

Fortune Cookie

by Cameron Tran

A loud ringing echoed within the walls of the kitchen followed by shuffling of feet. "No no no no," Tom chanted as he rushed towards the oven, "Please don't be burnt. Please don't be burnt."

Opening the door, smoke emitted from the machinery causing Tom to cough and fan it away from his eyes. And as he slowly pulled out the dessert that he was trying to achieve, his face slowly dropped. The clank with metal meeting marble only made his stomach churn.

What stood in front of him was a deflated, burnt chocolate souffle or what was supposed to be a souffle.

"This is the thirteenth time now." The man put his head in his hands, about to sob. Tom felt that the world was against him. Nothing was going right.

Maybe being a doctor would've been a better choice than whatever this is. Being a chef wasn't worth all the wedgies and toilet dunking that he suffered from those high school bullies. Being a chef wasn't worth the disappointment that his mother gave him every time he visited for the holidays. Being a chef wasn't worth all the teasing his friends made when he commented on his dream to become famous like Gordon Ramsay one day.

Sighing, Tom grabbed a fortune cookie in hopes that it calmed his nerves. These things always did the trick. The way they snapped in half in a crisp manner and the crunch they held was satisfying enough for him.

As Tom played with the wrapper of the cookie, he snuck another look at his disaster of a souffle. He let out another sigh again, snapping the cookie in half and taking the little sheet of paper out.

His eyes scanned the slip of paper and after a moment he smiled. Putting down the slip, Tom took the ramekin dish from the metal tray and scooped the contents of failure into the trash bin.

"Fourteenth time's a charm," he joked to himself. Food was an essential part of every human's living. And eating good food was a privilege. Tom knew this and he was allowing his failures to get the better of him. How could he?

The long hours of reading what each ingredient does for a food item wasn't going to be wasted. The long hours of editing that he did for his YouTube channel wasn't going to be wasted. His purpose in this lifetime wasn't about to be wasted. It was his fate for him to do this as a living and it was his choice to go through with it. And it was all because of the happiness that it brought to him—whenever his friends moaned in delight for the eclairs he made or the little noogie his mother gave him whenever he perfected a dumpling. It was all his joy.

Tom grinned as he repeated what the fortune told him, "Happiness sure is an inside job rather than an outside job."