



# Girl by the Road at Night: A Novel of Vietnam

*David Rabe*

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**David Rabe's award-winning Vietnam plays** have come to embody our collective fears, doubts, and tenuous grasp of a war that continues to haunt. Partially written upon his return from the war, *Girl by the Road at Night* is Rabe's first work of fiction set in Vietnam—a spare and poetic narrative about a young soldier embarking on a tour of duty and the Vietnamese prostitute he meets in country.

Private Joseph Whitaker, with Vietnam deployment papers in hand, spends his last free weekend in Washington, DC, drinking, attending a peace rally, and visiting an old girlfriend, now married. He observes his surroundings closely, attempting to find reason in an atmosphere of hysteria and protest, heightened by his own anger. When he arrives in Vietnam, he happens upon Lan, a local girl who submits nightly to the American GIs with a heartbreaking combination of decency and guile. Her family dispersed and her father dead, she longs for a time when life meant riding in water buffalo carts through rice fields with her brother. Whitaker's chance encounter with Lan sparks an unexpected, almost unrecognized, visceral longing between two people searching for companionship and tenderness amid the chaos around them.

In transformative prose, Rabe has created an atmosphere charged with exquisite poignancy and recreated the surreal netherworld of Vietnam in wartime with unforgettable urgency and grace. *Girl by the Road at Night* is a brilliant meditation on disillusionment, sexuality, and masculinity, and one of Rabe's finest works to date.

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#### **James Alvarez:**

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#### **Sylvia Ferland:**

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