

# The Fool



**Sophia DeLuna**

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By  
Sophia DeLuna

The Fool  
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As always, I'd like to say "Thank You" to my precious editor and friend Ágota.

## The Fool

With a brooding expression Rebecca watched her friend Bärbel adjusting her summer dress as she was getting on a seat of the antiquated looking Chair-O-Planes.

Why had she let Bärbel drag her to this fair? Admittedly, she hadn't been in a socialising mood ever since she lost her partner a year ago, and her friend had been increasingly worried about her because of it.

"You've got to stop living like a hermit!" Bärbel had scolded her, "I know Sabrina's death has been hard on you, but I'm sure she would be just as worried as I am if she saw you like this. You've got to go out and live again, Rebecca!"

Rebecca thought that this was a moot point. If Sabrina were still alive there would be no need for her to worry as they would still be happily living together. Happier even than they used to be, Rebecca would make sure of that. Nevertheless, Rebecca felt obliged to humour her best friend, who had helped her through the worst of times. But couldn't they have gone to a nice little café instead? Why did it have to be a fair? She wasn't in the mood for it at all, it was loud and crowded and she couldn't go on any of the rides as ever since she was a child she got nauseated from just looking at them. And worst of all, the cheerful atmosphere painfully reminded her of Sabrina. Rebecca groaned unconsciously as past memories resurfaced unbidden.

Sabrina had loved fairs, and although Rebecca had never been fond of loud and crowded places, she had always enjoyed going to fairs with her partner. In the eight years they had been together, Rebecca had won countless of prizes for Sabrina at the shooting galleries, and her partner had kept them all. All the gingerbread hearts and plush animals and accumulated bouquets of plastic flowers, and of course her most precious prize, a big brown teddy bear she named Ben. It had been the first prize Rebecca had won for Sabrina.

The big old bear had consoled Sabrina many a night when Rebecca had pulled yet another all-nighter, working at her computer.

Back then, Rebecca had always found it endearing to find her partner cuddled up with the bear clutched to her bosom.

*How could I be so bloody ignorant?! Why didn't I just work during the day while she was off to work? I could have spent more time with her, could have held her in my arms more often, but no, I had to insist that my muse could only work at night.*

Rebecca swallowed a lump in her throat as grief and guilt started to overwhelm her, and bracing herself against the ticket booth, she shook her head in order to force herself back into the present.

Ironically, ever since she had started to work again, Rebecca had her most creative ideas in the early morning hours, while at night it was now she who clutched old Ben.

The Chair-O-Planes started, and Rebecca began to feel the familiar dizziness creeping up. She turned away from the spinning seats, but the flashing lights of the other rides in the vicinity gave her a headache, and the excruciating noise all around her didn't help either. The terrible beer tent music, the shrilling sounds of the rides, the shouting of the vendors and the yelling of kids all mixed with the overall murmur of the crowd and resounded in a blaring cacophony. She squinted and let her gaze wander over the candyfloss and roasted almonds booths, the sweet flavours wafting over to her and intermingling with those of bratwurst and beer. The concoction of scents, loved by so many people, and once loved by her as well, now

only enhanced the queasy feeling in her stomach.

Disgruntled, she cursed herself yet again for agreeing to accompany her friend. Without Sabrina, there was really nothing here that even remotely interested her. Most of the carnival games around her were for children anyway. Not that that would have bothered her with Sabrina at her side, but she wasn't at her side; and her friend was having fun on the carousel. Rarely had Rebecca felt as alone in a crowd of people, and try as she might, she just couldn't get her mind into that happy playful mood she had enjoyed with Sabrina. Instead, she experienced an odd feeling of detachment, as she watched all the cheerful people mingling about, until her gaze fell upon a group of middle aged men having a blast at the balloon and dart booth. It was only Saturday afternoon, but going by their loud laughter and bawling, they were obviously already three sheets to the wind. Disgusted, Rebecca averted her eyes, only to witness another group of drunks staggering out of the beer tent. Shaking her head, she suddenly raised an eyebrow as her gaze fell upon a small, rather shabby looking tent with a sign that read: Tarot - 1€.

