

MADAME DORA, CLAIRVOYANT

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN FAIR - NIGHT

The streets are alive. Layers of opposing music come from every direction; a galaxy of lights flash in primary colours. People weave around each other laughing and/or stuffing their faces with candy-floss.

Against all this movement three young girls stand still, heads tilted upwards, mouths open. They are late teens sporting almost matching bobble-hats.

EMMA, 17, is in the middle, she's that halfway house between babyface and stunning-woman. She shakes away the awe and looks apprehensively at her friends.

EMMA

No. Way.

Her friends giggle and give her an insincere 'sure-you-don't-mind' before they run hand-in-hand to join the queue for the Mother of all Rides.

EMMA

(calling out)

Meet me here, I'll wait for you.

Emma jumps as hands grab around her waist, she spins to find herself facing a DRUNK-MALE, 25, in close quarters, she is visibly repulsed by his bad breath.

DRUNK-MALE

The wait is over baby, I'm right here.

Out of nowhere a fist hits Drunk-Male square on the jaw sending him reeling. The fist belongs to MATT, 18, tall and lean, impressive dark hair; he's calm, considering.

MATT

You OK?

Matt smiles as he passes Emma not waiting for the reply, he's still moving in on Drunk-Male. Emma has no time to register what just happened but knows she shouldn't stick around. She walks off in the opposite direction in search of a quieter place to wait, her legs have begun to shake.

Matt looks over his shoulder, he sees Emma heading towards an empty table outside a caravan at the edge of the fair. Emma pauses for a moment, she too feels compelled to look back, but doesn't. As she continues to walk she hears -

MATT

(to Drunk-Male)

Come on then.

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EXT. CARAVAN AT TOWN FAIR - CONTINUOUS

The music is quieter here and the air is cooler. Emma takes a seat at a metal table set out in front of a medium-sized CARAVAN. A SIGN dangles in the window sandwiched between the glass and velvet curtains: 'READING IN PROGRESS'.

People pass-by, Emma studies them.

After a few moments, fingers decorated with large jewellery, reach through the curtain and flip the sign over, it now READS: 'MADAME DORA - CLAIRVOYANT'. Emma frowns at the sign; in smaller print it LISTS: 'YOUR FUTURE (£50) / LUCK AND WISHES (EXTRA)'.

The caravan door swings open and a short elderly woman pokes her head out. This is MADAME DORA (M.D), at least 80. The perfect black bob framing M.D's shrivelled face is so obviously A WIG.

MADAME DORA

Oh Sweetie, be with you shortly.

EMMA

No, I'm --

The door closes. The door opens. A LARGE GENTLEMAN, 50, reverses out, smartly dressed and holding hands with M.D, almost bowing.

LARGE GENTLEMAN

Thank you, thank you. Until next year then? Thank you!

Emma watches the Large Gentleman skip away carrying the biggest of smiles. Amused, he side-steps around two males flanking a staggering friend, it's Drunk-Male, blood is splattered down his shirt, they are heading our way.

MADAME DORA

Ready Dear?

EMMA

Erm, yes OK.

Without hesitation Emma bolts for -

INT. MADAME DORA'S CARAVAN - CONTINUOUS

It's cosy; the lighting is dimmed and a pleasant smell of food hangs in the air.

Emma follows M.D through a narrow kitchenette, and through a partition of velvet curtains.

The same material covers the walls in the next area. A lamp dangles from the ceiling by a long cord and hovers just above a circular table.

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M.D sits and pats the cushioned seating.

MADAME DORA
Come. Sit.

EMMA
I'm sorry, I'm not really into
all this. Can I just --

Half listening, M.D slips a hand through a slot in the wall material and flips the sign over.

MADAME DORA
Sit.

Emma sits. M.D stares at her intently.

EMMA
So.. umm?

MADAME DORA
So you pay.

EMMA
I thought --

MADAME DORA
You pay now Dear, everything has
a price, including my time.

Emma pulls some notes from her back pocket and counts them on to the table: £10, £20, £30.

EMMA
All I have I'm afraid, if that's
not enough --

M.D reaches forward as if to collect the money, instead she grasps Emma's hand pulling it into the lamp-light. M.D's frail fingers rub on the underside of Emma's hand.

EMMA
Such lovely hands. Mine were once
this way too but alas, time
really does have a price.

M.D turns Emma's hand over and begins to trace the lines on her palm with a jewelled finger.

MADAME DORA
So, boy trouble yes?

EMMA
Wow, is that what it tells you?

