

Fortune Cookie

Diana Raab

Each Sunday evening, in suburban New York,
we eat at the corner Chinese:
its fish tank hypnotic, the smiling

welcome from the Chinese woman
pressing menus to her chest,
who leads us to the booth with the vinyl seats.

They stick to my legs as I slide
across to my designated spot. Dad promises
me a fortune cookie on the way out;

from the bowl by the door.
We eat spareribs, lick our fingers
and laugh, try to pick rice kernels

and slippery noodles with splintered
chopsticks. We praise the food,
but wonder why we often leave hungry

for food and fortune. After extracting
mine from the smashed cookie, I put
the crumbled paper in my pocket,

and find it weeks later, hoping somehow
the words change
and the little paper whispers

truths about my own future,
which never told me dad would die
before my daughters' wedding.