

## Chinese Lights And Coconut Snowflakes

It started at a holiday cocktail party in Tijuana. I was running a bit early, so I waited in a parked car on the side of the road seesawing a 40-oz Corona Familiar and breathing through my scarf to stay warm. After finishing the 40-ouncer, I arrived at the party super cold and a bit tipsy.

A stylish, chain-smoking and fabulous looking young couple greeted me as I walked through the door.

“We were just discussing the wonderful Chinese Lights.”

“Chinese Lights?” I asked.

“You know, you know... amazing colors, so popular these small lights... they come from China. We love them, and they are absolutely EVERYWHERE.”

“Sure, sure, yeah, I know!” I exclaimed, feigning understanding and walking on, assuming the “Chinese Lights” were some hot new lamp for the living room that I MUST have.

The next day back in Los Angeles, I started to look for the new must-have “Chinese Lights.” First stop Chinatown. I parked the car at a meter on Hill Street and stepped in a shop - Golden Eagle Gift and Souvenir. It had a neon sign and colorful lanterns in the window. I navigated through a sea of orange and red Chinese lanterns, super tacky framed pictures of dizzyingly bright changing seascapes, and some plastic blow-up lounge chairs. All the while my eyes peeled wide open searching for the “Chinese Lights.”

After looking through 8 gift shops and a two-story Chinatown Mall for the “Chinese Lights,” I was famished, and I stopped at the Empress Pavilion for a plate of dumplings. I had a great time in Chinatown that morning, but left empty-handed, no closer to the “Chinese Lights.”

Shot down and tired, I went home for a nap. As I slept, I had the wildest vision. In the vision, the Ebenezer Scrooge Ghost of Christmas Present visited me. I thought this was strange because I don't fancy myself the Scroogy type. He had two small children under his cape just like in the Dickens story. He reminded me to fear “Ignorance” and “Want” and to drop my stupid search for the “Chinese Lights.”

Now that's the pot calling the kettle black, I thought. What's so Scroogy about wanting a hot new lamp for the living room? But anyway, I agreed because it WAS the holiday season, and I figured he knew more on the topic than I. When my nap came to its natural conclusion, I greeted the evening on the porch with a wonderful glass of eggnog.

And that's when I saw them. I saw all of them. Up and down the street. They were hanging from positively every house on the block. The super stylish couple from Tijuana was right. Chinese Lights were EVERYWHERE and all around. Decorating with Chinese Lights, it seemed, had become a holiday ritual to all. Fabulously adorned neighborhood yards glowed with fantastic holiday tableaux thanks to the Chinese Lights.