

The Parameters of Refugeeism and Flight

by Nalin Samountry

Her, an oriental debutante
syllables spill out of her like maggots
irons her clothes so they'll last
she grew up hungry, barefoot, wanting
she was created out of the nostrils of the dead water buffalo
straw mats mark
her face a map
dad runs
this is real he tells me.

Bombs and the dust that settles
like a cloud
March 1975, armed clashes between PL soldiers
and Vang Pao's RLΔ troops
guarding the cease-fire line
between Vientiane and Luang Prabang
some spirits are meant to die
in the earth with a country divided.

The Mekong River the dead line the way
a pitch black blankets the sky
bullets burst like fireworks.

Run, run, run Dad!
I call out here, insufficient.

When the water level falls, the ants eat the fish;
When the water level rises, the fish eat the ants.



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