

They Eat Dogs in China

Timothy Liu

Or so my father said—
the clock on the mantle silenced,
that family Bible
 in his hands a weight in the pans
of judgment. That evening
splintered, as if a cross were being nailed
to my body—the warped
 light of the lamp casting halos
on the floor, the ivy
growing waxier. The weaker I
became, the more I loved
 the antique Chinese urn that fell
from the shelf, his fingers
bleeding onto my Book of Mormon—
torn pages like damask
 paper roses crumpled to the floor.
Nothing the Elders taught
prepared me for this, my father's throat
swelling with ghosts—a pack
 of feral dogs outside the door.