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A Korean Dream

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A Korean American Dream // Sharon Lee

One day, I make up my mind,

“I want to be more American”

I want to be like those confident, independent American women. I want to know who I am.

“So what stops you from becoming that?”

“Well...” I realize,

“That’s not who I am.”

I am a dual-citizen of two worlds, East and West

I am a Korean who wants to be American

I am an Asian who wants to be white

I say I am sick of my culture

My family and my friends

We are marginalized, outcasts, from the American society

Because I am ashamed of myself

I am angry at the world

The voice in my head shouts: “listen to me” and “look at me”

But I never cared to listen to the voices of others

I thought I didn’t need to

Because I am still invisible

So I care to see the Latin Ams, African Ams, Native Ams

And White Ams, too

Though we are all “I Ams”

I want to become more American

Because when I erase my culture, I can erase my color

And if I erase my color, I could become white

What if I could whiten my identity?

But would I be able to get rid of my Korean-ness?

If I get rid of it, would I still be me without it?

Can I become what I want to be

Or should I be who I am?

Identity is not always clear or solid

It is fluid, messy, and stained with trauma and pain

But like wabi-sabi*

Broken pieces can be mended with gold

I am me, whatever that may be

Broken and ever-changing

Never finished, never complete

I decide to be me, Korean and American

With my stinky kimchi and cheese

With my parents back at home

And my future here, another home

I allow me to be myself

So that they can be themselves, too

We are different, being one and only

But similar, wanting to love and be loved

That's how we break down the walls

And start building up tolerance

That's how I take the American Dream.

Smash it down, and rebuild it with my hands

*wabi-sabi: The Japanese art of discovering beauty in imperfection and in the natural cycle of growth and decay