

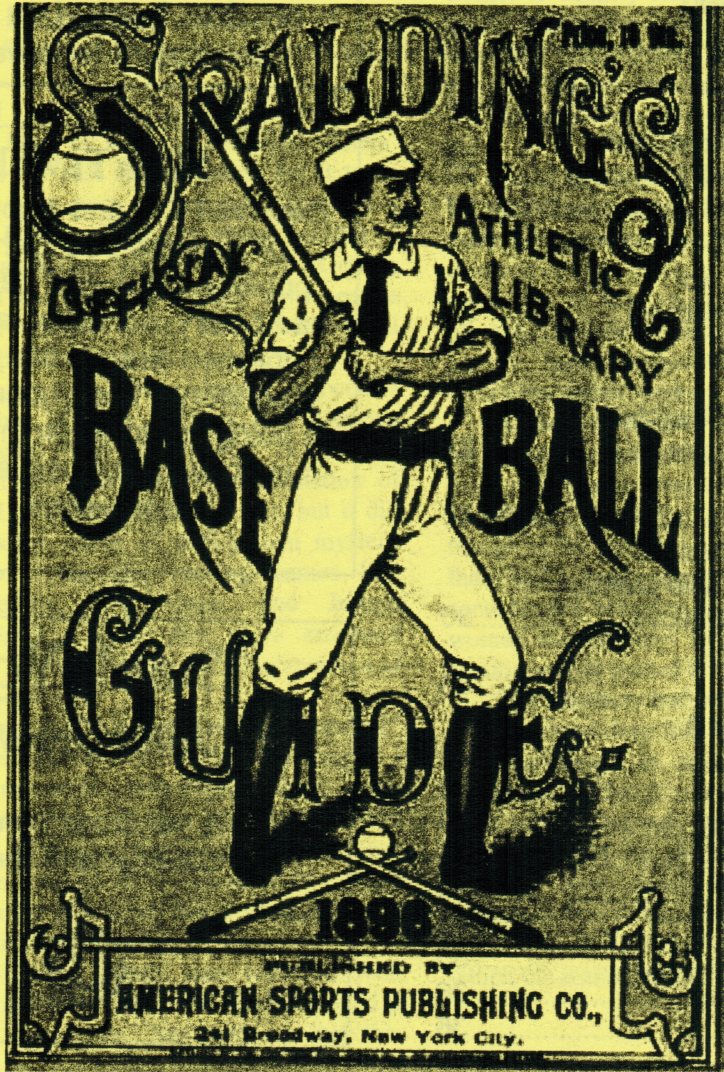
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CALLIOPE

A WRITER'S WORKSHOP BY MAIL



Your Own Personal Psychic

by Jacqueline Freimor



I know what you're thinking. Not because I'm psychic-- God forbid! --I leave that to the wonderful, wonderful counselors at 1-900-PSYCHIC-- but because I used to

be just like you. Like you, I heard beautiful, successful people swear on national TV that their own personal psychic had changed their lives, and I didn't believe a word they said. Like you, I sat on a couch, inhaling Ben & Jerry's ice cream by the pint, and thought, *That can never be me.*

Am I right? You look at me now-- a gorgeous face, a figure to die for, expensive clothes and jewelry-- and you think, *Dream on, Rhonda. Some people have it and some people don't. And I don't.* Well, I'm here to tell you how wrong you are. The counselors at 1-900-PSYCHIC can help you reach your potential and turn your life around 180 degrees!

Take me, for example. You know me now as Rhonda Lee, syndicated gossip columnist, 125 newspapers across the nation! And host of the hottest, late-night talk show on cable, "Who's *Shtupping* Who?" Believe me, I never thought I'd be this successful; no one did. No one who lived on Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, looked at Rhonda Lee Greenblatt waddle down the street and said, "Now that girl's gonna go places!". That's right, I was a big, *big* girl. And even though my face didn't shatter any mirrors, I knew it wasn't going to win me any beauty contests either.

What got me from there to here was my own personal psychic, Charnisse, who is just one of the dozens of caring, sympathetic counselors waiting for your call at 1-900-PSYCHIC. Let me tell you about her, and you can decide for yourself if you should take a chance and make that call.

The first time I spoke to Charnisse was almost three years ago, on the worst day of my life. Believe me, a day like that, it shouldn't happen to a dog. I was working as a secretary for the editor of a small newspaper-- *no names, please!*-- and my boss called me into his office and fired me, just like that.

As you can imagine, I was stunned, absolutely stunned. And here I was thinking he was going to promote me to reporter-- was I dumb, or what? After I stumbled back to my desk, I took a good look at myself, and I didn't like what I saw: an overweight, unattractive woman with no husband, only a high-school education, and a dead-end job. But just then, when I was at my lowest, I remembered a subway ad I saw for 1-900-PSYCHIC, and I thought, *What do I have to lose?*

Nothing, as it turned out. Charnisse told me that my stars would reward assertiveness that day and that I should go back into the editor's office, dazzle him with my knowledge, and tell him how much he would regret getting rid of me. So that's *exactly* what I did. I marched into his office, jabbed my index finger right into the expense forms he was filling out and said, "Listen, bozo. I know... I know..." But my voice was shaking, so I tried again. "You'll be sorry," I said, "when I... when I..."

Would you believe that was all it took? It's absolutely true! He stared down at the papers, turned white, and then, just like Charnisse predicted, hired me back and even promoted me on the spot. What's more, when another newspaper had an opening for a gossip columnist a month later, he used his influence to get me the job! Just in time, too. Would you believe that a week after I started my new job, he was arrested for embezzlement? Now, what do you think-- was my success only dumb luck? Or, do you think like I

do, that the stars and Charnisse had something to do with it?

