

THE UNFORTUNATE TELLER

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

FRIEND

A friend of a fortune teller who is currently unavailable. Smart, quick-thinking, but not very familiar with the fortune-telling business.

CUSTOMER

A simple, one might even say gullible, person looking for a reading.

SCENE

(It is a simple fortune teller's stall or shop. There is a table with chairs on either side, and some kind of furniture in which stuff could be stowed. The fortune teller's friend is on the phone with her.)

FRIEND

No. No, I don't... *(Pause...)* Sure I have *seen* yo-- *(Pause...)* Yes, but that doesn't me-- *(Pause...)* Look, I'm just not comfortable *(Pause...)* I know it's your livelihood, but... *(Pause...)* Fine. Where's the deck? *(Pause...)* Hold on. *(Friend looks around, but can't find it.)* It's not there. *(Pause...)* No, it's not. I looked. *(Pause...)* Okay, hold on again. *(Friend looks in a new place, and finds a deck.)* Yeah, I found it... *(Looks at deck, and noticed there is something weird.)* Is this a professional deck? *(Pause...)* Your kids? You had your kids make a deck of tarot cards? How do your kids even know... *(Pause...)* You can't just make a new—

(Friend freezes as Customer enters.)

CUSTOMER

I'm looking for Madam Tourmalaine?

FRIEND

(Into the phone, hushed and desperate...)

A customer just walked in. (Brief pause...) No. *(Brief pause...)* No I-- *(Brief pause...)* I won't-- *(Brief pause...)* They won't-- *(Brief pause...)* Fine.

(Hanging up, and turning to Customer...)

Hello.

CUSTOMER

Where's Madam Tourmalaine?

FRIEND

(In an overly dramatic voice, and regardless of friend gender...)

I'm Madam Tourmalaine.

CUSTOMER

You're Madam—

FRIEND

Oh, oh! The spirits are speaking! They are speaking to me! They are saying that you don't believe that I am Madam Tourmalaine!

CUSTOMER

Well, I—

FRIEND

I am sensing that you have come here to have your fortune told!

CUSTOMER

(Not expecting this...)

Yes. How did you know?

FRIEND

(Looks at Customer with a "Seriously? This is a mystery to you?" expression.)

It's a gift. Here. Sit, sit. Take off your aura and make yourself comfortable.

(Customer looks confused at how to do that, and hesitates. Friend makes strange aura-dispersing gestures, and guides Customer to sit. Friend sits opposite.)

Now I must tell you something, and it is very important. Are you listening?

CUSTOMER

Yes?

FRIEND

A reading costs twenty dollars. And it must be paid in advance.

CUSTOMER

In advance? Why's that?

FRIEND

Oh! Oh! Oh oh oh! The spirits do not wish to be questioned! They want to be paid in advance!

CUSTOMER

Uh, okay. Here. *(Hands over a twenty.)*

FRIEND

(Takes the money, and then looks again at the tarot deck, a touch of angst visible.)

Alrighty roo, then. Er... Ahhh, the spirits are restless. Here. *(Takes cards out of box.)* Here we are. Now... uh... pick a card. Any card.

CUSTOMER

Is this really how this works?

FRIEND

This is how they tell fortunes in... India.

CUSTOMER

I didn't know Tarot cards came from India.

FRIEND

Oh yes. Now pick a card.

(Customer picks a card.)

And what is the card that has chosen you?

CUSTOMER

It looks like the eight of... penguins. Is that—

FRIEND

A very auspicious starting card, the eight of penguins. It indicates... great misfortune, followed by... a lot of swimming. Are you an athlete?

CUSTOMER

Well, I like to stay in shape.

FRIEND

By swimming?

CUSTOMER

Raquetball.

FRIEND

In a pool?

CUSTOMER

Nooo.

At a gym?

FRIEND

Yes, as a matter of fact—

CUSTOMER

A gym with a pool?

FRIEND

Well, no—

CUSTOMER

I sense that it is a gym that has a water fountain.

FRIEND

As a matter of fact—

CUSTOMER

And do you float off the ground when you are there?