*Weird, thought Rebecca, I never noticed this before. Perhaps I could give it a go? Not that I'm hugely interested in tarot, but at least it is something I have never done before and I would be able to escape this noisy, stinking torture for a while. One euro seems a fair price for a few minutes of peace in the middle of this blustering hell!*

Wondering how long a tarot reading might take, she cast a quick glance behind her and saw that the carousel was just beginning to spin at full speed. The tarot tent was right on the opposite side. She would probably be back before Bärbel got off that infernal thing.

Steeling herself, she took a deep breath and stepped forward in order to fight her way to the other side through the crowd.

#

"Hello," said Rebecca as she entered the tent.

"*Jó napot, young lady.*"

Rebecca curiously looked around. The tent smelled much better than she had imagined. Frankincense, she noted. However, the shabby outside appearance of the tent was rather consistent with that of the inside.

The only light source was an old rusty camping lantern, which hung on a hook in the far corner. It provided a warm glow that softened the edges, and kept a lot of the details hidden in the shadows, which was probably better that way, thought Rebecca. However, despite of the poor illumination, it was easily noticeable that the muddy brown tent was patched in several places.

Surprised, Rebecca noticed with a sigh of relief that the shabby canvas seemed to be thicker than it looked. It almost completely drowned out the noise outside; and that although there was no floor, only the bare soil of the fairground and a moth-eaten rug beneath the furniture at the far end of the tent. Said furniture consisted of a small plastic table which supposedly had once been white if going by the matching two plastic chairs which still showed some of their original white colour. A third chair, this one behind the table, was occupied by a white-haired old woman whose wrinkled neck reminded Rebecca of a 100-year-old turtle. She guessed that the woman wasn't much younger, although her piercing blue eyes contradicted this impression. They sparkled in the light of the lantern and seemed to bore right through Rebecca, as if to search the bottom of her very soul.

Rebecca cringed at the scrutiny, and she was about to turn around and leave as the woman held out her bony hand and said in a low voice, "Come, come. No need to be afraid. I won't bite." She chuckled, the wrinkles on her dark-skinned face showing that she did so often, and she flashed Rebecca a smile that showed several gaps between her yellowed teeth.

Hesitantly, Rebecca stepped closer, and upon an encouraging gesture from the old woman

she sat down on one of the dirty plastic chairs. *Good thing I put on the old pair of jeans,* thought Rebecca.

"Your soul is troubled," stated the old woman softly, "You have tried to escape life for a long time, but now you come to seek answers."

"Well, actually I just came in here to 'escape' the hubbub out there," said Rebecca defiantly. The woman's words had hit a bit too close to home for her liking, and the gentle knowing look with which they were delivered unsettled her. *This is ridiculous,* she thought, *this woman doesn't know anything about me; she is just doing her hocus-pocus job. She probably says that same hogwash to everyone.*

The old woman smiled and inclined her head, "As you wish. But since you are here," she picked up the deck of cards and asked, "Would you like to ask tarot anyway? It is only one euro."

Rebecca shrugged, "Yeah, why not."

The woman shot her a toothless grin and began to shuffle the cards. When she was satisfied, she fanned them out on the table and said, "Pick five cards and place them next to each other in a row. The first card will represent what lies in your past."

With mild curiosity Rebecca did as she was told. However, as she saw the picture on the first card, she frowned. Dark clouds hanging low in the sky gave the impression of doom, which fit with the depicted scene of a person lying on the ground, pierced by ten long swords.

It had taken the mugger only one stab with a knife to kill Sabrina. He had hit an artery. She bled to death before she was even discovered. Rebecca felt sick. *I should have accompanied her, but no, I had this 'great' idea that I wanted to work on.*

"Go on," said the old woman gently, "The next card will represent your potential."

