



CHARLES DAVID

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTH

PSYCHICLOGICAL BREAKDOWN

A writer's personal journey through the intuitive underbelly of Eugene BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

Psychics, palmists, tarot card readers, alchemical healers, past-life consultants, after-life communication specialists and empaths. Eugene is to the intuitive arts what L.A. is to plastic surgery. The alternative and unorthodox practices of intuitive counseling thrive here more so than, say, Phoenix or San Diego. Who are these intuitives? How is it they've come to nest here in Eugene? And how many different types of them live among us?

I wanted to get to the bottom of these questions, and I didn't mind if that meant calling out all the stereotypes or facing some very real consequences as a result of swimming in the supernatural slipstream. I am not a guru, a spiritualist or a soothsayer. I'm a writer who soldier-crawls after the next good story. What you receive from this article may be the result of an act of faith on your part, a surrender of reason, or even a desire to be cheaply thrilled.

In pursuit of truth, I subjected myself for five consecutive days to an intensive series of visits with Eugene's intuitive practitioners. I dragged a brave, quasi-willing *EW* photographer along with me. To fully investigate the nature of coincidence/intuition, I decided to present myself differently at each of the counselings I attended. At one of the sessions, I arrived wearing a suit, while at another I donned full-on Grateful Dead hippie tie-dye regalia. My intention was to see if the intuitives could truly see past outward appearance when sizing up my chakras or spitballing my soulscape.

I am a skeptic by nurture. Given, however, that I guinea-pigged my own personal life for this story, I'm not going to tell you absolutely everything that went on in these counselings. Similar to traumatic experiences, "inside thoughts," or sexually suggestive text messages, the details of intuitive counseling sessions are not meant for complete disclosure or public consumption. I will, nonetheless, do my best to describe some of the people/processes/practices I encountered.

Buckle up.

After-Death Counseling And The All-Purpose Intuitive

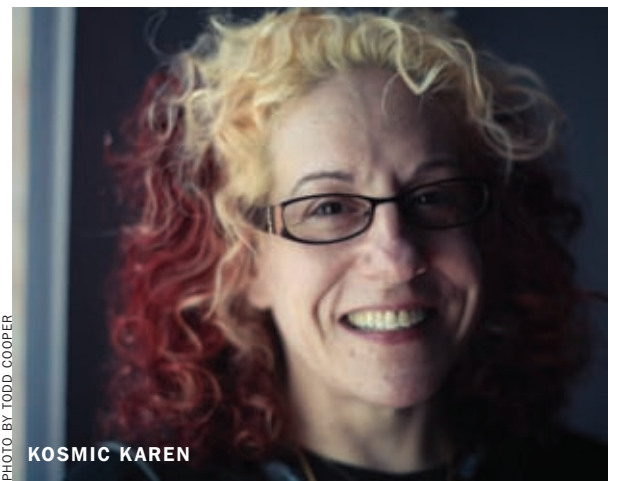
Kosmic Karen is not your average psychic. "I'm not going to put on a bunch of robes and have a velvet cloth-covered table and incense and all that," says the self-identified intuitive. "I'm not that type. I have more of a Jerry Springer sort of style."

Indeed, Cosmic Karen, whose real first name happens to be Roxy, is not the alternative personality one might expect to her to be. "I'm a mainstream person, I eat meat! I bodybuild. No patchouli oil." She leans closer. "Who woke up one day and said patchouli oil smells good?" Cosmic Karen wonders. "It doesn't! Please, Eugene, stop using it, it stinks! I'm serious; make sure that gets in the article."

The wife of TV commercial personality Mr. Appliance, Cosmic Karen was drawn to the intuitive arts from as far back as she can remember. She recalls watching movies and reading stories and feeling a deep connection to the spirit world. "But at first, I didn't know if I could really do it," she explains. "It's like art or auto mechanics; anyone can do it, but some people are better at it than others."

Karen is an all-purpose intuitive. She has done a little bit of everything and was featured prominently in 2004 by KDUCK 104.7 radio station as their in-house psychic. But attending to the needs of callers who rang in hell-bent on "getting only the answers they wanted to get" wore down on Karen. So she turned to her preferred intuitive practice: After-death counseling.

"Sometimes I hear things, sometimes I get a feeling," she says. "If it is important enough, whoever it is will make sure I get the message." She is talking about communicating with the dead. When summoning spirits, Cosmic Karen looks at photos or holds an object of the deceased. "When it begins, it always feels like it [the spirit of the deceased] is coming from the right side of my body. Never the left." She can do this with household pets also. "I did an after-death communication on a dog once," she recalls. "That dog is pretty darn cool."



KOSMIC KAREN

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Karen says these séances are healing for the people she counsels, though she is somewhat selective in who she will take money from. She no longer does a lot of traditional counseling. While intuitively counseling me, Cosmic Karen misjudged my astrological sign but told me some eerily applicable things about my current romantic relationship. She also claims that I have an intense sense of devotion, and my future as a writer will be unconventionally successful. Given my undertaking of stories such as this: If I am to have any success as a writer, she might just be right.

Karen says her talents do not often work when she attempts to use them on her self. "The doctor who treats himself has a fool for a patient," she says, bastardizing that old saying about lawyers and clients.

Hands of Fate

Meeting palmist Charles David was cinematic. The 67-year-old ex-Marine/painter lives in a two-story apartment that can be glimpsed as you drive north on Lincoln Street, not far past the *EW* office. A large sign advertising palmistry can be seen on the front porch, and hanging on the door is a light-up sign. David turns this on when he feels "in the mood," he says. The interior of his