

One of many times I wished to know the Back Story...

You see something, maybe out of the corner of your eye, perhaps something in the car speeding past you, or disappearing in the opposite direction. Snippets of other people's lives that register in your conscience for just a moment as ....What the hell....

Sometimes it's little things, like "why do I often see just one shoe on the side of the road?"; "Did that person who posted in the 'Missing Connections' ever find the person they searched for?". The Cinderella type stories.

Other times, there are more chapters to the story, but still no conclusion. Like the time I got out of a cab at a Tapas bar in Vancouver's trendy West End and there on the sidewalk at my feet was a corset. A lovely, barely worn, black lace corset, lying on the sidewalk at 8:00 at night. How would someone lose an undergarment like that? Stockings, sure, underwear, OK, even a bra or a garter belt I can see....but a whole corset!?

Today, I was missing a back story of tremendous-- possibly Epic Proportions. Perhaps because it took place in my small town on a sleepy Sunday afternoon, or perhaps because I am just naturally curious...or perhaps because I grew up in the same small town and am easily intrigued by events of this nature. In any event, this is the part of the story I know.

I was wandering around a funny little New Age store on the highway that runs through our village. I'd not been in this shop before, so, with time to kill, I ambled about the crystals and geodes and incense and "Goddess Bless" bumper stickers. As I stood at one display case near the till, a lady-- possibly the proprietor-- came out of the back.

"May I help you?" she inquired. When I assured her that I was not in need of assistance, she asked again, "Oh....are you here for a Reading?"

"Oh! No, thank you" I affirmed, and was about to step back from the counter when another woman appeared from the back.

Gathering together the clues I'd just been given and a couple that were to follow, I was reasonably sure this second woman was a client, just finished a "reading" of some sort, what in my less enlightened days I would have called "Getting her Fortune Told". Normally, another customer in a shop such as this one would be of only mild interest to me. But this woman was like none I'd ever seen before, in any setting, except maybe on TV. At least on TV, I would have been mostly guaranteed of the Back Story.

Of petite build, perhaps 5'3" or 5'4" (but appearing taller because of the 4 inch stilettos she wore), the woman approached the counter looking for all the world like a TV-movie version of a Paid Escort. Her height was also augmented by drastically teased dark black hair, raised at the crown fully 2 inches by method of back combing and hair spray. Her

eyes were ringed with black eyeliner and heavy mascara--possibly false eye-lashes, but if not, at least an average-woman's weekly allotment of mascara applied with precision. She wore a mid-thigh length black dress, unremarkable in itself, because I was distracted by the coat over top. A bold, just an inch or two shorter than her skirt, black white and grey Leopard print. Now, given that I am inclined to wear animal prints myself, it's not surprising that her clothing caught my eye. But the whole package, from mile-high hair to fuck-me stilettos screamed "I'm a call girl" or, at best: "I'm not a call girl, but I play one on TV." She was perhaps 30 years old, possibly older and well maintained, or possibly younger and well-used. It was impossible to judge.

She paid for whatever services had been rendered in the mystic back rooms and exchanged a long hug with the woman at the till, who assured her that: "If you need anything else before next time, just call".

Anxious for any more clues, I followed her out the door, marveling at her adroit choreography out the door, over the gravel path and to her car-- in shoes that would have crippled a lesser woman.

The last clue I got to her story only made that lack of back story all the more crucial: I watched her get into a car that carried a price tag greater than my yearly income.

She applied some lip gloss and turned the expensive sports car south.

And I will probably never know where she went, why she was here, and what was going on....

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