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Selected Poems

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National Association
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Advancement of
Cambodian, Laotian,
and Vietnamese
Americans (NAFEA)

Selected Poems *by* Krysada Panusith Phounsiri

Afterlife

Poem for Oo Ma, Grandmother

I look
for a cricket
hope it appears
in a corner
of our home
Mami used to
hush us kids
tell us to
bow our heads three times
"It's Oo Ma" she whispers

I search for
her soul
pray she follows us
from rented home
to rented home
must have been
her spirit
that sparks the incense
with the whiff
of a flame
ashes fall when we recite Sutras

I bend my legs
weight on my knees
don't care if I must crouch
inside my closet
or lay on the Event Horizon
of a Black Hole
I still look for a cricket
that hops its way
into my travels
listen for a chirp
like a lullaby
Oo Ma used to sing

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A Breath of Southeast in My Mother's Womb

Southeast skies in Huay Xai Lao
dive into my mother's lungs and
into my bagpipes of life
a Southeast Sky that the Sun
sneaks light through to
peek pass the thick fog
witness the signs of my birth

Sometimes remnants of cinder
warm the morning chills
Mother breathes the smoke
I take whatever air
my Mother breathes
and kick so she knows
the cinder rouses me

She immerses herself in the Mekong River
cleanses her skin letting each molecule
glide 'round her body
water drops that get lucky
swim down her throat
into her womb and
streams with my bloody
I taste the Mekong River for the
first time

My mother's womb
moist like the lakes
that bathe her
I swim in
this sphere of birth
so good
I call myself selfish if
I ever learn to
swim like that
again

Time comes for me to
leave my mother's brook
pass the nurturing canal
and I meet the Southeast sky
for the first time

born
in the corner of
a wooden house
guarded by green groves and
bamboo brush
on the second floor
in the corner of my mother's room

My jerks and kicks and squints
worry my mother
one breath and
I cry
the sacred air inside
escapes
time to inhale with
two nostrils like
caves on my face

Southeast air
pouched in jewels
leave their marks in my lungs
with the tinge of smoke still fresh
from the cinder
I believe the
weight of my spit still
reminds me

Reminds me to
inhale every spec of
Huay Xai sky
forever unite with
the world I trap in my
little bagpipes

In my mother's river
In my mother's sky
In my mother's home

For me

About the Author

Krysada Panusith Phounsiri is a Laotian-American who was born in Houay Xai, Laos. He immigrated to the U.S. at age two where he lived in Southeast San Diego. He began writing poetry at age 11, but fell in love with poetry when he attended UC Berkeley. It was at Berkeley where he learned June Jordan's foundation in poetry and it was also where he found his ways to share his story. His writings carry the stories of his family, his culture, and his life for the purpose of expressing what he loves in a manner of art. He writes because he believes these stories need to be heard, they need to be read, and they need to be soaked in. In a world where many do not know about Laotian Americans and their history in America, Krysada wants to bring readers into his world of words in an attempt to uncover some truths and disperse stereotypes plaguing the umbrella Asian-American community. He normally goes by the name Binly, a nickname forever used by his family since childhood. He is a Physics/Astrophysics double major, Creative Writing Minor, and a Professional Dancer. He is currently residing in San Diego.

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