozen creek.
CRRACK!
Grab it! Grab the rope!
The man Eddie hated pulled him out of the creek.
Why? Why would you do that?
My mother would have.


Three days later, Eddie Kelly walked into St. Brendan's for the first time in ten years.
Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I hated a man because of his face.
For your penance, go learn his name, Eddie, and pray a decade of the rosary for him. Put the bottle down. Christ will carry what you can't.
Eddie prayed the Act of Contrition. Father Kearney raised his hand: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." "Amen."
Eddie said it felt like jumping out of a hot tub into a cool pool. A shock. Then clean.
Every Tuesday, two old soldiers sat in the church basement. Neither one drank.


1982. Lan cleaned houses. Maggie found her every job in town.
You lost your husband in my country. Half of what my family has is yours.
Lan, I can't take this.
Take it. A broken thing is still a gift.
Neither woman knew how close her loss sat to the other's.


1983. Eddie Kelly had been sober two years.


I'm not asking for anything, Rosie. I came to say I'm sorry.

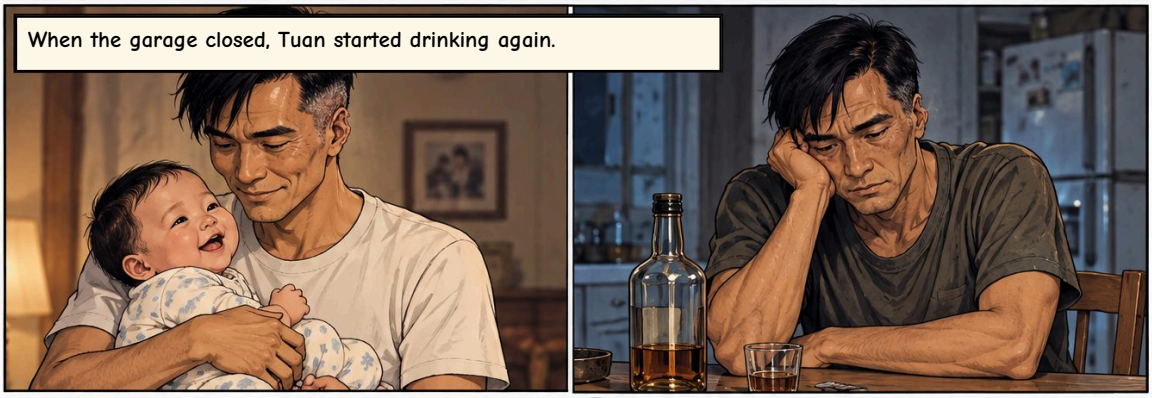

The Church still called them husband and wife. In the spring, they made their promises again.


Saturdays were football again.


My cousin's garage needs a man. I told him you're the best I know.


Georgia, 1985. Peaches on the porch. Two dogs. Three kids.
Dale still told small lies. They went down easy.
Runs fine. Mostly.
He went to church at Easter and Christmas. Mostly to be seen.
The two silver coins sat by his bed. He called them lucky.
Living for yourself is a treadmill. You run and run, and you never get anywhere.

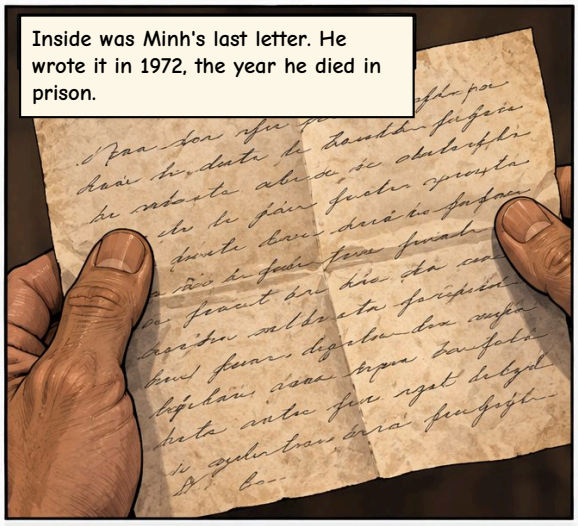

1989. Tuan married Linh, a quiet woman from the Buddhist temple in the city.

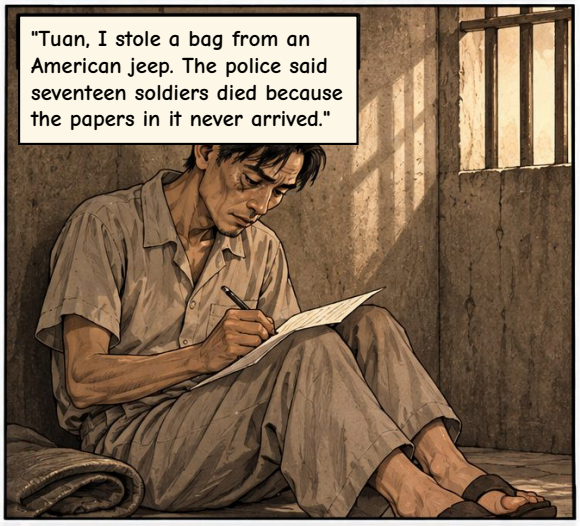

When the garage closed, Tuan started drinking again.


