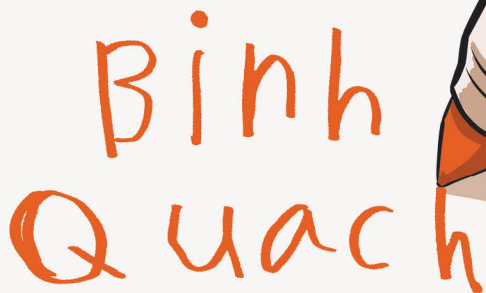




By Peter Quach




Special thanks to
Carolina Alonso Bejarano and Sophia Quach



Binh
Quach

WHEN I LOOK AT MY NAME,
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO
PRONOUNCE IT.

WHEN I WAS 5, I DECIDED I WANTED TO GO BY MY
BIRTH NAME, INSTEAD OF MY NICKNAME, PETER.



FROM NOW
ON, I AM--

BINH!

ALAS, DECREES ISSUED BY 5-YEAR-OLDS DIDN'T
HOLD MUCH POWER. A WEEK OR TWO LATER THE
ADULTS IN MY LIFE, AND EVEN I, WOULD FORGET.



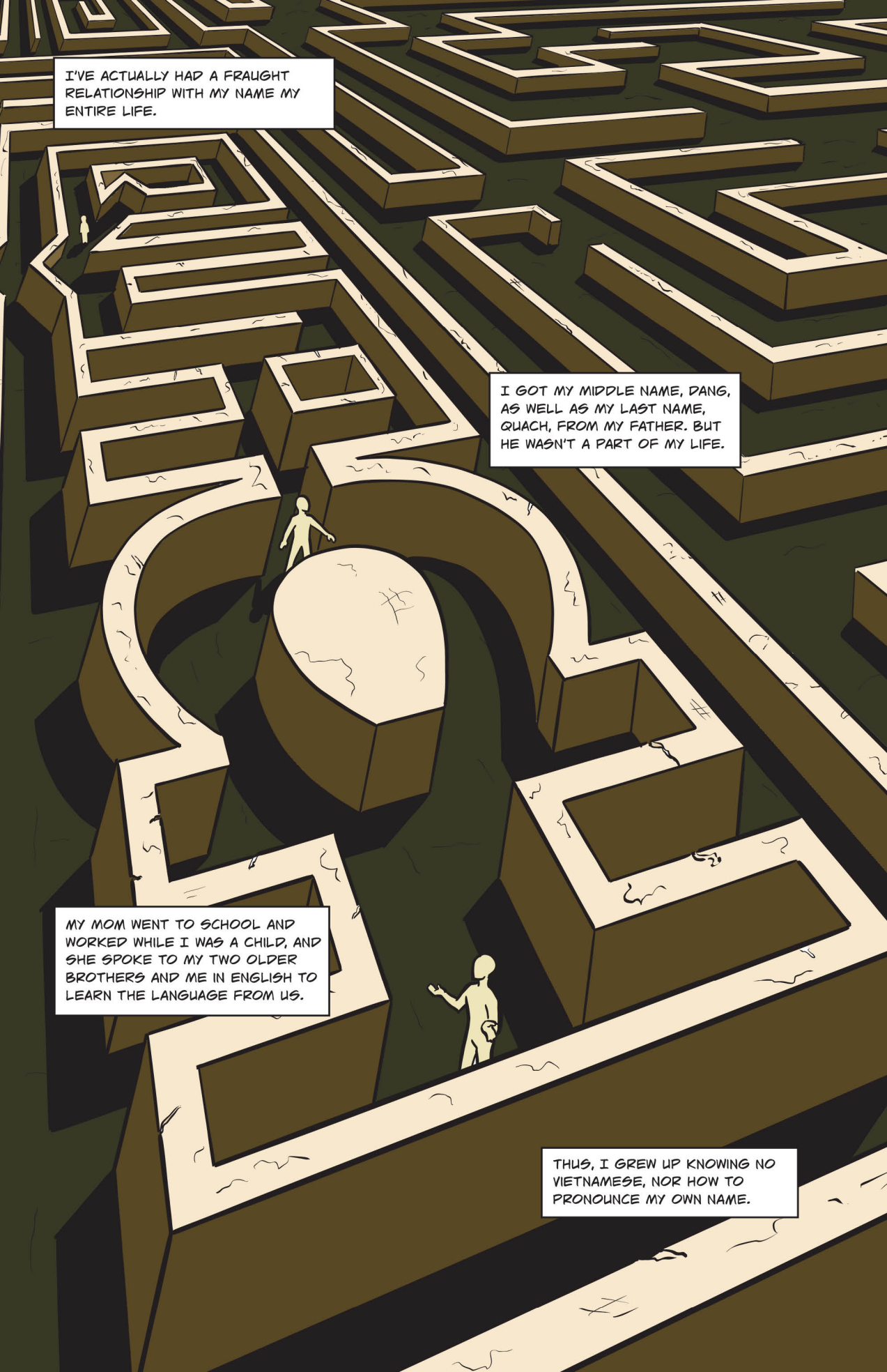
PETER!

YES,
MRS. VORIS!

WHEN I WAS 16, I GAVE IN TO INERTIA AND LEGALLY
CHANGED MY NAME TO PETER. BINH BECAME PART
OF MY MIDDLE NAME.



PETER

A 3D maze with a large 'P' in the center. A person is walking through the maze. The maze is made of brown walls on a dark green floor. The 'P' is a large, light-colored structure in the center of the maze. A person is walking through the maze, and another person is visible in the distance. The maze is complex and winding, with many paths and dead ends. The person in the foreground is walking towards the 'P'. The person in the distance is walking away from the 'P'. The maze is a metaphor for a complex life or a difficult journey.

