

The Blind Massage Parlor on Maizidianr Street

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Doctors Han and Wang run the love
heart massage in one of Beijing's two
and a half billion broken alleys.

"You'll recognize it by the red
awning," Dr. Han says on the phone.
And when I do, I wonder who told him.

Later, on one immaculate bed in a row
of seven, I feel Dr. Han's fist wedge
between two innocent bones in my shoulder.

He accompanies the soundtrack of my
gasping with a simple statement:
"We hated Titanic."

I shift my weight on the straight, white
table. And arch my eyebrows, a
gesture Dr. Han overhears.

He rests his right hand for one
thoughtful moment on my spine, and
explains. "The story was stupid
with its music. Your American
Hollywood knows what about love? Nothing
in that movie fit."

I make shy eye contact with the client
in a bed across the row. We are the only two
here today. I think she loves Titanic

from the delicate way she lifts
her neck to look at me, confused.
I smile and replace my face

into the massage table's dark
head hole. Maybe Dr. Wang and Dr. Han
also smile - at each other over us,

because Dr. Han says "we've been
married for eight-teen years. We feel
what other people just see."

Only after Dr. Wang, his wife
of eight-teen years, giggles like a
movie star in love, does he turn

his attention and hands back to me.
"These days we have a lot of foreign clients!"
he remarks, "How do you say in English:
Does this hurt?"

Foreigners

There's a language for other
languages. Burning
my bedside table
is a red dictionary. Nightlight,
guided, partial escape
from my fear of this
illiteracy I live in
a dark constant: wonder.
Is everything simple or is
emptiness another
misunderstanding? Beside me,
tea has steeped all day
uncovered. I sip slow, still it
soaks my mouth with cold, leaves
the faint taste of letters I can't read.

Beijing Awake

Dark, our constant wonder, understands
this city's list of questions. It demands
the morning be brought on again. The town's
awake, its pavement smell of sun alive, the rounds
of vendors under windows call up all their offerings -
fried dough, soy milk, the vowels move over awnings
into spaces that we make for days. How many noons
will pass while we play life? Until the ruins
of buildings, bridges, neon lights strung highway-side
short out, we rise. Today stall covers roll up, wide,
a spray of light, fruit, spice, hot words we use for trade.
The pork bikes make a metal sound, meat splayed
across their fender racks, they wheel to luncheonettes
for garlic, sweet and sour sauce, cilantro. We shop markets
for their patterns: feathers flutter from the block,
stretched necks suggest both flight and stock.

In our poetry section we look at the work of poets with both Asian and Jewish connections. While some of the poems we include will tie together both Asian and Jewish themes, or will be inspired by only one of these themes, we want our poetry section to be broader than that. As our poets show, Jewish writing does not only focus on Jewish topics but is often subtly colored by the warmth and humanism that imbues Judaism as a whole.

This will be a regular section in the magazine and we are looking to expand our pool of poets. Please send your poetry in for consideration to submissions@asianjewishlife.org.



Rachel DeWoskin is the author of the forthcoming novel *Big Girl Small* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011), the critically acclaimed novel *Repeat After Me* and a memoir, *Foreign Babes in Beijing*, which has been published in six countries and is being developed as a feature film. Rachel has published poems in a number of magazines. Her awards include an American Academy of Poets Award and a Bread Loaf Writer's Conference Fellowship. She is an artist in residence at Teachers & Writers and teaches creative writing at NYU.