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And In This Poem I Relate How I Wanted to Sream Obscenities at a Plastic Fish but Could Only Think Them Because My Six-Year-Old Daughter Was Standing Right There

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••AND IN THIS POEM I RELATE HOW I WANTED TO
SCREAM OBSCENITIES AT A PLASTIC FISH BUT COULD
ONLY THINK THEM BECAUSE MY SIX-YEAR-OLD
DAUGHTER WAS STANDING RIGHT THERE

DAVE NIELSEN

We're playing
with this five-cent piece of trash:
a Chinese Fortune Telling Fish,
four inches of read cellophane
whose static curl in your palm is your fortune.

The wrapper says it like this:
Head: Jealous. Tail: Passionate. Fin: Fickle—
and I think, fortunes?

Except for the other,
No Curl: Dead One.

My daughter reads this out loud
sounding the words slowly.
Dead One. Dead One. Dead One.

Big deal, I tell myself.
If she thinks she's going to die,
she won't.
So I go first
and the fin curls, and I think, fine,
fine, I'll be fickle.

Then her turn,
and what changes? Suddenly I'm superstitious?
I'm thinking, Curl you damn son of a bitch fish—
and it does, like she's charged.