

Fortune

by Irina Richards

THIS MONTH, WE'RE featuring a complete short story written and drawn by Sweatdrop member Irina Richards, who originally penned the tale as an entry to the Eagle Awards. Richards is the author of *Chemical Blue* and a contributor to *Telling Tales*, both Sweatdrop publications.

We asked Richards what she thought about the importance of awards like the Eagles for manga artists. "As with any competition, the Eagle Awards is a good opportunity for up-and-coming artists to showcase their work and move up a level," she told us. "Although the conditions are quite restrictive, it should attract more people who are into comicking in general – not just into manga."

Given the distinctive fortune cookie theme, we asked Richards to explain what inspired her choice for the story. "Fortune was partly inspired by my own experience whilst teaching at a language school, and partly by the concept of fate and the fact that nothing is coincidental – everything we do, however small and random, makes an impact on the rest of our life. The story was thought up a while ago, and I kept it in my 'ideas bank' and waited for a suitable format to put it into."

Short stories can be challenging in any medium, so we asked Richards just how difficult it was to fit her idea into ten pages. "Shorter stories are always a challenge for me – I think my natural storytelling style is quite spaced-out, dwelling on details and emotions, so I had to do some thorough planning to make sure the main parts of the story are still there. A lot of things in the story are just hinted at, such as Ben's past, and a broken relationship."

Finally, we asked Richards what projects she was currently working on. "I have been working on an instructional book, together with four other artists, for a few months now," Richards said. "I also currently do a lot of educational work, helping young people learn more about manga."

Turn the page now and enjoy Richards' fantastic short story – and don't forget that you can pick up more of her work at www.sweatdrop.com.

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