I can't watch you drown, Tuan.


He stopped going to Mass. He blamed God for a camp in the hills.
Measure twice. Bolt tight. Tell the truth.


1990. A letter came from Vietnam, from a man who had been in prison with Minh.


Inside was Minh's last letter. He wrote it in 1972, the year he died in prison.


"Tuan, I stole a bag from an American jeep. The police said seventeen soldiers died because the papers in it never arrived."


"I stole because an American with a gold watch lied and took our two coins. I forgave him. Please forgive me."


Seventeen. Glenmore lost seventeen.


Eddie. The night on the hill. Was there a warning that never came?
The Army said a report was stolen from a jeep in Saigon. How do you know that?
My father stole it. He was hungry.
I hated you once for your face. I won't hate you for your father's hunger.
Tuan never found the courage to tell Maggie. He carried it for thirty-five years.


Eddie died in 2010. A heart attack, before lunch. He had made his peace with God long before.
Get right with God while you can. Eddie did.
April 15, 2019. Notre-Dame de Paris was on fire.
People knelt by the river and sang the Ave Maria. A fire chaplain helped carry the Blessed Sacrament and the Crown of Thorns to safety.
With all the news about some priests, why do you still go?
Judas was one of the twelve. I don't go for Judas. I go for Jesus. And I pray for everyone who was hurt.


Be good. I'll be home for supper.
Lunch on the bridge today. Maybe I'll see an eagle.
Sean Doyle and Danh Pham were partners on the high steel. Friends at work. Their families had never met.
At 10:52 that morning, a section of the scaffold failed. Many people do not make it to lunch.
Two boys. Two doors. Fifty-six years after seventeen doors in Glenmore.

TWO PIECES OF SILVER



Today. Everyone is connected. Almost nobody looks up.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BENCH



Somewhere in this crowd, two halves of one broken medal are about to meet.

