

Psych Up Your Life

After eighteen months of increasing extremes, Elizabeth McCafferty goes in search of a happy medium.

I have been going through an existential crisis. Within a year, I've had 56 job rejections while I worked as COVID officer on the Tube, where men would throw food at me and then, sometimes, piss themselves in the station. My love life also flailed more than ever before. Like most people, I needed instant assurance that it was all going to be okay, but no one I knew was able to provide that.

Life was stranger than strange, and after a long googling binge, I reached out to a psychic via email to see whether they could help.

'Hi Elizabeth, thank you for your message... we're currently booking clients for 2022: please let me know if you'd like me to send you a date for this time.'

Had I been naïve to assume it would be easy to book in a psychic reading? Evidently yes. But after a few calls, I finally managed to book an interview instead.

Susan radiates warm energy via my Zoom screen. She is giggly, friendly and dressed in purple, with eyeshadow to match. She tells me that her intuition runs in the female side of her family. Her dad used to freak out when she mentioned her spirit friend 'Jean'. As she got older, her grandmother encouraged her to believe her visions were normal and she now works as a psychic full time. I ask Susan:

what accountability do psychics have towards their

clients? 'Under UK law, psychic readings are classed as entertainment only, no one can sue a psychic,' Susan explains.

But why weren't they able to predict the pandemic? Surely, they could have seen it coming and helped us to prepare? 'I'm sure psychics who look at world events can... but I usually focus on delivering messages to individuals,' says Susan. 'I could see lots of major changes, like hold-ups or personal health problems. Sometimes the spirit world only tells us things they want us to know – the world would be perfect if we prevented all disasters.'

Maybe because we live in an increasingly catastrophic world, I hadn't quite realised the scale of how busy psychics can get. 'I've not had a break for nearly seven years,' Martin Hopgood, a builder-turned-medium from Eastbourne, told me. He shatters any preconceived ideas of a stereotypical psychic. He's covered in tattoos, swears loudly, and adamantly sticks to his 'no pink and fluffy' rule. He tells you how it is, with a scary amount of accuracy.

As Martin continues, he suddenly interrupts himself. 'I've got your grandma's sister here with me... your gran's as tough as old boots, isn't she? Has she got a very unusual ruby ring? Sorry, I'm going off on one.' The information about the ring is true: I congratulate him on being a great psychic. 'I don't really like being called a psychic if I'm honest... as most people class them as "nuts". I'm a medium... there is a huge difference between a psychic and medium though.'

With scepticism about the term, how can you find an honest, hard-working psychic?

'Psychics can feed you full of shit with stuff you can't validate, be warned. There's a lot of blaggers out there and lots jumped on the opportunity to make money doing mediumship and tarot during COVID,' he tells me.

'I can see where he's coming from,' said Susan, when I told her Martin's opinion. 'Some people associate the name "psychic" with being conned from companies that charge extortionate amounts for things like phone readings per minute. I've heard of people racking up thousands of pounds from that.'

I do remember one lady actually. Over the course of a year she booked readings with me almost weekly, asking questions about her love life. I ended up telling her to stop booking because I couldn't give her any more information (she didn't listen). She contacted me offering £4,000 to put a spell on one of her exes to stop him marrying his new fiancée.

'Spells are bad Karma. I don't do spells, I do healing. I'm also not a witch. She ended up paying someone else to stop it and then a few days later, called me back saying the wedding went ahead,

wanting advice on how to get her money back. "The psychic was a scammer!" she cried.'

Having spoken to Martin and Susan, I hadn't quite realised the intricacies and technicalities that come with the gift of extrasensory perception. With the term 'psychic' being offensive to some, not all being 'clairvoyant', not all able to palm-read or use tarot cards, and with some people mistaking Susan for a witch, there was more to learn than I'd thought.

'I do have to ask you... From a journalist's perspective... there must be a big part of you that thinks this is a load of old shit right?' laughed Martin. 'Just you wait though, you've got some work coming up in a few months... make a note of these dates...' He explained that from the end of February to the beginning of March I would get a job in film. November 2021 I'll also be travelling abroad for work, and I need to keep writing as he can see a lot going on. As for patterns he could see in my dating life? 'Red flags, selfish stuff, coke issues.'

I often think about what Martin said. Do I think it's a load of old shit? Well, his February/March prediction came true... on the exact dates he gave me. It's a known fact my dating life is a shambles and as for November, I'm sitting tight and about to find out. Do I need another reading to fully answer whether it was a fluke? Yes, maybe. But how did he know about the ring? I guess we'll have to wait another two years to find out more, as he makes his way down his waiting list.