MADAME DORA
Ha. No, the way you came in to
avoid that trouble outside tells
me that. But we are..

M.D presses her finger down firmly in a position close to Emma's wrist.

MADAME DORA (CONT'D)
..here, now.

M.D squints, her finger is drawing circles then stops, pressing down again, this time closer to the centre of Emma's palm.

MADAME DORA
Ah! There he is..

M.D winks at Emma, then returns to business. Her eyes are darting around the lines on Emma's palm.

EMMA
Really?
(sarcastically)
What's he like then?

MADAME DORA
..and together you go, along this path, stronger and stronger.. Oh.
(beat)
Oh, my Dear.

A concerned expression fills M.D's face. Emma quickly tugs her hand free and inspects it herself. Nothing.

EMMA
(concerned)
What? What is it? What did you --

Emma presents her hand back to M.D.

MADAME DORA
(reassuringly)
It was nothing Emma sweetie,
don't you worry yourself, time is far too precious to --

EMMA
Wait? Say that again.

MADAME DORA
Time is precious Dear, yours and mine. We should conclude.

EMMA
You said my name?

MADAME DORA
You're mistaken Dear, I don't -
(beat)
Oh look, now I've gone and upset you, that was not my intention.
Allow me to make amends.

EMMA

But I'm sure you --

M.D squeezes Emmas hand tightly and her eyes roll back. In the light of the lamp they appear to be entirely white. A sharp fingernail digs into Emma's palm and scrapes from the centre towards her wrist; M.D exhales and a stream of cool air washes over Emma's hand.

Emma retracts her hand.

M.D's pupils slowly return and fix on Emma.

MADAME DORA

There. We are done.

M.D leans back in her chair, flips the sign over once again and gestures to the exit.

They both stand and make their way through the curtain, through the kitchen area to the door. Emma studies her hand as they go.

EMMA

Did you.. do something?

MADAME DORA

Everything is as it would be.

M.D pushes the door open and peeks her head out.

MADAME DORA

(to person outside)

Be with you shortly Sweetie.

M.D holds the door open and beams a smile at Emma.

MADAME DORA (CONT'D)

..only some of it sooner.

(beat)

Strong and handsome.

EMMA

What?

MADAME DORA

You asked what he'll be like? A pretty girl like you, I'm betting he will be strong and handsome.

EMMA

Well. Thank you.

Emma squeezes passed M.D, and steps out to -

EXT. CARAVAN AT TOWN FAIR - CONTINUOUS

The caravan door closes behind her. Emma bumps straight into the person waiting outside. He smiles -

MATT

Hey.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - MORNING

Matt, now 24 and bearded, is driving a FAMILY-SIZED CAR. Emma, now 23, sits beside him holding a map on her lap, her face has hardened over the past six years.

A FLASK OF COFFEE is lodged between their seats. Strapped behind them is an empty child seat.

They overtake a procession of colourful trucks pulling caravans and trailers loaded with flat-packed amusements and rides.

MATT

This is ridiculous, we don't even know if she's still alive. I can't believe you go for all this mumbo-jumbo. We should be at home.

EMMA

Like you care? Which home do you mean anyway, Matt? Ours or Liz's?

MATT

That's unfair, she's my daughter too. I came with you didn't I?

EMMA

OK, right, so you wanna play the father figure now, since you did such a good job as a husband?

(beat)

She'll be there, she has to be.

(pause)

Left here.

Matt turns off the road and into a field. The car bounces on the uneven grass.

Matt parks close to a gathering of vehicles. Trailers are being unloaded by generations of Travellers. Emma points at a familiar caravan and excitedly jumps out of the car.

EMMA

Told you! Wait here.

Emma closes the car door with a SLAM. She heads towards M.D's caravan. Matt watches through the windscreen.

MATT
 (under his breath)
 Close the door why don't
 you.. Bitch?

Emma arrives at the caravan, she knocks.

The door swings open, a brief conversation, then Emma disappears inside.

MATT (CONT'D)
 Ridiculous.

Matt grabs the flask and settles in.

INT. MADAME DORA'S CARAVAN - CONTINUOUS

In contrast to Emma's previous visit, the interior is ordinary, a KETTLE is boiling on the stove, boxes litter the worktops. Sat on top of one of the boxes Emma notices M.D's sign: 'YOUR FUTURE (£50) / LUCK AND WISHES (EXTRA)'.

M.D looks ordinary too, she wears a dressing gown. She looks a little older, though this is largely due to the absence of her wig, her grey hair is thin, mostly scalp.