FRIEND

No!

CUSTOMER

That explains the penguins. (*Lays some cards out on the table, and starts to turn them over.*) Alright, let's see what your future holds. Six of kittens... Four of... wontons?

FRIEND

I... think it's a boat.

CUSTOMER

Ahh, yes, four of boats. A very promising card... uh... matey. (*Continues flipping cards.*) Nine of cheese. Oh. Oh, dear. Look at that. We've flipped over... The Hermit!

FRIEND

Actually, it says Hermit Crab.

CUSTOMER

It does not.

FRIEND

It does. Look. Here.

CUSTOMER

FRIEND

So it does. Oh, friend, you are lucky indeed. The hermit crab is a sign... that you will... soon... be moving into a bigger house. Does that... sound like something that makes sense?

CUSTOMER

Well, I've been living with a friend for a while...

FRIEND

Yes, I know.

CUSTOMER

You did? How?

FRIEND

Because you drew the nine of cheese, of course. Now let us see what will happen when you move into your new house. (*Flips a card.*) Ah ha! The Lovers. You and a very close friend wi—

CUSTOMER

Louvers.

FRIEND

Sorry?

CUSTOMER

The card. It says "The Louvers".

FRIEND

Yes. Yes, I know. As I was saying, you and a very close friend will purchase some venetian blinds for your new home.

CUSTOMER

Why is there a picture of... Is that Elmo? What is he doing to Grov—

FRIEND

(Quickly flipping over a card and placing it on top of the other while saying...)

And the blinds will clearly be influenced by... What the hell is that?

CUSTOMER

A cotton ball?

FRIEND

A green cotton ball? No, maybe it's... Can you read that?

CUSTOMER

I think it says... *(finally able to make it out...)* "The Booger".

FRIEND

(Stunned in confusion, then recovering.)

Right. Yes. The Booger. Another very auspicious card.

CUSTOMER

What does it mean?

FRIEND

It could mean a great many things. But covering up The Louvers as it does means... that... you will... you will... invite a lot of children over.

CUSTOMER

Really??

FRIEND

And that you should clean up very, *very* thoroughly when they leave.

CUSTOMER

That's an oddly specific reading.

FRIEND

I like to stay away from generalities.

CUSTOMER

You're doing a great job so far.

FRIEND

I try. Now, this last card... It is perhaps the most important card of all, as the interpretation of all the other cards really hinges on this one. Trust me. It's a big deal. This... This is the make or break card. If it comes up as the... uh... *(Then mumbling, trying to remember the name of any tarot card her can break to mind...)* the... the magic dude, what is it called... the magistrate-- Magician! The Magician! Yes, if it comes up The Magician, then we know that everything will be alright. And the card is...

(Flips over a card...)

CUSTOMER
What the heck is that?

FRIEND
Looks like... maybe a twinky?

CUSTOMER
It has feet.

FRIEND
Not a twinky. Twinkies don't have feet. (*Trying to remember...*) They don't, right?

CUSTOMER
Not that I remember seeing...

FRIEND
Can you read it?

CUSTOMER
M... H...Y...

FRIEND
An H? Noo. Maybe a dotted N. Could it be an O?

CUSTOMER
Maybe. M... O... No, wait. Could it be an I and then an N?

FRIEND
Oh yeah. That's it. Min... Min... Yin. Min. Yin?

CUSTOMER
Is yellow the color of Yin or someth—

FRIEND
(*Working it out...*)
Minion! Minion. It's a Minion. See. That's not a growth. They're... They're goggles.

CUSTOMER
Yeah, yeah. I see it.

FRIEND
Oh, I'm so sorry about that. You really wanted to pick The Magician. The Minion is not a good sign at all. It normally means that you are about to get a parking ticket.

CUSTOMER

What? Right now?

FRIEND

That or that someone is going to empty out your bank account in a few minutes.

CUSTOMER

(As rushing out/off...)

Sorry! I gotta run!

FRIEND

*(Watching the customer leave, and then putting away
the cards...)*

Well, I think that went rather well, actually.