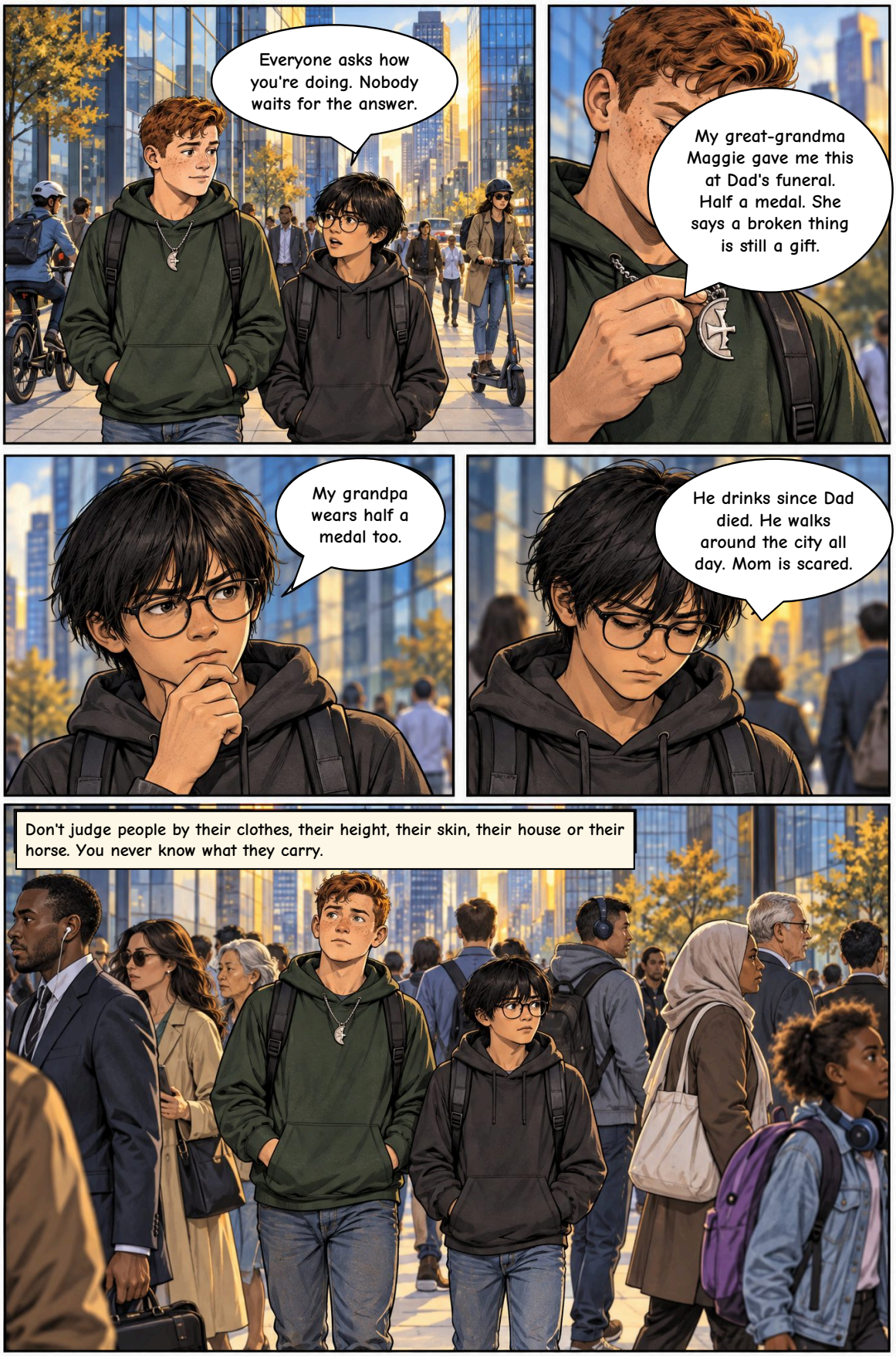

Six months later. Liam Doyle used to be the funny kid.
Doyle! The whistle blew! What is going on with you?
Nothing! Leave me alone!
Danny Pham used to win the science fair.
Now he skipped class and talked to no one. Different noise. Same hurt.


Watch it, shrimp.
You watch it.
You want to go?
Both of you. My office. Now.
Everybody wanted to know what was wrong with these two.


Liam's father died last fall. A work accident.
So did Danny's. October. The bridge.
Same day. Same bridge. Same scaffold.
My grandpa Eddie used to say, when somebody's drowning, you don't give a speech. You throw a rope.
Then let's throw them one.


Saturdays, you two run the food pantry. Together.
With him? He's not even Catholic.
I'm Buddhist. I can still carry a box of beans.
Liam was strong and loud. Danny was careful and good at plans.
Put together, they were twice as good. Different is not a problem. Different is a tool.

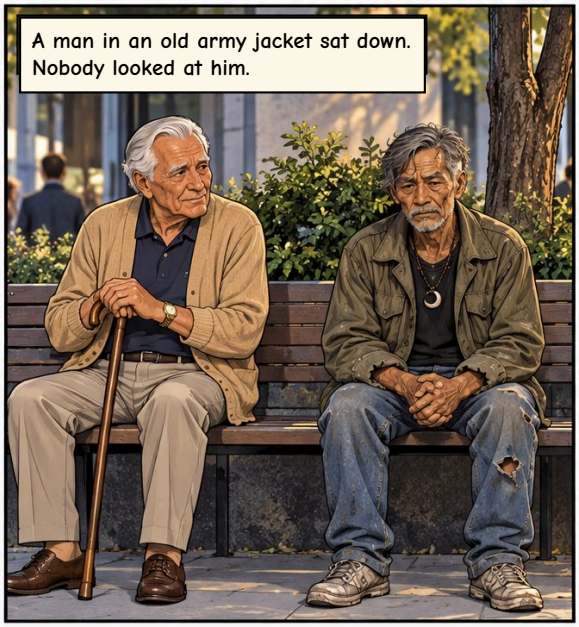

On the third Saturday, Danny's phone lit up.
Wait. That's my dad.
That's my dad. Next to him.
He talked about a guy named Sean every night. Sean made him laugh on the high steel.
My dad called yours the Professor. I didn't know you were his kid.


Everyone asks how you're doing. Nobody waits for the answer.
My great-grandma Maggie gave me this at Dad's funeral. Half a medal. She says a broken thing is still a gift.
My grandpa wears half a medal too.
He drinks since Dad died. He walks around the city all day. Mom is scared.
Don't judge people by their clothes, their height, their skin, their house or their horse. You never know what they carry.


The same week. The bench outside the dress shop.

