

ALL TAI'D UP

Dale, twenty-two, a recent graduate in archaeology, has reached the end of his rope. He decides to visit Anita, twenty, a psychic and physiognomist (a facial reader) out of desperation. In the past few weeks, his relationship with his girlfriend, Lea, has become disastrous — mostly because she seems to hate him. Anita, a third-generation psychic and biology major, uses the money from her psychic sessions to pay her way through college. Unfortunately, she not only has no talent in this area she also doesn't fake it very well. Dale has just rung the bell, and Anita has buzzed him in.

CHARACTERS

Dale: 22, a recent graduate of archaeology

Anita: late 20s, a physiognomist (a facial reader and student)

SETTING

Anita's family's psychic storefront

TIME

The present

DALE: Hi. I'm glad you're still open.

ANITA: Uh, we're not open. In fact, we just closed.

DALE: What? But the blinking "Psychic" sign says ten.

ANITA: Yeah, but the nonblinking me says "last appointment nine-thirty."

DALE: *(Looking at his watch.)* It is nine-thirty. See? I have nine-thirty. In fact, it's nine-twenty-nine according to my watch. And my watch is very good — a Swiss, precision-controlled watch synchronized with the National Weather Service.

ANITA: *(Pointing to her watch.)* Mine's a gift I received when I ordered a ridiculous amount of magazines I didn't want. Now it's a constant reminder of pushy people. Hint, hint.

DALE: I'm not being pushy. I'm just desperate.

ANITA: And this matters to me because . . .

DALE: I have a lot of money.

ANITA: Would you like to take a seat?

DALE: I can't. My life is a mess. It's this woman I'm very serious about.

ANITA: Can we go back to the lotta money thing again?

DALE: *Was* very serious about. I don't know. Everyone keeps saying that she's, that something is going on with this, this tai chi guy. I need to know what to do.

ANITA: Oh, I get it. Sigma, Sigma Pi, right? This is some lame initiation. I don't need this.

DALE: What?!

ANITA: I know what you all pulled at the laundromat yesterday. That poor girl. She nearly had a heart attack when that guy started knocking on the dryer window. Now, she's terrified of Clingfree sheets! Rule number one: Don't put freshman in dryers, understand? I hate frat boys! Even if you are cute.

DALE: But I'm not a frat boy. I couldn't get in. Not that I wanted to. I graduated from G.W. last year with a degree in archaeology. I'm twenty-two. I'm nice. I work at the museum. With rocks.

ANITA: Oh, well that assures me of your character. I'll call a stalagmite tomorrow for a reference.

DALE: Did you just say I was cute or did I mishear you?

ANITA: Yes.

DALE: To which?

ANITA: Never mind. *(Beat.)* Do you know if Beck's sells used books?

DALE: You're a student as well as a psychic?

ANITA: Yeah. Well . . . was. I'm not a psychic anymore. Tonight was my last night.

DALE: Last night? How? Once a psychic, always a psychic. Isn't that how it works? It's a gift.

ANITA: Yeah, I know. But it's really my mother's and her

mother's and her mother's mother's gift. Mine was more like a gift certificate. You use it a couple times and that's it.

DALE: So you don't have to be perfect at this, Zelda. I just need a little sound advice.

ANITA: I'm not Zelda. That's my mother. I'm Anita. It doesn't even sound like a psychic.

DALE: (*Shrugs.*) It's not as bad as Martha. That has no psychic ring.

ANITA: My mother's a genius. So is my aunt Ruby. I'm just not as good at this crap, OK? I can't feel vibes. I don't hear voices. And the only aura I ever saw turned out to be a strobe light in a smoky bar. Truth is I *suck*.

DALE: Well, I'm sure you don't suck.

ANITA: I suck. I really suck.

DALE: Are you sure you suck? You look intuitive.

ANITA: (*Intrigued.*) I do? Really? (*Shakes her head.*) I do not.

DALE: Yes, you do. You really, really do.

