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.