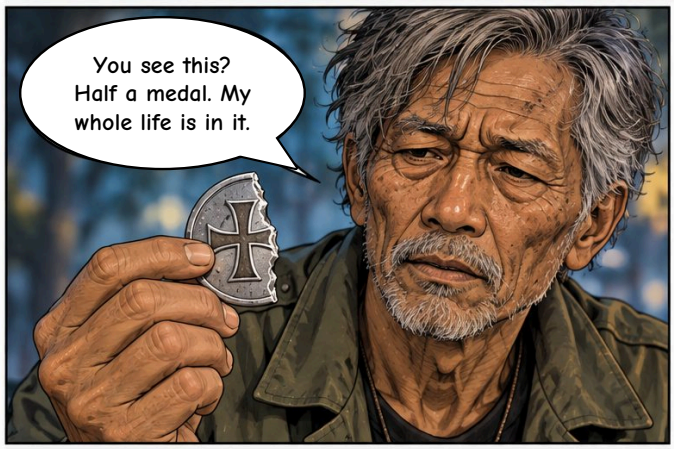

Grandpa, I've got a board call. Grandma has my card. Love you!


Mr. Technology on his scooter. The hip CEO. The man about town. All the trappings. None of it goes with you.


A man in an old army jacket sat down. Nobody looked at him.


Can I help you, friend? Are you OK?


OK? Nobody has asked me that in a year.


You see this? Half a medal. My whole life is in it.




Fifty-seven years fell away in one second.


In Saigon, an American cheated my father out of two silver coins. After that, we had no rice.


My father stole a bag from a jeep to feed us. Inside was a warning. Seventeen American soldiers died.
My mother died in a labor camp. I went to war at sixteen. This is where my ear was.
Last year my son died on a bridge. Now I drink. Every day.
Lots of medals in Saigon. Lots of Americans. It wasn't me. It can't be me.
He had carried them for luck for fifty-seven years.

