

Photograph by RYAN MCGINLEY

IS THE ANSWER OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE?

When you need a helping hand, who do you turn to? Your friends, your therapist – or your psychic? Lisa Reich swaps the shrink's couch for a crystal ball to see if she can find the resolution she craves

In a tiny pink kitchen in Finchley, north London, a middle-aged woman with Marilyn Monroe hair and creamy skin takes a pull on her Salem Menthol and says: 'You're Welsh.' Wow, I think. Lady Lilac grinds the cigarette into a glass dish and gives me a look. 'Your accent gave it away.'

She gives me a deck of tarot cards to shuffle while she sticks the kettle on. The cards are faded, soft with age. They feel nice. I shuffle until Lady Lilac, real name Jacqui Cosham, sits down, lights up another

Salem and takes the cards back. She asks for some jewellery to hold and I twist off two rings that usually sit on my right index finger. They belonged to my two dead grandmothers. I don't tell her that.

'You don't have any grandparents,' she says emphatically. 'These rings belong to them.' Belong, not belonged. I like to think that this is a psychic thing, not because I look too old to have any remaining grandparents. She sucks in a lungful, chases it with a gulp of hot sugared tea

and begins to lay out my tarot cards.

When I told my regular therapist I had decided to consult a psychic, he said: 'You must do what feels right for you.' I think what he meant was: 'Oh dear, you foolish, gullible woman.'

He looked a bit pissed off, in fact, so I tried to lighten the mood: 'Well, you know, they do say that psychics are the new therapists. All the stars are going... Courteney Cox, Jennifer... It's not just old women who smell of cat and Glade.'

My therapist smiled – a rather tight little smile – looked at the clock behind me and said he'd see me at the same time next week. 'Take care, Lisa,' he said. I hate it when people say your name after a sentence. It means they're cross.

Hollywood has been crazy for psychic healing for some time, but its popularity – and, crucially, credibility – is now growing rapidly. 'People seem a lot more open to it these days,' says Justine Kenzer, aka PsychicGirl. Kenzer is a Hollywood-based clairvoyant and her clientele reads like an Oscar's red-carpet commentary. 'I think people are beginning to realise there's more to life than solving problems or looking for answers to everything.'

My friend Melody says seeing a psychic is the best thing she's ever done. Within a month of her first appointment, three interesting things happened that had been predicted. One, she got a dream role (she is an actress). Two, she met a man whose name begins with P and she is still with him, six months on. Three, she won £50,000. An actual lottery win. She is no longer seeing her regular therapist, but touches base with 'my psychic' once a month. She swears by psychic therapy.

I admit it, my own motives for seeking psychic help, initially, weren't altogether spiritual. Like Melody, I want a man, one

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who will maybe one day turn into a husband. I'm still waiting for my dream job and, of course, I would like some money, too. Lots of it.

I'm mulling this over when Lady Lilac interrupts my thoughts and tells me: 'I'm not here to tell you just what you want to hear.' I nod sagely and mutter something like 'of course not' and that 'my priority is to feel better inside, more spiritual'. Lady Lilac raises an eyebrow but keeps her counsel and turns over some cards.

She pegs my star sign straight away, saying, 'It's not easy being a Scorpio,' and tells me that my nature could be hindering my love life. I can't

remember telling her I was single but I exude it, probably. She tells me that outwardly I am the life and soul, chatty and extrovert, but that there is a great chasm between that Lisa and the person I am inside.

She gives a sad sigh, and asks me about a man called 'Jay... James... Jamie?' She says, 'Did he hurt you? You still love him.' My eyes water, my lip wobbles. She tells me not to worry, that there's another man in the wings. 'I'm getting an N... That mean anything to you? It should. He's in your life. The problem is, he has a lot of other stuff going on... Does he have another family? He's divorced, maybe kids, too... I'm not sure if this will work out. I'm not sure. But he is interested. Don't push him away.'

She doesn't ask for confirmation, just continues flipping card after card, talking all the while. N. Nick. We've been on six dates. After our last, we spent the night together. The next morning, he told me he was married – but separated. He confessed he was in a 'weird space right now', which I took as 'goodbye'. I've ignored his texts, calls and emails since his confession.

'Don't write him off,' says Lady Lilac. 'Not yet. I don't know if it's him, it might not be, but you're going to meet someone soon; someone you're going to be with for a long time, maybe forever.'

'Oh dear,' she says, flipping over a series of cards in quick succession, wiping the grin off my face. 'What happened to you when you were 32?' I look at her, and give a tiny shake of my head. I don't want to go there (very, very bad break-up). She nods and says, 'It doesn't matter, it's over now, it's the past.' I feel something shift. The fist loosens. She's right. The past is just that. Gone, done, over. This is the opposite of therapy, where the past is analysed, prodded, dissected. I've been holding on to a lot of pain, feeding it even.

I have to ask: 'Can you see something... bad in my cards?' She sighs. 'Not bad

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exactly. But you need to take care of your health. I don't see anything life threatening, just keep an eye on whatever it is that you're dealing with at the moment. Your doctor knows what she's doing.'

I have recently been diagnosed with an underactive thyroid, my calcium levels are low and osteoporosis runs in the family. And my doctor is a female.

'So can you ever tell if someone is about to die?' I ask, then wish I hadn't. Lady Lilac rolls her eyes. She tells me she knows of psychics who think nothing of doling out bad news but says that they're scaremongers who give good psychics a bad name. 'Nothing is set in stone, dear. The future's yours, at the end of the day.'

She says her priority is to make people feel good, give them hope. 'I just read what I see. I want you to leave feeling ►