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The Cookie Warning

Red lanterns with golden accents, hanging from the ceiling. The walls are wooden with large windows, and they're dark brown. There are pots with short sticks of bamboo planted inside, and cherry blossom flowers as well. On the table, there are small, succulent-sized pots with beautiful, pink cherry blossom flowers sprouting out. As I eat my dumplings, I take in my surroundings. I've eaten in this restaurant a million times, but I still find it so beautiful and intriguing. It's a small business, but I don't understand why. The food is wonderful, the environment is beautiful and soothing, and all of the workers are incredibly nice.

I finished my dumplings and pulled out the fortune cookies that came with. They gave me two! The workers had started to recognize me since I ate there so much. I think they liked the business I gave them. They deserved it, this place was amazing! I opened my first fortune cookie. Normally, I don't pay much attention to the fortune cookies, but I still read them. I think they're fun. My first one said, "You will have good luck on March 19". That was weird. First of all, fortune cookies rarely have dates, and second, March 19 was forever away. Today is September 29, so even Halloween feels out of reach. Fortune cookies, if you were lucky enough to get one with a specific day, weren't normally very far away.

Well, at least it was good luck. I ate the fortune cookie and hastily opened the next. It read, "Your life is in danger. Say nothing to anyone. You must leave the city immediately and never return. Repeat: Say nothing to anyone".

I suddenly felt queasy. I tried to look normal so the workers wouldn't think something was wrong. One of the workers, a girl whom I was good friends with, came up to me and asked, "Ma'am, are you alright?" I started to answer by telling her about what the cookie had said, but then I reread the cookie in my mind. "Say nothing to anyone," it had said. I quickly made up an answer. "Oh- yes, I'm fine. I just- uh- remembered that I have to... go buy a gift for someone by tomorrow! Yeah- it's my- um- dog's birthday tomorrow." The girl seemed skeptical, but said, "Alright. Have a nice day!"

I sat there for a moment, questioning what I should do. Should I leave? I mean, it was just a fortune cookie. They're completely random- aren't they?

I decided I'd leave. I walked home, then started packing my stuff. I didn't know where I would go, or how I would tell my parents. I lived alone in my apartment, but my parents lived in the apartment next to me. We had lived like this ever since I moved out, 3 years ago. And my friends? They'd have to be out of the loop. It said to say nothing to anybody. I would tell my parents, but I wouldn't tell them the whole story. Once everything was packed into my four suitcases and backpack, I emailed my boss and told him I was quitting. I had been wanting to quit my job as a cashier for a retail store, but I had needed the money and hadn't been able to find another job. I guess this was my chance.

I fed my dog, Ginny, for the last time in this apartment. "We're moving, Ginny!" I said excitedly, but I felt sad as well. Would I ever be able to come back? I felt so content with my current life. Why had this tragedy struck me when I felt so happy about everything?

I booked some plane tickets. We were moving to Montana tomorrow morning. We currently live in Boston, Massachusetts, so Montana was pretty far away.

I grabbed some food out of the fridge that I wouldn't be able to bring with me like milk and eggs. I went over to my parents's apartment and knocked on the door.

They opened the door, holding a tray of their delicious lemon cookies. "Hey sweetie! We were just about to come over and bring you some cookies!" I smiled and took a bite of one. They were yellow with cracks and powdered sugar on top, giving it a snowy look. It tasted like a delightful sugar cookie, with a bit of lemon, but it wasn't sour. These were my second favorite flavor of cookies they made. My first favorite was their chocolate brownie explosion cookie. I love all the chocolate inside.

They saw my bags of food and my Mom questioned, "What's all this?"

“Well... I- I have to move. I’m- um- being... transferred to another store, so I thought I’d give you everything I can’t take on the plane.”

“Oh no! Will you ever be able to come back?”

“I’m not sure. I hope I will!”

“Where are you moving to?”

“Michigan,” I lied.

“Oh. Well, Michigan is nice. I hope the people there treat you well, and that we’ll be able to visit a lot!”

“Yeah,” I said, feeling downhearted, “I hope so too.”