I'VE ACTUALLY HAD A FRAUGHT
RELATIONSHIP WITH MY NAME MY
ENTIRE LIFE.

I GOT MY MIDDLE NAME, PANG,
AS WELL AS MY LAST NAME,
QUACH, FROM MY FATHER. BUT
HE WASN'T A PART OF MY LIFE.

MY MOM WENT TO SCHOOL AND
WORKED WHILE I WAS A CHILD, AND
SHE SPOKE TO MY TWO OLDER
BROTHERS AND ME IN ENGLISH TO
LEARN THE LANGUAGE FROM US.

THUS, I GREW UP KNOWING NO
VIETNAMESE, NOR HOW TO
PRONOUNCE MY OWN NAME.

IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHAT TO TAKE FROM THE SPELLING OF QUACH. YOU SEE, VIETNAMESE WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS.



嘉 定 報
GIA ĐÌNH BÁO

VIETNAM'S FIRST NEWSPAPER, GIA ĐÌNH BÁO, FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1865, WAS WRITTEN EXCLUSIVELY IN THE LATIN ALPHABET. ITS CONTRIBUTORS WERE LARGELY CATHOLIC.

m phải trả 6 gó

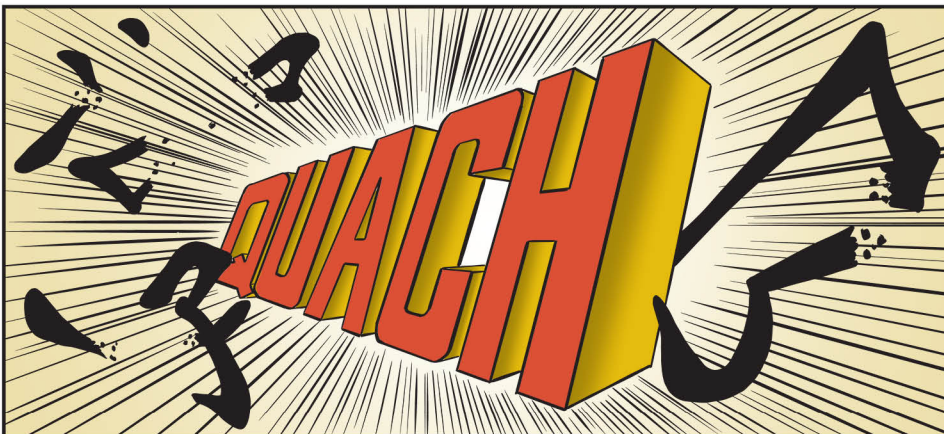
PORTUGUESE MISSIONARIES STARTED TO TRANSCRIBE VIETNAMESE INTO A LATIN ALPHABET BASED ON PORTUGUESE AROUND 1620. ITALIAN MISSIONARIES LATER CONTRIBUTED, AND THEN FRENCH MISSIONARY ALEXANDRE DE RHODES PUBLISHED A VIETNAMESE-LATIN-PORTUGUESE DICTIONARY IN 1651.

THAT LATIN ALPHABET WAS ONLY USED BY CATHOLICS UNTIL THE 1800S, WHEN THE FRENCH COLONIZED VIETNAM. THE FRENCH COLONIZERS DECREED THAT ALL OFFICIAL WRITING WAS TO BE DONE IN THE LATIN SCRIPT, CALLED CHỮ QUỐC NGỮ. BY FORCING THE LATIN ALPHABET ON THE VIETNAMESE, THE FRENCH COLONIZERS SOUGHT TO



...INCUPLICATE IN THE VIETNAMESE THE PRINCIPLES OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION AND ISOLATE THEM FROM THE HOSTILE INFLUENCE OF THE CHINESE.*

*PAULIN VIAL, DIRECTEUR DU CABINET DU GOUVERNEUR DE LA CONCHINCHINE, JANUARY 15, 1866.



THROUGH ADOPTION OF THIS LATIN ALPHABET, VIETNAMESE LIKE ME WERE SEVERED FROM OUR TRADITIONAL HERITAGE, AND STUCK WITH A SPELLING SYSTEM THAT WAS A MISHMASH OF PORTUGUESE, ITALIAN, AND FRENCH.

FOR MOST OF MY LIFE, I DEFAULTED TO HOW MY BROTHERS AND THE WHITE PEOPLE AROUND ME IN INDIANA PRONOUNCED IT, RHYMING WITH WATCH, AS



I WAS VAGUELY AWARE THAT MY VIETNAMESE-SPEAKING MOTHER PRONOUNCED IT DIFFERENTLY, RHYMING WITH WOK, AS



BUT MY MOTHER RARELY SAID MY FULL NAME, SO...

ACCORDING TO THAT BASTION OF TRUTH, WIKIPEDIA, QUACH IS DESCENDED FROM THE CHINESE NAME 郭, WHICH IS TRANSLITERATED VARIOUSLY AS GUO, GWOK, KWOK, QUEK, KWAK, OR QUACH. THOSE OTHER SPELLINGS POINT TO A PRONUNCIATION CLOSER TO MY MOM'S.



BUT CAN I REALLY CHANGE HOW I'VE BEEN PRONOUNCING MY NAME FOR 39 YEARS?



MY NAME FELT RIGHT,
BUT ALSO WEIRD.

A STRANGE THING
HAPPENED TO ME
RECENTLY. AT A
PHARMACY, THE
PHARMACIST
ASKED FOR MY
NAME, AND I SAID
PETER

MY NAME IS THE
DISSONANT CHORD
THAT PLAYS WHEN
THE THREE NOTES
OF EUROPEAN, US,
AND VIETNAMESE
HISTORY CONVERGE.

KWAHK

MY NAME IS

PETER BINH DANG QUACH

