

Mademoiselle

May 2001

Because this is your time

sexy hair

Summer's
most
wanted
haireuts

15

ultimate
beauty buys

Desperate For a diamond

Why are smart
women pushing
for a proposal?

"The day
my mother
died"

Intimacy report:

Is he telling
his friends
about your
sex life?

89

miracle
Fashion
Finds

Why everyone
in Hollywood wants

Estella Warren

Health special

Discover your body's real age

Surprise yourself, p. 122



U.S.A. \$2.99
Canada \$3.95
Foreign \$3.95

What career will make me happy?

How many children will I have?

Will I ever be rich and famous?

Is he cheating?

Who am I really?

Are we sexually compatible?

Where is Prince Charming?

Should I quit my job and become an artist?

Where should I live?

Is he cheating?

Did I make the right decision?

Does my father still love me?

Will he fall in love with me?

Who am I really?

Should I quit my job and become an artist?

Does my father still love me?

What will make me happy?

How many children will I have?

Story **Carrie Sloan**

Should you visit a **psychic?** (Get in line)

High-priced therapists, watch out. Increasingly, sophisticated women who used to view psychics with cynicism are now seeking, and acting on, advice from the other side.

Can you learn more from tarot cards than Rorschach tests?



The snapshot I hold is crumpled and covered in fingerprints. It is a photograph of me at the age of five, perched on my father's lap, laughing. We were cute back then, my father and I, sporting identical shades of blond hair and blue eyes—not to mention matching rainbow suspenders, which, in our defense, were very fashionable back in 1979.

I offer the slightly yellowed photograph to the woman across the table, and she smiles warmly. Her name is Faye Kathryn Barr, and she's a psychic from Virginia Beach who claims she can

communicate with my dad. He died in 1990, two months before my sixteenth birthday, of malignant melanoma. In some ways, I've never recovered, and today's psychic adventure is just the latest in a series of attempts I've made to move on.

Barr's psychic gift, she explains, is the ability to see a series of colors, words or images the spirits reveal to her and then interpret them—a game of cosmic charades. This otherwise average-looking fortysomething woman ponders the photograph of my dad and me and asks me to state my father's full name three times. I do, struggling for the appropriate →

"She knew I secretly wanted to be a singer—I had never told anyone."

spiritual intonation. Barr says, smiling, "Okay, here we go. 1-800-Dial-Dad." What *have* I gotten myself into?

Barr's demeanor changes almost instantly. She stares into the corner of the room and smiles widely. "He is so excited!" she tells me, then returns her gaze to the corner and reprimands, "You have to turn down the volume button for me to function!" She looks back in my direction and adds, "A lot of them are really excited and jumping up and down." She turns back to the corner and says, "Thank you, that's much better." This just keeps getting weirder and weirder.

"I'm getting an enormous sense of warmth," Barr begins. "He's just flooding me with compassion and 'I love yous' and tenderness. It's incredible." To my surprise, Barr's eyes begin to tear. She continues, "I don't know if this means anything to you, but I'm looking at a book with gold-leafed edges, and he's very carefully, page by page, almost... teaching you to read. I get the feeling that when you were little you were saying, 'I'm going to write books, too, Daddy.'"

Her comment hits my heart like a computer-guided missile. Each night, when I was a little girl, my father sat on my bed, reading to me from *The Hobbit* (his Gollum voice was superb), and by the time I hit first grade, I knew for certain that I wanted to be a writer. But is Barr just guessing strategically? I mean, come on, most parents *do* read to their children in bed.

Barr starts to describe a set of watercolors. "He seems to think you can do sketches or even illustrate books if you want to," she says. Another lucky guess? I don't know. I had been thinking recently about trying my hand at illustration. Then again, I look fairly artsy, so to guess that I like to draw wouldn't be a huge stretch of the imagination.

Barr's next visual: "I see the interior of a car; it's cream-colored." This rings a bell as well. Two months after my father died,

I inherited his car—Mable the Sable—which had a beige leather interior. I drove it for the next seven years, until I moved to New York City. My dad, Barr says, was pointing to the passenger side, as if to say he was riding shotgun all along. That last comment completely dissolves my cynicism. I begin to cry.

The most interesting part of meeting Barr may be that, a year later, I'm not embarrassed or ashamed of visiting her. My friends, my family, even the few complete strangers I choose to tell about the visit are more fascinated by my experience than skeptical of it. I've discovered that many of my friends have seen psychics on occasion or even do so regularly, which leads me to wonder how we became so open-minded. I mean, we're all educated women, conditioned to have fairly well-oiled bullshit detectors. We're about as far from Hilary Swank's character in *The Gift* as you can get. So, why do we go?

Perhaps because the psychics themselves have changed. No turbans. No speaking in tongues. No leathery hands barnacled with gypsy rings. The psychics that women like me are visiting seem, well, fairly normal. Take neo-psychic Stacey Wolf, a former actress and associate producer for MTV. Culturally savvy and undeniably hip, the 35-year-old author of *Get Psychic* (Warner, 2001) reads for clients—most of whom are professional women in their twenties and

thirties—on New York City's Upper West Side, as well as by phone.

One client, Jennifer, a 27-year-old singer from San Francisco, heard Wolf making predictions on a local radio station and immediately booked an appointment. "I felt like I could relate to Stacey," says Jennifer, who consults her psychic mostly on the topic of money. "I do a lot of freelance work," she says, "so my income fluctuates quite a bit. Stacey gives me an idea of what months will be the most financially insecure, so I can plan ahead." But what convinced Jennifer that Wolf really possessed otherworldly gifts? "Basically, she knew that I secretly wanted to be a singer, and she told me to go for it. There's no way Stacey could have known that—I had never told anyone." In Jennifer's case, her psychic adviser acts much like a career coach or even a therapist, encouraging her to pursue her dream—and providing financial advice.

