

Kim Adrian
from *Famous Cake*

About thirty weeks into the pregnancy, Miranda developed an intense craving for *dim sum*. Their favorite *dim sum* restaurant was only four blocks from their apartment, but somehow, they had a lot of trouble getting there. *Dim sum* was served only in the morning and early afternoon, and they both worked too far away to make a weekday lunch of it. And their week-ends were crammed: there was the stroller, the crib, the car seat to buy... Saturday mornings she took breastfeeding classes. Sundays they called home. Also, there were five million little things: the diaper service, the mobile... But over the course of several weeks, her craving got more and more intense. "I can't add," she said, calling him from work one day. "I can't even read. All I think about is *dim sum*." She even dreamt about *dim sum* one night, and told him the dream, which was long and involved, and included birds.

"Nice car, you like that kind?"

"The M3?"

"Yes, M3."

"Very sweet."

"Your wife... You almost father?"

"Almost."

"How much time now?"

"Three weeks."

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"O-ho," laughed Tong Way. "Wife, babies." He made motions through the air with his hands that suggested chaos, disorientation. "You be happy just to breathe," he said. "Like now." He took a long drag off his cigarette.

At *Lychee Garden*, a waitress wheeled a metal cart to their table. "You want?"

"Meat or shrimp?" asked Miranda.

"Shrimp. Shrimp. Water chestnut. Very good."

Miranda asked for two baskets.

"I like Renee, if it's a girl. Or Gwen."

"I don't like Gwen."

"Some one once told me I looked like a Gwen."

"What about Joseph, for a boy?"

A different waitress came by with a cart full of steamed cabbage buns and sesame cakes. A third one with vegetable and "good luck" and crabmeat dumplings. They ordered one of each. Also pork riblets in black bean sauce and turnip cakes and his favorite: pan-fried dumplings, filled with greens.

"So good," said Miranda, her chopsticks poking in the baskets, her mouth full. She had a grey hair. He'd never noticed that before. It glinted under the restaurant lights.

"So, so good," she said. She put some hot sauce on the *har gao*. She said, "I love you."

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At the birthing classes, he'd taken notes: *8 oz. liquid an hour or else I.V.! Reframe negative comments positively—control anxiety! Surrender & Companionship & Trust.* He had these notes folded in his shirt pocket when they got to the hospital.

"Your breath is *perfect*," the doctor told her every time she came in to check. There were all kinds of machines that beeped or dripped or printed hairline graphs.

"When it gets bad," she said, "I know I'm going to be awful. I'll probably say nasty things. Just ignore me."

"Don't worry," he said. His shirt was cold and damp under his arms and all along his back.

When the baby crowned, Mark saw that it had dark hair, like himself. The hair was wet and wavy, and for a long time, this was all he could see. The doctor invited him to touch the baby's scalp, which he did. It was surprisingly soft. Of course, the doctor had coached Miranda the whole time to push with each contraction, but at a certain point the nurse ripped a piece of paper from the machine that measured the baby's heart rate and gave it to the doctor. Then she said it was time to do something different. She said this as if it were a bright new idea she'd just come up with.

"Now you're going to push without a contraction," she told Miranda. "With all your might. Just like there was a contraction. And don't stop."

"Okay," said Miranda.

"Harder," said the doctor.

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In the drawing of the child attached to the cosmic lily pad, the cosmos extended through the cord right into the baby, into its central body cavity, where each of its organs was diagramed and labeled. The organs—rounded and amoeba-like—emerged floating from the middle of the little boy. They were slightly fanned out, so that each organ could be seen in its entirety. Behind the fan, on the child's abdominal walls, were what looked like stars spinning in a very dark sky.