

Andrew waited patiently for the check. The smell of sesame chicken and warm ambiance filled the restaurant. The amber lighting reflected off of the bright red decorations hung all around.

“Here is your bill sir,” said a lovely woman, as she handed him a slip of paper and a yellow fortune cookie.

“Thank you ma'am,” Andrew replied.

It was an evening week day and the restaurant was nearly empty. The perfect time and place for Andrew to enjoy a quiet dinner with himself. He picked up the cookie and crinkled the plastic in between his fingers. The cookie itself never was appetizing to him; it tasted like cardboard. However, the fortune inside is what intrigued him. Most everyone will say that those cryptid notes are useless and silly, and even if they werent, fate isn't real and coincidence is as likely as the sun rising each morning. But, not to Andrew. Fortunes were not something to sneeze at and in fact, something to reflect on and hold with you. Figuratively, and in his case, literally; he keeps a tin full in his dresser at home. He pulled apart the clear wrapping and broke open the golden cracker. It read, ‘Other worlds await your future’. Andrew re-read it a few times over before stuffing it in his front pocket.

He made his way to the exit of the restaurant before someone stepped in front of him.

“No way! Andrew Goodman!” said the man, hitting Andrew on the shoulder.

A wide smile was plastered on his face as he waited for a response. His hair was combed neatly to the side and he wore a fitted shirt and nice shorts. Andrew looked at the hand he placed on him, spotting a big fancy watch with numerous dials and circles.

“Oh- Jack, hi,” he replied in an attempted happy tone.

“Hey, long time no see. I just wanted to thank you for saving my butt that one time. If it weren't for you Jessica and I would've never made it.” Andrew tried to think back to what it was he did, but he couldn't place it.

“Oh, yeah, of course. Where are you headed anyway?”

“My son Johnny's got a t-ball game at 8:00, so the missus sent me to pick up food,” he shook the bag of take out in his hand.

Andrew tried his best to smile. “Alright well, enjoy.” Jack looked at him with a confused look.

“Th-the food.”

“Oh! Alright thanks! -And double thanks for everything.”

Jack walked off, but Andrew stayed behind. Standing still in the lobby. The weight of worthlessness holding his shoes down to the floor. He was standing alone, he ate dinner unaccompanied, and he found joy in *fortune cookies*. It was pathetic. How did he end up here? What could he have done wrong to warrant such a melancholic life. Why did the people around him seem so much happier? Their lives were fruitful, and his, morose.

He trudged outside, dissociatively. He looked at the ground in front of him, but he only saw his thoughts. He noticed a dip in the ground approaching him quickly, except he was too entangled in his thoughts to react. Before he knew it, the asphalt was at his nose and everything went dark.

In what seemed like a few seconds later, he awoke. He pushed his face off the ground as rain droplets kissed his hands, creating flecks of water scattered across his skin. He stood up woefully and looked around. The already darkened sky seemed darker, the sidewalk, a deeper shade of grey, and the thundering roar of a storm echoed around him. As soon as he saw this he

knew. He was in another world. And every corner of it was distastefully sad. The windows of every establishment were unwashed and dusty, a couple bickered in a side street, and the heavy, humid air all around made everything that much worse. The rain poured down harder and stuck his jeans to his skin, soggy. Trash floated down a stream of dirty rain water. He watched as it fell into an open drain. The water falling from the sky was polluted with despair, and it washed over him. Out of any other world he could have come across, this was the one he did. It almost made him miss his old one. He thought back to what once was. Flowers growing in the cracks of sidewalks, birds flying down to peer upon the city, and the bright yellow sun that warmed his skin. He missed the quiet nights in empty restaurants and taking scenic routes around the city. Every simple pleasure that is now unreachable. He was standing still, yet again, except this time his sodden socks and the feeling of doom were weighing him down. Right then, he felt a pull on his shoulder that urged him to turn around.

“Hey man, you alright? You took a pretty nasty fall,” Jack said.

“Uh yeah,” he said, hesitantly.

“It started raining while you were out, so I went and grabbed this from my car,” he said, holding out an umbrella. Andrew looked at him, dumbfounded

“Here keep it, you’d do the same for me,” he continued. The realization struck him that perhaps he wasn't in another world after all. Perhaps he’s exactly where he started. Perhaps that's enough. Andrew took the umbrella from his hand as a pleasant expression grew on his face. Jack nodded his head and tilted his foot, beginning to walk away.

“Hey, wait, what about Johnny’s game?”

Jack motioned his hand in the air, “It was canceled.”

“Oh, right. That's too bad.”

“Yeah, maybe.”

Jack walked off and Andrew stood. Alone. Except he didn't feel solemn or unhappy, he felt serene... and fortunate.