

What Did You Teach Me?

Amy Ng

It's the first time in twenty-two years that I've heard those words, Mami.

Taxes. Claims. Beneficiary.

税收。索赔。受益人。

No, I do not understand it.

All the words you ever taught me in our barely shared language, yet you've never taught me these.

It's been twenty-two years and you brag to me about how your friend's child has learned from thin, immaterial air — our language.

I find that foolish.

I find that sad.

I wonder if there is something shared between them, their words, that we cannot find in ourselves to speak.

You taught me things like, Did you eat? Sleep more. Be quiet. Never anything more. I think deep down, you were afraid of me growing up, of me understanding the fights you and Diedi have, of me knowing the depths of all that you are and all that you struggle with.

Mortgage. Retirement. Attorney.

抵押。退休。律师。

No, I do not understand you.

That opportunity has bloomed and gone.

Now, I don't think I ever can.

It's been twenty-two years and there is so much left unsaid.