



FORTUNE COOKIE

By

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Jack Morelli strolled into The Golden Dragon with a big, fat grin on his face and an obscenely thick roll of cash in his back pocket.

“Same table, sir?” Young, luscious Li-Li greeted him in the entranceway with a sunny smile.

“You betcha, sweet pea.”

The joint had just opened for dinner. None of the other regulars had shown up yet.

Jack settled into his favorite place in the back corner and opened his menu with a sigh of satisfaction. Things were going great. He’d had a record day at the races, landed a lucrative new account for his ad agency, and had finally received a “yes” from Audrey, his sexy secretary. This time tomorrow night, he’d be wining and dining her over at Vincenzo’s.

Li-Li stood by, waiting to take his order.

“Something different this time, sweet pea. How about Mu-Shu Pork?”

“Mmm, it is very good, sir. You will like.”

Jack slapped the waitress on the rear when she turned to walk away, and enjoyed her little gasp of surprise.

“Don’t forget my pot of tea.”

Yeah, for the first time in a long time, Jack didn’t have anything to complain about.

He took his time eating dinner – the Mu-Shu Pork was a little messy anyway. Then he poured himself a cup of jasmine tea.

Jack was sipping it and reading the sport’s section of an abandoned newspaper when Li-Li brought him the check, weighed down with a fortune cookie.

As always, the waitress hung around, expecting him to break it open and read the contents to her.

“Okay, sweet pea.”

Jack laid the paper aside and picked up the cookie. He broke it in half – and was surprised to find it empty. There was no fortune inside.

He chuckled. “What? Does this mean I have no future?”

Li-Li’s smile froze, and then quickly faded away. She scurried off into the kitchen without a word.

Jack shook his head. *Superstitious Chinese.*

He paid with cash, and left the girl an extravagant tip. On his way out he grabbed a toothpick off the takeout counter.

A steady rain had turned the summer night cool, but Jack whistled a cheerful tune as he hurried over to the crosswalk – reaching it just as the light at the intersection turned red.

He stepped into the dark street – never seeing the truck that swept away all his tomorrows.

THE END