for all my mothers, by blood & by blessing
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parts

Teresa Teng marries everyone at the NHK Tokyo Hall
therapist’s note
餓鬼 // hungry ghost
during the day, listen to Old Deng, at night, listen to Little Teng
for my own good
therapist’s note: July 6 2018
asking Teresa Teng out on a date
favourite person
borderline personality disorder: an episode in parts
favourite person
music video where Taylor Swift is a cardiac surgeon and
I am a dying bird
why Teresa Teng is my dream girl
Mommy
therapist’s note: July 27 2018
aubade for the BPD subreddit user who wrote
  can people with BPD love?
long distance relationship with Teresa Teng
therapist’s note: August 24 2018
favourite person
my father speaks to Teresa Teng

between

not a woman, not not a woman
flying lessons
Teresa Teng sends fan mail to Anna May Wong
ode to my depression
home remedies
tooth fairy
re: an incel’s guide to frightening girls
last night with Teresa Teng
showing up to Sunday dim sum with a fresh shave
frequently asked questions
Vancouver seawall, third bench from the water

elegy for the pre-packaged pie I ate on March 14, 2018

let me help you with your feelings

feel better soon

bodyload

flight risk

after the apocalypse, I visit CAMH

2010, the last night at Zipperz that all of us are still alive

instructions for removing an IUD

last word

not heaven, not ordinary

letter for my future daughters

this is an offering

acknowledgments
This is all, ultimately, a litany of madness—the colors of it, the sounds it makes in heavy nights, the chirping of it across the shoulder of the morning.

—Akwaee Emezi, *Freshwater*
ghost

at the funeral we learn to substitute a stone for a mother
begrudge this stolen soil for swallowing our mother

there is an ocean between me & what I miss a constant
gravity tiding Hong Kong history homeland mother

every flight & phone call a clumsy stutter towards family
across static corridors foraged words my lost mother

tongue calls out for discipline bows beneath its fledgling
Cantonese as to the heft of a grave & unfamiliar mother

who could have taught me to press dough into dumplings
seal the skin to prevent rupture a burdened mother

the kind our fathers fed their fictions to betray
the lineage of our mothers & our mother’s mothers

he named me for her in English & in Chinese 念
to practice or commit to memory as in poetry or a mother
split
the first spring we planted perennials

it felt like an undeserved miracle, that four hours of fingers kneading earth could lead to a lifetime’s flowers, that each year a different brood of blooms would crown gingerly through the snow-drowned soil, a new cacophony declaring arrival, cautiously—in Cantonese we do not say dead

we say not here and imply for now as if loyalty is an antidote for death. imagine our betrayal when the irises and bee balm and Veronicas didn’t sprout the following summer like when your body didn’t return from North York General and Dad swore his hands would never bury anything again that had no hope for resurrection. that spring, we scourged our nails of pallbearers’ dirt. we drank need like water, tended our garden on faith. we didn’t ask for rain. careless.

what did we know of permanence?

some things are worth the pain of losing, when May comes, Dad crouches on his plastic stool in the front yard, tucks his long-sleeved flannel into his jeans and turns fragile seeds into being and counts the ones that didn’t and lays tulips on your grave and still the cemetery hurtles to life under a blanket of dandelions

still you sleep, not here, for now
superstitions

going a haircut in the year’s first month portends the death of an uncle eating fish will bring your family abundance 八 meaning eight sounds the same as 發 meaning wealth & hair eight is the luckiest number but avoid the number four at all times the Beijing Olympics opened at 8:08 on August 8 2008 red is the colour of the flag & also fortune 四 meaning four sounds the same as 死 meaning dead this elevator lacks a button for the fourth floor never order exactly four dishes at a restaurant on new year’s children receive red envelopes stuffed with money 送鐘 meaning to gift a clock sounds the same as 送終 meaning to attend a funeral & to run out of time white is not to be worn on the body white is not to be used to decorate the home red is the colour of blood betraying the skin & life 過身 means leaving the body so 不在身 means not here not red white is the colour of funerals & foreigners when eating rice do not leave your chopsticks upright in the bowl like incense never give anyone a clock
origin story

dinner plates hurled at the wall
puddling between shards of soapwater
bows hurled at ’s headstone
we forgot its coordinates
maple tree rusted hose
I told she wasn’t family
a graceless child
one recess I muddied my only jacket
pristine ice crimsoned
my face breached to reveal
shame stuck to the dressing
shame stuck to the seam
my fascination ’s knee
goosebump between boot & skirt
guilt pungent as onions
I dream on wet pillows
wake hollowed of history
a runaway an orphan
the spiderplant shrivels
long I search for a reason
I too deserve to die young
allegation

it was late I was lonely I wore leggings a hoodie we were [friends]
I thought I might want until I knew I did not
such as comfort such as [ ] company he didn’t notice
I didn’t tell him [ ] I cried the whole time
he [didn’t] notice

the walls their grip on the ceiling
his forehead ragged with concentration
his Radiohead Arcade Fire
I willed the walls let go

I didn’t report there was nothing to gain
he texted me I texted back
the week before we wrote our together
mac and cheese I scrubbed the dishes [scrubbed]
my body became a portrait of
my body soapy water smeared between and after
my grip on certainty
I didn’t say [no] did I
know I could I willed myself to

[let go] I deleted his
I made better other calluses
other mattresses to

here’s what you want to know
I don’t owe [you] anything