

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

April Lim: Two Poems

April Lim · Tuesday, May 27th, 2025

Waiting for Khmer Class

After George Chigas' Waiting for E.S.L. Class

On hot mornings
I kick off my slides and enter
through the doorway of the once-house
now school. I sit waiting, wiping sweat off my brows,
catching polite glances from other students.

The tuktuk driver that dropped me off
always parks on my street in TTP.
I am one of many who need a ride
across Phnom Penh where the streets
crack and bump unsteady. We exchange
the same goodbye as always:

Awkoun, bong.

Som kai bram.

Jah, bong.

I think of the stars back in Texas that do indeed
shine big and bright above my childhood room
as I fall asleep to my bapa belting out Khmer karaoke,
where even now, I'll recall the tune but never the lyrics.

*

Hush

A king cobra lives in my family.
It's existed long before I was born.
It slips away quietly, keeping
itself a wallflower. I don't know when,
but one day it grew and began baring
its fangs. I screamed, as children do.

My bapa scolded me. Asked me,
Do you want me to die? He was trying
to catch the king cobra, catch it by its
mouth. When he did, it disappeared
and I forgot about it until it came back
years later. This time, it grew so big
my bapa could not restrain it with
just his hands. This time, I cried and it
was my mother telling me to hush. So I hid,
hushed, beneath blankets and blankets
when my mother and bapa approached it.
This time, they approached the now-intruder
together, grabbing each side of its mouth.
Once outside, they walked almost hand-in-hand,
the king cobra dangling in-between. They found
a place far, far away to release it from us.
It has been years since it has disappeared, but my
mother and bapa are quick to remind: stay
hushed and it'll never find me.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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