

"A BOOK TO BREAK YOUR HEART AND HEAL IT."

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1223 11839 5954

GLEN PARK

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Sympathizer*

THE BEST WE COULD DO



AN ILLUSTRATED MEMOIR

THI BUI



Hello, Thi.



I brought you a video I found.



"Vietnam War with Walter Cronkite."



The narration is only okay...

...but what I thought was neat was seeing footage of our old neighborhood



REALLY?

Thank you, Bô!



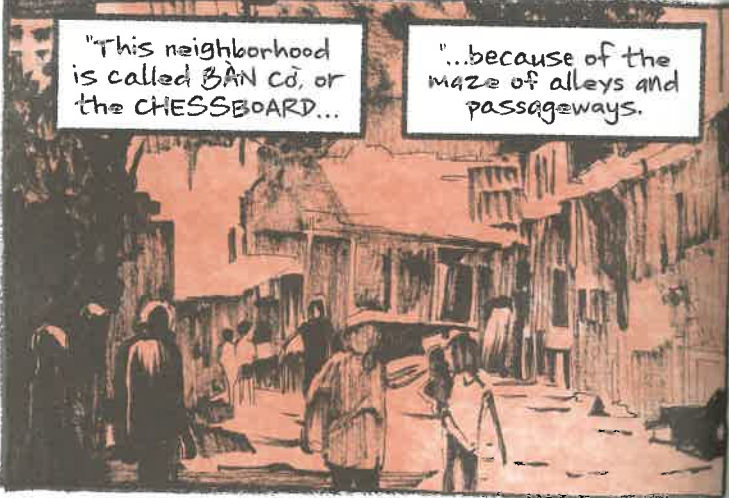
Mm. If you like it, I'll get you more.

George Syvertsen reports...



"This neighborhood is called BÀN CỜ, or the CHESSBOARD..."

"...because of the maze of alleys and passageways."



...its residents are mostly poor working people...



"...and its slums are a refuge for Sài Gòn's hoodlums and CRIMINAL ELEMENT."

"A Southeast Asian version of the Lower East Side or the Algerian Casbah."

I know this is caricature...



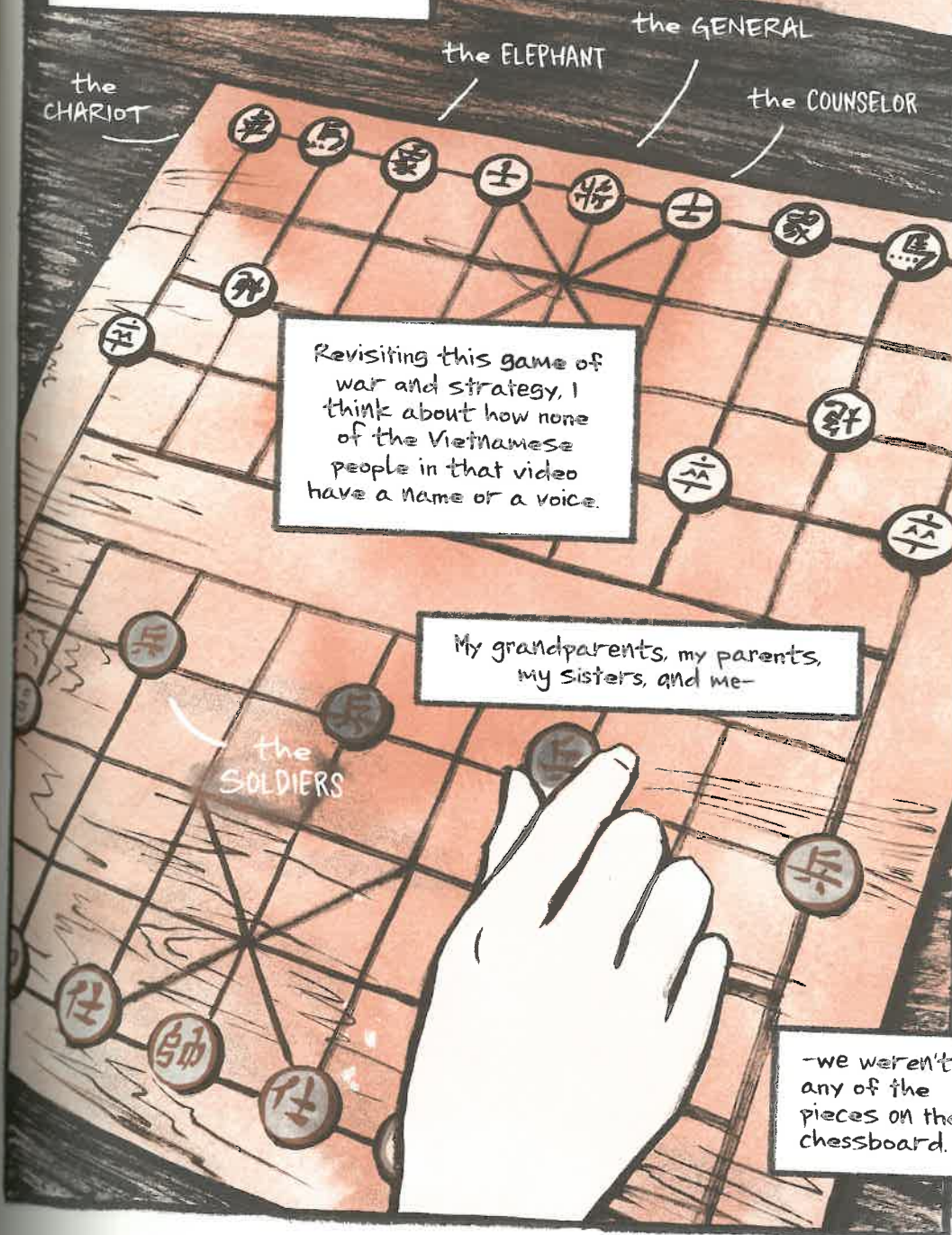
...but lacking memories of my own, I've come to depend on other people's stories.



The Lower East Side. I'll draw it like that.



I still have the chessboard my father made when I was a kid, and the wooden set of pieces we played with.



Revisiting this game of war and strategy, I think about how none of the Vietnamese people in that video have a name or a voice.

My grandparents, my parents, my sisters, and me—

—we weren't any of the pieces on the chessboard.