This blurring between psychic and therapist is reinforced by John Edward, arguably the most popular psychic du jour. Edward, 31, who looks like a guy you might have gone to high school with, hosts *Crossing Over* on the Sci-Fi Channel. On the show, he gives readings for members of the audience by "contacting" friends and relatives who have passed away. If you watch *Crossing Over*, you'll notice audience members using Psych 101 terms like *closure* and *validation* in follow-up interviews. (Interestingly, during the one hour the show airs, the channel's viewership swings from predominantly male to predominantly female, according to a spokesperson for the show.)

Women also make up the bulk of New York- and Los Angeles-based psychic Ferdie Pacheco's clientele. A trained relationship counselor and astrologer, Pacheco specializes in "helping couples work through their difficulties by examining their astrological charts," a clear combination of therapy and clairvoyance. Just one click on his website, www.askFerdie.com, and you will →



Psychic to the chic: Marie of New York City.

"Unlike therapists, psychics offer fast answers to problems."

understand Pacheco's appeal: the first image to load features Pacheco's romance-novel-cover face, complete with strong chin and windswept hair. (The site also offers a detailed astrological analysis of Brad and Jennifer, if you're interested.)

"Seventy-five percent of my clientele is female," admits Pacheco. When asked to speculate why women are more likely to seek his advice than men, he says very quickly, "Women are more codependent, more interested in being fixed." But how can Pacheco "fix" you better than, say, a therapist could? "Unlike a therapist, I offer fast, clear answers to people's problems. I can tell just by looking at their chart what love patterns they are predisposed to repeat," he says. "People pay good money to ramble on in a therapist's office. When my clients start to get repetitive, I encourage them to start moving forward and resolve their problems."

Stacy, a 27-year-old senior account supervisor for a New York City public relations agency, is one of Pacheco's clients. "When I first spoke with Ferdie, I was a little skeptical," she says. "But he zeroed in on May 1995, saying it was an extremely traumatic time for me. That totally convinced me—my father underwent triple-bypass surgery that month." Now Stacy consults Pacheco with all of her relationship concerns, often bringing her boyfriend along for the ride. "When Ferdie and I first spoke, he said, 'Your boyfriend is very successful but practically has attention deficit disorder,' which is completely true. Although Ben is a chief operating officer of a big company, a real big-picture kind of guy, he's so bad at details. It drives me crazy, but Ferdie has taught us how to deal with each other's personality quirks."

Another psychic capitalizing on the Internet is Justine Kenzer, the 32-year-old behind www.PsychicGirl.com, a site that proclaims its marketing strategy in big, bold letters: "Psychic Girl! Claiming a unique niche, targeting Gen X, Y and D

with spirituality." Kenzer's online biography even plays up a statement from the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "Kenzer is a marketing queen." (A psychic who unabashedly professes her own marketing genius? Well, if that isn't portraying oneself as an intelligent woman's psychic, I don't know what is.) Kenzer attributes the rising credibility of psychics to grassroots word of mouth: "Women who have never consulted a psychic before will see a friend try it with positive results and think, Hey, why not?"

Even if you can't quite swallow the concepts of telepathy or clairvoyance, consulting a psychic can be useful in certain circumstances, according to Robin C. Stark, a New York City psychotherapist in private practice. "Most educated, professional women are not going to take what a psychic has to say as gospel," says Stark. "But if you don't get resolution from friends or family when you're trying to reach a decision, there's inherent value in hearing yourself discuss the situation with an outside party."

Rachel, a 29-year-old corporate events planner from Huntsville, Alabama, would probably agree: "A few years ago, a friend approached me with the idea of visiting a psychic, and I figured it would be fun. The first thing the woman asked when I sat down was whether I was considering changing jobs, which was remarkably on target. I had just been

offered a different job within the same company and was torn as to whether I should take it. The psychic said I would be much happier if I accepted the new job." Rachel considered her own instincts, as well as the psychic's advice, and decided to accept the new position. The psychic ended up being correct; the career move turned out to be a huge success. "Could it have been a lucky guess? Absolutely. I'm not particularly gullible, but seeing the psychic was just what I needed to get me going. I probably would have made the change anyway," she adds, "but in retrospect I think I had been looking for some kind of divine sign—if there is such a thing."

When it comes to coping with the death of a relative or close friend, says Stark, "people can get some sense of comfort and relief from consulting a psychic, especially a medium who has experience dealing with the bereaved." As long as you walk away from your experience with positive feelings, she says, "seeing a psychic can produce a harmless placebo effect." Stark cautions: "However, women need to remember that a therapist's mandate is to be free of an outside agenda. Certainly, some psychics may be agenda-free, but many have a moneyed interest in their clients."

As for me, I needed someone to remind me that although my father had passed away, I could still draw on his love. Was my psychic legit? I can't say for sure. I do know this: the two hours I spent in her office were more practically useful than a whole year of therapy. Instead of droning on ad nauseam about what I had lost, I managed to open my mind to the possibility that, in some form, he's still here. As Barr put it, "Your father's around a lot more than you're even aware of." I can't prove this using Popper's Scientific Method. I wouldn't want to try. Whether anyone else believes it, it feels good to me. —Additional reporting by Samantha Altea

All that's missing is the Magic 8 Ball.

