

Blindsided

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Rowan sat at a booth in the corner of a bustling bar. Drunk singing following along with the band filled the air while she fidgeted with her deck of cards. Her fingers brushed against the raised dots in the left corner of each card. It was the first deck she ever had, so the Braille had worn down to faint bumps over the years. She rarely used it while performing tricks after customers repeatedly accused her of cheating. Nonetheless, she carried it everywhere she went. Knowing it was there always comforted her.

“You must be the magician I keep hearing so much about.” A deep voice heavy with a southern twang asked.

“That depends on who’s been talking.” She smiled politely and offered her hand to shake. “I’m Rowan. Were you looking to see a trick?”

He grasped her hand and gave a firm handshake. “I’m Liam. I’d love to see one of your tricks. Is it true that you’re, ya know?” The booth across from her creaked when he slid into it.

“You can say the word blind, Liam. It’s not some big secret.” Rowan returned her cards to the dilapidated box which found their home in one of the pockets inside her purse.

“My bad. I hope you can forgive me. I would never be able to tell by just looking at you.” His apology sounded sincere, so she gave him a forgiving smile.

“Never judge a book by its cover,” she said while pulling out the set she used with customers. She poured the cards into her hand before spreading them out faceup on the table.

“You can see that this is a normal deck and not a trick deck, yes?” After claims of using a trick deck, she fell into the habit of showing the cards before performing the trick.

“Yes, ma’am.”

Rowan gathered the cards and shuffled them. As the cards slapped against the surface she began to drown out the ruckus of the bar until it was only her and Liam. She shuffled the deck once more before fanning them out in front of the man.

“Tell me when you’ve picked one, but don’t tell me the card.”

A few seconds passed while Liam pried the chosen card out of the deck. Once he gave the verbal confirmation, she reformed the cards into a stack and set it on the table. She inhaled a deep breath and chased away any thought that didn’t involve his card. She pushed the stack toward Liam and directed him to place it anywhere in the deck. Once he had, she lowered her hand below the table and tapped her palm gently. In her mind, she repeated the phrase, *pone hic*. Her hand tingled with magic as the card materialized in her palm.

Placing the card on the table, she slid it towards him. “Is this your card?”

Shocked silence filled the air between them. "How did you do that? Do you even know what card it is?"

She smirked playfully. "A good magician never reveals her secrets."

In reality, she knew that if anyone found out her magic was more than a fun party trick, she would be looked down upon. The town she had lived in since she was a baby was full of close-minded people, so she only used magic for protection and as a way to bring in extra money. Her dream was to move to New York City someday where she could live judgement free, but New York City demanded money that she didn't have from working in retail.

"That's quite impressive, Miss. How much do you charge?"

"I'm not technically allowed to charge anyone here, but tips are always appreciated."

"Here you go, then." He planted a bill in her open hand. "It's a twenty."

"Thank you very much. I hope you have a good night."

"You as well."

Rowan stuffed the bill into her wallet alongside the other twenty she had. She pulled her phone out of her purse and tapped the screen until the automated voice read, "Eleven thirty-two P.M."

Deciding it was too late to stay in the bar any longer, Rowan returned her phone to her purse and packed up the set of cards. Her folded cane clicked together when she removed the strap, and she pushed herself out of the booth. She was a frequent visitor of the bar and memorized the layout quickly. Even though she never drank, it brought customers who were willing to spend money on what they would deem worthless when sober.

She navigated her way around tables and people until the tip of her cane hit the wall about a foot away from the door. As she started to feel her way to the door, a man who smelled as though he had bathed in beer appeared beside her. "Hey, sweetheart, let me help you." He wrapped his arm around her waist to guide her.

She wrinkled her nose at the pungent smell and pulled away from him. "No, thank you. I don't need any help."

He ignored her and placed an arm around her shoulder. "C'mon, just let me help you. Are you trying to find the door?"

She shrugged him away. Impatience began to bubble inside her, threatening to spill over. "Sir, please don't touch me. I don't need any help."

Ignoring her again, he placed a hand on her back. "Don't be rude. I'm trying to help."

"Stop!" she demanded with her teeth clenched. Her skin began to tingle as impatience turned to anger. Energy pulsed from her body, vibrating the air around them. The man was knocked off his feet, and Rowan winced when she heard him hit the floor. Her face flushed a bright red when the busyness of the bar ceased, and she froze as the stares of the attendants burned into her skin. She had never done anything like that before. In the past she was always able to control her magic. She jumped when a hand patted her shoulder.

“Good luck.” The same voice from before whispered in her ear. Liam.

“What was that?” The man’s voice wavering as the cockyness turned to fear.

She pulled the hood of her jacket over her buzzed head and rushed to find the door. The ringing of the bell on the door seemingly echoed through the entire town as she hurried out. Rowan knew then that her secret was out. It wouldn’t take long for the word to spread, and living in a small town meant word spread fast.