

The Psychic

By Jameel Anne Johnson

Katie popped her head into my cubicle. “I’m having a party this weekend. Want to come?”

“Sure, what’s the occasion?” I asked. I’d been to Katie’s house a few times, but this is the first party she had ever invited me to. We both worked in the Disbursement Division of an Annuity Department at a mid-size insurance company outside of St. Louis, Missouri. I had been with the company about seven years, and she had started maybe a year before that. We had hit it off over water-cooler chatter and had lunch together a few times a week.

“It’s a psychic party!” she said excitedly. Katie was a bit older than me. She had recently gotten divorced and was looking for a job to supplement her income to raise her two teenaged boys. I had just gotten married and hadn’t had any kids yet.

“What?” I said, laughing. “What’s a psychic party?”

“Oh, its sounds fun.” Katie came in my space sitting on the edge of my desk to explain. “My girlfriend has a girlfriend who gives them all the time. Everyone pays twenty bucks, I provide drinks and snacks, and everyone gets a psychic reading.”

“That sounds crazy,” I said, laughing at the idea.

“Oh, c’mon, Jameel, it’ll be fun!” she pleaded. “I get a reading for free, since I’m hosting.”

“How does it work? We all sit in a room, and she goes around predicting our futures or something?” I said, trying to imagine the scene.

“No,” she said, “she takes each one of us into a side room and we each get a 20-minute private session.”

“Well, 20 minutes for 20 bucks. Sounds like a deal. Count me in.” I smiled thinking Katie comes up with the craziest stuff.

When I got to Katie’s house Saturday afternoon, there were already seven or eight other women there. I was surprised that she convinced so many of us to participate in such an activity. I had never seen a psychic before, although I had nothing against it. I thought about Sam and Oda Mae Brown in the movie *Ghost* and thought “I hope this psychic tells me something fun.” Honestly, all I expected was an afternoon of quirky entertainment.

When I had arrived, the psychic was already in a guest room with a closed door doing a reading. Katie had laid out a yummy spread of chips, crackers and cheeses as well as soft drinks, bottled water and wine. Every 20 minutes or so the guest room door would open and

the psychic would come out and socialize for 2-3 minutes. “Who’s next?” she would ask, and another one of us would agree to go into the room with her.

I didn’t recognize any of the other women at the party, so I spent my time getting to know some of the friendlier guests. Most of the women seemed to be related to Katie or her neighbors. One woman used to work with her at a previous job. After a woman would leave the room and another would go in, we would all move to the woman who just had her reading and flood her with questions. “What did she say?” “Did she predict anything good?” “Any lottery numbers?” It seemed that we all took the party as good fun and an interesting way to spend a Saturday afternoon.

“Your turn Jameel!” Katie called out, volunteering me as the next player. I went into the room with the psychic. She was dressed casually, looked friendly, and motioned for me to sit on a chair that was in the center of the room.

She introduced herself and asked me my name. “Nice to meet you,” she said politely, and went on to explain what I should expect. “The way I work is I hold an object you have that has great importance to you, and images come to me that help me see into your past, present and future.”

“So, you have visions?” I asked.

“It’s like a movie starts running in my mind’s eye, and I can see images in your life. Then I’ll describe those images to you and at times it helps people answer any questions they may have.” She sat in another chair directly across from me. “I can’t necessarily interpret what the images are showing me, but I can describe them to you.”

“Okay,” I said. “Sounds good.”

“So, do you have an object I can hold? Possibly a piece of jewelry?” She reached out and took both my hands in hers turning them over. “No rings?” she asked.

I shook my head. Even though I had just gotten married, my husband and I didn’t wear wedding rings. “I’m not really a jewelry person.”

“Do you have something in your purse that has significant meaning?” she asked. I thought about the contents of my purse. There were several things in there, a wallet, makeup bag, car keys, hand lotion, but nothing that was that important to me. I thought about an item that I might have left in my car or even my apartment, realizing I don’t really own anything that I place a lot of value on.

“I don’t really have anything like that. I own things, but I don’t think I place a lot of emotional value on anything” I said, not knowing what to offer.

The psychic sat quietly, obviously thinking. “Let’s try this.” She reached into her bag and pulled out a small notebook and a pen, “Write your name on this.”

I took the pen and started to write. “Does it matter which name?” I asked.

“What do you mean?” she looked at me.

“My current name is not my birth name, and I just got married, so my last name...”

She interrupted, “All your names. Write down every name you’ve ever used.”

I wrote down my four names – first name, middle name, maiden surname and my new last name – and handed her the paper.