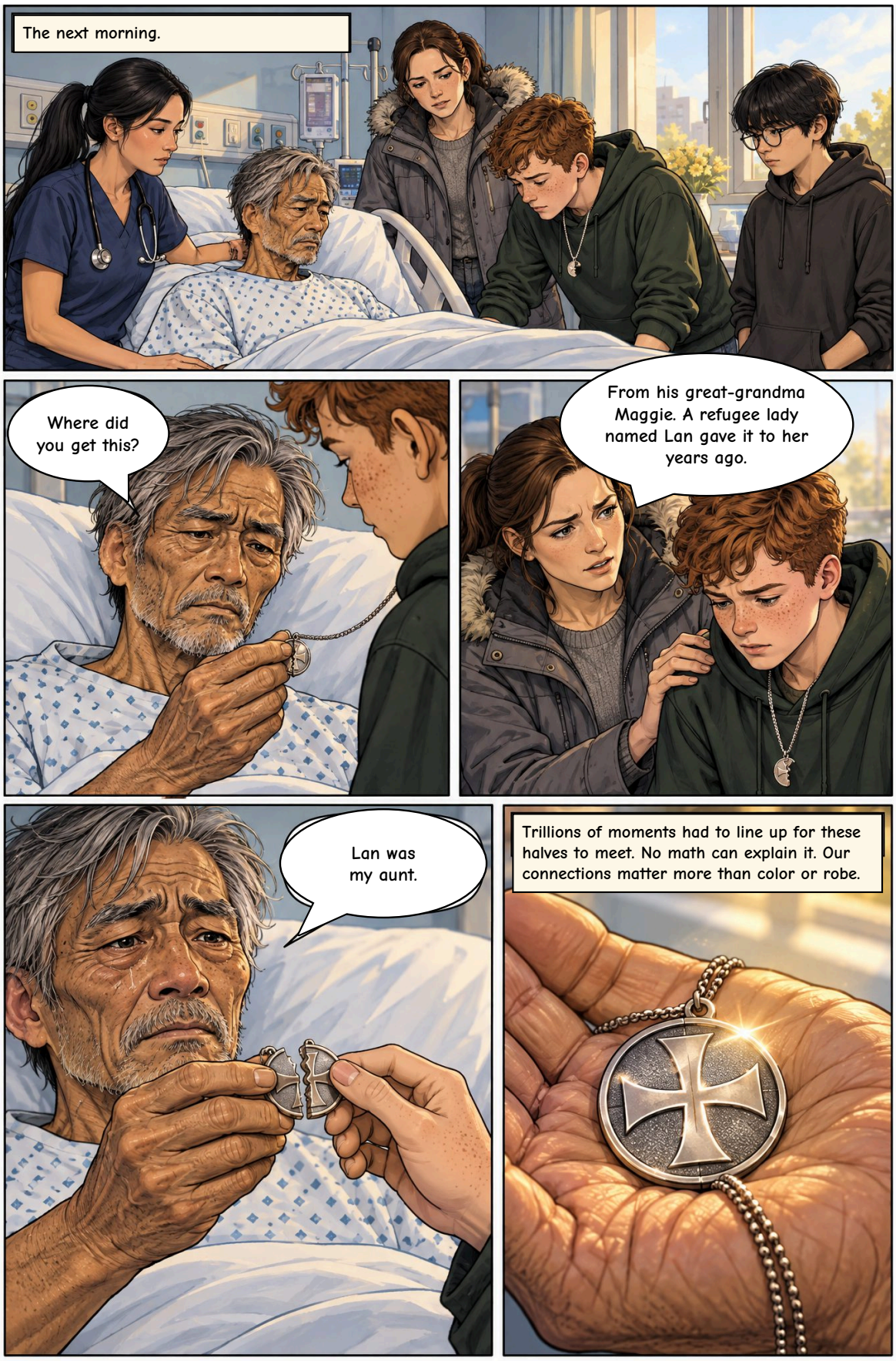

It was me.
YOU?
I can't forgive you. Not today. Keep your coins. Take your sins to God. Go find a priest.
Dale? Honey, you look like you've seen a ghost.

