

Poetry Collection by Rhea Anne Masilang

Jiang Cheng

The lotus is a flower of rebirth
Grown from the burnt ashes of earth
The dirt mixed with blood of loved ones
The same blood that runs

Through his veins
He feels every pinch of pain
Of his incompetence, his insecurity, his fear
The fire of anger turns its head and leers

At the small young boy
Played, tugged, and broken like a toy
Thought his siblings would understand
But their blood is still on his hands

And in his mind, unchanged
How he sees the world now rearranged
To resent, to fear, to rage against
How can he be kind when they were not as lenient?

How can he love kindly
When everyone who loved him left in a hurry?
How can he open his heart
When the roots would only tear him apart?
How can he represent the pure lotus
When everything he's ever loved is still lost?

Cheeks

soft pillow framing his face
dough-like puffiness
to caress is basking in the sun's rays
to look upon is more, not less

they protect his smile
they hug his eyes
their shine is seen for miles
there is no guise

they are the moon,
a beacon that shines above
that everyone else claims is "aloof"
but only certain people can love

your mother says they are dumplings
i say that's so cute
you say it's embarrassing
but such argument is moot

home lies in between cheekbones and jaw
home is the soft curve of his grin
to insult is outlawed
i am the law bringing criminals in

they are pillows i land my love on
they are red blush i paint
they are a boat carrying your songs
they are my night and my day

cheeks as warm and kind as your heart
once i saw them, i knew i could never part

my filipino side speaks

home is far away
where sun kisses skin too rough
where we stay hungry

hungry for our lives
culture taken or had died
or spun for profit

family stays here
our bellies, full of love
but is it enough?

yes, we make it last
just like those colonizers
last for a long time

home is far away
bahay ang buhay, the same
is life only this?

From Eden, To . . .

Love leaves me breathless and ashamed
But I hold strong to all that remains
My heart, a muscle strained
Under the weight of a single emotion
It crashes me against the rocky shore.
I've loved and loved and loved
But she changes, leaves, withholds
With my anger churning under the waves
I ask, "if you are Love, why do you hate?"
No words but he blinds me, not her
He left me with a "see you later"
Not knowing a goodbye is easier
Because seeing him again will hurt
Over and over and over-

Then she came along
A tumultuous house, her stringed heart broken
Under my hand, I seek pardon
A deal is struck like the Devil's smile
Her hand in mine, my own harpy
To seek revenge against Love and him
Feel my wrath against my twisted laughs and touches
My own happiness is a weapon
Even if it's fake

But then!
Love tricked me again!
Tricked me with Her siren voice, Her rough fingers
Plucking the strings, making me dance
Making me feel the light through my feet
Her eyes are the lighthouse
My anger dissipates like the foam of water
Reflecting the open sky
Of blue, sunsets, light
Of her smiles, her laughter, her strings humming
Echoing in my mind, loving
I am wrapped so tight in her that
Her breath is my air, her tears are my ocean
My world knows only her eyelashes,
Her curves, her scars, her, her, her-

My loss is not with her
Or him or Love
It is my loss that I am lost
Lost in my head, my insecurities

Have settled so deep in
Nestled and burrowed like a termite
Eating away my beating heart
To Love when I am not Loved
When Love doesn't love me
How do I do that?
For her?
For me?