



Kathy

Chapter 20

The Fortune-teller

Spring, 1966

Boys, if you are ever with your girlfriend and a fortune-teller stops you and offers to tell your girl's future, ignore the fortune-teller and keep walking. Nothing good can come from this. Here's what happened.

Several days after the Prom, Kathy and I headed to a party rental company on Larimer Street in downtown Denver to return rented Japanese lanterns and other items we had used to decorate the gym for Prom. Larimer Street wasn't the charming shopping and dining destination it is now. Back then; it was skid row and a threatening place for a high school junior wearing his letter jacket and his pretty girlfriend in a short skirt. We parked the car in a lot and headed to the rental company. We did our best to ignore the panhandlers with their outstretched arms and upturned palms and their demands for spare change. Some whistled at Kathy, and their pleas turned to taunts as we passed without handing out change. I told her to keep walking.

A block later, we came upon a decrepit storefront. A crudely painted sign advertised fortunetelling, hexes, and love potions. More hand-scrawled promises to cure ills, extract revenge, and contact long-dead loved ones covered the windows and door. An old woman, wearing a long brown skirt and a red and blue patterned blouse, stepped in front of us. Her head was wrapped in something resembling a turban, and strings of shiny beads spilled down her stained front. Smearred red lipstick covered her lips and spread toward her chin; bright pink rouge splotches covered her weathered cheeks. A half-smoked, hand-rolled cigarette hung from her lips. We stopped, looking at her and not quite sure what to do next.

"Fortune, sweetie?" she asked Kathy. "I read minds and I know what the future will bring for you. Don't you want to know what's coming?"

"I'm not sure," Kathy answered looking at me. "Maybe."

"My cards will tell you what lies ahead"

Kathy looked at me.

Sensing that Kathy wanted to have her fortune read, I asked the old crone how much she charged. She pulled me aside and whispered, "Five dollars." That doesn't seem like much today, but five dollars in 1966 would be nearly forty dollars today. I didn't have that much. I had spent all my money taking Kathy out to dinner before the Prom. "Give me five dollars!" she whispered again and then added in voice that Kathy couldn't hear, "I'll make it good for you. You won't be sorry."

“I don’t have five dollars!” I hissed in return. “I’ll give you two.” That seemed like plenty for a fortune reading to me.

“You rich boys always have five dollars,” she argued. “Don’t get cheap with me! You’ll be sorry!”

I told her again that I didn’t have five. “Two’s all you’re gonna get!”

“Give it to me!” she snarled. I took two dollars from my billfold and she snatched it away. She turned back to Kathy and led her into the dingy building. As they entered, the old woman looked back at me and glared. I sat on the stoop and waited. I could hear cards being shuffled in the background.

About twenty minutes later, Kathy emerged from the store. Her face was red and she was quite upset. As we walked to the rental store, I asked her what the old woman told her.

“She said I was going to go to college, meet a good man, get married and have children.”

“That sounds good,” I replied.

“Yes, but then she said I should break up with you.”

“What?” I gasped.

“She said you aren’t good. All you want to do is get in my pants,” Kathy went on, starting to cry.

I was amazed! The old woman really could read minds! But I didn’t tell Kathy that. “That’s not true!” I lied, pulling her close. Well, it wasn’t a total lie. I was interested in Kathy’s pants, but that wasn’t all. I liked many things about her, her sense of humor, athletic ability, tenderness, smile, and more. I was starting to like her a lot. We sat down on the steps to an abandoned building and I told her how the old gypsy had demanded five dollars for the fortune telling, but I only had two. “She told you that because she was mad at me for not giving her five.” I explained.

“Really?” she asked, looking at me and wanting to believe what I said.

“Really!” I answered. She thought for a minute, then hugged me.

Later, I gave the situation some thought. Even if I had given the old hag five dollars, it wouldn’t have improved my chances of gaining entry to Kathy’s pants. Kathy was a good girl, and anything the old woman might have said would not have improved my odds.