

CHAPTER VII

VERY PRIVATE READINGS

I discovered early on that however well you think other people are getting on with their lives, they're just muddling through. We are all going through the same shit.

—Roger Daltrey¹⁴

You are unique. Just like everybody else.

—Anonymous

A private reading with a single individual is altogether a unique kettle of fish. A private reading can be painful and unrewarding. It can also end up being the most hysterical experience, in every sense of the word—particularly in the frenzied, unhinged sense.

During my years in radio and at psychic fairs and other psychic events, several memorable clients were what I call “special cases”—individuals who are obsessive about anything considered psychic and who won’t take no for an answer. They seem to feel as if I’m their own private psychic trainer or life coach. This is fine with me, if they are reasonable individuals and act on what I might tell them with a grain of salt, but when they demand a reading in supermarkets, shopping malls, or at social events where I am an invited guest, it can get beyond obnoxious. Some of these sorry souls have driven to my house, mailed me nasty letters when I wasn’t responsive enough to them, and generally made a nuisance of themselves.

14 Tony Fletcher, *Dear Boy: The Life of Keith Moon* (London: Omnibus Press, 2005).

Like the irrepressible zombies in a scene from *Night of the Living Dead*, psychic junkies have to have their fix. They have little or no regard for others; it's all about *them*. A middle-of-the-night phone call was not uncommon, and if I wasn't around to answer and immediately provide counsel, I was frequently treated to mean-spirited threats and rants left on my answering service. I was eventually forced to rent a post office box so that I could not be tracked down so easily.

A friend who lives in New Zealand and is one of the world's best-known psychics and authors was once asked by a woman of dubious mental capacity who he thought was the best psychic in the United States. This woman had gone so far as to show up on his doorstep, naked and begging for a reading. Thinking to help me gain some remuneration (as well as get himself out of a nasty situation), he offered my name and phone number. For months afterward she called me at all hours, until I abruptly ended all connection to this nutty and possibly dangerous sycophant.

Such neurotic seekers are sometimes hard to discern during a first-time call for guidance. They might start off acting quite normally, but then quickly degenerate into blithering idiots, presenting difficult situations to escape from.

One night Tami phoned, a woman who wanted a personal reading. This was early in my days of doing private readings, and I as yet had no idea what I was getting myself into. She sounded reasonable enough. She suggested that I meet her at her nearby apartment, and we set a time and settled on a fee for a half-hour reading.

Her modest apartment building was in a part of town known for its singles scene. As I climbed the stairs to her apartment, I thought briefly that this might be a little more intimate than the usual situation, but I needed the cash and figured I could handle it. I knocked on the door and was met by an attractive bleached-blond in her twenties. Okay, so far so good.

"Hi, I'm Mark. I'm here for your psychic reading."

"Oh, hi. Glad you could come over. Please come in."

I noticed immediately that Tami looked a little nervous and that she glanced over my shoulder and down the stairs as I entered her apartment. It was a nice little love nest, complete with wicker furniture and a ceiling fan. She



*A candid shot giving tender private guidance to a wayward young girl
sometime in the late '90s.*

offered me a beer, which I declined, and asked me to sit in one of her oversized modern chairs. She pulled out cash for the reading and handed it to me in a hurried manner, suggesting that she wanted me to get to work pronto. Tami bit one of her nails and brushed back her severely dated Farrah Fawcett-style bangs.

“So, I need to know about my boyfriend Danny right away.”

“Can I take out my cards first?” I asked as politely as I could.

“Oh, sure. I’m sorry. It’s just that I’m a little nervous.” She chewed bubble gum and snapped it as she talked.

“No need to be. This will be fun. Just relax and let me do all the work.” I felt like a masseur. “There’s nothing to be nervous about.”

She fidgeted in her chair. “It’s not the reading part. It’s Danny I’m nervous about.”

“I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Well, he has a terrible temper.” Tami stood and went to the window, where she pulled aside the curtain and looked down at the parking lot.

“Temper?”

“Oh, yes. And he’s the jealous type. Capricorn and all that.”

“Well, this reading will be more about you than him, so let’s forget about him and see what the cards can tell us about both of you, okay?” I tried to refocus my energy on shuffling the cards and letting her cut three piles for past, present, and future, before she sprang up again and paced the room.

A strange feeling began to creep up my spine. “You do want me to go on with the reading, don’t you?”

“I do. It’s just that he beat up the last guy he caught in here with me. He pays the rent and all, so he thinks he owns me.”

I looked at the three cards she had cut to and was once again reminded of the synchronistic effect the tarot can sometimes have. Spread out was all I needed to know. The past was the Emperor, a card of hard dominance and power. The present card was the Hanged Man, a card of suspension and entrapment. And to round out this uncanny set, the future card was the Devil. The Devil means avoiding the temptation to stay with things that may be holding you back and breaking any chains of bondage that may be restraining you.

Tami’s face dropped into a look of abject fear when she saw His Satanic Majesty staring up at her.

“Now, don’t jump to any conclusions, Tami,” I said. “Let’s see how the other cards work out before you take the Devil too seriously.”

“He is a devil. He almost killed my ex-husband.”

“Ex-husband?”

“Yeah. He hurt him real bad. He’s a judo expert.”

My throat was suddenly very dry. I was almost ready for that cold beer Tami had offered, but I thought for my own safety it might be best to remain as clear-headed as possible.

She began to whine. “He’s just so possessive. I can’t go anywhere or see anyone.”

“Does Danny live close by?” I tried to ask casually.

“He lives here, but he promised he would stay out for at least an hour. He’s working out at his gym.”

“So, how does Danny feel about psychics? I mean in general.” I was trying to be tactful, but my courage was beginning to fade.

“He hates them. When he was a baby someone told his mother that he would turn out bad and never amount to anything. I’m starting to think that the psychic was right. That’s why I called you.”

I checked my watch. Twenty minutes left to go. I had completely forgotten about the tarot cards. I was instead considering whether or not it was worth thirty bucks to possibly end up in a hospital.

Tami made up my mind for me. She had been standing by the window, surveying the parking lot when she said, “Oh, shit. He’s driving into the garage. You better go!”

In two quick motions I threw Tami’s cash back onto her coffee table and scooped up my tarot cards. I was out the door in less than ten seconds and flying down the stairs, coat in hand. I tried to look unruffled as a jarheaded jock in a sweatsuit passed me at the bottom of the stairs. He was red-faced, flexing his hands in a threatening manner, and I swear the veins in his neck were standing out.

Life as a private reader is never boring and adrenaline is a powerful cocktail. I count my blessings often and, on occasion, wonder if Tami is still alive.



After my KYAK stint, I usually had at least two or three private readings scheduled each week. Danielle managed to get my phone number from the Light Path Foundation. I refer to Danielle as the Woman Who Never Listened.

For our first reading, we decided on a neutral meeting place. I refused to do any more home readings without plenty of party guests in sight to protect me from liability or harm. Sacred Grounds had become my base of operations, a coffeehouse perfectly suited to my purposes. It was not too