



AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE FIRST PIECE OF THIS STORY that found me was Angel Island. In 2009, Angel Island was reopening after millions of dollars of renovation, and there was a story about it on the radio. I had been thinking a lot about immigration — our naïveté about its hardships, the immigration stories buried in many Americans' pasts. The reality of immigrating through Angel Island, particularly for Chinese immigrants, ran counter to the myth of coming to America that I had been taught, that I believed. That contrast was what first drew me to this story.

I had been thinking even more about China. I was getting ready to go through the immigration process for my son, our first child, who we were adopting from an orphanage in Shenzhen. Because of this, the center of my whole world had shifted: Our family was suddenly spread across two continents, and a piece of me and my husband now resided in China.

While we went through the final steps of the adoption, I took Chinese language classes and discovered the beauty of Chinese — its specific tones, its exactness and economy. I read translated

Chinese poetry, reveling in its elegance. I studied the history of the early twentieth century in China. And, finally, I traveled to the country to get my son, Jack. The gracefulness that is in China's language and poetry is also in its land and its people. When I was there, I fell in love with the way the Chinese hold on to what is good and true even through the chaos that change and progress can cause. They cherish their family, culture, history, and community, not with grand gestures, but in thousands of small, daily acts — singing groups meeting in the parks, families gathered for New Year's, the young giving subway seats to the old, or a stranger smiling at someone visiting from far away. My visit deepened my respect for the Chinese people — their sincerity and their kind and generous spirits.

Throughout the adoption process, I was also taking writing classes. That is when the second piece of the story arrived — the character Jade Moon. She came to the first draft as curious and strong-willed, adventurous and idealistic as she is today. The facets of who she was never fit perfectly with who people wanted her to be. She was too bold for China, too Chinese for America. She didn't think things through enough according to Nushi, while she probably thought far too much for Mr. Hon. Jade Moon had to decide who she was, outside of what everyone told her she must be. That journey of settling into who you are was familiar to me, as it's been familiar to many young women across all cultures throughout history.

I believe in the value of history. It can show us truths about our present attitudes and give us perspective. It is important to me to know the history of Chinese-American immigration, because I want that history to influence how I think and feel about immigration today.

I also believe in the power of stories to reveal our humanity, our connections, our mistakes, and our triumphs. I hope I have honored this story of Jade Moon, China, and immigration the way I wanted to. It was an honor to try to write it — one I definitely didn't deserve. But the things we treasure most, we rarely deserve. The very day I am typing this, at the end of my journey through this story, my husband and I have been approved to adopt a second child from China. It is true what Jade Moon said about stories: Sometimes one ends so another can begin.

I am indebted to many authors and their work for giving me a glimpse into this world I love. I found *China: Empire of Living Symbols* by Cecilia Lindqvist particularly enlightening. It offers a unique look into the history and culture of China through its written characters. The stories that Nushi, Jade Moon, and Spring Blossom tell were adapted from versions in *Cloud Weavers: Ancient Chinese Legends* by Rena Krasno and Yeng-Fong Chiang, and *Chinese Folktales* by Howard Giskin. *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*, by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung provided the translations of the poems, which give voice to the feelings and frustration of the Chinese immigrants. *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* by Erika Lee and Judy Yung, and *Miwoks to Missiles: A History of Angel Island* by John Soennichsen were both excellent resources. I also enjoyed many wonderful hours on the Angel Island Immigration Foundation's website at www.aiisf.org.

San Francisco's Chinatown by Charles Caldwell Dobie, written in 1936 and complete with charming sketches, allowed me to travel back in time. *Good Life in Hard Times: San Francisco's '20s and '30s*

by Jerry Flamm also offered valuable details. *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Women in San Francisco* by Judy Yung told the story of women in Chinatown. *Hatchet Men: The Story of the Tong Wars in San Francisco's Chinatown* by Richard H. Dillon explained much of the tong activity of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco provided additional information about tongs and the police in the 1920s. You can visit them at www.sfmuseum.org. Any mistakes that remain are my own.

Many people have put their tremendous talents into the creation of this book. I am thankful for Suzanne Frank and Dan Hale with the Southern Methodist University Creative Writing Program. They are talented writers in their own right, and yet they choose to share their wisdom with those of us who come to class with not much more than a laptop and a dream.

I am so grateful to my agent, Rosemary Stimola, who can always be relied on for encouragement, sound advice, and kindness. She gave early recommendations that made this book whole. And she didn't just find my book a publishing house, she found it a home.

That home is with the wonderful people at Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic. Special thanks to Cheryl Klein, my editor. She gave the book depth. Her thoughtful comments and her devoted reading nursed this story into its potential.

