

your mother doubts your dumplings

your once-midas touch. she sends you as a messenger
for vinegar instead. plagued by your overseas puzzle-piece

existence, the fish in the supermarket parody you: hooked
and baited from the blue-greens of the pacific. you can only dream

of the spiraling entropy of shanghai markets, your city
of salt and acid, how you swallowed the dawn

as you left. you can no longer hold saltwater in your lungs
or suture the pacific reservoir in your chest. your grandfather calls

on a tuesday evening, his voice crackling silver over
the static of a soundless line—*i'll send you each star*

*in this city like messengers, to tell you how proud
i am.* his voice still warm, as if you hadn't strayed

too far from your hometown stage, as if you hadn't purged
the slip-sliding syllables of your mother tongue, lies nesting

like minnows between your front teeth—*i'm coming home*—
too blood-tender to swallow. like sudden rain, you remember

the fortune teller who sits on the corner of fifth avenue under
milky skies and weaves poor men's fantasies,

feather-fleeting comforts: how strangely beautiful
it must be to still believe. you've traded your familiar cradle

built atop fishbones and homeland soil for manhattan's
smoldering skyscrapers, traded your place

at the potbelly stove—instead you braid raw scallions across
white marble as your mother carries in the vinegar.

you can't outrun the flood. you wade into it instead.