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## Nuclear Peach

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## *Nuclear Peach*

for Meng Qingshi

You sit on the floor of my home,  
shoes off, green tea cooling,  
teach me the name of English walnuts:

her tow—  
nuclear peach.

Beauty is a pregnant woman,  
the big river  
you swim every day (April to October)  
though your body turns purple  
those years in the countryside.

Together,  
we translate a poem for your wife's letter:

My body is in the moon.  
One lamp reflects my thinny face.  
Thousands of things, including us, are quiet.  
The bright moon casts her dim light on me.

Your favorite artist,  
a carpenter who learned to paint,  
flowers, worms, fish, a frog,  
always painted crabs  
during the Japanese invasion,  
for the way they walked, (30 million Chinese killed)  
not like us, you say.

Professor Mao, you call him,  
waved a chicken bone with meat on it.  
Some of our soldiers, he said,  
victorious on the battlefield,  
will fall to the sugar-coated bullets  
of the bourgeoisie.

You think sour dough  
 is the name of a nation—Florida,  
 which you eat with relish.  
 You recite for us, in Chinese,  
 the old, old poem  
 through which you teach your grandchild,  
 how precious  
 every grain of rice  
 spilled from her bowl:

The sun is overhead.  
 Everyone plows the field.  
 Sweat falls to the ground.  
 Who knows that the rice in every bowl,  
 every grain of it,  
 is precious?  
 Someone's labor,  
 harvested by hard work.

Your grandchild picks up  
 every grain of rice  
 spilled from her bowl.

I tell you of the Seri Indians  
 living the edge in the desert,  
 everyday saving their feces  
 so the undigested seeds  
 can be eaten again.  
 But that's filthy,  
 you say.

As we drive over the bridge  
 there are flowers, red and yellow,  
 tied to the railing  
 where the Indian girl fell to the tracks:  
 her blood in this sun.  
 Bullets coated with sugar.

You teach me Chinese silence,  
beauty is a big river,  
her body in the moon.  
The Seri woman  
picks every seed  
spilled from her bowel,  
someone's precious labor.  
Thousands of things,  
    flowers, fish, worms, a frog,  
  
    including us,  
  
    are quiet.

*Roger Dunsmore*