

(4) Sparky's Mystery Fortune

"Hurry up," said Dad. "Mom is going to wonder where we are. And it's her birthday, we should at least meet her at the restaurant on time."

"Okay, I'll be right there," said seven-year-old Emma.

"Me, too," said Jake, her older brother. "Hey, Emma, lock the back gate so the puppy can't get out. We'll only be gone for an hour or two. It's nice outside. He'll enjoy the fall air and sunshine."

"Okay," said Emma.

Every year for Mom's birthday, the Mason family headed for their favorite Chinese restaurant. It was called the Golden Dragon. Emma loved the fried noodles, and Jake liked the mixed Chinese vegetables. Mom and Dad always ordered Chinese egg omelette.

"Just in time," said Mom, as Dad and the children ran breathlessly into the restaurant.

Soon, the family was seated, singing Happy Birthday to Mom. She opened her gifts, and everyone ordered their favorite dishes.

"Oh, that was delicious," said Emma.

"I'm stuffed. But I always have room for a fortune cookie. Besides, it's fun to read the fortune."

Mom, the birthday girl, opened her cookie first. It read: You will help solve a mystery. "Well, how do they know that?" asked Mom, smiling.

Dad opened his cookie next. It read: What looks like the right road may not be. "I like to drive," said Dad, laughing.

Jake opened his fortune cookie next. It said: You will lose something you care about. "I hope it's not my skateboard," he said.

Then Emma opened up her cookie. The message inside said: Trees keep secrets under their leaves. "Trees don't have secrets," Emma laughed.

"Let's get one for Sparky so we can find out his fortune," said Jake.

"Sure," said Dad. "After all, he's a member of our family now." Jake asked for another fortune cookie when he asked for a leftover container. Jake mixed the leftovers together while Emma opened Sparky's cookie. It read: Those around you will be busy while you are at rest.

"I wonder what that means." thought Emma. She stuffed all the fortunes in her pocket.

As soon as the family got home, they discovered Sparky was missing. Emma had a sick feeling in her stomach. Emma knew it was her fault. She had forgotten to lock the back gate. The family began to search everywhere they thought the puppy might go. Mom called all the neighbors. Dad drove around in the family car. Jake rode his skateboard to the park. But, after an hour, they hadn't found the puppy.

"Where is he?" said Emma sadly. Then Emma remembered the fortunes in her pocket. She opened the papers and read them again. One fortune caught her attention: Trees keep secrets under their leaves. "Wait a minute. I think I know where to find him!" Emma shouted. She ran around to the back of the house. Under a pile of leaves beneath the maple tree, Sparky was curled up, fast asleep.

"There you are," said Emma, as she hugged the puppy. "I guess there are secrets under tree leaves. Well, it doesn't really matter. Finding you is the very best fortune of all!"