

Dorothy Chan

A-List Celebrities and Chinese Immigrant Families

When I was a kid, I dreamt my parents would turn
into A-list celebrities, like in a transformation sequence
straight out of anime, and I think back to four-year-

old-me glued to the TV set in Hong Kong, fixating
on my dream girls transforming into goddesses
as their hands reached for Technicolor Xanadu,

ribbons wrapping around their bodies, wings
growing, and I've always wanted to live the dream—
Hollywood—and I'd still give anything, *anything*

to be famous, and when I was a kid, I dreamt
my parents would turn into A-list celebrities,
because being a Chinese girl in Allentown, Pennsylvania

is hard, and I needed a little more glitz, more glam,
a little more home makeover edition when the child asks for
a Golden Age bedroom, and before you know it,

Pow! a million lights surround her face like she's
Norma Shearer, making faces in the mirror—
I wanted all this to protect me because being a Chinese girl

in a PA town is hard when your older brother gets
beat up in high school locker rooms for being the only
Chinese boy, and I needed a little more glitz,

a little more glam, a little more Las-Vegas-Liberace-
let's-buy-two-of-everything-and-stuff-another-house-
dear-Scott, oh you dear precious boy, here's the Japanese

Empress doll to go with the Emperor doll, because
two of everything is always good luck, and how everything
comes in pairs, and I remember how in elementary school

none of the girls wanted to pair up with me in gym class,
probably because I was the only Chinese girl,
something that confused them, someone their parents

told them to befriend because I was “smart,”
“good at math,” “a good influence,” and words like this
only breed lonely little Asian girls watching

Turner Classic Movies in their bedrooms, eating lots
of chips in their pajamas before studying,
and my parents always told me to study hard—

work hard, and I think back to the family photos
from the late '80s of my dad and brother in New York—
the Statue of Liberty, and how strange it is,

how vintage, even, to have a photo with Lady Liberty—
the past is the past is the past, but what *about*
that house with two of everything, the one my father

designed following the rules of neighborhood
Feng Shui, the other houses bowing down, and give me
my strength, you million years of Chinese history,

and when I was a kid, I dreamt my parents would transform
into A-list celebrities, and give me strength,
Chinese history, because my father *did* stuff that house

with two of everything that my mother could have
ever wanted, and give me strength, because I've got
my own Chinese girl transformation ready to take off.

Dorothy Chan is the author of *Revenge of the Asian Woman* (Diode Editions, 2019), *Attack of the Fifty-Foot Centerfold* (Spork Press, 2018), and the chapbook *Chinatown Sonnets* (New Delta Review, 2017). She is a Contributing Editor at *The Southeast Review* and a co-founder of *Honey Literary*. Visit dorothy-poetry.com.