

Hungry Mornings
Kaelyn Harms and Paw Kee Lar

I miss my three-year-old dreams
When I could run in the streets

With my friends

And not have to worry

About the soldiers.

I miss my father

Who left for work

And never came back

“He go and find a new wife,”

My momma told me.

We wait in Myanmar

Until the men with guns come

Running down the hill

Their mouths open wide

Screaming a beautiful battle cry

And soon the air fills with the familiar scent

Of cooking



His smile doesn't hide anything,
it shows his strength,
living his life in the present,
moving forward unshackled by memories and scars.
He is a refugee,
here today because of his
Power.

Except this is different

Because momma is scared of these men's cries

And we run

Away from home

I turn as black clouds rest on my village.

My eyes droop

As my toes slide across the pointy stones

But my momma keeps walking

Through the thin trees

And large ferns

While my sister sways in her arms

A childish guilt speaks from my numb legs

Wishing I was the one being carried.

My mind wanders

I think of

Grandpa

Grandma

And of my friends

All the things I saw

Washed away by the flames

We take a break at a river

To drink the water

But my momma says no

As ash flows past my cupped hands.

I rest on my momma's hip

As she walks through the water

Her bare feet skim the mud

And prod the rocks

Until I sit on the tall grassy bank

Momma goes back for my sister

As I pull the water out of my

Long black hair.

Finally

We make it to Thailand

Where cold nights

And hungry mornings welcome us

My momma works hard

She comes back every night

Her feet dragging

Head lolling

Like she's on the edge of a dream

But hard work pays off

And I am soon standing in front of a

Red door

Pain follows my family
 Everywhere
 And soon father is sick
 We pray at night
 Tears dripping into our laps
 As he lays in a sky blue hospital bed
 And closes his eyes.
 My poor sister
 Who braved the fire
 The men with guns
 The ashen river
 And all the times before Thailand
 Soon follows in my new father's footsteps.
 With no father
 Our family is not protected
 So we come here
 To America
 We fly in a huge plane
 I grasp the armrest as we leave the ground
 But momma looks out the window
 the whole time.

Whose paint is being eaten away by the dirt.
 I start school
 But the teacher is so mean
 Every time I come home for lunch
 I tell my momma about the
 Teacher who hits me
 That I don't want to go back
 Hoping she feels my sorrow
 But she insists
 So I grab my books and run to school
 Clenching my fists.
 In my new life
 In Thailand
 I have a new father
 He is gentle
 And he makes my momma happy
 And it is good to see her smile
 For once.
 But I knew we could never find a
 Home
 In Thailand

My Child
Daisy Erskine and Justine Nyogushimwa

Leave now my child.
 Leave the tribal fights,
 leave the fear of inequality and yells of brutality,
 leave that suffocating camp.
 Leave now my wonderful child.
 Go my child.
 Go start your journey,
 go and see your land drift away,
 as you fly higher and higher,
 go find your own way in your new home,
 you cannot get lost at home.
 Go my beautiful child.
 Be free my child.
 Be free to
 learn,
 to speak,
 to laugh,
 and to embrace.

Good-bye Thailand.
 We say
 Good bye
 To father
 To sissy
 To grandma
 To grandpa
 And to our house
 in Burma.



Be free to let one language flow in one ear
 and another language out the other,
 be free, but never forget where you are from
 or you will forget where you are going.
 Be free my loved child.
 And one day,
 come home my child.
 Come home to the dirt floors of the refugee camp,
 come home and eat from the banana and passion fruit
 trees,
 come home to those childhood friends displaced by
 war.
 Come home my new American child.

Regina Sadie Pierce Heartman and Paw Nay Blui
A Better Life
 "We go for a better life.
 And when you learn English, life is better."
 Before we left, my father spoke slowly and gently in
 my language,
 explaining why we were leaving Thailand, my home.
 Now, I speak slowly with my messy words
 about those times of conflict and excitement.
 Language is the door and education is the key,
 but what if it's also the other way around?
 How can I solve my problem
 if the problem is also the solution?
 In Thailand my parents starved for my schooling.
 And they chose education
 because it is our only chance.
 Everything depends on education.
 So here I am, caught in this mess of jumbled words,
 waiting for a way out so I can find my way in.

Lifeline

Sabine Englert and Adil Al Munshid

His chocolate hands clutch each other
Like they are the lifelines

In this confusion of a room

That echoes with the babbling of too many tongues,
And too many tight smiles,

That only prove that the strangers across the table,

Are just as nervous as he is.

They stare at him,

Expectant, waiting.

But he simply stares into his lap,

Pretending he knows what he is doing,

Because that is easier than starting into the curious eyes
Of everyone else's expectations.

He can see the questions,

Stacked neatly on their papers.

One by one,

Their handwriting practiced and pretty,

Fluttering lightly in time with the quivering of their

Anxious fingers.

Their hands cramped around their papers

Like they are the lifelines

These hopeless words are marbles in my mouth:
smooth on my tongue, but impossible to swallow.

I came for a better life.

And when you learn English, life is better.

This language is brimming with possibility,

and I am making it mine.

My life is lost in translation between continents,
but with every new word my worlds are merging,

from Asia into America.

At school, more learning breaks through to my
hungry brain.

At school, people can hear my voice.

At school, they are understanding me

and I am understanding what English can do for me.

My father spoke slowly and gently in my old
language

when he told us we were coming here.

"We go for a better life.

