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Death and Birth in a Chinese Restaurant

Here, or nowhere, is the thing we seek

—Horace

We don't agree on death.
While I think we'll become
the dragon's fire, flames dissolving to sky,
you believe we'll be the paper body
folding to earth as the strings are cut.

We agree on birth though,
how our child arrived messy
and loved. Those first moments,
when she wasn't breathing,
her limp body, a paper kite,
we could have agreed then,
as neither would have wanted to think
she was brought into this world
only to be returned to nothing.

So instead we imagined a cloud

where newborns sleep.

But after our Lazarus could breath
on her own, and our lives returned
to their daily unmiracles,
the routines of washed and dirty dishes,
we went back to opposite corners
of rebirth and burial, reincarnation
and under carnations.

The teapot steams a small heaven,
the purgatory of noodles,
and what about limbo
where the unbaptized drift or sink
among tea leaves?

“You worry about the wrong things,”
you tell me as our check arrives
on the black tray.

We open the fortune cookies
as if there is a reason for luck.

Mine: *You are headed for a land of sunshine.*

Yours: *There's magic in everything, and some loss to even things out.*

Kelli Russell Agodon

Kelli Russell Agodon is the author of *Small Knots* and the chapbook, *Geography*.
Currently she is one of the co-editors of the literary journal, *Crab Creek Review*. Her
favorite appetizer at the Joy Luck Restaurant is barbecued pork. Visit her website
at: www.agodon.com.