I Didn’t Know Aiiieeeeee, But It Knew Me
By Adrienne Su

Of the aunts I had met, only one went by Ayi, so there was no need to number my Ayis.

When I splattered cheesy macaroni on a library book, my mother cried, “Ai-ya!”

Is it worse to see no Asians in a movie, or to see one with a single line: “Aiiieeeeee”?

Avoidance failed. No tickee, no laundly. Look at these. She had almond eyes. Ah-so.

All the martial arts were called karate. A human could almost fly: Hai-ya!

Other aunts dwelled in forbidden country. How would it be, to know five Ayis?

To become a writer, I studied Chinese as if English could not contain “ai-ya.”
I never learned how to swear in Chinese. Instead, I pretended to die: “Aiiiiiiii!”

The International aisle of my grocery had a sauce resembling neon wine, Ah-So.

A white man at a party tried to correct me. Su, he said, is really Hsu. Oh, right. Hai-ya!