

This concluding novel in a trilogy examines three American lives that intersect during the Vietnam War.

Cathy Addison, a nurse stationed in Vietnam, is brutally beaten by a psychopath, Ray Slaugh, who was stalking her best friend and colleague, Barbara Mander. Dion Murphy, Cathy's boyfriend, enraged when he discovers what happened, tracks down Ray and kills him in self-defense.

Soon after, Cathy shows up (its unclear how she too found Ray when the military could not), and shoots his corpse in a fugue like fit of fury. Dion, a Marine lieutenant, enlists the help of a first sergeant to doctor the scene of the shooting, but military investigators figure out that he and Cathy are likely responsible, and prepare to prosecute both.

Meanwhile, Cathy resigns her post and returns to Minnesota, pulverized by distress, especially after she learns she is pregnant. Dion travels back to the United States to pledge his loyalty to her and marry her, and to stand by her side when they inevitably face trial. Meanwhile, Norman Coddington, a fighter pilot, finally learns that his girlfriend, Barbara, lied about her past--she was once a prostitute and sex slave, and hails from inauspicious beginnings. Norm leaves her, and Barbara, extremely distraught, attempts suicide.

Shortly after, Norm is shot down flying over North Vietnam and captured, and the appalling ordeal forces him to reconsider his judgment of Barbara. The harrowing account of Norm's treatment in captivity by the enemy continues the series' commitment to a realistic, if often gruesome, portrayal of war.