

Clay Walls

Kim Ronyoung



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"A whole generation of Korean immigrants and their American born children could have lived and died in the United States without anyone knowing they had been here. I could not let that happen" -- *Kim Ronyoung*

Clay Walls weaves the complex threads of Korean culture into the tapestry of American society while telling the story of the early Korean immigrants, who arrived in Los Angeles in the decade prior to World War II, and of their American born children.

Haesu, a yangban of the nobility class, is betrothed against her wishes to Chun, a farmer's son. Bound not by love, but by tradition, she follows him to America where they begin their life together. Born in a land where class defines one's status, Haesu's rank in the United States is acknowledged only by her fellow Koreans. Servility is anathema to her and she fiercely resists the slights she experiences in California.

Chun, on the other hand, embodies the Taoist mentality. "If you want muddy waters to become clear, you have to lie still," he tells Haesu. He seeks no affirmation of his worth from strangers, wanting it only from his resentful wife.

These two irreconcilable strains of Eastern tradition, personified in Heasu and Chun, are rerated as one by a disinterested America which fails to distinguish one Asian immigrant from another. Within the walls of their home, however, the Chuns wage unrelenting war over their differences. It remains for their children, born in the United States, to integrate these conflicts and, ultimately, find their place in the New World.

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