

Speak With Love

by
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INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S TENT - NIGHT

Lazy smoke drifts along the garishly patterned tent walls, past a dream-catcher lined with cheap crystals.

The tent wall shivers as Alice, a timid young woman with pain in her eyes, enters nervously. She has been crying. Her hand cradles her pregnant belly as she stops just inside the tent, looking around.

A small wooden table attended by two comfortable chairs dominates the tent, which is otherwise decorated with disparate occult-flavoured ornaments.

MORANYA (O.S.)

Have a seat, I'll be right with you.

Alice smooths her long coat beneath her legs and sits down, fidgeting. After a moment, MORANYA, an older woman in a flowing dress, bustles into the tent.

MORANYA (CONT'D)

Who has come to see Moranya? Oh, my dear, now look at you!

Alice doesn't return Moranya's grin as the older woman sits down.

MORANYA (CONT'D)

What is your name?

ALICE

Alice.

MORANYA

And you're wondering - boy or girl, yes?

ALICE

No, that's not...

She trails off as Moranya lights a hand-rolled cigarette and eases back into her chair. Moranya follows the younger woman's gaze and butts it out again, rolling her eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Thank you. I heard you have a gift. (VERY SERIOUS) A real gift.

MORANYA

Ah... (REACHES FOR THE TAROT DECK) I only translate what the cards tell me, child.

Moranya quickly turns over three cards as Alice watches her, confused.

ALICE

The cards?

MORANYA

Let me see. Now. Three of swords. The Hangman. (LOOKING UP) A separation.

Alice is shaking her head, getting more frustrated.

MORANYA (CONT'D)

Together with the Ace of Cups...

ALICE

No! I don't want to hear this.

MORANYA

Then why do you come to me?

ALICE

They... they told me you're some kind of psychic. They never said anything about... cards.

MORANYA

(LEANS BACK) Then what *did* they
say?

Alice's hands cradle her pregnant belly again.

ALICE

They told me... (IN A RUSH) they
said you could talk to the dead.

Moranya moves the tarot cards away and folds her hands,
considering the younger woman.

MORANYA

They told you the truth, child.
(FORESTALLING) But... it is not
something easily done. The cost
is... considerable.

Alice fishes around an inside pocket, removes a roll of
fifty dollar notes and snatches her coat closed.

ALICE

They told me. (SITS THE MONEY
DOWN) They said you wouldn't
refuse.

MORANYA

(WRY SMILE) It sounds like they
know me too well. (TAKES MONEY)
It is difficult, girl. To take a
spirit into my body... it is
dangerous for me, you
understand?

ALICE

(NODDING, EYES WIDE) But you'll
do it?

Moranya sighs, her dark eyes weighing the money.

MORANYA

I will try. Tell me who you
would speak with. Your mother?

Alice shakes her head slowly. A tear is rolling down
her cheek.

ALICE

(WHISPERS) My mother lives in
Devonport.

MORANYA

Ah. (GENTLE) Is it the father of
your child? Has he passed from
this world?

ALICE

No. No. It's...

She lowers her head and cradles her swollen belly
protectively. When she looks up again, her tears are
flowing. Moranya stares.

MORANYA

(WHISPERS) The child?

Alice's shoulders hitch and she takes a deep breath.

ALICE

She... she didn't... (SOBS)

Moranya stares in consternation as the girl cries.

MORANYA

The child has passed? My poor,
sweet, girl... I... I'm not sure
that I can... you need a
doctor...

ALICE

(INTENSE) You'll try, won't you.
I've paid you, you'll try. I...
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

(DEFLATES) I need to tell her...
She needs to know I love her.

Alice cries quietly while Moranya lights her cigarette again, then purses her lips and leans forward.

MORANYA

I will try, but I have never...
I cannot guarantee it will work.
You understand?

ALICE

(NODS) Thank you. Thank you.

Moranya exhales a thin stream of bluish smoke, her eyes troubled.

MORANYA

For one so young... the spirit
will not speak. It will not know
your words.

ALICE

(FROWNING) But you will, and you
can...

MORANYA

No girl. I will not be here. You
must speak to the spirit.

ALICE

But... (SHAKING HER HEAD) if she
doesn't know what I'm saying....

MORANYA

The words don't matter. The
spirit will know what you feel.
Speak with love. Hide your
sorrow, your fear, just for a
little while. Show it your
love... and let it go.