Rebecca shook her head to bring herself back to the present. She looked up at the old woman, and when she nodded encouragingly, Rebecca hesitantly reached for the cards and pulled another one out of the fan. A fleeting smile flashed across her face as she looked at the picture of the card, called The Sun. *Now, this one looks a lot nicer,* she thought, *though I doubt I would be as happy as that child if I were riding naked on a horse.*

"The next card will show how far you live up to your potential," explained the woman, and gestured Rebecca to pick the next card.

Not bothering to fumble another card out of the fan, Rebecca picked the uppermost card on the edge. She regretted her decision as soon as she looked at the card. The card depicted a church scene with a person lying in repose on what looked like a coffin. At first Rebecca felt disturbed by the image, but on second glance, she noticed that the 'person' was painted in the same colour as the coffin, so perhaps it wasn't a person after all, but just a statue. But what did the picture mean?

As if the old woman had read her thoughts, she explained, "We will talk about the meaning of the cards in the end. Now, pick the next card. It will advise you what to do next."

Rebecca was getting tired of this game, and she quickly pulled another card out of the fan, messing it up in the process. "Sorry," she apologised.

The old woman shook her head slightly, "It doesn't matter."

Rebecca refused to take a closer look at the card, which was called The Hanged Man, and she just stared at the messed up fan, waiting for the woman to tell her to pick the last card.

The woman regarded her for a moment with her piercing blue eyes before she went on, "The next card will show a glimpse into what your future may hold for you, if you listen to the advice."

To get this over and done with, Rebecca picked up a card that had been separated from the fan with her last move. Nothing of this mattered anyway; it was just hocus-pocus. And although she was glad that she had escaped the hubbub of the fair for a while, she was beginning to get antsy. Bärbel didn't know where she went, and she would surely worry about her if she couldn't find her.

She glimpsed at the last card, at least this one looked friendlier again. It was called The Fool, and as Rebecca took a closer look, she found herself smiling at the androgynous figure on the picture, which seemed to dance soft-footed and happy with a white rose in her hand and a little dog danced beside her. The figure reminded her of Sabrina. Not so much with regards to looks, but rather because of her carefree attitude. Why the card was called The Fool, Rebecca couldn't fathom. Perhaps, because it looked as though the figure was dancing right into the abyss. But you couldn't see if it really was an abyss, maybe it was just a small step?

When Rebecca looked up, her gaze was met by the woman's sparkling blue eyes.

"Are you ready to hear what the cards want to tell you?"

Rebecca nodded.

"The card of the past," the woman began and pointed at the Ten of Swords, "Shows that you have suffered a great loss."

Rebecca swallowed a lump in her throat and nodded again.

"The Sun as your potential shows vitality and confidence, and a joy of living. But you are stuck in the past. You have withdrawn from life," she pointed at the Four of Swords, "You keep yourself locked up instead of dealing with the pain and grief in your heart. But it is time to change your perspective or you will never reach your potential."

Rebecca reluctantly followed the woman's finger to the Hanged Man card. So it wasn't a bad card after all? No, now that she looked at the picture more carefully, she noticed the relaxed body language of the upside down hanging man. With his arms casually crossed behind his back, he didn't look terrified about hanging from the tree. In fact, he looked rather serene; his features showing no fear or pain.

"It is a card of acceptance and letting go of the past," the old woman explained, and went on, "He is hanging of his own free will from the world-tree, gaining new perspective on his whole self." Picking up the Fool and the Sun card, the tarot reader fixed her intense blue eyes on Rebecca and continued, "If you listen to the cards, you will be able to gather the pieces of your shattered soul and move on open minded into the beginning of a new future in which you will be able to live up to your potential."

