

I WANT TO ASK MY FATHER

CHISI AMANDA XIONG

In the Laos jungle,
down the hill,
on the elephant trail
was the last time he saw him, his father.
How old was that boy?
Who looked back one last time,
was the question I wanted to know.

A new world, with strange weather,
where delicate ice shavings fell like petals
and grounds that sizzled your feet, as if they were as delicate as eggs.
Did you think the world was changing?
Seeing the weather so strange

A new place, to call home
but it's not home, only a place,
to live for another day and live a different way,
so how can this place be called home?
Because war time had separated families

How did you brush it off?
The laughter, not with you
but at you.
Pointed fingers
at your long hair and repeated pants,
with no socks to wear.

No helping hand extended, because
yellow skin and hidden lids, because
English was not your first language;

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but being thought as “stupid”
didn’t sit right with you.

As you sit in your room
no mattress, no pillow
no mother, no father
was your spirit beaten down?
Had it left you behind, to endure the pain alone?

The hidden tears, that never dripped,
a painted smile, or a mask,
can’t hide the droopy eyes
but you kept going because?

He looked up and said, to me
I looked back one last time
and ran down the elephant trail
to my father,
no hug, but I said ‘I love you’ to him,
for I knew it was the last time
I’d see his face.
He told me to go
before I was too far behind the others,
and to come back to look for them, if I survived
and that’s how your grandmother
and my brothers got here,
because I survived.