I'll give you another for-instance: I'd been writing my column for a couple of years, but my career was going nowhere, and I decided that I needed an agent to give it a boost. And I didn't want just any agent-- I wanted Sidney Pumpernik, the best in the business.

Well, I called and called, but his snotty, oh-so-superior secretary with the fake British accent, kept telling me that Mr. Pumpernik was *rah*-ther busy with his important, Pulitzer-prize-winning clients and could not take my call. Well, I was fit-to-be-tied. How, I asked Charnisse, could I get the great and powerful Sid Pumpernik to talk to me?

Well, Charnisse did a reading and told me that the stars favored the subtle approach in this case, and that Sid needed to be wooed like a lover. I thought and thought about the best way to approach him, but I didn't have much experience with wooing anyone. I had no idea what to do.

Finally, Charnisse and I decided that we should design something like an advertising campaign. What I did was send Sid a letter a day for five days. The first four were handwritten, perfumed little notes with flattering sentiments on them, like, "The character of a man is proclaimed by the company he keeps." Meaning, his prize-winning authors. I didn't sign the first four notes; I wanted Sid to be dying of curiosity by the time he got the last one. The fifth note was different from the others, more businesslike. All it said was, "We must talk. Tomorrow, 4:00 p.m. I'll call you."

To make a long story short, I called, and miracle of miracles, Sid himself answered the phone! "I've got a certain something that I *know* you want," I said. "But to get it you gotta represent me." And would you believe, it worked? Sid signed me immediately, and in no time flat, got me my syndication deal and my own cable TV show!

Of course, since Sid's suicide-- and I want to go on the record as saying that I don't for a minute believe those rumors I've heard about child prostitutes, and you shouldn't either--agents by the dozens have offered to represent me. So, what do you think I'll do as soon as the show is over?

That's right! I'm going to call my own personal psychic, Charnisse, at 1-900-PSYCHIC, to discuss which one I should choose.

Well, Rhonda, you must be thinking, it's all very nice that you have a fascinating career and wealth beyond your wildest dreams, but what about your love life? I know, I know! What good is success if you have no one to share it with? Even after my personal trainer helped me to slim down and I had my surgeries, I was beginning to think that I was never going to meet anyone special.

As usual, all I had to do was talk to Charnisse. This time, she said, she didn't have to consult the cards; after three years of daily conversations, she knew *exactly* the kind of man I would want. Not only that, she said, she knew the actual man I would want. Her brother, Chris.

Hmmm, I thought. I wasn't sure if I should go out with him. What would happen to my relationship with her, I asked, if I went out with her brother and didn't like him? Or what if I did like him and we got involved but then-- God forbid--we broke up? "I can live without a husband," I said, "but I can't live without you, Charnisse!"

"Trust me," she said. "He's perfect for you. Have I ever steered you wrong?"

Well, I'm happy to announce to all of you that the wedding will be held on June 26! Charnisse was right: Chris is perfect for me. He's warm and funny, and adorable, and sweet. It's almost as if he were made to order.

And he's so considerate! Would you believe that he begged me to draw up a prenuptial agreement so I wouldn't think he was marrying me for my money? Of course, I wouldn't hear of it, and Charnisse agreed with me; who likes thinking about divorce, she said, when you're about to get married?

So, you know what he did then, that sweet, sentimental guy of mine? He sent me a single, blood-red rose, and a card that said, "I'm yours, sweetheart, 'til death to us part." Is that romantic, or what? I could've just died!

Take it from Rhonda Lee-- 1-900-PSYCHIC changed my life, and it can do the same for you! So what are you waiting for? Call 1-900-

PSYCHIC and get your own personal psychic today!

What do you have to lose?



STRANGER TO THE LIGHT

by Walter Zimmerle

About The Author

Jacqueline Freimor's mysteries have been published in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Red Herring*, and *Murderous Intent*. In 1994-95 she won First Prize in the new writers category of the "Golden Mysteries" short-story competition sponsored by Mystery Writers of America. One of her stories just received an honorable mention in *The Best American Mystery Stories 1997*, edited by Robert B. Parker and Otto Penzler.

EXAMPLE

by Dan Buck

Once upon a time there was a worker bee. Every day he went out in search of the perfect flower.

"My queen is worth no less," he said.

Finally, after two weeks of finding nothing, the queen had him destroyed.

"I can only hope," she said, "that all you other workers learn from his example!"

And sure enough, they did. ❖❖

About The Author

Dan Buck is a single man, unquietly growing bald. In addition to his writing, he's involved in his local theatre group and puts on puppet shows every year in his home town, Armour, SD. To expand his creative range, he recently took up cartooning. His work has appeared in numerous small press publications over the last year, for which he feels fortunate.

Did you touch the fringe of evil
when all sanity was vain
Would your tortured soul lie bleeding
if you healed your spirit's pain
If you gazed into the future
would your visions make you blind
Can you reason with the voices
of the demons in your mind

Have your dreams become your night-
mares
in your sleep and in your wake
Will the fear that breeds your torment
taint the hope you once called faith

Shall you endure this worm of madness
is your strength a bold disguise
Or do you weep alone in darkness
a stranger to the light.



Horizons

By J.W. Donnelly

Swept alone a slate gray sky,
silver melodies trill their song,
a siren's wail through forgotten woods,
the hollow cry on a mountain trail.
Calm is the seeker's repose,
though dazzling to one's eyes,
nature on horizon, silent spectacle.
Ever closer, a swelling rumble
echoes tumultuous approach.

Probing eyes,
stung by the first dusty drops,
persevere the driven elements;
For a cleansing rain it is.

Braving the raging torrent, he looks—
gaze alert for the abatement of storm,
first hint of gilded sun,
imminent birth of a rainbow,
arced bridge spanning a clearing sky.