Shanghainese restaurants in Taipei, searching for the delicacy of his childhood, 上 shang 海 hai 熏 xun 魚 yu. I run my mother through Google Translate: Shanghai smoked fish.

I ask, "What does it taste like?"

On the phone, my mother doesn't speak. I am coming to understand it, that silence: she may not know the answer, or she may not have the words in either language to explain. Outside, an Uber Eats moped idles its engine and rings a doorbell. My white American neighbor yells through her open window, "Thank you!" I imagine that she has ordered pasta from a western restaurant in the Tianmu neighborhood. I wonder: Is it possible for my maternal grandfather to have found, on this foreign island, that perfect concoction of the right fish from the right river, fried and marinated in that same sweet and tangy sauce, smoked by the right cypress branches of the old continent?

At last, my mother replies, "I don't know."

I ask, "Did he ever find it?"

I do not tell her: just after I arrived in Taiwan, I stood in front of the bubble tea shop of my childhood, looking for a neighborly uncle with muscular arms, dancing with a cocktail shaker, his triceps flexed, sweat shredding from his black, silky hair; instead, I found an airconditioned shabu-shabu restaurant, two women ladling sliced meat and enoki mushrooms out of a pot, the windows fogged with steam. I do not tell my mother that there is now a parrot on the sidewalk talking smack to passersby in a language no one understands. That I have taken the high-speed train to Taichung, 波霸 奶茶's fabled birthplace, and tried half a dozen bubble teas from the shops that line its main station. That I have taken my students' recommendations and scavenged through Taipei in chase of that fragrant milk tea tumbling out of a cocktail shaker, plopping into a frosted glass.

"No," she says. "I do not believe that he ever found it."

I am thinking, then, about all the sizzling frays of night markets that have gained global popularity peppered in cities and villages across our tropical