MADAME DORA
 If you're selling I'm not buying.
 If it's a refund you're after,
 best speak with my boys outside.

EMMA
 Madame Dora, it's you! We met a
 long time ago, you did that..
 thing you do. I can't believe
 I've found you.

MADAME DORA
 Dora. I won't be Madame until
 this evening. Met before? And I
 was right yes?

EMMA
 Yes you was, but it was more than
 that, it was like magic, you
 changed things, I know you did. I
 have money..

Emma holds out a BUNDLE OF NOTES.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 ..I just need you to --

MADAME DORA
 Need me? You need me? You come
 see me this evening Dear. You pay
 then and we look again at your
 future yes.

EMMA

No! I'm sorry, no. Please, can't we do it now? My daughter, she's very sick.

M.D squints at Emma, trying to recall her face.

MADAME DORA

Ah yees, I remember. I'm sorry. Would you like some tea?

M.D takes the kettle off the stove, and sets out a SMALL WHITE TEA CUP. She squints through the window as she pours.

Matt now sits on the bonnet of the car talking on his PHONE.

MADAME DORA (CONT'D)

Goodness, Didn't think that would last.

EMMA

It didn't, we're separated, or will be soon. My daughter, our daughter, will you help us?

(beat)

Help her? You can change it? Make her better. We'll pay, anything.

Emma places the bundle of notes on the table, temptingly close to M.D.

MADAME DORA

Have a seat Dear..

Emma sits at the table. M.D sits and slides the tea cup over to Emma.

MADAME DORA (CONT'D)

..and listen. We are Show-People, customers pay, I show possibilities, that is all. People take care of their own destinies. I'm afraid you hope for too much.

M.D eyes the money on the table.

Emma drinks her tea down in one. M.D scoops the cup back and gently swirls it round on the table.

EMMA

(tearfully)

But, this is our last hope for Ellie, they say she.. she doesn't have much time.

M.D peers into the cup, she studies the patterns inside formed from dregs and tea leaves.

M.D points to a shape. A look of resigned sympathy appears.

MADAME DORA

Hmmm. Yees, it's true. He comes.
He is coming to collect.

EMMA

No. No, you change it. Do it.

MADAME DORA

I speak, but you do not listen.
He will not be stopped, He will
collect. I see possibilities, but
tell me, what would you give to
change the future for.. Ellie?

EMMA

I'd give anything, anything. If
you need more money just say.

MADAME DORA

Any-thing is not enough. What
about any-one?

(beat)

You would have Him take someone
else instead yes?

EMMA

Yes. Anyone, if it meant my baby
would just get better.

M.D blows into Emma's tea cup, then shakes it VIOLENTLY.

M.D peers inside the cup once more.

MADAME DORA

And things change, yees. But
careful, there is always a price
for ones actions.

(beat)

No. You do not want this..

M.D pushes the bundle of notes back over towards Emma.

Emma stares at the money thoughtfully.

Eventually Emma stands giving a polite smile. M.D grabs Emma
by her arm.

MADAME DORA (CONT'D)

..let things be as they will be
my Dear. Spend precious time with
your daughter.

EMMA

Thank you for the tea, and the
advice. I.. do understand.

Emma removes M.D's hand from her arm and exits the caravan.

M.D, and the money, both remain at the table.

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INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Matt slides down off the car as Emma approaches.

MATT
(on the phone)
She coming. I'll see you later.

Matt stuffs the phone in his pocket as Emma arrives.

MATT
(sarcastically)
That was quick.

They both enter the car. Matt starts the engine, they pull away.

MATT (CONT'D)
And? All sorted?

The car turns off the grass, back on the main road.

MATT (CONT'D)
Well?

Emma snaps -

EMMA
You were right. She can not help
us. Happy now?

Matt decides against any further retort.

They drive in silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

The car makes a turn off main road onto a narrower road leading through a wooded area.

Matt looks over at Emma, silence still, he goes for an ice-breaker.

MATT
Coffee is still warm.

Emma stares dead ahead, no reply.

MATT (CONT'D)
Mind pouring for me then?

Mechanically, Emma takes the flask from between their seats and unscrews the cup.

Emma pours the drink and hands the cup over to Matt.

Matt drinks.

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MATT

So, umm, I've been thinking, it might be best for both of us if I move my stuff out.

(pause)

Liz says I can stay at hers, you know, for a bit.

Emma looks over at Matt, he can feel the weight of her stare but it's his turn to keep his eyes on the road.

