

The Windswept Journal

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Dog 101

Murphy writes:

I'm thinking about my future again, despite the admonition I get from the two old folks I live with that I won't have a future if I don't learn to behave myself.

Sitting around bored all day may be one reason I'm often in trouble. When the highlight of our day is the arrival of the mail lady and the latest flyer from Sam's Club, I'm left with most of the hours to lay around and think. Thinking always gets me in trouble.

Some day I will want to get out from under all the rules and regulations of Himself and his household and strike out on my own. The new freedom will be exhilarating, but I'll have to support myself. I can't expect the old dude now taking my dictation to continue to pay for my upkeep and the world travel I expect after leaving his home.

I'll need a responsible job ... one that pays well and provides top notch benefits such as a cute little secretary of an esteemed breed. Maybe a Collie for good looks, or a Chesapeake if I locate near the water. Of course, a big Newfoundland would be comforting on cold winter nights. And a German Shepherd would tear the heart out of anyone who threatened. But come to think of it, a diminutive Chihuahua might add a little Latin zing to my life.

As usual, I'm ahead of myself. Before I spend a lot of time contemplating what I want in life, I need to get ready for today's world of win or lose, triumph or heartbreak, Winner's Circle or Circle K.

Part of one's preparation for a worthwhile life is of course a proper education. I've read that college provides ample opportunity for eager-beaver students to witness adult men and women ... the faculty ... make a comfortable living by doing mostly nothing. But they do it

with style.

"I'm thinking I'd like to do my undergraduate work at MIT," I told Himself, "and then pursue my PhD and ongoing academic glory at Stanford and maybe wind up on the faculty of Princeton."

He looked down at his feet.

"We have possibly enough money set aside to send you to typewriter repair school."

"What's a typewriter?"

"They were used before personal computers. You can buy one real cheap today. You can learn to fix them for even less."

I could foresee an awkward moment some day in the future when my Curriculum Vitae was read off at the Nobel Prize ceremony and my only entry was Phil's Typewriter School.

"You have no need for a technical or professional education," Himself said.

"Why not? Let each become all that he is capable of being."

"Because no one is going to hire a university trained dog as a junior executive to analyze insurance forms."

"You're probably right," I said "But I was kind of hoping I could talk Home Depot into hiring me as an appliance salesman. I'm certainly personable."

"But Murphy," he said, "the only person who understands you is me."

"We haven't tried Berlitz yet," I said.

"It may take more than that," said the old man.

"But once I learn to talk like you and Herself, there's no limit to my potential. I could even become a TV Weatherman."

"So you can tell people who never go outside it will rain tomorrow?"

"Well, yeah ..."

"For thirty years, every night. 'Temperatures moderating over the delta, periods of rain likely ...'"

I had to admit it. "That does sound pretty boring."

"Anyway," said Himself, "you do have a few talents that might be put to use. Maybe as a Nanny for a suburban family."

"I don't like most of the children I've met." I said. "If I could tie them up and hide them in the cellar that might work for me."

"Or how about a therapy dog ..." he said, his voice trailing off as if he was sorry he

mentioned it.

“I think people just need to get over it,” I said.

“Murphy, perhaps you need an education in the humanities that is tailored especially for anyone who is not intellectually inquisitive. A plan for someone who will navigate through life without a great deal of precision.”

“Where could I go to school for that?” I asked.

“Right here. You needn’t leave home.”

“You mean a correspondence school?”

“Not exactly,” he said, “although much like it.”

“I don’t know. I was kind of looking forward to all those campus activities I’ve read about. Those that tickle a young man’s fancy and do just about the same for a dog.”

“You mean “booze, broads and mini Coopers?” he said.

“No, I meant sleeping late, skipping housework and being irresponsible.”

“Yes,” he said. “You’d be good at that. Do you like Chinese?”

“You know I like any kind of food. Or garbage.”

“I think,” he said, “everything in your universe, everything you need to know, you will find on the paper slips found inside fortune cookies.”

“Really?”

“Yes, listen to this gem: “A smile is your passport into the hearts of others.”

“That’s pretty astute,” I said.

“And this one: “Change can hurt, but it leads a path to something better.”

“Wow,” I said. “I’d sure like to be able to quote sayings like that.”

“I propose we have take-out two or three times each week and you can memorize your fortune cookie lesson each time you eat the cookie.”

“And that’s a proper substitute for classes, books, term papers and final exams?”

“Yes, for you it is,” he said

“What about Beer Brawls, fraternity smokers and all night beach parties?”

Himself raised his eyes heavenward and sighed.

“No,” he said. “You’ll be too busy with your studies.”

So I feel a lot better, now that I have

education plans in place. I’m to be taught by the finest scholars of the current dynasty, the People’s Republic of China. I have to hand it to the old man. He almost always has a solution for any problem.

A couple of my friends outside the fence scoffed at the plan to educate me with Fortune Cookies. Billerica the Boxer asked why not just memorize a Chinese restaurant menu.

“Because,” I told her, “if asked about the cause of modern mankind’s social dilemma, I certainly would not want to answer “General Tso’s Chicken.”

Hudson, the Airdale Terrier, said if I pursue my Fortune Cookie degree, I had better watch my triglyceride levels more closely .

And so today, for lunch we went down to Mr. Chow Wu’s take-out:

Chow’s Hot Chow Wet Drinks Our Specialty All Food Must Go.

I got the Sweet and Sour Pork and the first lesson of my academic career. I cracked open the cookie and rolled out the slip of paper. I’ll share it with you since it may apply more to you than me.

Your shoes will make you happy today

I should have it framed and hung in the corner of the kitchen where I do my homework. Maybe I’ll use it someday in the opening of my Nobel acceptance speech.

<http://www.fortunecookiemessage.com/archive.php>

Paws are not very useful for holding and writing with a pen or pencil, so I dictated this to my man-servant here ... the old fellow who insists he owns me like some kind of pet.

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