

# Burma

*by* Kyle Hemmings

Our mothers died in childbirth. Taken in by the village, our new mothers taught us to wave at the river boats, to sell our trinkets to tourists. They offered us coins of a foreign currency and little pathetic smiles. By nightfall, our fingers bled. Then came the self-forgetful years: We were chased by evil nats with the names of monsoons. Overhead, the dung colored sky seized. Strangers mistook our eyes for soft deposits of crude oil, turned our skin into opium dreams they could smoke. Crouching in jungles, losing our balance as if wounded tigers, or disowning our toughened feet, we tried to escape. At the banks of the Chindwin River, the soldiers of the second junta ordered us to strip. Naked as jade, our bodies glittered in the sun. One of the oldest among us, who went crazy from staring into flaming sunsets, said It's always time for tea. The ground beneath us opened up. It had already changed names.

