

## WHEN THE SKY WAS BLUE

### Synopsis

LEAH, a sensitive, artistically inclined 10-year-old girl, finds herself torn between the desire to please her parents and the need to forge her own identity.

During a bustling Sunday lunch at a Chinese restaurant after church, Leah grapples with her complex feelings about her sense of belonging within her Chinese family and specifically, her relationship with her strict, hardworking mother, LI-JING. Overhearing Li-Jing and a church auntie exchanging stories and boasting about their children's achievements, Leah retreats to the bathroom. While gazing at her reflection in the bathroom mirror, she wonders what it would be like to have a different, more pointed nose. A beautiful tropical fish in the restaurant's tank becomes a symbol of her own entrapment.

Leah's day takes an unexpected turn when she discovers another girl her age hiding beneath their restaurant table. Their encounter is short-lived as Li-Jing scolds Leah.

As the family heads home with a car full of Asian groceries, Leah glimpses moments of Li-Jing that reveal surprising similarities. Li-Jing faces her husband's indifference regarding dinner plans and seeks solace in the expansive blue sky. Interested in the girl she met at the restaurant, Leah cuts through an argument between her parents to ask about her and is delighted to learn she will soon attend her school. However, her excitement is crushed when she returns home to find her beloved pet fish has passed away.

Later, Leah struggles to scale a fish while helping her mother prepare dinner. For Li-Jing, this task is essential for their survival, and she insists on Leah doing it.

During dinner, YeYe (Grandpa) calls, and Leah awkwardly attempts a conversation in Mandarin and English before handing the phone to her father, who makes an unkind remark about her Chinese skills. Leah confronts him, and though her father dismisses her, Li-Jing takes notice of her daughter.

As Leah lies on her bed, her mother enters with a plate of cut fruit—a silent display of love. Leah begins to understand that her mother is doing her best, just like she is. She embraces her and takes her hand to go outside.

Leah and Li-Jing kneel at the spot where Leah buried her fish, holding incense. In this shared moment, Leah doesn't fully comprehend its significance but is thankful. She gazes up at the deepening blue sky.