MATT (CONT'D)

I'll still see Ellie and help out with the money and that, just think we need some space yeah.

Matt holds the cup close to his mouth and blows as if to cool the coffee, though it's probably not needed.

Emma moves to put the flask back between their seats -

MATT

Look, I'm sorry about how --

Emma grabs the steering wheel and yanks it down sharply.

The car SCREECHES across the road, up a bank, and flies towards a large tree. Moments before impact we -

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. MADAME DORA'S CARAVAN - MORNING - (FLASHBACK)

M.D shakes Emma's tea cup VIOLENTLY.

END FLASHBACK.

OVER BLACK:

INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - MORNING

Sound Only: Loud CAR CRASH followed by long continuous HORN.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

SMOKE rises from the front of the car.

Emma slowly raises her blooded head up from the dashboard.

Matt is slumped in his seat, the windscreen in front of him is shattered in roughly the same shape as Matt's forehead.

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EMMA

Matt...?

(pause)

Matt?

Matt's chest is motionless.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Snow falls softly outside the window.

Emma, now 30, awakes alone in a double bed.

Her eyes opens to a framed PHOTOGRAPH sitting on her bedside table.

In the photograph is Matt (c. 23), clean shaven, young and smiling with ELLIE (3) pale and thin, but happy too, perched on his knee. Ellie has a nasogastric tube running into her nose.

Emma stares at the photo.

FOOTSTEPS crescendo from the landing and the bedroom door bursts open. In bounds Ellie, now 10.

Ellie dives head-first on to the bed, full of energy.

ELLIE

Mum. Mum. Guess what day it is?

EMMA

Umm. Is it Saturday?

ELLIE

No silly, my Birthday!

EMMA

So it is. You're not too old to give me a big cuddle now are you?

Ellie hugs Emma. Ellie looks over at the photograph.

ELLIE

Tell me again about Daddy.

EMMA

Oh come on, you've heard it a million times, and we've got to get you ready for the big party.

ELLIE

You have to do everything I say today, remember?

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EMMA
 OK, OK... Daddy loved you, just
 like I do. You was his little
 princess..

Emma kisses Ellie her gently on top of her head.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 ..he loved you so much he made a
 (fast)
 special magic spell to make
 you better.

Ellie smiles.

ELLIE
 Then he disappeared -

EMMA/ELLIE
 (in unison, well rehearsed)
 - in a flash of smoke.

EMMA
 That's right El. Now come on,
 we've got cake to make.

ELLIE
 Is the clown coming?

EMMA
 Sure is.

CUT TO:

INT. EMMA'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A party popper BANGS sending ribbons flying.

Balloons, party food, banners: 'HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY ELLIE'.

Emma carefully places a BIRTHDAY CAKE down on the table, ten unlit candles.

KIDS run wild, in and out of every door. PARENTS huddle in the safety of groups, sipping wine.

A colourful CLOWN, 30, stands on a chair with one hand covering his eyes, the other holds an AIRHORN at the ready.

CLOWN
 Three, Two, One..

The airhorn BLASTS loudly, startling Emma.

CLOWN
 (loudly)
 ..COMING! READY OR NOT.

The kids have temporarily vanished. Emma glares at the clown.

CLOWN
 (quietly, to Emma)
 Sorry!

EMMA
 OK everyone. We'll do the cake
 after this one.

INT. EMMA'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The Clown waves his hands in the air, conducting the guests
 as they sing -

GUESTS
 'Happy Birthday Dear El-lie'-

Emma enters carrying the Birthday Cake, candles lit.

GUESTS/EMMA
 "Happy Birthday to you".

A guest dims the lights.

Emma presents the cake to Ellie. The kids gather around,
 their faces lit by the candle light.

The clown sneakily readies his airhorn again.

Ellie inhales deeply -

EMMA
 Wait! Don't forget to make
 a wish.

ELLIE
 I wish --

EMMA
 (interrupting)
 You mustn't tell us!

ELLIE
 I wish Daddy was here.

Ellie exhales, blowing the candles out and plunging the room
 into total darkness.

OVER BLACK:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - MORNING

Sound Only: Long continuous HORN.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

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INT./EXT. MATT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

SMOKE rises from the front of the car.

Matt slowly raises his blooded head up from the steering wheel, shocked, he looks over at Emma.

Emma is slumped in her seat, the windscreen in front of her is shattered in roughly the same shape as Emma's forehead.

Emma's chest is.. motionless.

FADE OUT: