

Qingdao Garden

Over a hot pot of tea
we order Vegetable Lo Mein,
Boneless Spareribs, String
Bean Chicken, Pork with Leek
Dumplings; that's #141, 07,
41, Q3. The food comes quick,
steaming plates on the table.
A table over, two elderly
women ask the waiter what's
good. Over dumplings, I learn
to use chopsticks again. We
pick & peck at our plates,
give in & call for the check.
The waiter brings paper
boxes for what we can't
finish. We crack open
our cookies, they break
into pieces like frail vases.
The table's sticky with spilled
tea & soy sauce. Your fortune
reads: *When flowers bloom,
so will great joy in your life.*
(*Lucky numbers 06 17 18 29
38, 15*). Mine's empty, no
future inside, but paper
flowers bloom on the table
& leftovers rest in our laps.
Tomorrow I'll play the lotto,
your lucky numbers. Great
joy: this food, our knees
under the table. I hold
open the door for you
on our way out, the old
women coo over their
food—a whole pink fish.
Oh this is good
they say, so good.