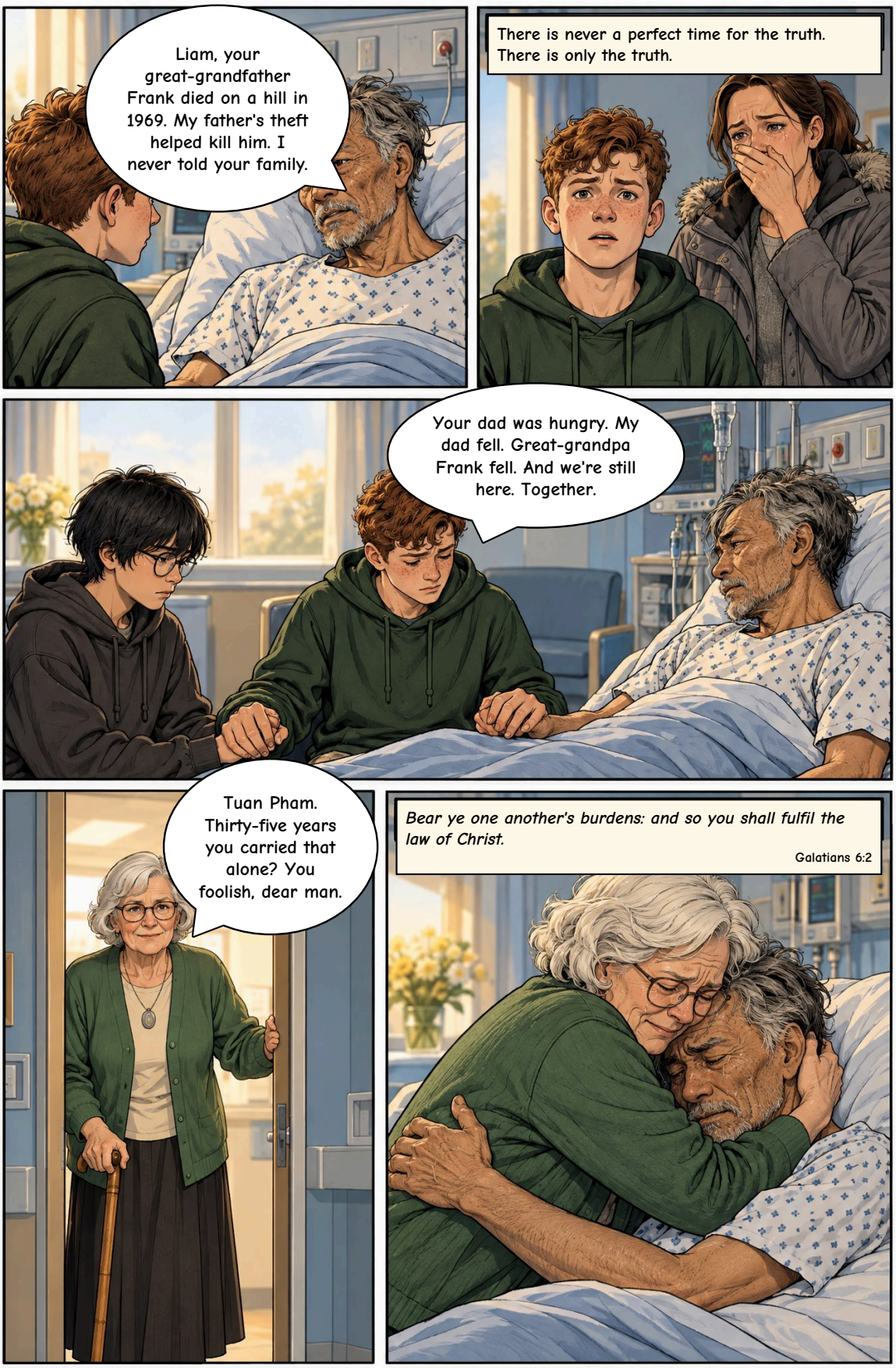

That night Dale stood in his grandson's glass apartment, forty floors up.
A brain, a heart, a conscience: priceless gifts. His conscience had slept for fifty-seven years. Now it saw the doors.
For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.
Psalm 50:5 (DR)
Tell me everything.
Then you know what to do. Tomorrow you go to confession. I'll drive.


Tuan walked to the only place he could think of. The bridge.
SKRRT!
Grandpa's phone is off. He never came home. Danny, it's freezing out there.
Liam, my grandpa is missing. I think I know where he went.
I'm coming. I'm bringing Dad's rope.

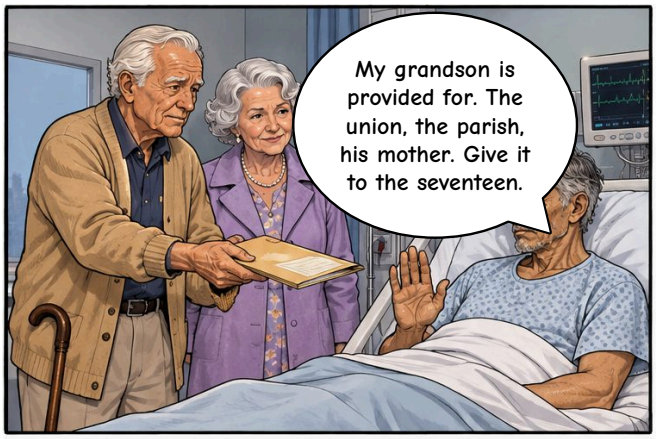

There! On the ledge!
Mr. Pham! Hold on!
Dad taught me this knot. It won't slip.
You hold. I'm lighter. I'll go down.
Grandpa, it's me. Hold the rope.

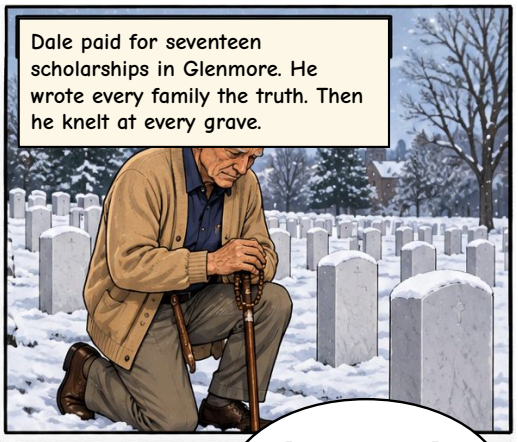

Liam pulled the way his father taught him.
Come on! Together!
A man handed me a rope once. I handed him one back. Now two boys did it for me.
When someone hands you a rope in a moment of loss, it changes your life.

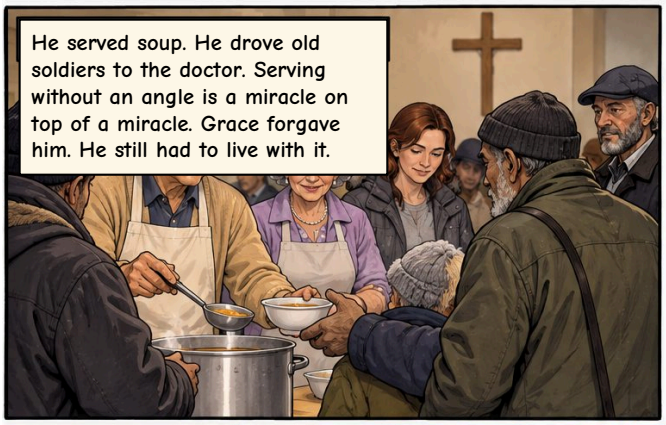

The next morning.
Where did you get this?
From his great-grandma Maggie. A refugee lady named Lan gave it to her years ago.
Lan was my aunt.
Trillions of moments had to line up for these halves to meet. No math can explain it. Our connections matter more than color or robe.

