

***I Did Not Stand on The Great Wall and Feel Like a Tourist***

The patience of her holding my ink brush  
Not giving up until I could master the stroke  
Bartering below the Great Wall  
Not letting up until I bought the calligraphy stamp  
The excitement of the Lazy Susan  
Not afraid to put anything and everything on my plate  
The grandness of the Xi'an wall  
That made me feel alive as I pedaled atop  
It was the ornate quality of every arch and doorway  
That made me awestruck  
It was the culture  
Nudging me to communicate  
The man that told me America was free  
And my response spoken in his language  
It was the glimmer in native eyes when my mouth opened  
And I no longer seemed distant  
It was the unrecognizable that took me from reality  
It was the newness of everything  
It was all I could not see at home  
What brought me to China is what makes me who I am  
You learn a language to learn respect  
To show someone that you understand  
You are not just there to eat their food and shop in their markets  
China gave me clarity  
It showed me who I am and who I have been  
A language student  
A traveler  
A lover of Chinese culture  
I did not stand on the Great Wall and feel like a tourist  
I felt like I belonged  
I felt connection  
I felt hope  
I felt deep love  
Those who I met showed acceptance  
The uniting feeling is not fleeting  
I felt connected then and I feel it now  
Sitting on the plane eleven hours to go  
I felt a tingling in my chest  
I could not leave I thought  
Looking out the window on my way  
Was wonder  
Leaving was all the same

*Cheyenne Weiss*