

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

A Children of the Apocalypse Story

By Skyla Dawn Cameron

“There was a guy in Newhaven who used to do readings,” Janine said as she and Genevieve got out of the car.

Gen barely pivoted out of the way of a taxi that whizzed past her on the busy road, and swore she’d park on the other side of the street next time. Sure, that meant her girlfriend might get hit instead, but Gen hated downtown Toronto enough to risk it.

“He moved away,” Janine continued as the two girls started down the block and into the area known as Kensington Market. Although few cars traversed those streets, a bike or two nearly clipped Gen as cyclists rushed past. “Haven’t seen him in awhile.”

“Austin?” Gen guessed.

Janine gave her a confused look. “Maybe. Was he an old guy with weird elbows?”

“Definitely not,” Gen said, recalling the little boy with the blood and snake fixation. She slipped her hand over Janine’s, and the two strolled past the many shops. Neither bothered pausing to take in the many scents or sounds, however, as Janine had a destination in mind.

After turning a few corners, they stopped before a storefront painted a dark purple, with cheesy silver stars and moons stenciled over the window. A sign that read “The Magical Pentacle” hung over the door, and a red flashing light in the shape of a palm advertised readings.

This looks lame, Gen thought, but before she made a joke, she glanced at Janine to gauge the other girl’s expression. Playfulness twinkled in the depths of her dark eyes, so Gen tried to remain open-minded.

“How’d you hear about this place?” Genevieve asked.

“There are always ads in the paper,” Janine said. “Plus my dad’s girlfriend went here and said they gave a *great* reading.”

With a sigh, Gen took the lead and walked up to the front door. Merri would probably have been a more trustworthy psychic, but she wasn’t exactly reliable, and Gen didn’t think anyone would be too pleased if she told her girlfriend about her other friend’s superpowers. When Janine suggested they drive out to the city to see some psychics that sunny July day, Gen couldn’t come up with a reason not to go, so there they stood.

“Oh...damn.” Janine pointed to the sign on the front door.

“Out on my broomstick—try *Curio Killed the Cat* down the street,” Gen read.

“This sucks,” Janine said.

“Yeah...well, we could try the other place?” *Please say no...*

“I guess,” Janine said.

“We could *not*,” Gen said quickly. “We could try some other—”

“We came all this way. Might as well check out the other store.”

Gen pretended to smile.

They followed the arrow on the bottom of the sign and wandered down the street until they came to the storefront they sought. Gen would have infinitely preferred checking out the

marijuana café next door, but Janine carried on toward the occult store. Black paint trimmed the big, dark wood door. As the girls opened it, a little bell jingled.

Hard rock played over speakers on either side of the shop, which seemed out of place among the old wood and musky scents.

“Wow,” Janine whispered as they gaped at the shelves. Dozens—if not hundreds—of labeled bottles lined one, while big jars of herbs—or *something* Gen wasn’t sure of—ran across the other. Towards the back, she caught sight of a book section.

Her gaze travelled next to the front counter. A head of black hair, wound into two buns, rested on the wooden surface between the old fashioned cash register and a display of crystals. Deciding against bugging the sleeping employee, Gen moved instead to the books while Janine went her own way.

The floorboards creaked beneath each step she made. As she slipped between the stacks, a shadow moved suddenly and Gen jumped a little. The shadow turned out to be a tall, skinny Goth guy with shoulder-length black hair. He turned to look at her, eyes a clearly-fake blue and set in an unnaturally pale face. He hovered over a book clutched tightly in his white fingers and stared at her accusingly until she moved on.

Weirdo. Raji always wanted to go to occult stores, but Gen would never go with him and that creepy customer was exactly why. Nothing but a bunch of wannabes who wouldn’t know real magic if it extinguished a candle right in front of them.

She browsed the spines until she came to one that looked promising: a little hardcover book of sigils. As she returned—book in hand—to the counter, she met up with Janine, who carried a little sachet of bath salts.

Janine held it up. “*Follow Me Girl* bath crystals. It’s so that I can make you obsessed with me if you ever leave.”

“I don’t think you need any help with that,” Gen said with a grin.

“Will that be everything?” the cashier said without looking up.

“Actually, we’d like psychic readings,” Janine said. “If you do those.”

The cashier pulled herself up into a sitting position, stretched her arms over her head, and yawned. A light yellow tank top exposed enough brown skin to show black tribal tattoo on one upper arm and glimpses of more tattoos on her back.

At least she’s not waving around a crystal ball, Gen thought.

“Yep, we do readings,” the woman said. “You,” she pointed to Janine, who stood directly in front of her, “can come with me. And you,” she jerked her thumb in Gen’s direction, “ring the bell on the counter and Liam will be right with you.”

It seemed an odd request, and as Janine and the cashier walked toward a side room, Gen considered not bothering with the bell and going back to the books. But guilt at possibly lying to Janine won her over, and she tapped the bell lightly.

Moments later, a thirty-something blond man walked out. Dark-framed glasses sat on his nose, and though he wasn’t much taller than Gen, she felt incredibly small around him—as if he was somehow judging her, and his verdict wasn’t at all good.

“Can I help you?”

“The other lady said you’d do a psychic reading with me...?” Her voice trailed off into a question, realizing as she spoke that she should probably be asking rather than telling him.

He nodded. “Follow me to the back.”

Gen did so without a word and hoped the whole thing would be over soon.



A small round table sat in the center of a tiny room that wasn't much bigger than a walk-in closet. Two chairs were pulled into either side. Candelabras—with small light bulbs rather than candles—hung from the walls and lit the dark space.

The woman from the counter snatched a package from a shelf near the door, then dropped down heavily on one of the chairs. While she unfolded the cloth parcel, Janine took the seat opposite her.

“So I'm Briar,” the woman said. She spread out the burgundy fabric across the table and pulled out the stack of cards wrapped within.

Janine watched with rapt interest as Briar shuffled the large Tarot cards. “I'm Janine.”

“Any preferences today? Standard spread or do you have a particular question?”

Though she opened her mouth to speak, she couldn't quite get the words out. She did have questions, of course, but part of her didn't want to voice them.

“Just about my love life, I guess.”

“Okay, let's see how this goes...” She cut the deck a few times, then began turning cards up on the table in a pattern. Janine couldn't make much sense of them, but then she'd never tried Tarot before.

“What's it say?” Janine asked after Briar had studied them in silence for a few moments.

“This one,” her red-tipped fingernail tapped on a card with cup, “says you don't know what you want with love. You had your heart broken in the past.”

That's more than a little accurate, Janine thought, but she had to remember to stay rational. Every person has had his or her heart broken at some point—that was hardly a revelation. Unless the psychic mentioned Trish by name, she wasn't getting too excited.

“Your heart wants what you know is wrong for you,” Briar continued. “You'll struggle with that for awhile. And your current lover is lying to you.”

Janine swallowed hard and the hair stood up on her bare arms. She shivered a little. *God, I don't want to ask this...I don't want to know.* She didn't think her heart could take again...but she spoke up anyway. “Is she cheating on me?”

Briar shook her head almost immediately. “No. Not yet, at least, and maybe not ever. But...I see others in your future.”

The psychic's words stung, but Janine smiled anyway. “As long as she's not cheating, though...”

“Well, she's not sleeping with anyone, if that's what you mean. But she's keeping other people—and another life—from you.” Briar cocked her eyebrow, the stud in her brow glittering in the light. “We could do something about that, you know. Like...a little fidelity spell? Something to keep her with you? That's doable...for a fee.”

“I...I don't think I can afford that kind of thing...” Janine said. She glanced absently at the packet of bath salts. Five bucks for some smelly salts? Fine. But no spells—that stuff was just weird.

“Ah well,” Briar said with a sigh. “You know where to find me if you change your mind. Just don't tell my partner in crime here—he disapproves of that kind of thing. Anyway,” her dark gaze scanned the cards again, “the outcome won't necessarily be that bad for you and your girlfriend.”

Janine looked over the cards. In the center sat The Wheel of Fortune, though she couldn't derive any meaning from the pictures.

"Sometimes people are fated to find their way back to one another again and again," Briar said. "And I get that sense from..." She glanced up and put on a quick smile. "From the pair of you, of course. No worries."



Gen fidgeted a little in her seat while she waited for Liam—the psychic guy—to shuffle the cards. He seemed to do so deliberately slowly, as if pausing to feel the weight and smoothness of each card before sliding it back into the deck.

"So I'm Genevieve," Gen said. "Do you need to know anything about me?"

"I'd rather not," he said, his voice cool and detached. "It would influence things."

"Oh. Right. So...what exactly makes you a qualified psychic?"

He glanced up at her sharply and his eyes narrowed. She tried not to fidget any more than she already was.

"Fifteen years involved in various Wiccan covens, and three years as a High Priest. I've also been reading Tarot since well before you were born."

"Ah, so are you one of those naked ritual, waving around an athame kind of wiccans then, or do you do actual spells and stuff?"

He rolled his eyes. "Let's just do this reading. I don't have time for inane questions about my religion from people like you."

Good thing I'm not expected to tip the guy, Gen thought.

Liam quickly drew cards, one after the other, until he had a selection of them spread across the table. Gen had tried ages ago to learn Tarot, but always failed to remember what they all meant and quickly gave up. She only recognized the odd one Liam drew, and even then, she had no idea what the significance of them was.

"This," Liam pointed to a card with a woman in blue, "represents you in the spread."