Despite admitting that the cards were rather fitting, Rebecca felt disappointed. This was just the standard psychological hogwash as with the daily horoscope. It always fit - at least to a degree. She didn't know what she had expected ... well, granted, she hadn't really expected anything initially ... nonetheless, maybe because of the old woman's look and the appearance of her shabby tent, she had somehow imagined the interpretation to be a little more mysterious. "Well, thanks for the reading," she said and fished a euro coin out of her pocket.

A smirk played on the woman's lips. "You are disappointed. Have another look at the future card, and memorise it well."

"All right," said Rebecca, and looked at The Fool for a moment. Then she placed the coin on the table and got up, "I must go now. Good bye."

"Life is a journey, and guilt is not a good guide. Keep your eyes open, young lady. The cards may be more precise than you would imagine," said the woman and winked at Rebecca.

#

When Rebecca stepped out of the tent, the Chair-O-Planes was just coming to a halt and she spotted Bärbel with her untamed blonde locks and her baby blue summer dress. *Wow*, thought Rebecca surprised, *just in time!* And she quickly made her way through the crowd, back to the other side.

"Whew! That was fun!" exclaimed Bärbel as she joined Rebecca.

"I'm glad you enjoyed yourself. Can we go home now?"

"Are you crazy? We only just arrived," complained Bärbel, "I haven't even had candyfloss yet."

Rebecca rolled her eyes. Her friend was behaving like a child, and Rebecca really couldn't fathom why a 45-year-old would want to eat this disgustingly sticky sweet stuff. "It's right over there. You can get yourself one and eat it on the way."

"On the way to the ghost train, yep, that's what I'm intending to do," said Bärbel grinning and headed for the candyfloss booth.

Sighing, Rebecca followed her friend through the throng of people.

As she took her candyfloss from the vendor, Bärbel turned to Rebecca and asked, "Are you going to continue being mopey or are you going to join me on the ghost train?"

"I'm not 'mopey'," argued Rebecca as they made their way towards Bärbel's next destination.

"So, you are going to join me?"

"No."

"Oh, come on, you can hardly get nauseated on a ghost train."

"Maybe not, but I don't like scary stuff."

Bärbel sighed, "Had I known you were going to just stand around waiting for me, I wouldn't have dragged you here."

"I can't help it," said Rebecca, "I hate fairs!"

"Since when?"

"Since they remind me of Sabrina," said Rebecca defiantly, but truthfully.

"Everything reminds you of Sabrina," said Bärbel, "There is no place in this world that would not remind you of Sabrina. There will always be something that triggers your memory, even if it's just a painting on the wall or a certain flower on the table. You've got to start living in the present, Rebecca. Life is more than just a memory!"

Annoyed, Rebecca rolled her eyes, "You sound like the old fortune teller."

"What?" Bärbel looked at her as if she had lost her marbles.

Chuckling at her friend's expression, Rebecca nudged Bärbel's arm and explained, "I haven't just been standing around. I went to the tarot tent and got a reading while you were on the Chair-O-Planes."

Bärbel shot her a sceptical look. "You got a tarot reading in ... what ... five minutes maybe? - at the most."

Rebecca shrugged, "Yeah, well, it felt more like 15 minutes, but since I got back right when the carousel halted, I suppose it didn't take as long as it felt."

Bärbel still looked doubtful, but she asked, "Where is this tent? I didn't notice it. Maybe I will go there on the way back. Was it any good?"

Rebecca stopped and turned around. "Hm, I can't see it from here. It's behind the bratwurst booth, right opposite the Chair-O-Planes. The old woman was a bit weird, but it was only one euro, and for that I suppose it was okay."

"One euro? Well, it's certainly not a professional reading then. Probably just a load of rubbish. No wonder it only took five minutes," said Bärbel, and she nibbled the last bits of candyfloss off the stick and threw the empty stick into a rubbish bin.

"I don't know," said Rebecca, as they reached the queue in front of the ghost train's entrance, "I didn't think it was that bad, really; just not particularly spectacular."