ANITA: I do? (*Flirting.*) Want to grab a drink tomorrow?

DALE: I, I can't. Even if I want to. (*She stares at him.*) Not that I don't because I do. Very much like your . . . drinks. I like drinks. But I have a fiancée. Well, not exactly a fiancée — a soon-to-be fiancée if she doesn't dump me. You see I need some sound advice.

ANITA: From a psychic?

DALE: My relationship, my whole life hangs in the balance.

ANITA: Oh sure. No pressure. I'm really sorry, uhhh? (*Referring to his name.*)

DALE: Dale.

ANITA: Dale? (*He nods.*) That's so cute. Look, Dale, I'm not good at this. And it sounds like you need a therapist, not a psychic. It would be completely unethical for me to give you advice.

DALE: But cost is no object.

ANITA: Of course, who said I was ethical? That'll be fifty bucks. Take a seat.

DALE: Fifty bucks?! I can't afford that.

ANITA: I thought you said cost was no object?

DALE: It isn't. Just as long as it's no more than seven.

ANITA: What?!! No more than seven?! Even for regulars, we charge twenty.

DALE: I'm sorry. I can't help it. I'm broke. My girlfriend has been forcing me to fix up my place. She says I have to upscale if she's going to stay with me.

ANITA: Upscale? What kinda snotty-faced brat is she?

DALE: Exactly. That's exactly what I say — sort of . . . in a nicer way. I don't know why I always have to spend money to make her happy. I'm a neat guy. I keep my laundry off the floor. And I do our laundry every week.

ANITA: Our? You do her laundry? (*He nods.*) You're sick.

DALE: She has me setting up my living environment so that it brings flow or energy or peace or something. It's, uh, this Chinesey thingy called uh funk, funk, funk —

ANITA: Feng Shui?

DALE: (*Smacking his hands.*) That's it! It's supposed to be all about peace.

ANITA: And marketing.

DALE: Buying a seventy-five dollar water fountain didn't bring me peace. She insists we run it all night long. I have to pee every half-an-hour with its tinkling.

ANITA: Tinkling?

DALE: Well, you know what I mean.

ANITA: It's all crap. (*Chinese accent.*) "Do put a plant or living thing in the southwest corner of the room." I kill plants.

DALE: So do I. Decaying plants do not equal peace. She's on me all the time about the living thing in the southwest corner.

ANITA: I always keep a *living thing* in my southwest corner. It does keep the peace.

DALE: It does?

ANITA: Yep, my roommate. I tried to kill her, but she has other living things over there, protecting her. Molding coffee mugs, fish, her boyfriend. It's just useless.

DALE: You're funny. But I'm serious. She blames me for her low energy. She said I don't have a well-defined main entrance to my place. I have to define it. It's the mouth of my chi. She says I have bad chi 'cause of my mouth problem. Do you think I have bad chi?

ANITA: No, I think you have great chi. (*Flirting more.*) You have a nice mouth too.

DALE: You too — I mean, you do? She says the door problem is damaging her energy.

ANITA: Tell her if the door is a problem, maybe she'd be more comfortable on the other side of it.

DALE: I know. You're right. My friends say she's rotten to me now. She hates my cat. She used to love my cat. Poor thing sheds a lot. She's nervous with all the knick-knacks and New Age music. Maybe I should do something drastic like get rid of her. What do your vibes say?

ANITA: Get rid of her.

DALE: But she's so friendly and cuddly. I love her.

ANITA: Not the cat, Dale. The chick.

DALE: The chick?

ANITA: The chick, the snot-faced brat. She's messing with your relationship with your cat. That's wrong.

DALE: But don't you need to consult the tarot cards, the tea leaves, the crystal balls?

ANITA: Yes, that's what you could use here, Dale — balls.

DALE: You do the crystal ball?

ANITA: I meant . . . never mind. Look, I don't do all that stuff. I'm a physiognomist.

DALE: Oh. Of course. That's great then. What is that?

ANITA: Facial reading.

DALE: You read faces? How does one read a face?

ANITA: Sit down. And I'll show you. (*Starting her routine.*) Now relax. Just relax. Relax. (*She stares at him intently.*) Relax!

DALE: How can I relax? I feel like you're staring at me.

ANITA: Of course I am. That's how you do it.

DALE: Well, what do you see? You see anything about my girlfriend?

ANITA: No, no. I'm seeing blue. Is blue something significant to you?

DALE: Blue . . . blue . . . Um, well, my room is white and the basement I work in is green . . . Blue, um . . . I have been . . . blue. That's it! I've been feeling so blue!!

ANITA: Well, that's just . . . that's really stretching. Let's see what else I get.

DALE: I've been feeling really blue because I wanted to ask my girlfriend to marry me this Thanksgiving, but I think I realized that was a bad idea when she told me she hated me.

ANITA: Yeah, I'd say that doesn't sound too promising.

DALE: So what else does my face say about my girlfriend?

ANITA: It says, it says, um . . . you have nice eyes.

DALE: Does my girlfriend think that?

ANITA: Who cares. She's irritating. (*Looking at him more closely.*) Oh my God.

DALE: What? What? It says she's seeing someone else, doesn't it?

ANITA: It does? (*Realizing.*) Oh yes, it does. This, this wrinkle here. Right in this wrinkle.

DALE: She gave me a wrinkle?

ANITA: She did! It's a guy, a guy she knows who's like some, some big —

DALE: Nah, the guy I'm thinking of is short.

ANITA: Fat —

DALE: Nah, he's kinda lean too.

ANITA: Fat eating it says . . . type of guy.

DALE: He does like burgers. I saw him with a burger. You're good. You're really, really good.

ANITA: Thanks, cutie. But let's face it. I'm making this crap up. I suck.

DALE: No, no, you're doing really well. You just have to warm up.

ANITA: Warm up? No. I wouldn't know a fortune if came

wrapped in a cookie. I'm just too insensitive. Just today I told a guy he'd meet a woman and then probably die in the next month wearing an ugly toupee. I should've left that part out.

DALE: His dying?

ANITA: No, the toupee. Oh yeah. I probably should have left out the dying part too, huh? See, I'm insensitive.

DALE: That's not true. You've been very sensitive to me. And you can see what's going on with me too. You've already made me feel better about it.

ANITA: About what? Your stupid, mean girlfriend who's sleeping with her Tai Chi instructor?

DALE: Tai Chi instructor? How did you know?

ANITA: I don't know. Probably because you said it when you walked in. Tai Chi. Feng Shui. Lotta chi chi goin' on to me.

DALE: They're definitely having an affair?

ANITA: It looks pretty certain to me, Dale. And a guy like you . . . you don't deserve that.

DALE: No, I certainly don't.

ANITA: You're a good catch. You're cute. You're a guy with a cat. And you work in a museum —

DALE: With rocks.

ANITA: Rocks. Exactly. She's a boulder on your back.

DALE: She's why I have such a blue aura.

ANITA: Black and blue. You don't need that. You deserve someone better.

DALE: I know. I know. Someone in science and, and —

ANITA: Anatomy. Anatomy is always good.

DALE: You know what I see?

ANITA: What?

DALE: *(He looks in her eyes.)* I see something in you now . . . I see something red and new —

ANITA: My new car! You're good too.

DALE: You have a new car? And it's red? Really?

ANITA: No, it's old. But I just got it back from the shop so it's like new.

DALE: But it's red?

ANITA: No, it's blue but it does have red rust. It's a bug.

DALE: I love bugs.

ANITA: Me too. Just the drivable kind though.

DALE: I'm seeing this red car and you and me and maybe a few drinks?

ANITA: Oh really? *(She looks at him devilishly.)* Aren't you quite the psychic now?

DALE: Maybe I've found my new calling.

ANITA: You have. *(She smiles and takes his arm.)*