

# 'Not a bang, but a whimper'

Wed. Apr. 16, 1986

It was quiet in the restaurant's bar as we headed out the door after dinner Monday night.

Bork had been staring at the television screen while he waited for us to get our coats.

We all peeked in before leaving.

"It's just another talking head on the 7 o'clock news," I thought to myself as we walked out.

"Did they say something about a strike on Libya?" Jay asked Bork.

He shrugged.

"I didn't watch long enough to pick up what they were talking about," he answered.

None of us were too concerned. I guess we thought the announcement of a strike would be accompanied by a bigger hullabaloo than the bar contained.

It wasn't until an hour later, after we darted across the North End rotary and strolled around Faneuil Hall for a little while, that we learned something really had happened.

We were still laughing at a man dressed as a gigantic red sock when we passed the bar.

"Excuse me," someone said, and a man stepped out of the shadows to intercept us. "Did you hear? We bombed Libya."

The man was a little drunk, and I didn't know whether to believe him at first, but after staring at him for a moment, I did.

"We just heard it on the news, inside," he said, pointing at the bar. "It happened around 7 tonight."

We stared at each other, nervous, for a moment.

"Are you a military man?" the stranger asked Jay.

He nodded.

"I was too," he said. He seemed to want to talk about anything. "My assignment was weapons."

In that moment, war became a reality to me.

Although I lived during the Vietnam War era, I was too young to understand what was happening.

No one I knew was drafted. No one I knew was killed.

During social study periods, I saw pictures of Vietnamese children running across bullet-strewn runways to try to climb on American planes.

I read about the river boats, and the fighting, and I heard about the draft protests on the 7 o'clock news.

But because we studied it during social studies, I was aware



## The Blank Page

Karen Cubie

Linda, a companion of Monday night, wasn't so ignorant as a child. She knew people who

fought, and she knew people who died.

"I used to pray every night that no one lost arms or legs," she remembered, "and our neighbor's son lived, hiding, in their attic, for a long time."

I still don't know much about Vietnam, but over the years I've grown to be afraid of war.

I've heard numerous, bone-chilling war stories that make me think I wouldn't have courage to fight, but would run screaming across the battlefield and into the

nearest jungle.

Occasionally, I wonder how World War Three will start.

Sometimes I think it could begin with the loud bang of a nuclear explosion.

Or maybe with Russian troops landing on the beaches near Tel Aviv.

But, after Monday night, I realize it could start in a quiet, mundane way, with a talking head on the 7 o'clock news announcing the isolated bombing of a far-away land like Libya.

"DON'T KNOCK 'EM — THEY'RE MAKING US LOOK LIKE REG'LAR FELLERS"