"Hm okay, maybe I'll check it out after all. Spending a euro certainly won't break the bank," Bärbel grinned, and she pulled a wet wipe from her pocket to clean her face of the sticky remnants of the candyfloss.

Rebecca buried her hands in her pockets and looked around. A child was shrieking with joy when the booth attendant handed her a rather big brown teddy bear which her father had just won at the shooting gallery. It looked exactly like Ben - well, a new, yet unwashed and

un-cuddled version of him.

Freezing for a moment, Rebecca suddenly felt as though a warm blanket was wrapped around her, and as she closed her eyes, it was as if she could hear the voice of Sabrina in her head, *"Ben was the best prize you ever won for me. I cherished every night when I could cuddle with him and enjoy the peaceful quiet, only the faint sound of your typing in the background."*

*"I'm so sorry,"* thought Rebecca, *"I should have been there for you more often."*

*"You were always there for me."*

*"No I wasn't,"* protested Rebecca. *"I should have gone with you to the cinema."*

*"You were my partner, not my nanny! I would never have let you accompany me to see a film you didn't want to see."*

Rebecca cringed, it was true, she didn't care for romantic comedies, and Sabrina had always said that she would rather indulge in such films on her own than having to worry about Rebecca being bored out of her mind. *"OK,"* thought Rebecca, *"But instead of insisting on working at night, I should have spent the nights with you."*

*"And not even grant me the few hours of solitude?"*

Rebecca furrowed her brow in confusion, *"But I could have held you in my arms. Then you wouldn't have had to use Ben as a substitute."*

The voice in her head chuckled, *"Oh, silly Becster. Ben is a teddy bear. I loved him, but he was never and could never be a substitute for you."*

*"But,"* Rebecca tried to argue, but the voice interrupted her.

*"No but, Rebecca. The years with you were the best years of my life. There is nothing I regret, and neither should you. Stop using me as an excuse for being miserable!"*

*"So, what are you going to do while I'm in there getting terrified?"*

Rebecca shivered as the warm-blanket-feeling abruptly vanished. Befuddled, she looked at her friend and asked, "Huh?"

When Bärbel repeated her question, Rebecca shrugged, "I might try my luck over there," she gestured with her head towards the shooting gallery. *Damn!* she thought, had her late partner just given her a tongue-lashing? - And not the good kind either. It had certainly sounded like Sabrina. Had she dozed off for a minute or was she going crazy?

"All right," said Bärbel, "You go and have fun with the shooting. I'll meet you there, okay?"

"Okay," agreed Rebecca and watched her friend settle into one of the guided vehicles and disappear into the darkness. Perhaps she should listen to Sabrina's lecture, even if it had just been a figment of her warped imagination. Maybe her friend and the fortune teller were right after all. Perhaps she should try viewing things from a different perspective. She used to love the challenge of the shooting gallery. Maybe she could learn to love it again.

#

Surprisingly, the shooting gallery was almost empty and Rebecca was the next in line. She smiled as she spotted a little white dog curled up on a cushion in the corner of the booth.

As the guy in front of her reloaded his air rifle, she let her eyes wander over the prizes, and finally opted for a little pocket knife which only required to shoot off one of the ceramic tubes.

Once it was her turn, she bought four shots and the female attendant handed her the rifle.

Rebecca got into position, raised the rifle to her shoulder, aimed for the tube that belonged to the pocket knife and fired. However, instead of hitting the targeted tube, she nicked the tube next to it, which held a white rose. *Damn!* she thought and reloaded the rifle. She certainly didn't want to win a stupid plastic flower now that she no longer had someone to give it to.

*"That could change soon."*

"What?" asked Rebecca before she realised that the voice she had heard had only been in her head.

"Almost," said the attendant with an encouraging smile.

*"Why don't you just open your eyes and see what's in front of you?"*

Annoyed, Rebecca ignored the voice and tried again to aim for the pocket knife. *Blast it!* she cursed inwardly, when she nicked another splinter off the rose's tube.

