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Fortune House: Open for Business

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Fortune House: Open for Business

WenQing Liu

A red and blue neon sign beams through the roads that read "Open." Families shop for groceries, but kids are running around and mothers are trying to tame their kids in a

busy plaza. Suspicious men are smoking at the back of the plaza as the cigarette smoke waifs its way through thin air. Finally, a small restaurant sandwiched between a donut shop and a hair salon run by different families, but with similar backgrounds. In the restaurant, fumes of hot fire, spice, and oils with a hint of sweetness fill the atmosphere as customers walk in. The waitress is running around picking up phone calls, taking orders, and packing take-out food all while speaking the little English she knows to the best of her ability. In the back, the chef splashes oil into the wok as the fire is roaring back to his face. With his other hand, he tosses barbecue pork, cubed carrot, and frozen peas, flipping the heavy metal wok with one hand and letting it bounce back and forth with the fire. He is preparing three dishes all at once. Fire and metal clash, and people chatter all together as two kids just quietly sit behind the register, bored out of their minds. The kids are a nuisance to their mother as she is taking an order on the phone. The mother, in response to the chaos, throws a quick glare to the kids to be aware of their misbehavior. As the busy day finally start to settle down, the kids are asked to start on their daily tasks. They fold napkins, place clean cups back on to the racks, and pre-pack bags for take-out orders. Later on, they also answer the phone for take-out orders and package food just as their mother did. Growing up in a restaurant became their childhood, they have little memory of being at home. The kids were sent right to the restaurant after school rather than a daycare. This is a life of Chinese American children when their parents own a restaurant. The restaurant is their life.

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