

# Red Strings

For as long as I can remember, I have always seen red strings following every person. Back in kindergarten, my parents would hold my hands and keep me close. They had lost count of the number of times I had slipped out of their sights and chased after what seemed like imaginary balloons floating around in the sky.

I recall those memories vividly. I was chasing after the clouds of vermillion yarn.

Everyone had a string; it was tied to the pinky of their right hand. The only difference was that some floated like kites in the azure sky, chasing after another person whilst others seemed severed and dragged along like iron shackles.

When I first asked my parents what they were, my parents shrugged it off as a figment of my imagination; a child's make believe. Time after time, I bugged them with questions about the cherry-red twine that lined the sky and littered the floor, and as the days passed – their faces would pale with every mention of the maleficent ruby threads.

As I grew older, I began to understand that these strings were things that only I could see. My curiosity peaked and I tried researching into this phenomenon that plagued me. Several sleepless nights were spent scouring the internet for even the tiniest tidbit of information.

Alas, the outcome of my investigations resulted in a dead-end with nothing to show for it, only vague urban legends of how a man and woman who were connected were meant to be soulmates.

Instead, another worry had taken root. Why is there no red string on my pinky? Through the years, I was never bothered that I didn't have one, yet the recent discovery put my imagination on overdrive as the infinite possibilities ran amok within my mind. Perhaps I was destined for a lonely fate.

Exhausted and dejected, I took a breather and went for a stroll around the void deck of my block. It was there that I met the resident fortune teller. He was set-up at the common area where he played Chinese chess with those of his generation. The aunties of my estate crowned him as the greatest clairvoyant of our time, claiming that the numbers he picked would certainly appear on that night's TOTO draw. I was skeptical of course.

The white bearded elder smiled at me and gestured for me to join him. He was dressed in a stained tattered monk robe and seemed more like a common pauper, begging for alms on the street, rather than a sage of divine wisdom steeped in deep mysticism. The seemingly-wise old man stared hard at my facial features, particularly at my glabella, as if there were words printed on my face and stroked his beard in contemplation.

Just as I was about to share the troubled tale of my life, the fortune teller shushed me as he put his boney finger to my lips.

The seer remained silent. He raised his thin arms and chanted what sounded like a verse from the sutras and nimbly brought his thumbs to meet his fingers, as though doing a tectonic finger dance while staring at the cream ceiling of the void deck.

When he was done with his finger dance, a glint beamed in his listless grey eyes and he recited an eastern myth, as if delivering a prophecy from the heavens.

“Red threads of fate, tie two who were meant to be. Worry not for yourself, as fate has plans for you.”

The last thing I could remember was the cheeky grin of the old prophet and a flash of a golden tooth before he vanished, as if he had never been there. I was put into an immediate trance and froze in place. If not for the faint pounding of my heartbeat, one could have mistaken me for The Thinker, as I sat deathly still.

In truth I was struck by an epiphany. Much like how Taoists sought “the Way”, I had found mine; to unite lost lovers of our earthly domain. By virtue of my “red-string vision” I could bring together even the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl.

In my later years, I would be lauded as the greatest matchmaker that humanity had ever seen, to go as far as being bestowed the title of “Cupid”. I would establish the world’s greatest matchmaking service, “Cupid’s Arrow”, helping destined pairs connect, all around the globe. The number of blissful couples I would bring together would be innumerable. Sadly, the same could be said for the number of forlorn souls that would seek my counsel, ones who’s other half could no longer be found in the world of the living.

I rose from my seat and sauntered home, in rumination of my recent divination. The mystery of the red strings that have been haunting me since birth had been solved. Along with it came

a new destiny that I embraced. Even the enigma of my own string seemed to be trivial after the augury from the old vagrant.

Amidst my musings, I collided, head-first, with a stranger. The recoil from the impact was strong enough to knock both of us, butt-first, to the ground as onlookers giggled at the hilarious scene before them. Rubbing my head and winching from our cranial contact, I apologized profusely as I recovered from the unintentional run-in.

I stood up and offered a hand to the stranger and I received a right hand, with a pinky free of the scarlet strand.

As if rehearsed with the stranger,

“Where’s your red string?!”