"Just one more shot and you'll get the rose," said the attendant.

*"I'm sure she would appreciate the rose,"* said Sabrina's voice in her head.

*"Be quiet! I can't concentrate!"* thought Rebecca, refusing to look in the direction of the attendant despite feeling an odd urge to do so.

She was almost certain now that the rifle wasn't properly calibrated. It didn't happen as often as people thought, but Rebecca had experienced rigged rifles on occasion. Taking a slow breath to steady herself, she raised the reloaded rifle to her shoulder and aimed for the tube to the right of the pocket knife. Alas, instead of hitting the desired tube of the pocket knife, she missed entirely.

"You've got one more shot," said woman, "I'm sure you can make it."

Sighing, Rebecca reloaded the rifle, and raising it one more time she decided to aim for the pocket knife's tube again. *Better to win a bloody rose than nothing,* she thought and fired.

"You did it!" said the attendant and she picked up the white rose and held it out for Rebecca to take.

Rebecca glanced at the rose and then for the first time she took a closer look at the attendant, a woman in her forties, like herself, with short blonde hair. She was wearing a green vest, which was embroidered with red and yellow flowers, over a long-sleeved white shirt and tight fitting beige leather pants. Rebecca felt her jaw drop as she thought of her future card.

The woman raised an eyebrow and asked, "Are you going to take the rose?"

"Keep it," squeaked Rebecca and cleared her throat, "You are my future."

"Excuse me?" said the attendant and furrowed her brows. Nevertheless, an amused smirk played on her lips.

"I'm sorry," stammered Rebecca, blushing, "I mean you look like The Fool ... uh ... no ... wait ... let me explain..."

The attendant leant against the counter and crossed her arms, waiting for her obviously highly embarrassed customer to continue while her workmate attended to the guy next in line.

Rebecca closed her eyes and took a deep breath, trying to regain her composure. Finally, she continued, "I've just been to the tarot tent over there," she pointed in the direction of the tent.

"What tarot tent? There's no tarot tent at this fair," said the attendant.

"Of course there is!" exclaimed Rebecca, "It's behind the bratwurst booth."

The attendant shook her head, "The beer tent is behind the bratwurst booth."

"No! Between the beer tent and the bratwurst booth," explained Rebecca, "A shabby little tent. Tarot - one euro," she tried to refresh the woman's memory. "I swear it!" she said as the woman looked at her doubtfully. She hadn't imagined it, had she? No, she had definitely been there. She had looked into the woman's eyes, had heard her talk with her ears, not just in her head, and she had seen the cards with her own eyes, she had even touched them, and she had spent one euro. She certainly couldn't have imagined it all.

The attendant eyed her upset customer for a moment, then she turned to her mate, "Frank, can you manage without me for a few minutes?"

"Sure, no problem," replied Frank.

"Thanks, I'll be back in a few," said the woman and turned back to her customer, "Would you show me this tarot tent?"

"Of course," Rebecca nodded, and while she waited for the woman to exit the booth, she typed a short message for Bärbel on her mobile phone and pressed 'send'. When she looked up from her phone, she shook her head as she saw the dog, which looked like a white Spitz just less fluffy, jumping and dancing around the woman. The two really looked astonishingly similar to The Fool and his dog on the tarot card.

"My name is Mónica and that's Jojó," said the woman, pointing at the dog that was still running and jumping around her, "He follows me everywhere."

"I'm Rebecca. Is he always this energetic?" asked Rebecca as they headed for the tarot tent.

"Only when he has been inactive for a few hours," said Mónica grinning. However, her grin vanished quickly, and she said seriously, "If there really is a tent on the place you are saying, I will have to inform my uncle. The place would normally belong to my cousin and her husband, but they had an accident. They are both all right, thank God, but their trailer was destroyed. If someone snuck in and is making money on their spot, my uncle won't be pleased, to say the least."