We hugged, and said goodnight to each other. It wasn’t too late yet, but we would both be eating dinner and my parents always watched their favorite show together before they went to bed, so I didn’t want to interrupt that. I made myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with the leftover food I got out before I packed it. I then packed up everything that was left. I looked around my apartment one last time. My parents would use it for storage until I got back (if I was ever even able to) and would help pay the rent. I would send them some of the money from my new “job” to help pay as well. If I wasn’t able to return, they would stop paying and someone else might get my old apartment. I know that the fortune cookie said I could never return, but what if the danger goes away and I’m able to come back one day? I hoped this would be the case, but my hopes weren’t high.

The next morning, I got up, fed Ginny, and put her on a leash. I didn’t have a car; whenever I drove, I used my parent’s car. I asked if they could drive me there, and they said that would be fine. The airport was within walking distance of the apartment complex, but it would be hard to walk carrying four suitcases, a backpack, and a dog on a leash.

I put my luggage in the trunk and put Ginny in the back seat with me. I then got in the seat and buckled up. My mom hopped in the driver’s side and my dad on the passenger side. I asked if we could stop by the chinese restaurant for breakfast, since I’d never be able to go in again, and my parents agreed. When I opened the fortune cookie, my jaw dropped. Was this sorcery? Was I imagining things? The fortune inside said, “You’ve made a lifesaving choice recently.”

It was an awkward car ride to the airport. I think we were all too sad to talk. I just pet Ginny’s soft, silky fur the whole way. She was a miniature goldendoodle, a golden retriever mixed with a miniature poodle. She has golden, curly fur and it shimmered in the sunlight.

When we finally got there, my parents gave me a hug and said bye as I got out all of my luggage.

“Bye, sweetie! We’ll miss you!” Mom said.

“Don’t forget to text us! Call us when you make it there so we know you’re alright!” Dad called out.

“Will do! Bye!” I said, not wanting to let the hug go. I finally pulled away and started walking into the airport. I made it through security just fine. I kept noticing a strange person in all white and some shades who seemed to be near me everywhere I went. A strange coincidence.

I stopped by a stand and grabbed a newspaper and one of those traveller neck pillows. I decided I’d read the newspaper on the plane ride. I felt bad for all of my friends, especially since we’d all still be in contact. I decided to text them on a group chat the fake excuse I had come up with. “Guys, I have to move to Michigan for a job. They transferred me to another store and if I get transferred, I get promoted. I’ll miss you, but hopefully we’ll still get to visit and talk!” I texted. I was immediately removed from the chat. I decided to ask my best friend Candace who had removed me. “Hey Candace, who removed me?” I asked her. “It was Laila, want me to add you back? Also, congrats on the promotion! I’m going to miss you so much.” She replied. “Yes, please add me back. I’ll miss you too!” It wasn’t very suspicious to me that Laila would remove me. We weren’t as close. We knew each other through mutual friends, but I could tell she really didn’t like me.

Finally, my plane gate opened. I walked through and found my seat. It was a window seat! I sat down and opened up the window. I grabbed out my neck pillow and put it on. I waited for a moment for the other passengers to board. I almost gasped aloud when I saw who sat in the same row as me. The person in all white and shades. I gaped at them for a moment, and they stared back at me, or at least that’s how it seemed. I couldn’t see their eyes through the shades.

There was someone in between us. A man with sleek, black hair. I was so thankful he was in the middle of us.

I slowly teared my eyes away from the mysterious stalker and decided to read the newspaper. As soon as I pulled it out, however, all throughout the plane, the pilot’s voice echoed, “Please find your seat and stay seated, we are about to take off.” He then started explaining the safety precautions and how to use the vest and oxygen masks. When the lady came around asking if anyone wanted a snack or drink, I told her I’d take pretzels and a cup of orange juice. I hated plane orange juice, but it was probably the best thing there was. She gently tossed the pretzels onto my tray and went to get the orange juice. When she came back, she lightly placed the orange juice on my tray. She seemed very nice.

I decided to read the newspaper now, since I had been interrupted earlier. I felt nauseous after reading the

headline. "Apartment Number 408 Explodes In Flames". My apartment number was 408. It could have been any apartment though. However, as I kept reading, I felt even more queasy. "Apartment number 408 of the Purple Star Apartments explodes in flames today at 6:13 AM." It read. That had been my apartment. Thank goodness my parents and I had already left for the airport by then. I petted Ginny, who was in my lap, to calm myself down. Someone had tried burning down my apartment. There's no way the stove could have turned on by itself and started this. "Thankfully, no one was hurt and everyone escaped." It continued. Thank goodness. I didn't want anyone else to have to suffer because of my sudden stroke of horrible luck. "The apartments are fixable, and the fire was put out before it could spread out of room 408. There were many witnesses of the fire, and they all claimed to have seen an anonymous individual wearing a white jumpsuit, a white beanie, and black shades running out of the burning apartment and into a nearby alleyway. All witnesses of them said that they knew that wasn't who lived in apartment 408. If this individual is seen please alert the officials immediately for questioning."

