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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.*
“*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.

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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”.)