

## The Magic Fortune Cookies

In a little town, crowded around a small bustling shop, swarms of people would wait in line for a little piece of wonder, and a little spark of magic. Early in the morning, as soon as the sun rose, the fortune cookie stand sprung to life. The dull gray shack became a colorful and vivid pop-up store containing the most delicious treats anyone had ever laid eyes on. Empty counters and cabinets were filled to the brim with cookies, and an intoxicating aroma entered the air, drawing people from every corner. It was known all across the world, in every village, every home, every house: buy a cookie and your greatest desire will come true.

One day, a farmer received a fortune that his crops would grow, and as a matter of fact he had an incredible harvest in the next couple of weeks. A seamstress read that she would create the most beautiful dress and she designed and sewed an intricate masterpiece. Everyone that had ever taken a treat from the stand had incredible news to share the next day, miracles that the cookies had given them. It was the last day the fortune cookie store would be in town. Many people had already received their wishes, and were thriving in prosperity, contributing to the village's new happiness and lightheartedness that the cookie stand had brought along with it.

Friends and family of villagers stepped into line for fortunes along with a villager that was still waiting for her miracle. Nearing the front of the line, a girl with large brown eyes and strawberry blonde hair, spoke to the girl at the counter with a determined gaze.

“Another cookie please,” she said stiffly, her coins clinking in the palm of her hand

Everyone in the line began to murmur and chuckle as she ignored them. She was very aware that this was one of hundreds of times that she had been to the cookie vendor. The girl had visited the fortune cookies on the first day hopeful and excited for her wish to be granted. All her

life she had dreamed of learning how to bake wonderful treats and goods. She dreamed of owning her own bakery and bringing joy to her community through baking.

When the magical store came about she knew that her wish was about to come true. After years of daydreaming in classes and spending her free time looking in a bakery window she was ready. She stepped right up on the first day to claim her greatest wish. *You are going to be a famous baker who will bake the best treats in all the land.* The next day she tried to bake a cake.

It came out sour, and grainy, and mushy in all of the wrong places. While she was disappointed, she kept trying. She tried again the next day. Then the next and the next. Drowning in her frustration, she went back to the cookie vendor, she got her fortune, and then she tried to bake it again.

Over and over, she kept trying, never letting her spirits lower or her determination. To this day, she was determined to not give up, and to not let the words of others or her own failure stop her from achieving her dream.

“Back again?” The vendor smiled, familiar with her most frequent customer.

The girl tapped her foot on the grass littered with cookie crumbs and held out a fistful of golden coins.

“Yes. I’m trying it again.” She jangled the coins impatiently, wanting to get away from people's whispers.

“Best of luck,” The vendor’s eyes sparkled watching as the girl walked away.

As she walked in her small village, she took her daily route passing the farmers, the library, and at last the bakery. The girl stopped in front of the window and took in the sweet smell of the cakes and cookies. She longingly glanced inside.

*One day. She thought to herself in her head. One day this is going to be me.*

Painstakingly, she looked away knowing her small wooden kitchen awaited her. Arriving in her house, she pulled out her ingredients and did exactly what she'd been doing the previous days, one after another. Except this day was different. She'd been going to the cookie shop for six months straight now and each time she tried she failed. After making the golden batter, she sat and stared at it.

This was her last chance. The cookie vendor was moving to another village. This was her last chance for her little spark of magic to work, one last shot in the dark for her dream to come true.

*Here we go.*

She took a deep breath and then put her cake in the small brown oven. Untying her plaid apron and taking off her mitts she sat and waited. Staring at her reflection in the oven, trying to wipe the smudges of sugar and flour off her face, she smiled sadly. Over the months, her love of baking had never diminished but she was wanted for once, to be the one sharing the good news all across town. She was ready for it to be her turn for a miracle.

“Beep! Beep!” The cake was done.

She opened her eyes and smoothed her hands on a towel. Slowly, she pulled her cake out of the oven and laid it on the table taking in the consistency and finally tasting it. Spitting it out, she felt her heart and dream shattering into a million pieces. With fresh anger and frustration, she stood up. She picked up her cake, stomped past the market, passed the farmers, and back to the cookie stand.

The line was empty and the cookie vendor was sitting down packing up for the last time. She threw the cake down at her feet, raw splashes of batter flying everywhere.

“What is this? My fortune. My cake. My dream. Everyone has gotten their happiness, everyone has gotten everything they wanted so why haven’t I? Where’s my magic?” She exclaimed in anger .

The vendor smiled and began walking, the girl followed behind, struggling to catch up, trying to argue and yell as they went along the grassy path to her house. As the cookie seller started into her kitchen the girl tried to stop her.

“Why are we here? Just fix this, fix me,” She begged the vendor, pulling her away from her pots and pans.

The baker pulled out bowls, cups, and measuring spoons.

“What are those? The girl said in confusion.

Although still angry, she became curious and walked over to the kitchen to stand by the baker. As the cookie vendor measured out sugar, and flour, and vanilla extract she gestured to the girl to help her. As they worked side by side the cake batter was finished. The pair sat at a table in the kitchen waiting for the cake to bake. Finally, the girl heard a familiar beeping in her kitchen. She carelessly waved her hand in the air.

“You get it.”

As the vendor went to get the cake out of the oven. The girl felt a small speckle of hope ignite inside of her again. The feeling that she felt after every cake and every cookie she’d broken

*Maybe this time...*

Looking at the cake, her hope grew even stronger. It was golden, no lumps and spongy. She beamed at the vendor.

“You fixed it! You fixed my wish!

The vendor leaned in closer to the girl whispering in her ear.

“I’ll let you in on a secret. I’ve never granted a wish in this town and I haven’t granted yours,” her eyes twinkled as she confessed.

“But the farmer? The seamstress?”

“The farmer worked extra hard in the field over the summer. The seamstress studied sewing patterns and styling techniques for months to obtain the perfect design of that dress. Everyone and anyone in this village that has had a dream, has done it on their own with their own hard work, just like you are going to do. Sign up for a job at the bakery and work hard to accomplish your dreams.”

She walked out of the kitchen ready to spread the same hope and wonder to another village desperate in need. Leaving the girl with a new understanding of achieving her dream and a giddy excitement in her eyes.

Years later, another little girl stood in front of the bakery window watching a young woman bake a tray of treats. Overwhelmed with customers, and beaming from head to toe was the girl from many years ago. As the little girl walked inside the baker smiled. She remembered her frustration and pain and how she had needed a little extra push to continue working towards her dream. She set a tray of fortune cookies in front of the little girl.

“These cookies will make your greatest wishes come true. Would you like to try one?”