

I Am Both

By Bethany Chan

I am five.

Drip! Drop! From the blurry kitchen window, the Asian pear trees wave “hello” to Douglas Firs

I wave too. “Zhe Ying, zhun sum ah. Say sing ba hey mayeh leh?”\*

Sizzle! Woosh! The stir-fried bok choy shrinks. Ma Ma hums Amazing Grace.

Creeaaaak. Ba Ba’s home! I grab the chopsticks. “Sik phan may ah?”\*\*

Warm arms envelope me instead. The smell of bread surrounds me.

I am loved.

I am ten.

Red, white, and blue. “One Nation under God.”

Sacagawea smiles up at me from the pages. She is as excited as I am.

Riiinnnnngg! We walk past the evergreens and into Maddy’s home, our shoes still on.

For hours, colorful bills fly. I pass go and collect \$200. “Come set the table!”

Our forks dig into the salad-- it’s my first time trying cheesesteak.

I am discovering.

I am fifteen.

Argued with the teacher; he lost my homework. “You are too American.”

Did well on a math test I studied for days in advance. “You are too Chinese.”

Go back to China! I speak Cantonese, not Mandarin.

Don’t be so American! You say it like it’s a bad thing.

Stuck between two worlds, never solely belonging in either one.

Kneeling down, Dear God, who am I?

I am questioning.

I am an adult.

We crunch our Pocky to the rhythm of Bruno Mars' music.

Papers scattered, brows furrowed, "Father God, you give me strength"

Derivatives, limits, matrices, ai yah!

Veering away from work, I tell my friend about everything good.

Hello Kitty atop the Christmas tree, spaghetti sauce with ramen

"Do you think you are more Chinese or more American?"

Memories all flash by in seconds.

Hand over my heart. A soft smile.

"Why, I am both."

\*Bethany, focus. What is four times five?

\*\*Can we eat yet?