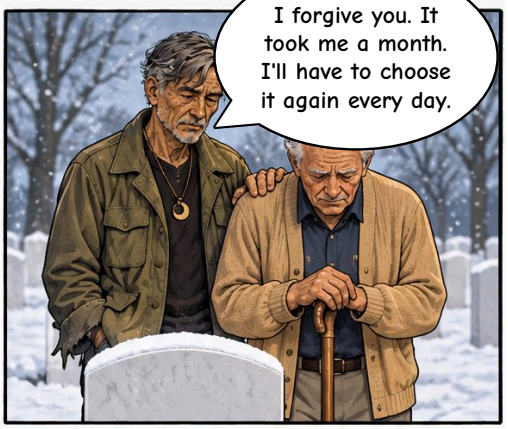

Liam, your great-grandfather Frank died on a hill in 1969. My father's theft helped kill him. I never told your family.
There is never a perfect time for the truth. There is only the truth.
Your dad was hungry. My dad fell. Great-grandpa Frank fell. And we're still here. Together.
Tuan Pham. Thirty-five years you carried that alone? You foolish, dear man.
Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2


Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been sixty years since my last confession.
He told it all. The lie. The coins. The seventeen. Sixty years of small lies after.
God's mercy is bigger than your sin. Where you can repair harm, you must. You can't buy back seventeen lives, but you can serve the living. For your penance, pray at the seventeen graves, one family at a time.
My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
"Amen." That chill. Like jumping out of a hot tub into a cool pool. Swept away in Christ.


My grandson is provided for. The union, the parish, his mother. Give it to the seventeen.


Dale paid for seventeen scholarships in Glenmore. He wrote every family the truth. Then he knelt at every grave.


He served soup. He drove old soldiers to the doctor. Serving without an angle is a miracle on top of a miracle. Grace forgave him. He still had to live with it.


I forgive you. It took me a month. I'll have to choose it again every day.


Tuan went back to Mass. Danny came too, as a guest, to sit with his friend.


Honor. Courage. Commitment. Love your neighbor as yourself. Get right with God before it's over.
this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found.
Luke 15:24



THE HISTORY BEHIND THE STORY

The Knights Templar.

Around 1119, Hugues de Payens and a few knights in Jerusalem took vows to protect Christian pilgrims. The Council of Troyes gave them a rule in 1129. Pope Eugenius III granted the red cross on the white mantle in 1147. On Friday, October 13, 1307, King Philip IV of France had the Templars in France arrested on false charges. Many confessed under torture. In 1312, at the Council of Vienne, Pope Clement V closed the order without declaring it guilty. On March 18, 1314, Grand Master Jacques de Molay was put to death on a small island in the Seine, within sight of Notre-Dame. A chronicler of the time, Geoffroi de Paris, wrote that he asked to face the cathedral.

Notre-Dame de Paris.

Building began in 1163. On April 15, 2019, fire destroyed the roof and the spire. A fire brigade chaplain helped carry the Blessed Sacrament and the Crown of Thorns to safety, and crowds prayed and sang by the river. The cathedral reopened on December 7, 2024.

Saigon, 1975, and the boats.

Saigon fell on April 30, 1975. Many people tied to the old government or to the Americans were sent to re-education camps. Hundreds of thousands later fled by sea. Catholic parishes across the United States sponsored refugee families and helped them start again.

Glenmore.

Glenmore is fictional. Real towns did lose many sons in one night. On June 19, 1969, Battery C of the Kentucky National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery lost nine men from Bardstown, Kentucky, when Fire Support Base Tomahawk was attacked.

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

The Sacrament of Penance (also called Reconciliation or Confession) is where Catholics meet the mercy of Jesus, who gave his apostles the power to forgive sins (John 20:23). You can go behind a screen or face to face. What you say is protected by the seal of confession. A priest may never reveal it.

1. Get ready.

Pray. Ask God to show you your sins. Think back to your last confession.

2. Begin.

Make the Sign of the Cross. Say: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession."

3. Tell your sins.

Say them simply and honestly. The priest is there to help, not to shame you. If you forget something, God's mercy still covers you.

4. Listen.

The priest may give counsel and will give you a penance: a prayer or an action. If you have harmed someone, he may ask you to repair it where you can. The Church calls this restitution (Catechism 1459, 2412, 2487).

5. Pray an Act of Contrition.

You can use the prayer on the next page, or your own words of sorrow.

6. Receive absolution.

The priest says: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Answer: "Amen."

7. Do your penance.

Then live in the freedom of being forgiven.

A WORD FROM COREY

Dale thought his lie was small. Two coins. A laugh. He never saw the doors. Most of us never see where our ripples land.

Honor, courage, commitment. Love your neighbor as yourself. Those words are easy to print. They are hard to live. Living them means you tell the truth when the truth costs you, and you serve people with no angle at all. Serving without manipulation, in faith, is a miracle on top of a miracle.