"I don't think the old woman is making a lot of money with her one euro readings," said Rebecca, suddenly feeling the need to defend the weird toothless tarot reader, "Perhaps she asked your uncle for permission?"

Mónica shook her head, "He would have told me if there was a fortune teller here."

"What the..." Rebecca froze as they reached the end of the bratwurst booth. The shabby tent was nowhere to be seen; only an empty paper cup was lying on the otherwise bare fair ground. "I swear it was here. It can't have been more than 15 minutes since I left the tent!"

"I believe you," breathed Mónica. "Look at Jojó," she pointed at her dog who seemed to be searching the bare place with his nose, alternating between sniffing the ground and the air until he finally stopped and looked around in confusion. Again, he sniffed the ground and the air, and then suddenly he began to whine and turn around as if he couldn't make sense of what he was perceiving.

Both women went over to the confused dog.

"Poor Jojó," said Mónica as she squatted down to pet him.

Furrowing her brow, Rebecca bent down and picked up a one euro coin, "Look what I found," she said baffled, as she turned the coin around to look at it from all angles.

Raising an eyebrow, Mónica said, "That's not unusual. You'll find a lot of change lying around after so many people have been here. Jojó's behaviour is far more telling."

The dog was obviously still upset; he had buried his head in Mónica's lap and was whining quietly.

Rebecca pocketed the coin and was about to squat down too when she noticed something in her peripheral vision. Turning her head to get a better view, she squinted and took a few steps towards a flat object which lay on the ground.

"Another coin?"

"No," said Rebecca, and she turned the object so that Mónica could see it, "My future card."

Mónica nodded, "It's from a Rider deck. My great grandmother used that. Jojó was her dog until she died last year."

Rebecca looked at the card and asked, "Your grandmother was a fortune teller?"

"My great grandmother," corrected Mónica and got up from her crouching position, "Yes. Tarot reading was her specialty, although she didn't really need the cards. They were more like a tool to her to get her messages across to her customers," Mónica shook her head with a lopsided grin, "And she is obviously still doing it. It's nice to know that she is looking out for me."

"What do you mean?" asked Rebecca confused. Surely the woman didn't mean to tell her that she had spoken to a ghost? That she was hearing Sabrina's voice in her head was one

thing. She could explain that with being emotional and being reminded of Sabrina so much today, so her mind could easily play tricks on her; but she certainly hadn't suddenly turned into a medium who could talk to ghosts!

"Well, what did she tell you?"

"The tarot reader?" asked Rebecca while she tried to remember what the old woman had said. When Mónica nodded, Rebecca said, "She told me to memorise my future card, and to keep my eyes open, as the cards may be more precise than I might imagine."

Mónica grinned, "There you have it. Vague as it was, no tarot reader would ever tell you to keep your eyes open for The Fool. For one of the court cards, maybe, but not for The Fool. But my great grandmother knew that I resemble the look of The Fool to a degree, including the white dog and even the rose. You didn't want the rose, did you?"

Rebecca shook her head, "No, I was aiming for the pocket knife, but I thought..."

Mónica shook her head, "My uncle's rifles aren't rigged, they are actually fairly precise. So unless you're drunk, if you're halfway decent at shooting, you should be able to hit the tube you aim for. But," Mónica continued with a wink, "*Dédi*, my great grandmother, obviously had other ideas."

*"I like her. She's catching on quickly."*

There was Sabrina's voice again, and Rebecca rubbed her face with her hand, feeling confused and unsure of what was happening to her. She was about to ask Mónica a question, when her mobile phone rang. "Sorry," she excused herself and pulled out her phone. She made a face when she saw that it was Bärbel. "Yes?"

*"Where the hell are you? I've been waiting for you for ages here at the damned shooting gallery! You said you'd be right back."*

"I'm sorry. I got held up. I'll be there in a minute." She shut her phone and looked ruefully at Mónica, "Sorry, that was my friend. She is waiting at the shooting gallery."

