

# 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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