The man about town, the hip CEO, the scooter guy with every gadget: none of it goes with you. Living for yourself is a treadmill. Serving others is the way off it. Your brain, your heart and your conscience are priceless gifts. Use them.

Many people do not make it to lunch. If you are carrying something, do not wait. Get right with God. Go to a priest. Make it right where you can. When you finally listen to God, it feels like jumping out of a hot tub into a cool pool. A shock, then clean, then that chill when you are swept away in Christ.

And look around. It took trillions of moments to put the people next to you in your life. That is beyond math. Our connections matter more than color, robe, height, house or horse.

Corey Pearson

GET RIGHT WITH GOD

Catholics pray an Act of Contrition in confession. You can pray it tonight, then go to a priest.

> ***My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.***

WHAT'S NEXT?

1. Go to confession. Find times at your local Catholic parish or at masstimes.org.
2. Talk to a priest. You can ask for a private talk about anything you carry.
3. Repair what you can. Pay back, tell the truth, serve the people you hurt.
4. Go to Mass on Sunday. You don't have to carry it alone.
5. Hand someone a rope. Pass this book to a person who needs it.

Glenmore and every person in this story are fictional. The history around them is real. We wrote it with respect for the Catholic Church and for every family that has waited at a door.

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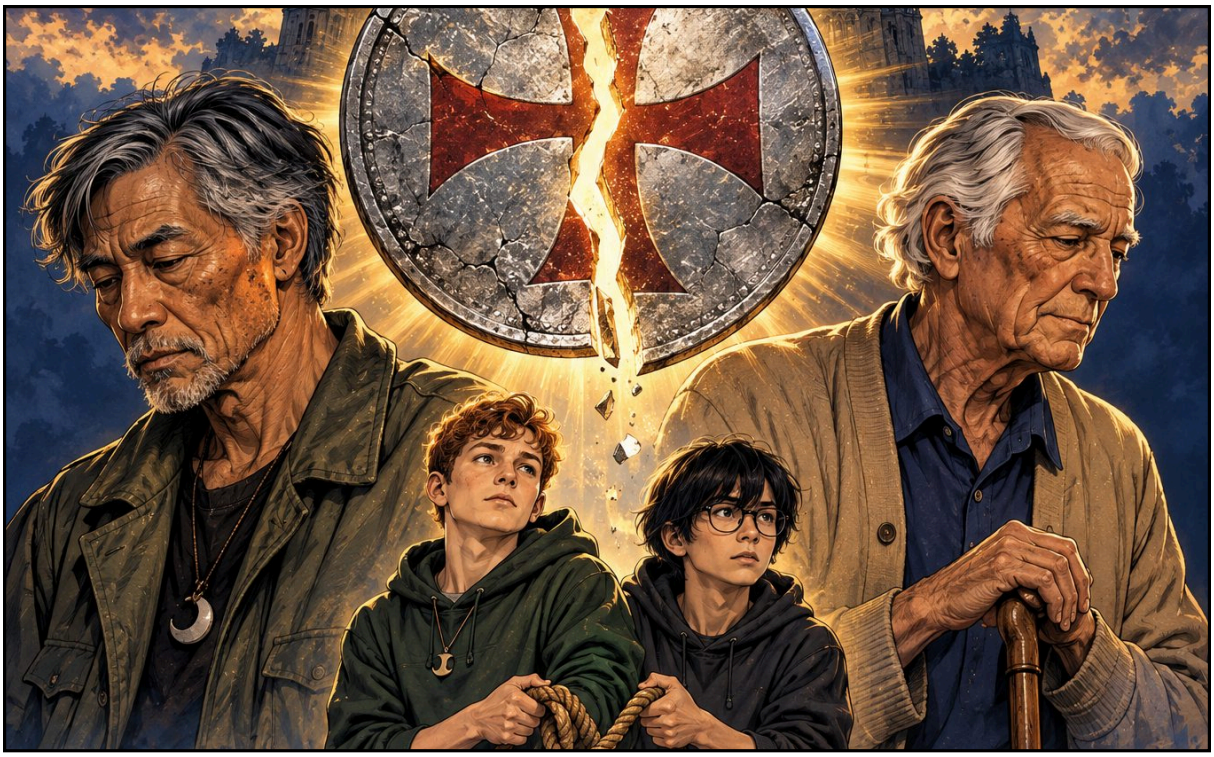

TWO PIECES OF SILVER

One lie in a Saigon silver shop. Two pieces of silver. Seventeen doors in a Pennsylvania steel town. Fifty-seven years later, an old man on a bench asks a stranger, "Are you OK?" and the truth comes home.

He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.

Proverbs 28:13 (Douay-Rheims)

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