Make Haste tTo Live

Plink

Celink-click

Tik-tik-tik-tik-tik-tik........

Shink!

-"How much is that?"

The old lady manning the counter peers up from her book as if I've interrupted her. Lady, if you want a job with no distractions, don't work in retail. But then she dredges up a smile from somewhere, gets up and comes around the counter, her Ceoke bottle glasses catching the light. "How much is what now, honey?"

"This. The old carnival thing."

"Oh, you mean Madame Tarot?"

FIne front of the wood-and_glass box simply says 'Fortune Teller' in swooping red letters on a darker red background, the type-set swirling around someonebody's idea of a mystic mandala framed in cherubs and the sort of curlicue decoration the Victorians liked so much. Lower down. 'One Cent', reads the smaller type above a little coin slot below that. But it's what's inside the box that's really catching my eye.

The figure iInside the glass box is the figure of a seated woman, her head slightly bowed; a candle sits on her right hand, a teacup on her left, A a sheaf of tarot cards fanneds out under her quiet hands. And she's gorgeous. I've seen these things before, running up and down Antique Row; usually the fortune telling dummy is made to look grotesque, or comical, or just a little bit sinister.

These wax windup dolls in their glass boxes survive from the days when little carnivals still traveled the country every summer. P, and people across America really did get a wicked thrill out of putting a penny in a slot and feeling like they'd done something exotic when a wax 'gypsy fortune teller' dropped a card in the slot. Pretty tasteless to most people today. But hey, they had culturally insensitive carnival toys, we get into fights with strangers on Facebook. Every generation does one dumbass thing, at least.

Besides, this -dummy is different. She looks like a Moroccan Madonna dressed for a

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italic

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Commented [LAJ1]: I suggest 'behind' instead of

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Commented [LAJ2]: Internal thought. Italics helps

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Commented [LAJ3]: Coke is a trademark of the Coc

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Commented [LAJ4]: I added 'swirling' as it felt like a

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Commented [LAJ5]: The 'above and below' overly-

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dance. On her head is a sheer veil with a bordered withof silver coins. Beneath it, her hair is a lustrous black, catching dusty light in soft blue shimmerings. Damn, I wish I'd brought my sketchbook. I want to capture that hair in the light. -Her wax face is beautifully defined and lustrous, tinted so perfectly that you expect her to take a breath, raise her head and look at you any second now. If somebody had told Michelangelo, "-Hhey man, ever done a carnival attraction before? Give you fifty bucks if you can do it by next week. ... this is what they'd get. "How much is she?" The shop lady consults a tag behind one of the long, fluted legs that support the fFortune tTeller's box. "Hundred and fifty, honey." I bite my lip, A hundred and fifty is the proceeds of the last painting I sold. It's supposed to go on the credit card......but I could make it up by doing some extra hours at the tea house, right? It'd even out. -And I really, really want to draw this lady. Hell, I'd love to do a full painting based on her, and if that sells, then she's a business expense, right? -Oh screw it, I'll be honest. I want her because she's that toy you never got as a kid. She's old and new and shiny and fascinating, and I know right where she'd go in my studio. "Does she work?" I ask tentatively, pointing at the jotted note tacked below the penny slot that reads 'Ddo Nnot Ttouch!' The shop owner's iron curls bob as she tips her head. "Oh that was just to keep kids from messing with her. I can't really tell you to be honest; I never tried her." -I nod, still chewing my lip. Hundred and fifty....hundred and fifty...... A glint catches my eye, and I stoop to pick up a penny off the floor while my brain does the The shop owner looks up at me from her nest of canary cardigan like a friendly tortoise peering out of its shell, studying my face.

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Commented [LAJ6]: Or is she the shop owner? See two comments down for more.

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Commented [LAJ7]: Biting of lips is a common cliché used often by many writers. Think about having your character do something else instead. What would her character be likely to do? Imagine her in this scene and see what comes to mind.

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Commented [LAJ8]: Previously she was referred to as the 'shop lady'. Choose one title for consistency.

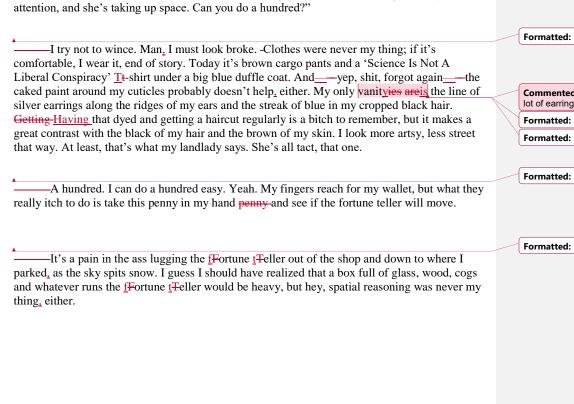
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Commented [LAJ9]: Again here with the lip chewing. I suggest something similar to, "I nod, still mentally juggling my budget" Try some ideas and see what you like

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"I'd sell her for a hundred." she announces after a long moment. "She hasn't gotten any

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Commented [LAJ10]: Changed plural to singular. It's a lot of earrings, but it's her only vanity.

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