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Mudskipper

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Mudskipper

By Robbieana Leung

She awakes in the Land of Hard Work and Discipline

Gong gong, Po po, Baba, Mama, zao an, ni men hao. ¹

“*Chi fan!*” ² Steamed rice, cooked cabbage, and *chao mien* ³

Ren bu yinggai yinwei hui yezhe er bu chifan. ⁴

Na ni kuai chi - Yi ding yao.” ⁵

She sleeps in the Land of Opportunity and Dreams

Smiling and dazed, she loses touch of reality as she begins to fantasize

Swimming in endless, forbidden tides of her *lao jia* ⁶

Sweeping her away from reason and reality

 Ensnaring...endangering...and drowning...

The foreign land of her birth, but not her cultural heritage it seems

A face she knows but an attitude she does not recognize

Once a sea of black, now an ocean of gold, brown, rose...

A mirror! So familiar! Butterflies. So anxious to embrace and fuse!

...they answer, she hears them, but they morph into fishes, mouths open and close

Alien sounds escape; utterances that confuse!

Glass thorns shatter and cut...how painful that deceptive rose, only sweet once.

Rudely awaken, roaring black horses.

Eating rice with a fork, she realizes

This isn't a Dream.

She has become a fish, suffocating outside the stream.

¹ *Gong gong, Po po, Baba, Mama, zao an, ni men hao*: grandpa, grandma, father, mother, good morning, how do you do (polite form of address).

² *chi fan*: let's eat! (literally, “eat rice”.)

³ *chao mien*: a type of Chinese fried noodles; mixed with various vegetables and meat (there is one flavor; as the ingredients are cooked together and are unified in taste)

⁴ *Ren bu yinggai yinwei hui yezhe er bu chifan*: one cannot refuse to eat just because there is a chance of being choked (Chinese proverb)

⁵ *Na ni kuai chi - yi ding yao*: So hurry up and eat - you must (no exceptions)

⁶ *lao jia*: hometown (literally, “old home”.)