Future

You’re leaving your favorite restaurant after eating breakfast when a stranger taps you on the shoulder. But this tap leads to a conversation—and adventure—that leaves you with one item that you never thought you’d ever own. Start your story with “I hate to bother you, but I have something important to ask.”

“I hate to bother you, but I have something important to ask.” A softly urgent voice accompanied the hand that rested on my shoulder.

An older woman with shoulder-length salt-and-pepper hair and pale green eyes was the one who addressed me.

She looked to be in her early eighties with a long burgundy pea coat and a strand of pearls around her neck; despite her age, she stood straight and still retained all the elegance of a woman half her age.

“Yes?” I turned to her, a smile touching my mouth.

A look of doubt played over the old woman’s face for less than a moment. “I was wondering if you’d be willing to drive me?” She spoke hesitantly, fidgeting with the clutch in her hands.

“Oh,” I exclaimed, the surprise evident in my voice, “I- well yes, of course.” I fumbled for words.

A look of relief crossed over her features, her hand going to the pearls, “Thank you, I appreciate it so much.”

“Of course!” I replied cheerfully, happy to help anyone so close to the holidays. As we walked to my car, our heels clicking lightly on the pavement, we chatted about superficial things like the weather and how pretty the trees looked dressed up and I wondered who this
woman really was and how I was lucky to have been engaged in this adventure.

As we approached my Buick, the woman became silent, and a far-off look came over her face.

“So, where am I driving to?” I asked.

She thought a moment. “Houston Avenue, please.”

“I moved here during my third year of college; I have a PhD in English,” the woman said softly, looking out the window at the rows of small houses. “I’m a book editor.”

“I’m starting my second semester of college,” I whispered, the hairs rising on the back of my neck. “I’m studying English.”

A knowing smile crossed her face. “I would like to go to 3rd street.”

I looked up at the brick apartment building in awe; I had always wanted to live here.

“My boyfriend and I moved in here just before I graduated. We were so in love.” I looked as her voice cracked, a smile and a tear gracing her face.

We went all over the city, to the place her husband proposed to her, their first home, the house their daughters grew up in and finally, the large colonial home she lived in now.

“Thank you,” my friend said as she opened the door.

“Wait!” A thought dawned on me: “I never caught your name.”

The woman paused, giving me a wistful look. “Wendy Carter.”

I was awestruck. “Mine is Wendy Holm.”

She smiled and shut the door, walking up the front landing.

I sat in silence before brushing the snow off my burgundy pea coat and reaching to touch the pearls that had been in my family for generations.

And that’s how I ended up being the proud owner of a beautiful future.