I wanted out. I needed to get off of this plane. The individual who had attempted to burn down my apartment was one seat away from me. They followed me onto the plane. Had my apartment fire been what the cookie had forewarned me about? Was there more? If I returned home, would they follow me back?

All of these questions ran through my mind until I realized I was petting Ginny so tensely that she was scooting out of my lap. I picked her up and apologized to her, then started scratching her in her favorite spot.

I saw the person with the shades get up. They walked towards the back of the plane. They must have been using the bathroom. But then, I remembered from an article I read back when I was in high school, that some planes have a lot of control panels located in the back. Suddenly, the plane started rocketing forward, and everyone was pushed back against their seats. The poor flight attendants, who had been caught standing up, got hurtled to the back of the plane. The captain then said in the loudspeaker, "I'm not sure what is happening, but I think someone went into the control room at the back of the aircraft and pressed a button that makes the plane go extremely fast. Flight attendants, please attempt to make it back there and shut it off as I do everything I can to slow it down. Passengers, please stay seated and buckled as we- oh no, my coffee!" The speaker then shut off and we heard the sound of ceramics breaking from the captain's room. All of the flight attendants staggered to get up and then slowly attempted to move to the control room. Many of them got knocked over, causing others to get knocked down as well. Finally, one of them made it to the back of the plane and they stopped the aircraft. Then, the plane started spiraling straight downward, until the pilot pulled the plane back up and we started flying once again. The captain then said over the loudspeaker, "Sorry, ladies and gentlemen. I turned the speed all the way down to see if it would slow down the plane. You are now free to get up." With that, everyone who had been caught standing during the super speed then stood back up and went back to their seats.

The person in all white, who I knew without a doubt was who had caused the plane to rocket forward, never came back to their seat. I don't know where they were or where they were hiding, but I hoped somehow they had gotten off the plane and couldn't follow me anymore.

I slept for the rest of the plane ride, and so did Ginny. When I awoke to the sound of the captain's voice, he said, "Everyone, we will be landing soon. Please find your way back to your seats and buckle up. Please turn off all devices. Thank you." Everyone scurried back to find their seats. The plane then landed. The pilot said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have now arrived in Montana. Please be careful when exiting the plane. The next flight goes to Wisconsin. If you have tickets to Wisconsin, please come up to the front and let one of the flight attendants scan your ticket. Have a nice day."

I exited the plane. I was still shook from the super speed and my discovery of this person in all white. I was also sad. As soon as I walked off of the plane, a giant hole grew in me. I missed my parents. I missed my friends. I missed my apartment. I missed the Chinese restaurant. I missed my old life.

I started basically a new life. I got a new job. It paid more, but wasn't any more fun than my old job had. I met new friends. I started renting a small apartment in a complex, but it wasn't like the apartments I was used to. It just looked like an oversized house, but it had lots of doors and small rooms inside. It was very cozy.

I still called my best friends back at home almost every day. I tried to call them as much as I could. I didn't want to lose contact if I ever moved back. I called my parents as much as I could. I couldn't bear to eat Chinese food anymore. It made me too sad, thinking about how a Chinese restaurant had caused me to move away. There weren't any good ones anyway. When I had worked up enough courage inside me to order one without feeling sad enough to start crying on the spot, it tasted horrible. I missed the small, soothing restaurant I had loved.

There was a dog-friendly park right across the street from my apartment building. I took Ginny there every chance I could.

The date was March 19. One night, it was late, and I was walking home with Ginny after going to a restaurant, when suddenly, Ginny started growling. I thought she was growling at nothing, so I thought nothing of it. She kept growling and I started getting nervous. I started passing an alleyway, when I heard a noise. I decided to go back there and see if it had just been some sort of stray dog or cat. Suddenly, someone in all white and black shades jumped out.