The High Priestess, Gen read the label at the bottom, which faced her.

"She looks pretty bad ass," Gen said. "So that's a good thing?"

Liam frowned. His lips parted, as if to speak, but he said nothing for several long moments. "It's reversed."

"Uh...so that's bad?"

"It means..." His gaze moved over the cards for a moment, then darted up to hers. He switched focus again to stare at the cards once more, and Gen got the distinct impression that he intentionally avoided her eyes. "It means you don't know something about yourself. About the things you're capable of."

"How about that one?" Gen thrust her finger on a card that sat at the top of a row.

Liam gave her a cold glare and looked pointedly at her finger. She shrank back a bit and gave him an apologetic smile for touching the cards.

"The Wheel of Fortune," Liam said. "Consequences and possibilities...there's a lot of movement and change around you. Things are coming that you can't escape. The Wheel of Fortune is, in essence, representative of your destiny."

Gen studied the card again, and realized it was surrounded with different cards from the sword suit. "That doesn't look good."

“You’ll have a lot of obstacles to overcome.”

Her gaze settled on one card with several swords protruding out of a dead man. “You don’t say. Maybe we should go back to The High Priestess.”

Liam gathered the deck up suddenly. “Maybe we should call it the day. The cards aren’t speaking to me well today—this one will be on the house.”

The crappy psychic visit had Gen feeling shivers up and down her spine. Clutching her sigil book tightly, she didn’t argue with Liam, but instead exited the room. Out in the main area of the shop, she found Janine browsing a rack of necklaces by the door with a paper gift bag labeled, “Curio Killed the Cat” in hand.

Guess I’d better hurry... Genevieve dropped her book on the counter and pulled out her wallet. “Liam said he couldn’t read the cards and it was on the house.”

The dark-haired tattoo girl at the counter glanced back toward the private rooms, but Liam hadn’t followed Gen out. With a heavy sigh, she punched in the price of the book and didn’t argue about the reading.

“Can I ask you something?” Gen said. “About the Tarot?”

“Sure. First, gimme fifteen thirty-five.”

Gen passed her a twenty. “In my cards, there was The Wheel of Fortune with a bunch of swords around it. And then he said I was represented by The High Priestess, and she was reversed. What does that mean?”

The woman glanced up quickly, her dark eyes wide with worry. Her fingers trembled as she handed Genevieve her change.

Oh god, it means something bad...

“Your power...it’s significant. But dark. You’re going to do something horrible, but you don’t even know it yet.”

Gen felt hyperaware of everything suddenly; the air she pulled into her lungs with every breath, the weight of the change in her hand, and the chills running along her skin.

Things are coming that you can’t escape... Genevieve swallowed hard, stuffed the money into her pocket, then grabbed the book and ran to meet Janine at the door.



Just as the two girls left, Liam approached Briar at the counter. “What was—”

As she turned to answer his question before he could get much further, the bell over the door chimed. Both looked towards the entrance.

A woman marched in, heavy heels thumping loudly on the hardwood. Long black skirts swirled around her legs, and dyed red hair—complete with fake extensions—mimicked similar movement around her shoulders. She stormed to the counter and slammed a piece of paper on the surface. Rage danced within her dark eyes.

“Hey Billie,” Briar said with a grin. “What’s up?”

Wilhelmina Raven glared at her. “Next time, I’m phoning the police.”

“I don’t know what your problem is today,” Liam said coolly, “but—”

The intruder held up the paper, which Liam took and read aloud. “Out on my broomstick—try *Curio Killed the Cat* down the street.” His gaze moved to Briar, who looked up at him innocently. She doubted he believed she was blameless in this, but he didn’t dare reprimand her in their rival’s presence.

“I’m very sorry,” he began.

“And we have no idea how that happened,” Briar interrupted. “Though maybe if you got said broomstick out of your ass, your customers wouldn’t end up here.”

“I mean it!” Wilhelmina spat. “Don’t do it again!” She stomped off again without another word, slamming the door and leaving the poor bell shaking above it.

Liam turned to speak, no doubt with a lecture in mind, but Briar raised a hand to stop him. “Hey, at least my sign got a couple of new people here. Not like it did any good, with you giving readings on the house.”

“I don’t like reading Tarot, which is why I generally don’t,” Liam said. “The girl left in a hurry, though, so what did she ask you?”

“Oh, that. Yeah, she wanted to know what The Reversed High Priestess meant.”

Liam frowned. “I already told her that. She didn’t know the things she was capable of. What did you tell her?”

“Uh...” Briar grinned and looked away. “That she was going to do something really evil.”

Liam closed his eyes and shook his head dramatically. “What is wrong with you? Why do you have to make up things like that?”

Briar shrugged. “I just like fucking with the tourists. I’m sure she won’t take it too seriously.”