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Letter to My Unborn Self

Saymoukda Vongsay
Saymoukda@gmail.com

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Letter to My Unborn Self

by
Saymoukda D. Vongsay

Your mother will slap you because out of frustration you'll yell, "Why can't you just learn English?" So what. You're supposed to act as translator at the welfare office. At the grocery stores. At your parent-teacher conferences. This is why they'll raise you bi-lingual in this strange country. On the fourteenth year of your life, you'll be blindsided by the fact that you had a second brother. Don't blame yourself for not knowing. Blame pain and guilt for taking residence in the hearts of your parents the night their second son died in the hospital. Blame their need to forget and their reluctance to heal, to even tell you his name. Be thankful that they didn't give up on having more children after him because then you wouldn't be born.

When you're five years old, your uncle's friend Tom will hurt you, coercing his grown man tongue into your mouth when no one is looking. Tell your uncle so he will beat the shit out of Tom. Don't blame yourself. Don't blame your uncle. Finish the weekend work your third grade teacher sends you home with and go to bed early on Friday nights so that you can wake up two hours before dawn. Don't wear your good clothes. It's only the cucumber fields. Try to daydream about Saturday morning cartoons as you move down the rows, dragging your white bucket behind you. Only pick the ones as big as your hand or your parents won't get paid. Remember to bring a box of facial tissue with you when you go to pick up your mother at the Christmas wreath factory. Don't be disgusted when she cups your face with her dusty sap-dried hands, then kisses you. Fall asleep on the ride home, your head on her lap, and dream of a better life for her.

About the Author

Vongsay is the Lao American author of *No Regrets*, a collection of poetry and haikus published by Baby Rabbit Publishing. Her work can be read in publications such as *Altra Magazine*, *The University Register*, *Hmong Today*, and *Bakka Literary Journal*. A Minnesota-based spoken word poet, she has performed nationally, having shared the stage with nationally acclaimed American artists, and internationally in Italy and Japan. She has worked with the Anchorage Urban League of Young Professionals lecturing and performing at the university level and at local high schools to urge voter registration and civic engagement and also served as liaison between local government and the Southeast Asian community regarding public policy.



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