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Nanking

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Nanking

Mother had little patience
with us. She lived far away
from the family she'd left

in Nanking. On bad days,
she'd teach us with chopsticks.
Our hands never hurt until

she grabbed the rolling pin,
the one she used for dim sum
on Saturday mornings: *kwo teh*

and *cha shiu bao*. I think
she was happiest then. A-po
came to visit when I was four,

the last time mother saw her
mother. The kitchen steeped
in black tea leaves and eggs

steaming in the rice cooker,
shi-fan on the stove. Good
for healing. When I was sick,

mother brought instant soup
to my bedside where she now
sleeps alone on the other side

of town. She knew of a home
I'd never seen, taught me how
to boil the *shi-fan* I take to her.

—Timothy Liu