

Age: 13, Grade: 8

School Name: Mountain Brook Junior High School, Mountain Brk, AL
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Category: Short Story

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 packed up my things and took the bus to the airport. I had a small suitcase with me, a backpack, and a dog on a leash. I was nervous, but I knew I had to go. I took a deep breath and stepped onto the plane. I looked back at the airport one last time before the door closed behind me.

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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 and searching for 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 to the front 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. Ah, all in the line.

“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.