

Creative Writing

Sunday Morning Dimsum

Tiffany Ren

Two women sat at a window table in East Buffet.

A dimsum cart stopped by their table. The older woman pointed to several dishes.

"I think that's enough, Ma. We only have twenty minutes before your appointment."

"You're always rushing somewhere else these days. Have some *ha cheung*."

The older woman picked up shrimp wrapped in a noodle sheet and soaked it in a pool of soy sauce. She reached across the table for the girl's plate. Her hand trembled from the weight of the food. The girl moved her plate closer.

"I'm not hungry, Ma." The food plopped onto her clean plate.

"Come, you'll be hungry later." The woman picked up another *ha cheung*.

"I don't really feel like eating that right now. I'm sure we'll come back next week."

"But this was your favorite. Ever since you were a baby."

"Yes, but every Sunday we come here and order the same food."

"We never know what we'll miss until it's gone." The woman's hand shook as she put her chopsticks down. The chopsticks clinked against her clean plate.

"I'll never not have *ha cheung*, Ma. It won't be *gone*. But what if I don't have egg tarts for a couple of Sundays? What's so bad about that?"

"*Ai*, do you still want to go there? It's dangerous, Ma told you already. Not many Chinese there, you know?"

The girl looked away, out the window. "You told me already Ma."

The building across the street took up the entire view. Its windows were thin, rectangular snapshots the girl saw every week: Mrs. Lang, cutting a man's hair, next to waiters polishing wine glasses amid Hot Pot Lamb's mid-day lull.

"And have you seen the news? The attacks? One happened near—"

"Yes, you showed me on the map." The girl looked up. She could see only more brick.

"It's near where you want to go!"

"So security will be increased! It'll be fine, Ma!" No spots of sky to be seen. "There's just, like, so much out there, so many people to meet—I can learn so much from just meeting different people or walking through different streets!"

"But they're dangerous—"

"Not everyone is dangerous, Ma!" She drove her chopsticks into her *ha cheung* like a stake. "Just because they're not Chinese—"

“But if there is danger—” The woman paused. She pressed her lips together, forcing back nausea. “Ma can’t be there to help if you need it. Ma needs to stay close to the doctors.”

The girl surveyed her food. She reached over to place an egg tart on the woman’s clean plate. “Ma, eat this, the doctors say you need sugar.”

“I feel better if I don’t eat before appointments.” The woman looked at the dishes, still untouched. “Maybe we can box it, take it home.”

The girl checked her phone for the time. “We should leave, Ma. I lost track of time.”

“Why don’t you finish the *ha cheung*? The doctors say this time will be longer, and I don’t want you to be hungry while you’re waiting.”

“I’m fine, Ma. I stay full for a while.”

“But you won’t have it when you leave.”

“I’m not leaving, Ma.” The girl waved over the waiter for the bill.

“But what about meeting new people?”

“I have all the people I need here.” The girl started filling up the cartons. “And what if you... what if I miss you when I’m gone?”

“Ma will always be here.” The woman put a quivering hand on the girl’s arm, then withdrew it to cough.

“But I want to be there for you. To help drive to the doctors. They said starting radiation—we need to go five days a week.”

The waiter returned. The daughter moved to put down money, but the older woman slapped away her daughter’s hand. “No, I’m supposed to treat you every Sunday—”

“I know! I know, Ma.”

The girl lifted the white teapot and the woman tucked some bills under it.

“Every Sunday,” she said to herself.