She looked at what I wrote and then back at me. “Why do I see you surrounded by stacks of paper?” she asked.

I thought of my desk at work. There are stacks of paper everywhere in my cubicle. “I have a lot of paper at my job,” I told her questionably. The psychic nodded.

She closed her eyes again holding the paper in front of her. Opening her eyes, she looked at the paper again and asked, “What’s this word?” pointing to my birth name.

“That’s my first name, Mumtaz,” I explained. “I don’t really use it because no one can pronounce it. I go by my middle name, Jameel.”

She sat quietly for a few more moments, then she spoke, quickly and with intent, pointing to the paper. “This is the name you use, but its just a façade,” pointing to the word ‘Jameel’. “It’s the name you use for work, and to keep up appearances.”

Then she pointed to the word ‘Mumtaz’, “This name... this name is the important name. This name was given to you with much love. With this name I see gardens and flowers and light... positive energy. Whoever gave this name to you, gave it with lots of love in mind. It’s a powerful name.”

Then the psychic looked up, eyes wide. “You need to change your name. Change it to just ‘Mumtaz’, like Cher or Madonna. Just use the one name. See if you can change everything you own to be owned by that name. Change your bank accounts and everything. Sign everything just using the one name.”

Amused, I asked, “What about a last name?”

“No, no,” she said dismissively. “These other names are just names passed down through the family. They’re not important. You need just the one name.” She looked up, scanning the area around my head. “I see silver flecks coming down all around you. That’s money. You’re going to make money. Just enough to live a comfortable life. But once you change your name to Mumtaz, then...” She waved her hand through the air, “... the silver will turn to gold. Gold flecks are everywhere coming down all around you.” Her eyes got wide, looking surprised. “You’re going to be rich! Enough money for you and all your future generations!”

She set the piece of paper down and looked at me somberly. “Go down to the Central West End. Look for a shop. I’m not sure of the name, you’ll see a sun, a bright sun. When you go in the shop, you’ll see a stamp.” She made her forefinger and thumb into a circle, “It’ll be like a circle. You need to buy the stamp. I’m not sure if you should stamp your documents with it...” she trailed off, trying to think. “I’m not sure. But you should do that.”

Then she suddenly sat back, clapped her hands and smiled wide. “How fun! I’ve never done a reading like this before!” She stood up quickly, “Okay, that’s it. Time for the next person.”

So of course, later I took a trip to the Central West End. I thought the whole experience was comical, and interesting, and a little

fascinating. Buy a stamp. That's not so bad, I thought. It's not like she told me to give all my money away or bet on a horse or something. But, as I drove up and down the streets of the Central West End neighborhood, I thought, I didn't have much to go on. I wasn't sure where to even go! I decided I'd spend about 30 minutes driving around and if nothing came of it, I'd just go home.

Then I saw it. It was part of the logo of a small shop. A bright yellow sun. Okay, I thought. Time to park my car and check it out. I walked into the shop, looking around. It was a quirky clothing shop. There were a lot of bohemian-style clothes and scarves. As I walked deeper into the shop, closer to the registers, there were glass cases containing all types of jewelry. I quickly surmised there was nothing here resembling what the psychic was telling me to buy.

A woman appeared, "May I help you?" A little embarrassed, I thought, I better buy something just out of obligation. I saw a stand of bracelets made from different color beads. Maybe I would buy a bracelet, I thought. Scanning through the jewelry, I looked in the glass case and there were several sets of earrings, rings, pendants for necklaces and various trinkets.

My eye landed on a round silver disc with squiggles and lines on it. The trinket looked foreign, ancient, and not very attractive. I wondered what it was doing there. "What is that?" I asked.

The woman looked at it, and said, “I have no idea. Let’s see.” She proceeded to open the glass case. “It looks like something someone can put on a chain and wear as a necklace.” It was obviously very old, and a dingy silver color. She picked up the piece and read a label on the back. “It says it’s some kind of stamp,” she said looking confused.

I looked up at her. “A stamp?” I repeated.

“That’s what it says,” she confirmed. “I’m not sure what that means. Let me get Jim in the back. He may have more information on what this is.” She disappeared behind a drapery and came back out with a man holding the trinket. “Hi,” he said, “Yes, this is an old Hindu stamp, we believe. It has something to do with their religion. The old nuns used to dip it in ink and stamp their foreheads to represent their third eye or something.”

“Do you take credit cards?” I asked.



डीक dīka

A phrase corresponding
with admirable! capital!
excellent! Exactly as
could be wished!