And when you learn English, life is better."

And now, life is better.

Grayson Lauer and Justine Niyogushimwa

Infusion

One lingering memory remains,

a smooth carved spoon,

Mama's wooden ladle,

stained from many exotic foods and

odors from flavorful spices,

infused into the splintered utensil.

Tasteless futu clings to the surface,

like me to Rwanda.

I fear that in America I will lose my true self,

that the culture of my people

will be drowned out by influences in the US,

so I cling even tighter to

Mama's wooden ladle.

And think to myself,

What is this place

Boise, "ID"?

But I cannot look back,

I'm not headed that way.

I'm moving forward

stirring together two spices;

one familiar and one unknown,

one of my traditions, and one of modern life.

The strangers still smile at him.

They wait

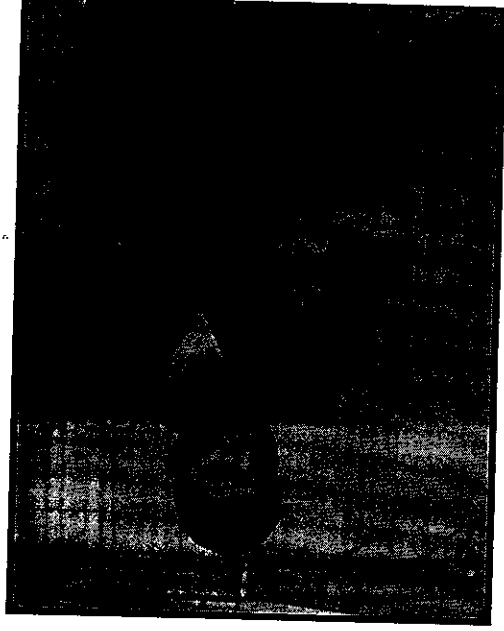
For something to write down on their

Pure, white papers,

Not yet smudged with his past from

Back

There.



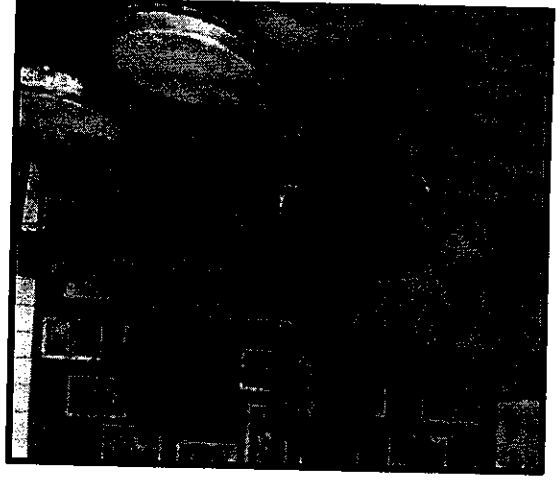
The Game of Hide and Seek

Naomi Priddy and Doh Gay

Hide and seek,
a game played by generations of children.
In Myanmar, everyone plays.
I was seven when I first learned the game,
Hide and lay low.
The Burmese government played too,
only they did not hide.
Come out they spoke,
the seekers, the killers,
Their voices made up of lost generations of Myanmar.
You see, once you are found,
the game is over.
So we ran to Thailand,
to safety.
I went to school and I was happy,
I was safe.
But opportunity did
not find us,
and we ran again.

I can smell the mixed aromas,
and I wonder what will I make
of myself?

Although I have begun a new part of my life,
I will still hold tightly to my roots
with pride and confidence,
gleaming in my eyes,
showing that I will not discard my people
and my home in the dust.
Instead I will carry my past
into my future,
clutching Mama's wooden ladle.



Lost in Translation

A Poem in Two Voices
Lilli Serio and Shueb Dahir

Question after question they
hand to me.

*Slow down, slow down,
he doesn't understand.*

Questions that I can't answer.

*Speak slowly,
pronounce your words,
simplify your sentences.*

I don't remember.
I can't remember.
I won't remember.

Give it time.

What if I get the answers
wrong?

*We've tried
everything.*
All I can do is sit,

Waiting to understand.

*He just sits and
nods like he's on epau*

*"Is Boise or
Somalia home
for you?"*

Home.
Shabby tents,
with unraveled edges,
The ghosts that are my life.

We communicate
with something larger than words.
We look beyond the delicate letters,
and we see each other,
past all struggles,
and in the definition
of who we really are,
we find home.

Shadows

A shadow behind me,
An unfocused figure,

A blurry aura,

He stands in my wake,

my shadow named Iraq.

When I turn to glance at him,

He is pulled just beyond my reach.

Beyond the idea of reality.

He is no longer tangible,

Reduced down to fragments of memories on the dirt,

A ringing bullet in the temple.

I am leaving,

hoping to stumble upon myself

when the new day comes.

Living off a borrowed sun,

the night seems brighter than the light of day.

I don't care where into the darkness I am taken,

because everything that matters is already left behind.

Behind me, and my shadow named Iraq.

Leaving is the easy part.

Somalia

"How long did you live
here?"
We lean in,
we wait.

I whisper cracked words back
to them.

The interpreter
listens.

"24 years."

"Whoever said
lost in translation"

Wasn't kidding.

We try again.
"Will you ever go
go back?"

I want to tell them

sometimes I dream I'll go back,

but then I remember

there is nothing to go back to.

Trying to understand
A refugee's world.

Is hard.

But trying to be one

Is even harder.