

Lotus Flower

by Isabel Hernandez-Cheng

Filthy water
Squalid streets
From filth they bloom
Morning dew delicately sat on a petal
Industrious tears fill the eyes of Chinese pioneers

An arduous odyssey
A one man's journey
In hope for promised gold and glory
His family patiently waits for an indefinite date
Sorrowful evenings

Two lonely hearts stare at the solitary moon

For a privileged price
He can hope for half a humble life

Thousands of miles away from home
In this Chinatown
He walks down Shanghai alley
And sees familiar faces
He hears tense Chinese opera
A discovered sense of calm in his home dialect

In a society where he is not welcomed
Chinatown embraces and empowers
He can find a clan amidst the rundown streets
Where in this foreign land he finally belongs

Bright red lanterns decorate the streets
Enticing neon welcome signs flash as he walks by
A steamy smell arises from a bamboo basket of chashu bao
Shop owner's wife beckons him in

The muddy pond in which lotus flowers bloom
Chinatown, the muddy pond in which he flourishes
He came as a seed and planted himself in this neighbourhood
Unassuming and taken advantage of
Chinatown is where he finds his worth
He will give and give before he fights for his rights
Sacrificed sons lost to war
Fighting for a country that they need to prove their worth to

The alluring lotus flower

Like the Chinese immigrants
Who found their home in Chinatown
Came from a pond of struggles and inequalities
Yet bloomed so beautifully and strong

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