Alice dries her eyes and nods slowly.

ALICE

Love. Only love.

Moranya nods, satisfied, and stubs out her cigarette.

MORANYA

The spirit will come, but not
for long. Say your piece quickly
girl. My body is not as strong
as it once was.

Alice's hands unconsciously massage her belly as she watches the older woman sit back and take a deep breath. Moranya closes her eyes.

The candlelight flickers and shadows play along the tent walls.

Moranya lowers her head and her brow furrows. Her lips move but no sound is heard. Alice looks down at her belly. Moranya twitches sharply, but her eyes remain closed.

ALICE

What... what's happening?

MORANYA

I see her. (SHAKES HER HEAD) She
is reaching for me, but...
something is wrong.

Alice bites her lip, her hands nervously stroking her belly.

MORANYA (CONT'D)

Something is... (DEEP BREATH)
She has not yet passed over.
(GRIMACES IN PAIN) She hovers
between...poor, poor girl...

ALICE

(HOARSE) They told me it would only take a few hours. (LEANS FORWARD) Let me speak to her!

MORANYA

It is not right, it is not...

ALICE

Let me speak to her!

Moranya's entire body tenses momentarily, as though she is struggling, but then she sags limply in her chair.

Alice stands, slowly, staring. When Moranya lifts her head again, Alice claps her hands over her mouth.

The older woman's eyes have changed into blank milky orbs. Her face is slack, expressionless, as she gazes at the tent walls, her head swivelling bonelessly.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Is that... is that...

At the sound of Alice's voice, Moranya snaps to attention. Her blank eyes lock onto the young woman with a beatific, slack-jawed smile and her head tilts gently.

Alice sits down slowly, her knees weak, her eyes wide.

ALICE (CONT'D)

My love... my precious love...

Moranya's smile grows even wider and she sighs euphorically. Alice's own smile quivers.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I loved you so much. So much.
Please don't hate me.

Alice's hands scrabble across the table, reaching for her child. Moranya's smile falters a little.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I had no choice. There was no other way. Please forgive me.

Alice snatches her hands back, her body wracking with sobs. Moranya watches, confusion and fear blooming across her slack features.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(SOBBING) They would have sent me away... I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.... (PLEADING) They couldn't find out...ever... please... forgive me...

As Alice buries her face in her hands, Moranya begins to shake her head from side to side. Horror plays across her features.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(SOBBING WHISPER) I just wanted to say... goodbye.

Moranya begins a wordless whine. Alice sobs harder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I love you...

Moranya's wail grows louder and more frantic. Her body jerks uselessly. Her face is helpless, primal fear.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Forgive me... (SOBS)

Moranya's cries become screams, then abruptly she slumps in her seat, her eyes squeezed shut.

Alice sobs, huddled over her belly.

As the older woman sits up straight again, the milky clouds dissipate from her eyes. She is exhasuted.

Alice freezes mid-sob, confusion passing over her features... and then sudden pain.

MORANYA

(WEAK WHISPER) You fool. What have you done?

Alice shrieks, her hands clutching at her stomach. She tries to stand, but pain wracks her body and she sits again, heavily.

ALICE

(AGONY) What are you doing?

Moranya is blinking as though she has just woken up.

MORANYA

I do nothing, child. This is your work.

ALICE

Please... make it stop...

She tries to stand again, but collapses onto the ground instead, her coat wide open. A small pill bottle rolls away from her. It's label reads: Misoprostol.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It hurts... why does it hurrrrrt?

Moranya stares at the shrieking girl pitilessly.

MORANYA

(WHISPERS) Your child wants to live.

Alice writhes on the ground, gasping and shrieking. Moranya comes to stand beside her. The younger woman's belly is shifting, bulging. She pulls her blouse aside.

ALICE

Oh god, I think she's coming, oh
god, get me to a unnnh...
hospital.

MORANYA

It is too late, girl.

Alice screams in agony, her body arching.

ALICE

No... no...

There is a wet, bloody sound as a gore-covered arm
pushes through the skin of her belly. A tiny hand
grasps at the air, it's gore-coated fingers waving
weakly.

BLACKOUT:

AUDIO:

The shriek is cut short by a dreadful ripping sound,
followed by a newborn's squall. The baby's cry
continues to ring out as the CREDITS ROLL.