

## **THE AUTHORS SHOW – Authors of Fiction**

### **Author: Amy S. Kwei**

My grandmother had gifted my grandfather a Concubine to ensure a male heir. This family history and characters from “learned” stories informed these books on Chinese culture, history and politics.

A Concubine for the Family describes an opium den, silkworm breeding, acupuncture, foot binding, and the plight of a “book-fragrant” family fleeing war from 1937 till the fall of Hong Kong in 1941.

Lisa See wrote: “I really enjoyed the story.”

Kirkus Review: “An adept stylist and storyteller, the author weaves with simplicity this tale of upper-class China in upheaval . . . An engaging family saga by a talented storyteller.”

Under the Red Moon chronicles the daughters’ plight, struggling through the Nanking Massacre, the Korean War, the Cultural Revolution, and the English colonial rule in Hong Kong.

Kirkus review: “An absorbing exploration of mid-20th-century China through the story of a fractured family.”

Using Tang poetry, colloquialisms, and idiomatic expressions, the books place the readers into the Chinese culture and reveal how it differs from our own.

The stories celebrate strong, complicated female characters and family solidarity. They’ll find emotional and intellectual resonance with families in Diaspora. They are the Chinese equivalent of Downton Abbey.

An excerpt from Under the Red Moon:

“You bloodsuckers of the proletarians! Your dog is better fed than we are!” The student pushed Golden Bell down. A young woman with fiery eyes yanked her up by the hair. Pipes and sticks flew.

Yung crouched and ran forward, covering his face and head with his bare arms.

“Loot all you want!” Golden Bell shouted in defiance, her hands shielding her bruised face.

“You speak of looting?” A young man swung his pipe. It came down hard on Golden Bell’s chest. She lurched backward. “You live in luxury while we work and starve!”

“No, no, no,” Yung pleaded, kneeling beside his wife. “We worked hard to create jobs for thousands!” A fist came down on him like a sledgehammer.

Coral Bell shouted, “Bring them to prison, bring them to prison!”

More Red Guards rushed down the stairs, carrying a carved cedar chest of furs. “Get out of the way!” Amid shouts and confusion, the couple was dumped on the patio like two bags of garbage.

Coral Bell averted her eyes. “Burn all the poisonous books and old decadent calligraphy!” she shouted. Her friends stoked the fire and watched their comrades carry load after load of family treasures into the truck, blocking the front gate.

Golden Bell recognized her sister and shuddered.

“Degenerate!” Coral Bell shouted as she passed her sister, whispering, “Run to hide.” She clapped her hands next to her sister’s face. Anyone would have thought she had just slapped her.

The couple half ran and crawled into the rosebushes in their walled-in garden.

Tears streamed down Golden Bell’s cheeks, but her painful chest prevented sobbing.

“Such mayhem!” Yung cried. He watched as his collection of watercolors and books curled into black cinders and ashes floated into the eerie night.

Yung went into spastic retching. His stomach emptied as if someone had uncorked a champagne bottle. Most vomit landed on his pants and Golden Bell's sleeve. She sniffled and hung her head.

"How can savagery rebuild this country?" They mourned as quietly as they could.

"Where are they?" The Red Guards scanned the faces around the smoky fire. Coral Bell and her friends disclaimed any knowledge.

Soon the Red Guards found the injured couple, and dragged them onto the lawn. Circling around them, brandishing their sticks and pipes, they screamed, "Tried to run away?"

Kicks and blows flew on to them.

"Trying to cheat us?"

"Capitalist liars!"

"Where are your children, your servants?"

"They ran away!" Yung mumbled.

"Lies, more lies!"

A wave of hysterical yelling and beating rained from all sides. The squall drowned out the moans.

"Where have you stashed your gold and silver?"

Coral Bell shrieked from the periphery, "Confess, confess!" To confess was to stay alive. Maybe this was the only way out for her sister.

Stamping feet took on a rhythmic cadence. Threshing sticks and pipes punctuated the incantations: "Liars! Confess! Bloodsuckers!"

Thick smoke billowed over everyone, obscuring the two bundles of blood-soaked flesh and bones and the ghastly faces streaked with sweat and soot. No one noticed the victims were spitting blood and the blows were bringing up hair and messy red emulsions.

“Stop!” A male voice rang out. A young man elbowed his way into the circle. “We still need to bring them to a struggle meeting.”

The frenzied mob froze. Arms stopped flailing. The hard breaths and panting gasps were amplified in the sudden quiet. The occasional pop from the fire sounded like firecrackers. The young women turned away to rub their tearing eyes. Young men pulled off their shirts to wipe their sweaty, gleaming faces.

“Call the hospital,” a voice whispered. A lanky youth bent down to turn over the bundles lying before him.

“Don’t bother. They’re dead.” He ran onto the grass, rubbing his shoes over the dewy lawn.

“The bloody slime is sticking to my shoes!” He twisted as if he was doing a macabre dance. The mob followed, cleaning their shoes but ignoring their bloody, soot-streaked clothes.

Sweaty faces glistened under the moonlight, and tears of panic coursed down Coral Bell’s cheeks.

“What happened?”

“Who started this?”

“I didn’t!”

“I used my stick because all of you did it.”

“I didn’t kill them.”

“I didn’t even know they were dead!”

“Beaten to death!”

“They wouldn’t confess!”

“We got carried away.”

“Who did?”

“We were all shouting.”

“Serves them right.”

“Yeah, serves them right!”

Coral Bell felt her head exploding. The blood-soaked figures were spinning, whirling in circles. Blood swirled over the moon and splattered onto the stars. She sat down and cradled her head between her legs. Her friends followed.

Lucky appeared out of nowhere. He sniffed and whined, circling the dead bodies, avoiding the pool of blood as best he could. He licked Coral Bell and howled. Other Red Guards stopped to stare at the dog.

White Lily shuddered. “Go away! Leave us alone!” She hit the dog with her stick shouting, “We have to dig up the flower gardens!” She pulled Coral Bell to her feet, pushing a bloody stick into her hand. “Decadent symbols of capitalism!” She hustled others into the rose garden, glad to leave the harrowing scene.

Lucky trailed behind whimpering, his tail hanging limp between his legs. He continued to whine and circle while Coral Bell and her comrades dug up the roses.