

# CASSIE'S CURSE

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

- CASSIE (F)                      Cassandra has been alive for thousands of years, cursed to know the future but that no one will believe any prediction she makes. She is weary as only those cursed by the gods can be.
- BARTENDER (F)                 A pretty straightforward bartender, she just wants to get through the night without having to write up any kind of incident report.
- JENNIFER (F)                 A simple woman of nearly any personality who is out on a date with a reasonably recently-found boyfriend.
- ALEX (M)                        A simple man of nearly any personality, out with a woman who he thinks he cares about, but will soon get sick of.
- APOLLO (M)                    The Greek god of prophecy, and the one who (supposedly) cursed Cassandra because she spurned his sexual advances.

## SETTING

Modern day in a simple bar (or restaurant, if one renames “Bartender” to “Waitress”).

SCENE

*(Cassie is sitting at a table in a bar. A few tables over, a man and a woman are flirting with each other. She watches them, shaking her head. She does not notice a man in the shadows at the back of the bar. After a few moments, the bartender enters, carrying a plate of food.)*

CASSIE

*(Calmly...)*

Oh shit.

*(Cassie gets up and rushes toward the bartender. As she gets close, the bartender trips. Cassie manages to catch the plate of food, but a drink spills to the floor.)*

BARTENDER

I'm so sorry ab— Oh, good catch there! I'll go get you another drink.

CASSIE

I guess we can't get to the third one without going through the first two.

BARTENDER

Let me just clean th— What was that?

CASSIE

I said... You know what? Never mind. It's fine.

BARTENDER

So you don't want the drink?

CASSIE

No, I do. I'm just not feeling particularly patient, that's all.

BARTENDER

I said I was sorry. It was an accident.

CASSIE

I know. I don't even mind waiting for the second one, but I'm going to be really thirsty by the time you spill that one and get the third.

BARTENDER

*(Bartender shakes her head, turning away and muttering...)*

Bitch much?

*(Cassie heads back to her table. Just as she starts to eat, there is a loud laugh from the woman at the other table.)*

JENNIFER

I would not!

ALEX

You so would.

JENNIFER

No one would do that.

ALEX

Yes, they would. You would!

JENNIFER

*(Calling out to Cassie...)*

Excuse me. Would you settle a debate for us?

*(Before Cassie can say 'no'...)*

If someone wrote a song for you, would you laugh at it?

CASSIE

No.

JENNIFER

*(To Alex...)*

Of course not. There? See? No one—

CASSIE

But you will.

ALEX

See??

JENNIFER

I definitely would not!

CASSIE

Yes you will, but don't worry. He's gonna leave you in a few weeks, so it won't really matter anyway.

*(Alex sputters his drink at this...)*

ALEX AND JENNIFER

What?!

ALEX

Why would you say something like that?

*(Bartender enters, carrying a replacement drink towards Cassie.)*

CASSIE

It's gonna happen. He's going to—

ALEX

*(Turning to Jennifer...)*

I'm not gonna leave you, babe.

JENNIFER

I know, hon.

ALEX

That's crazy.

JENNIFER

I know.

*(They shake their heads dismissively at Cassie, returning to their table just as the bartender slips on the wet floor. She manages to regain her balance, but the second drink slips out of her hand. She stares at the dropped second drink, and then over at Cassie, who shrugs and shakes her head. The bartender looks down at the drink again, then back at Cassie. Finally, she comes over to her.)*

BARTENDER

You said that would happen.

Yep.

CASSIE

How'd you know?

BARTENDER

I can see the future.

CASSIE

Right. Seriously, how'd you know?

BARTENDER

I told you.

CASSIE

BARTENDER  
*(Looking around for some kind of tripwire...)*  
Is this some kind of prank? You put something on the ground that—

CASSIE  
*(Ultimately bored...)*  
No prank. I told you. I see the future.

BARTENDER  
Don't give me that—

BARTENDER AND CASSIE  
*(Bartender angry, Cassie bored...)*  
—bullshit. I want to know how you knew!

*(There's a long pause, as the bartender looks at Cassie in anger and frustration, then...)*

CASSIE  
Can I just get my drink?

BARTENDER  
Whatever.

*(Bartender storms off. Cassie just sighs. The man from the back approaches, the hood of a hooded sweatshirt pulled up over his head.)*

APOLLO

This seat taken?

*(Cassie looks confused, wondering who this is and why she has no future vision of him. Eventually she shakes her head.)*

May I?

CASSIE

I guess. Who are you? *What* are you?

*(Apollo laughs, taking a seat.)*

What?

APOLLO

You seem kinda down. What's the matter?

CASSIE

Ha. How much time have you got?

APOLLO

Oh, I have lots of time. All the time in the world, one might say.

CASSIE

What *are* you?

APOLLO

You seem to have quite a lot of insight into things. That seems like it would be a useful talent.

CASSIE

Less than you might think.

APOLLO

Knowing tomorrow's lottery numbers today? Must make you quite the popular lady.

CASSIE

Oh, is that what this is about. Looking to beat the odds, are you?

APOLLO

Would you help me if I were?

CASSIE

Normally not, but a few more cryptic evasions, and I just might.

APOLLO

You say that like you're offering me a slap in the face.

CASSIE

Looks like I'm not the only insightful one at the table. Good for you.

*(Apollo just smiles at her.)*

I could tell you the numbers, yes. But if I do, you won't believe me. *(Bored, explaining what she has explained for centuries...)* Then the day after tomorrow, you'll get upset at yourself. And then you'll decide that it's better to get upset at me.

APOLLO

Wow. That must suck.

CASSIE

Let me give you a piece of advice.

