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A walk through Etheria

A spiritual medium. Just the thought conjurs up a vivid picture of pitch black rooms with thunder rumbling and lightning flashing. Those who dare to commune with spirits sit rigidly, gripping each other's hand. The medium goes into a trance and icy breaths from beyond lick at faces frozen in terror.

Anticipation of my first contact with a medium was wrought with Hollywood stereotypes, though my more rational side reassured me nothing quite so bizarre could happen — and certainly not in Montville, of all places.

In truth, though, I didn't know what to expect. While driving to my appointment I wondered, would Carl Hewitt — the medium — tell me something wonderful about my future? Would he tell me I had none? Do mediums tell you if they know you are going to die?

Calm down, I reassured myself — if he goes the gloom and doom route, call in reason, and forget it. After all, I still had the option to remain a skeptic.

I had my questions ready — those I thought would prove whether Hewitt is clairvoyant, or whether he is a charlatan. I was prepared to ask the most personal questions — demanding answers only I would understand — all in the spirit, as it were, of the story.

When I met the man face-to-face, I must admit I was surprised. I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't what I saw — a perfectly normal, middle-aged man, who actually looks a bit like Jimmy Carter. He wore corduroy pants, a plaid shirt and turtleneck, and sneakers — no shrouds, no turbans, no crystal ball clutched to his breast.

His voice was soothing, and with a touch of Southern accent he described what would happen during the hour-long session. During a reading he enters an altered state of consciousness, he said.

He sat across from me at a large desk in his small office, fingering my wristwatch — something which holds my personal vibrations, he said. All around us were busts and statues of Indians and books of myriad subjects.

As I sat there, knees shaking a bit, sweaty palms clutching the arms of an easy chair, he slipped into the reading — and before long I saw my heart and soul laid out before me.

As he told me things about myself only I could have known about I weighed my words to avoid giving him leads on which to tag his predictions — and perhaps a few times I was not as careful as I would have liked.

Being an astute observer of human behavior — body language, voice inflection, general reaction to certain comments — could have been responsible for some of his revelations.

But he said other things that made my flesh crawl. The feeling that there is someone else looking at the most personal side of you is, at least, unsettling.

My reading was a mixture of information. A happy future, success in my job, a loving husband, small home by the water, and a little girl — but a gloomy prediction in other ways.

A difficult time ahead, and possible medical problems with a family member — which by the way haven't materialized as predicted — were delivered in a matter-of-fact way. Descriptions of relatives and friends, mixed in with the most personal information from the past, present, and future, offered enough material to keep my mind racing for days.

After telling me I had the strength to weather upcoming storms he explained that those hidden traits I must muster in times of adversity were there thanks to an Indian spiritual "guide." My own Indian stands beside me, he said, to watch over me and give me strength. Indians, he explained, often serve as links between the earth and spiritual planes. That, I thought, was one of those tidbits of mysterious information you can take or leave, but fitting for those seeking their own spiritual link to Etheria.

Then Hewitt came out of his "trance" as easily as he had slipped into it, and immediately the questions I should have asked ran through my mind. This, I am sure, happens to many people, bringing them back to Hewitt for additional readings.

I left his office and walked out into the sunshine skeptical yet still curious, at turns believing and disbelieving — I was still just not sure.