

Girls at 1001 Nights

We were small talk and falafel
when from the kitchen, out she shimmered gold all
over, between tables that were suddenly full
of hungry people. She was a lull

in conversation - pushed her right
hip through the air so thick the room bulged tight.
A man in yellow blew fruit hooka smoke
clouds, bellowed, singing, took a toke

and cheered. Her arms wound flails
underneath the bands and metal scales
of a sequined top. She was all skin, her skirt so low
along her stomach that a hollow

scar line smiled out, ceasarian, maybe a sneer
beneath hot glittered scraps that made the light appear
and disappear - thrown off too fast to catch. Her
hips spun the public circle, were

the joy of every table. She flared smiles, brushed
up purple chairs, arrived at our feast last, a little rushed
before the music stopped. She faltered, looked outside
the window. Zero: instant winter. I looked too, tried

to see what it was she saw. Cold air
seared the glass right where
our four eyes - hers and mine - reflected
out and in some kind of blinking recognition, met.

Chinese Highway

You wanted to take an overnight train from Xi'an,
but I hired the driver named Yang, who danced as he drove. "Yan'an
peasant song!" he said, gesturing prettily with his right hand.
You rolled your eyes and started up again -

we should've taken - but stopped talking
just as he stopped singing
at the accident. Three peasant trucks had collided
and were nothing now but burning metal, ruined

in the road. We gaped, maybe relieved to find machines we make are
not any stronger than we are. They gushed out radiator water.
Sunlit oil made the drivers' graveyard holographic.
Their bodies were the smallest obstacle to traffic.

A farmer coming to sell soda led his donkey and rickshaw over them.

Two tow trucks and an ambulance arrived. To claim remains, clear
passages for cars. We moved through but sat still, our fear
made quiet. Driver Yang looked at us in the rearview mirror.
One of those trucks was carrying bees, he said, and drove into a sheer

curtain of them, stingers buzzing, thick smoke rising up from honey-truck
eleven.

The road stayed steeped in sugar glass and we recoiled, covering our
faces even

as Yang went back to the local song about love: If I don't see your
face for three days, sweetheart, I can not swallow one strand of noodle.

Seafood

In the neon Rainbow Seafood Club,
we remember the future before
us: visible, audible, edible. Now past is
long out of our range. Dark, estranged, we
watch cloudy cases lobsters peer back from
eye-stalks, walk glass to glass wall,
sideways, twisting through crowded
water with one tense and motion, present.

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 spent her twenties in China as a consultant, writer, and the unlikely star of a nighttime soap opera called "Foreign Babes in Beijing." Her memoir of those years, *Foreign Babes in Beijing*, has been published in six countries and is being developed as a television series by HBO. Her novel *Repeat After Me*, about a young American ESL teacher, a troubled Chinese radical, and their unexpected New York romance, won a Forward Magazine Book of the Year award. Her most recent book, the novel *Big Girl Small*, is forthcoming from FSG in 2011. Rachel divides her time between NYC, Chicago, and Beijing with her husband, playwright Zayd Dohrn, and their two little girls.