Excerpt – Ghostwriting Fiction

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The Stars Speak

*“Men at some times are masters of their fate; the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves.”*

Stella owned a hairdressing shop on Harvard Street [*possibly change street names*]. Mom said they had been friends for as long as they both could remember, growing up in Portland. I never got a clear answer on how they actually met. It’s as though they just appeared in each other’s lives one day and neither of them knows how it happened. I always thought that was strange for such good friends not to remember how they met, but I didn’t have much to relate it to I suppose.

In school, I waited in last period watching the clock and willing it to move faster but it never heeded my silent command. I would leave school as soon as that dismissal bell rang and walk to Stella’s looking down at my feet, feeling bigger than every other 8th grader and invisible at the same time.

I came to Stella’s place every day after school. She gave me two dollars to sweep up the floors. Mostly I liked having someplace to go. Stella made me wear a green smock that all the employees wore. On me, the strings hung down at my sides because they didn’t reach all the way around my waist to tie in the back. No one ever said anything about it, and I tried not to look in the mirrors that surrounded me as I swept up. It was kind of the same way I avoided the things I saw that no one else ever seemed to see.

Tuesdays and Thursdays were the best days. Those were the days the ladies would come to the shop not only to get their hair done but also to see my mom read the cards and tell their fortunes. Fortune is a strange word, isn’t it? It can mean money or luck, but it also means your fate, your destiny. Somehow my mom could see people’s fortunes, not their wealth, although sometimes messages about money did come to her, but mostly it was to tell them of their future fate or that of someone they know and love. I often wondered why anyone would want to know. My experience with that told me that seeing what you cannot change is like a form of torture. The hell with waterboarding, we should show terrorists their fortunes while they sit watching, unable to change what they see.

Mom was quite the celebrity at Stella’s shop. It made Stella happy because it was good for business; it made me happy because I got to listen to mom tell fortunes. They would walk into the shop and look directly at mom like she was the one person who could fix all their problems or something. They would excitedly wait their turn, sitting in the waiting area squirming in their chairs and holding notes in their hands of the questions they wanted to ask. “Will I have a baby soon?” “Is my husband going to get a promotion?” “Will we be able to afford a bigger house or a car?” They would giggle and whisper with each other as they waited to have their lives told to them. My mother was the prophet of Portland.

For me, this was an escape from my world. At Stella’s I wasn’t fat. At Stella’s I was popular simply because I was Angela’s daughter. I listened to my mom give information to women about things that had not happened yet and felt like maybe I wasn’t so weird after all. I wasn’t strange because I saw things sometimes, things that had not happened yet, things that didn’t exactly make sense but involved people I recognized. Things like mom was talking about. She saw them in the groupings of the cards and I just got bombarded by them, like a pushy uninvited guest.

People loved her just for telling them things about their own lives. Why then was I so frightened everyone would hate me for the same thing?

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