

# Write your own Historical Fiction 2025

**‘What kept me from having those luxuries?’**

**by Johnny Nguyen**

## **18th November 1982**

I was only 6 years old when I had fully understood the dire situation I was in, born only one year after the Vietnamese War ended (1976). I was the few fortunate kids who had their father survive the war as a soldier against the Americans. However, this caused our country to suffer in the upcoming years due to the lack of labour as millions died from bombshells and on the battlefields. Many of the Vietnamese people like me, had to endure the pain of poverty, which prevented us from having the luxurious things that life had to offer.

## **26th January 1983**

I never had a chance to experience life's wonders, I grew up on a farm with limited education and resources that we had to ration between a large family. We had no electricity, no running fresh water, and we ate rice when there was enough or boiled leaves when there wasn't. Every time I would go out with my mother and support her with agriculture, from the corner of my eye, I'll never forget the waves of laughter I saw from the children coming from the village chief's house. The kids there would always smile with brand new shoes, toys, rough but cleaner shirts than I could ever have - but I couldn't stop the question that formed deep inside me - "What kept me from having those luxuries?"

## **13th February 1983**

The lunar new year has finally arrived, and this is the only time I look forward to in the year, as our family of 4 got to share one whole chicken, which we ate once per year! My brother and I would get the chicken wings and legs, whereas our parents would eat the rest. As a family, we would go out and celebrate the festivals with the community, even forgetting the circumstances of each other

and a time to start fresh. I would receive money from friends and family, even though it wasn't much, me and my brother would stay positive and go to buy small gifts for each other. The day ended with bright smiles and laughter similar to the chief's children and I had wished the day never ended. At that particular moment I thought to myself - "What if there was enough food for us all." - "What if there were markets of plenty, not memories of ration lines" - "What if children were holding books and toys instead of farming tools and seeds." Would it have solved the luxuries I've longed for...

### **5th July 1985**

Two years have passed and life in the village has become much better with the progress we were making. Now I have more free time to do other things other than farming, like fishing in small-scale lakes and catching miniature insects like butterflies, grasshoppers and cicadas in order to pass the time, as there wasn't much to do. Food at home slightly improved with our entire family eating rice, bananas and sweet potato daily, with our family having enough food to keep us full. Vietnam at this time has also advanced with modern knowledge outside of the country, and I was able to start my education as schools were built for children like me. I could feel my body expressing the sense of joy as I began to wonder, could this be the luxury I've wanted?

### **22nd August 2005**

So many years have passed, and I'm 28 years old. I have dedicated my years to studying at a university in the capital city of Vietnam (Hanoi), and I am married to a wonderful woman. We felt prepared to travel to a foreign country (England) to give our children the life they would want, which is to experience things I couldn't do. I also wanted a better future for our future children in a more progressive country like the UK. However, things didn't go as planned. We had to start from scratch, meaning we had to rebuild our lives with the little finances we had. It felt like living in poverty again, as we had no shelter and barely any food to survive, but I had to work for money to buy food, water for me and my wife. I'd always drop into despair whenever the rich refused to support us, nevertheless, I did not blame them. I knew that they would have worked hard to reach the top, and I would have to do the same to secure my children's future one day. I stayed resilient and pushed through the tough times, even having to starve myself to make sure my wife didn't starve.

### **19th May 2025 (20 years has passed since)**

"I did it..."

"I made my own business."

“I got my dream car.”

“I got my dream house.”

“I always eat full.”

But what led me up to this point has made me realise that these weren't the luxuries I were chasing. Throughout my life, I've learned that the only thing that keeps you from having any luxury is yourself, unless you can push yourself to your limits, nothing will change and that none of the things I thought were luxury were actually important to me, if anything else, the only luxury anyone can have in their lives is...

“Your children and a loving wife.”