

## For Granddaughters

*Lift it to your lips.*

*Do you see  
the stone ridges?  
Hold it like you held Ahma's hand.*

Palms cupped in rest  
while eyes squeeze shut with the  
repentant press of a mute prayer.

*Can you feel the warmth? Warm like when  
you were four and I was  
sixty-something,*

*and your eyes were only wet  
from hazy remnants that  
Sleep forgot to gather.*

*Bring your knees up to your chest.*

Curl up like a ceramic bowl. The half-traced,  
crescent courtyard of its flinching lip  
the curve of your back.

The white billow reckons  
hours of uncertain embrace; sour jaws  
may choke down this companion in loss.

*You're shaking now, a quivering  
hunched arch and you still look so  
small.*

*Meimei-ah,  
I know you don't like hugs anymore. But drink this;  
make Ahma feel a bit better, hao ma?*

## Can I Pray in English?

Please don't laugh. Baba told me faith is  
what I can see. Like how we sat on plastic-covered booths

& he spooned strips of beef into my bowl. *Too fatty*  
he said. My jaw sore as I chewed.

Why aren't you laughing? I'm out of my element  
here. Ahma, you must be sick of giving reminders. *Turn your palms up &*

*down & back up again.* I wonder whether thoughts can stutter  
& hope Buddhas can't hear them.

I'm thirteen again, beneath incense & feverishly chanting  
because every request made in Taiwanese means so much more than mine.

Tell me vulnerability kneels  
next to a hunched back & knees that cleave

into soft mats & laminate floors. During chemo, there's  
skin hanging slack over bone—so thin that I worry

a papercut will have you bleed out & it's resting red  
now as you smother your hands in foundation & begin to

paint. So Mama says to pray while Baba looks away &  
I yearn again for the company of my younger self

where we can press our foreheads to the ground, praying  
that Buddhas can hear our English.