Thank you to my mom and dad, Ted and Nancy Hankamer, who raised me with such a steadfast love. That love makes anything possible in my life. And thanks to my sister, Sarah Hankamer, who is honest, intelligent, and kind. I have had to rely on those traits countless times.

Most important, I am grateful to my husband, Jeb Honeyman, who was the first to believe in Jade Moon, and the first to tell me I could whenever I was sure that I couldn't.

I hope this book will inspire people to learn more about the real-life people, places, and history mentioned in it.

Chinese Animal Signs

In the Western calendar, your zodiac sign is determined by the day and month of your birth, but in many Asian countries, especially China, each year is assigned one of twelve animal signs (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar) and an element (earth, wood, fire, metal, or water). A combination like horse and fire will only appear once every sixty years. The last year of the Fire Horse was 1966, and while women in China seemed to shake off the stigma, birthrates in some Asian communities still dropped unexpectedly. The next Fire Horse girls will be born in 2026.

Chinese Exclusion Laws and Paper Sons

In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress, blocking the entry of Chinese into America. Never before had American immigration policy been directed against one specific ethnic group. Other laws restricted the Chinese from owning property, testifying in court against white citizens, or gaining citizenship. The Chinese reacted by finding loopholes in American laws. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the citywide fire that Sterling Promise describes offered an opportunity to add new names to the records

of American citizens. This created a thriving black market in the false identities known as "paper sons," through which thousands of Chinese men and boys applied to enter the United States. In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and replaced with a quota allowing one hundred and five Chinese immigrants into America annually, while also making the Chinese eligible for citizenship. It wasn't until the Immigration Act of 1965 that the quota system based on country of origin ended, and immigrants from China were put on equal footing with immigrants from other nations.

Angel Island

Angel Island was called "the Ellis Island of the West," but the immigrants who landed there, many from China and Japan, had a very different experience than the Europeans who arrived in New York. While immigrants on Ellis Island were processed in three to five hours, the average stay for a Chinese immigrant on Angel Island was two to three weeks. Records show some immigrants detained for as long as two years. The narratives of detainees tell of the unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions they had to endure: The food was terrible, the bathrooms were filthy, and the officials and guards treated them like criminals instead of immigrants. There were suicides in both the men and women's barracks.

When Angel Island opened in 1910, it was declared a first-class immigration station, but enthusiasm soon cooled, and Chinese-Americans and politicians raised concerns over the safety of the island. Those concerns proved valid when a fire began in the Administration Building, burning it to the ground in August 1940. Immigrants were then moved to the mainland, and the Angel

Island facilities were used for other purposes, such as housing prisoners of war during World War II. After the war, the buildings were abandoned until 1963, when Angel Island became a state park. The barracks where immigrants stayed were scheduled for destruction in 1970, when Alexander Weiss, a park ranger, discovered the *tibishi* poems written on and carved into the walls of the men's barracks. Today, people can visit the restored barracks on Angel Island and see some of the poems for themselves. (A little artistic license was taken in putting all the poems Jade Moon reads into the same room.)

Tongs

The term *tong* means “hall” or “meeting place” and can be used as a label for any Chinese society. When Chinese immigrants first journeyed to America, they often came without their families, and these associations provided support, security, and even legal services. The tongs of San Francisco's Chinatown ranged from orderly groups of men who worked in similar occupations to gangs devoted to illegal activities such as drug trafficking and prostitution. These latter kinds of tongs clashed in infamous “tong wars” that plagued Chinatown in the late nineteenth century. By 1923, violence between the tongs was still present but dwindling, as community and police pressure had robbed the tongs of much of their power. Chinatown was changing from a community of first-generation immigrants who planned to make a fortune and return to China to a neighborhood of Chinese-American families with children, as it remains today.

While it may seem unlikely that Mr. Hon would be protected by an Irishman like Neil, a tong boss known as Little Pete started the

trend of having a white bodyguard during the tong wars. His thinking was that his enemies would not want to risk killing a white man and possibly facing a lynch mob. It became a popular form of protection.

Donaldina Cameron

Miss Donaldson is based on the real-life figure of Donaldina Cameron, who served the Presbyterian Mission Home in San Francisco for almost forty years, from 1895 to 1934. Miss Cameron devoted her life to helping the Asian women brought to California as slaves and prostitutes. The women she rescued referred to her as "Lo Ma" or Beloved Mother. Miss Cameron would often go on rescue missions herself, accompanied by a police officer. Some stories even have her jumping across rooftops to rescue girls hidden up there by their owners. Today, the mission home Donaldina Cameron ran is known as the Cameron House and is dedicated to helping immigrants in San Francisco. For more information, you can visit the house's website at www.cameronhouse.org.