"No problem, I have to go back anyway," said Mónica, and as they made their way back, she asked, "I'll finish at eight, how about we meet for a drink somewhere?"

Rebecca smiled, "That would be nice. I'm dying to hear more of your wild theories. Where would you like to meet?"

"Do you know the Rainbow Café?"

Rebecca raised her eyebrows in surprise. "I've been there once or twice."

"So, let's say, nine at the café?"

Torn between her feelings for Sabrina and the sudden wish to move on, Rebecca hesitated for a moment. The Rainbow Café was a lesbian café, and a rather nice one at that, thought Rebecca. So, Mónica didn't only look like her future card, she was also a lesbian.

*"Of course she is a lesbian,"* said the voice in her head, *"Do you think we'd have gone to all the effort if she wasn't?"*

*"Why are you doing this?"* asked Rebecca.

*"Because you are both ready - even if you can't believe it yet"*

*"Don't you,"* Rebecca swallowed, *"Don't you love me anymore?"*

*"Don't be daft, Becster. I will always love you."*

*"Then why are you trying to hook me up with Mónica?"*

*"Because I can no longer be with you, and Mónica is perfect for you."*

*"She belongs to the fairground people - how can she be perfect for me?"*

*"She doesn't live with the fairground people. She only helps out her family whenever they are in town. She is actually a nerd like you."*

Pausing, Rebecca thought, *"This is not something I could have knowledge of. How the hell does my mind come up with this?"*

"Would another time suit you better?" asked Mónica when Rebecca didn't answer.

"What?" asked Rebecca, turning to Mónica, "Sorry, I'm still a bit confused."

"It's okay," said Mónica with a smile, "I just asked if nine would suit you, or if you'd

rather meet at another time."

"Nine is fine," said Rebecca, returning the smile.

"All right then, nine at the Rainbow Café it is?"

"I'll be there," acknowledged Rebecca.

"Great! See you then," said Mónica, and waving good-bye she headed for the door of the shooting gallery.

Rebecca returned the waving as Mónica turned around before she let Jojó into the booth and followed him inside.

*"I have to go now,"* Sabrina's voice sounded serious and a touch sad.

*"What? Why? Where are you going?"* asked Rebecca with a sudden feeling of urgency.

*"I can't explain; there are no words."*

*"Will you come back?"*

*"I will always be with you in some way, but I will no longer be able to communicate with you. You are not a medium, unfortunately. Mónica's dédi is helping me to keep the link. She is really cool. You should ask Mónica to tell you about her. She can also show you photos. They will reassure you that you aren't losing your marbles,"* Sabrina chuckled.

Rebecca didn't care for Mónica or her great grandmother at the moment. The prospect of losing the connection with her beloved partner after having just begun to admit the reality of it made her heart ache all over again, and choking with desperation, she pleaded, *"Please, don't go yet. There are so many things I want to tell you."*

*"I know everything you want to tell me,"* said Sabrina gently, *"I have been and always will be with you whenever you think of me. Now, go and have fun. Bärbel is waiting for you. And remember, I will always love you, my sweet Becster."*

A tear rolled down Rebecca's face as the cacophony of the fairground noises penetrated the deafening silence she felt as Sabrina's voice left. Blinking, she found herself still staring at the now closed door of the shooting gallery. Wiping the tear off her face, she took a shuddering breath. Surprised, she realised that despite the sadness, she felt as if a heavy weight had lifted from her, and an involuntary grin spread across her face. She shook her head at the weird mix of feelings, and when she spotted Bärbel with a bag of popcorn in her hand, looking in the opposite direction, she headed towards her friend.

"What have you been up to?" asked Bärbel when her friend finally joined her.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," said Rebecca still unable to stop grinning, and before her friend could prod further, she grabbed Bärbel's arm and exclaimed, "Let's go and have some fun!"

And a bewildered Bärbel let herself be dragged along by her suddenly unexplainably cheerful friend.

###

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