

ESSA. I already have your money, now hush.

*(ESSA gazes into the crystal ball. The lights dim and a hum fills the space. Suddenly it all cuts out and she gives him a look.)*

That's odd.

CLIFF. What?

ESSA. Give me your hand.

CLIFF. Which one.

ESSA. It doesn't, just give me one.

*(She grabs his hand and examines the palm. Again the lights dim and the hum fills the space. Again it all cuts out abruptly.)*

That is so weird.

CLIFF. What is it?

*(ESSA takes his money out and hands it back to him.)*

ESSA. Here. Take this. Good luck.

CLIFF. Are you kidding me?

ESSA. Take your money back.

CLIFF. No. Tell me what you saw.

ESSA. I can't read your fortune so you deserve a refund.

CLIFF. Okay, you are a complete scam artist. I'm supposed to freak out and offer to pay more, right? I'm not giving you any more money.

ESSA. I didn't see anything, and that's strange. So it doesn't matter if you offer me more money because I can't help you.

CLIFF. I'll pay more.

ESSA. You just said you wouldn't.

CLIFF. I know what I said.

ESSA. I don't want your money. Thank you and good night.

*(ESSA drops his money on the ground. CLIFF gets up to leave, but he doesn't collect the money. She notices this and gets annoyed.)*

No, no, you have to take the money back.

CLIFF. I paid for a reading. I suppose you did something just now, so caveat emptor or whatever. I only came to this carnival because I was having a really shit day at work and I needed, like, a lark or something. You have any idea what an actuary does?

ESSA. Does this story end with you taking the money?

CLIFF. I look at charts and numbers and assess risk for an insurance company. It's not exciting. And the overhead light in my office flickers at a really odd interval that's driving me nuts. And now I have no future and I'll get some cotton candy and call it a night. Thank you.

ESSA. No, it's like a karmic thing, you have to take the money back or I have to finish what we started.

CLIFF. Finish telling me my fortune?

ESSA. Or else I'll have bad luck. Forever. It's in the amazingly awful fine print of having this gift.

CLIFF. Harsh.

ESSA. Are you, like, the king of saying obvious things?

CLIFF. Huh...sounds like you've got yourself a real problem.

ESSA. My problem is that you're not showing up on, listen, if you're not gonna take your money then just sit back down and let me see if I can figure this out. There has to be a reason it's so difficult to see you.

CLIFF. Maybe I don't want to know now.

ESSA. You said your life is boring and you're still standing here; I don't need a crystal ball to figure that one out. Now sit your ass down.

CLIFF. Okay, jeez.

ESSA. Who says that, who says "Jeez?"

CLIFF. It's colloquial.

ESSA. Whatever, I'm going to touch your face, don't freak out.

*(CLIFF sits back on the stool. ESSA stands in front of him. She places her hands on his cheeks and looks deep into his eyes. The lights dim. The*