“No,” I said to myself in disbelief. It couldn’t be the mysterious person from the plane. It couldn’t be the person who had sent my apartment in flames, thinking I had been in it.

They stood in a fighting stance in front of me. Did they want to fight? I didn’t want to fight. I just wanted to go back home, whether that be my apartment or Boston. But if it was a fight they wanted, I was going to give them a fight. I had taken karate from 11 years old to 19 years old. I remembered quite a bit.

They came towards me with their fists outstretched towards me. I pulled my fists out too and let Ginny off of the leash. I hoped Ginny wouldn’t run away, she might get run over. As they slowly approached me, ready to fight, I made a battle plan in my head. It would work.

The objective was to tackle them and pull off their shades and hat so I could see who they were. Then, I would call the police and stall my no longer anonymous attacker. As soon as the police came, I would go home. Hopefully after the person was caught, I would be able to go back to my real home, in Boston.

As soon as Ginny was off of the leash, she ran towards my attacker and started biting them. I knew her little teeth were sharp, and the stalker was yelping in pain. They finally were able to kick her off and they started approaching me again, this time quicker than before and fuming with anger. As Ginny hit the ground, she let out a yelp. I was mad too. You can’t just kick my dog and expect me to forgive you.

I approached the stalker confidently. They went in for a punch in my face, but I blocked them. I then quickly punched them back, and they let out an *oof!* in pain as they stumbled back. We then emerged into battle.

I got in a few punches and kicks, and Ginny got some revenge as well by biting the back of their leg. Finally, the time came where I could execute my plan. I quickly went in and tackled them, pinning them to the ground. I pulled off their hat in eagerness. Long, black, silky hair came flowing out. The stalker was female.

I pulled down their shades and let out a gasp in shock. I knew them. From Boston. In fact, they were one of my friends. A friend through mutual friends. It was none other than Laila.

“Laila?!” I asked in shock when I pulled off the shades. “What- why- how-” I stammered. “Why would you do this? I- I have no words... You’re who burned down my apartment! I saw it in the news! And you caused the plane to rocket forward! You kicked my dog!”

She gave me a weird look. I couldn’t tell if it was guilt or anger that I had caught her. Or something else, an emotion I didn’t know how to name.

“Laila, explain yourself,” I said, now that I had gotten over the shock and was steady again. “Well... I was hoping to scare you away. So that I can be better friends with everyone. You’re so nice, and kind, and generous, and pretty and... I was jealous. Everyone likes you better. So I thought if I got you out of town, and made sure that you didn’t talk to anyone, I could be the center of attention. But then you kept in touch with everyone and... I had to resort to plan B,” She finally said, never looking into my eyes.

I was stunned. I knew Laila had never liked me, but I never knew it was to this extreme or that reasoning.

“Did... did you somehow make sure I got that fortune cookie?” I asked.

“What- What are you talking about?”

“Oh, I- nevermind, it’s not important. Laila, I’m sorry. You didn’t have to do all that! You could’ve just told me!”

“Pfffft, no. I still don’t like you, even if you stole my spotlight. You’re weird.”

“Fine then.” I said grimly.

“Wait a minute- what day is it?” I asked, remembering back to the day when I got the fortune cookie. I rapidly pulled the fortune out of my pocket. I always carried around both of the fortunes I had gotten that day. I pulled out my phone as well, almost dropping it in haste. My calendar said March 19.

“March 19th, and-” I pulled the fortune in front of my face and looked at it, “This says March 19th! ‘On March 19th, you will have good luck’! It all makes sense now!” I yelled out in joy for figuring out what the cookies had meant. Laila was looking at me like I was a maniac.

I quickly pulled out my phone and called the police. Laila was arrested and I never saw her again.

Ginny and I moved back to Boston. I told all of my friends, old ones from Boston and new ones from Montana, the story of what had happened with Laila. I introduced my old friends to my new friends over text, and they seemed to get along well.

I told my parents the story, and they hugged onto me tightly.

Ginny hadn’t really changed, but I could tell she was more protective of me after the stalker attacked.

My friends and I immediately clicked again. It was as if nothing had happened, like I had never left, I just had a new story to tell.

I got a new job that I enjoyed so much more than my past jobs. I was a waitress at a very busy restaurant. I met a lot of new friends there, too.

I kept going to my favorite restaurant. And I always heeded the fortune cookie’s words.