

# Dumb Luck: A Satirical Novel by Vu Trong Phung

If you are looking for a witty and insightful novel that explores the social and cultural changes in Vietnam during the late colonial era, you might want to check out *Dumb Luck* by Vu Trong Phung. This novel, first published in Hanoi in 1936, was banned in Vietnam until 1986 because of its controversial and influential critique of the modernization craze that swept the country. *Dumb Luck* tells the story of Red-haired Xuan, a street-smart vagabond who rises to fame and fortune by sheer luck and cunning. Along the way, he encounters various characters and situations that reveal the absurdities and contradictions of colonial society, from the filthy sidewalks of Hanoi's old commercial quarter to the gaudy mansions of the Francophile upper classes. The novel also examines the transformation of traditional Vietnamese class and gender relations triggered by the growth of colonial capitalism. Vu Trong Phung was arguably the greatest Vietnamese writer of the twentieth century. He died in Hanoi in 1939 at the age of twenty-seven. He wrote at least eight novels, seven plays, and several other works of fiction in addition to *Dumb Luck*. His works are known for their sharp satire, realistic portrayal of everyday life, and innovative use of language and style. *Dumb Luck* is the first translation of a major work by Vu Trong Phung into English. It was translated by Nguyen Nguyet Cam and Peter Zinoman, who are both experts on Vietnamese history and culture. The translation is faithful to the original text, while also capturing its humor and nuance. The book also includes an introduction by Zinoman that provides historical and literary context for the novel. If you want to read *Dumb Luck* by Vu Trong Phung, you can download it as an ebook from Google Books<sup>[1]</sup> or WorldCat<sup>[3]</sup>. You can also find more information about the novel and its author from these sources. *Dumb Luck* is a classic of Vietnamese literature that will entertain and enlighten you with its satire and insight. One of the most remarkable aspects of *Dumb Luck* is its use of humor and irony to expose the flaws and follies of colonial society. Vu Trong Phung employs various techniques, such as exaggeration, parody, and juxtaposition, to create hilarious and absurd situations that mock the pretensions and hypocrisies of the characters. For example, he depicts the ridiculous fashion trends that the upper classes adopt to imitate the French, such as wearing horned hats, high heels, and tight corsets. He also shows how the characters misuse and misunderstand modern concepts and technologies, such as civilization, democracy, and medicine. The novel is full of witty dialogues and clever wordplay that highlight the linguistic and cultural gaps between the Vietnamese and the French. Another important theme of *Dumb Luck* is the critique of the colonial system and its impact on the Vietnamese people. Vu Trong Phung shows how colonialism creates social inequalities, corruption, exploitation, and violence. He also exposes how colonialism erodes the traditional values and customs of the Vietnamese, such as family loyalty, moral integrity, and spiritual faith. He portrays the characters as either victims or collaborators of colonialism, who are either oppressed or corrupted by its power. He also contrasts the decadence and decadence of the urban elite with the poverty and misery of the rural masses. The novel offers a sharp contrast between the idealized image of colonial civilization and the harsh reality of colonial domination. *Dumb Luck* is not only a satire of colonial society, but also a satire of human nature. Vu Trong Phung shows how human beings are driven by greed, lust, vanity, and ambition. He depicts how these vices lead to foolishness, folly, and tragedy. He also shows how human beings are easily manipulated by luck, fate, and circumstance. He portrays Red-haired Xuan as a symbol of dumb luck, who rises and falls by chance and cunning. He also shows how Xuan's luck affects the lives of

those around him, for better or worse. The novel suggests that human beings are ultimately powerless and helpless in the face of destiny.

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