

# I WANT TO ASK MY FATHER

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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.