APOLLO

Please.

CASSIE

Be careful what you wish for. We're just toys for the gods. And the gods, they're just puppets of Irony.

APOLLO

I see.

CASSIE

In the end, it doesn't bode well for the average Jane on the street.

APOLLO

What an interesting observation.

CASSIE

I've had a few years to dwell on it.

APOLLO

You carry them well. You don't look a day over thirty-five hundred.



*(Cassie's head whips around to stare at Apollo. She reaches out and pulls back his hood.)*

CASSIE

Apollo. I should have known.

APOLLO

The centuries must have clouded your mind, Cassandra. Who else could have eluded your omniscience but the one who gifted it to you?

CASSIE

Gift? Gift!? That's what you call this curse?

APOLLO

Don't get belligerent at me. You asked for it. Begged, as I recall.

CASSIE

To see the future, yes. I did that. But I'm not the one who... *(Takes a breath.)*  
What do you want, Apollo? You didn't need to take form to watch me suffer.

APOLLO

No. No, I didn't.

CASSIE

What do you want? You want to fuck? Fine. Let's fuck.

APOLLO

I didn't curse you, Cassandra. I know you *think* I did. I know you thought that I—

CASSIE

What... do... you... want?

APOLLO

The question is, what do *you* want?

CASSIE

Since when is that the question?

*(Apollo just stares at her.)*

Millenia of praying for some release... an iota of mercy... begging for death. And now, out of nowhere, you sit your ass at my table like some Hellenic Santa Claus and say "what do you want for Christmas, baby Cassandra?" What the hell?!

APOLLO  
*(Getting up...)*

Never mind, then. I'll just—

CASSIE

Wait!

*(She pulls him back to the table.)*

Wait. I'm sorry. I just... I didn't exactly expect to "hear from you again", after all this time. And when you asked me what I wanted like some reformed alcoholic trying to make his way through step nine, I just... You're not actually a reformed—

APOLLO

No.

CASSIE

Dionysus didn't—

APOLLO

No.

*(Cassie takes a moment to calm down, to study Apollo.)*

CASSIE  
*(Calm now.)*

So what *do* you want?

APOLLO

As I said, the question is about what you want.

CASSIE

You know what I want.

APOLLO

Tell me anyway.

CASSIE

I want to touch the world again. I want an end to this endless life of meaningless *watching* – no surprises, no chance to make a difference, just empty... existence.

APOLLO

You wanted to see everything.

CASSIE

I wanted to help people.

APOLLO

People can't be helped by knowing the future.

CASSIE

So it seems.

APOLLO

Otherwise there wouldn't be any—

CASSIE

I know I know I know! *(Then calm.)* I get it. People need to take responsibility.

*(Apollo nods with a satisfied smile.)*

What's that stupid grin for?

*(Apollo stands.)*

What?

APOLLO

I meant what I said.

CASSIE

You said a lot of things.

APOLLO

I didn't curse you.

CASSIE

Well I sure as hell didn't.

APOLLO

*(The smile drops...)*

Oh?

*(Realizing that she actually doesn't quite understand yet, Apollo sits back down.)*

Are you really so sure?

CASSIE

What's that supposed to mean?

APOLLO

Do you remember what I said when you asked for the gift of prophecy?

CASSIE

You said no.

APOLLO

I *said* that the ability to see the future is not a gift for you.

CASSIE

Right, like I sa— I see.

APOLLO

Funny turn of phrase.

CASSIE

Excuse me if I don't laugh.

APOLLO

I tried to warn you.

CASSIE

Not very hard. I thought... I thought you were saying I wasn't permitted to have the sight.

APOLLO

I know. But some things cannot be understood from explanation. You would never have believed me.

CASSIE

I might have.

APOLLO

Have you learned nothing these past millennia?

CASSIE

If you had just explained that—

APOLLO

A mortal with a score of years behind her, understanding the intrinsic link between uncertainty and free will?

CASSIE

People believed *your* prophecies.

APOLLO

Really? Oedipus's father believed me, did he?

CASSIE

At least some people did.

APOLLO

Some, yes. But then I told the prophecies better than you did.

*(Cassie gives him a dirty look.)*

I am a god, after all.

CASSIE

You're an asshole, is what you are.

APOLLO

Meh. I have my moments. But more to the point, as a god it doesn't get under my skin when some sniveling mortal doesn't accept their fate.

CASSIE

It's amazing that anyone ever went to you at all.

APOLLO

Some people are so afraid of the unknown, they're willing to trade everything of any consequence to avoid it.

CASSIE

There's a comfort in knowing. You must appreciate that better than anyone.

APOLLO

It's like you said a moment ago. The comfort's in abdicating responsibility. But without uncertainty, there is no life, no value. Just mechanism. Tell me, Cassandra. How many thousands of years did it take for you to recognize that you can only change your future if you haven't already determined what it will be?

CASSIE

The *curse* of prophecy. That's what it *should* be called.

APOLLO

Sometimes it is. Are you ready to let it go?

CASSIE

What do you think?

*(Apollo makes a mystic gesture, or perhaps removes something iconic of his from her, like a harp earring, a raven tattoo, or whatever. Cassie remains seated, stunned as Apollo puts his hood back up over his head, and disappears in a shadow on the stage, and then gone completely.)*

*(As Apollo is vanishing, Alex gets up and takes empty glasses over to the bartender. A moment later, Jennifer comes over to Cassie.)*

JENNIFER

Why is he going to leave me? Will it be something I do, or...?

CASSIE

I... *(Cassie breathes a huge sigh of release and smiles broadly.)* I don't know.

*(Lights out)*