

Love isn't always in the cards

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But some come to consult the tarot, just in case

By Christine Legere, Globe Correspondent | February 14, 2010

While true love conquers all on Valentine's Day, have the recession and scarcity of jobs dropped love down on the list of life's most pressing matters these days?

If you ask those who claim to read the future from tarot cards, the answer is no, romance still reigns above all other concerns.

"Yesterday I did three readings, and all three were about relationships," said Patrice Hatcher, an experienced reader who owns Ishtar's Avalon in downtown Plymouth. "Jobs seem to be just an afterthought, and money even after that."

Pembroke psychologist Leslie Proulx Cutler said she is not surprised.

"I believe true love has amazing healing powers, and relationships provide a certain structure to our lives - where we live, how we feel, how we respond to our environments," Cutler said in an e-mail. "There is tremendous comfort in this - the type of stability most desired in these uncertain times."

Dennis Callahan, a self-described fourth-generation witch who learned the tarot deck at his Great-Aunt Marion's knee, also reads at Ishtar's. He and Hatcher have set up private reading rooms there lavishly appointed in Victorian opulence and containing the trappings of their trade - crystal balls, brooms, and pentagrams.

They say some who request tarot readings are already romantically involved and looking to see where their situations are headed.

"People aren't usually coming in because their life is perfect," Callahan said. "And if they are asking about relationships, they probably already have problems."

Callahan will lay out the cards, study the runes and crystals, interpret the combinations, and report what he sees. "All I can do is provide them with the information," he said. "I'm not saying it's good. I'm not saying it's bad. I'm saying this is what I'm seeing."

Customers are sometimes unhappy with his revelations.

"They will even argue with you," he said. At other times, the message may not be good, but it rings true. "They'll say, 'I see exactly what you're talking about,'" Callahan said.

Hatcher said if the cards show that an ongoing relationship is flawed, she will deliver the news. Sometimes it's fixable with hard work. But not always.

"A girl came in 2008, and I told her she was in a toxic relationship based on the cards," Hatcher said. But the woman refused to believe the reading.

"Over the next several months, she found out he was seeing two other women," Hatcher said. "You can be in denial, but the writing is always on the wall."

A typical 15-minute reading (for \$25) at Ishtar's involves three tarot cards representing past, present, and

future, along with runes and destiny stones.

"We don't always understand what every piece of information means, but we've learned to just trust our instincts," Callahan said. "We're seeing the future, but the future isn't set in stone."

When doing a relationship reading, the one card Callahan dreads turning up is the King of Swords, which usually means a dominant male, either verbally or physically. "I see it as a controlling factor," he said. "That's when I take my fatherly tone and say, 'You have to look at yourself and ask what is love.'"

There are also those without soul mates who hope the cards will reveal someone poised to fill that void. "It's not as classic as, 'I see a tall, dark stranger coming into your life,'" Callahan said of such readings. "It's more, 'I see somebody coming into your life, but I don't know what the relationship will be.'"

Internationally known psychic Dawn Carr, a Brocktonian who is the proprietor of Angels of Dawn, agreed the big question for people asking to know their future has historically been "romance, romance, and romance."

Carr, a cofounder of the American Association of Psychics and Mediums, said she has hundreds of customers asking about their futures each year. And more people than ever are coming for readings, the association's members report. "Many of them are people who hadn't contacted psychics before," Carr said.

She said she is finding the tough economy is reflected in her customers' questions and concerns. "While the love thing is still No. 1, money is starting to run a close second," she said.

And what about those seekers who may want to apply a little psychic pressure to the object of their love?

Hatcher said it's not a good idea.

"They want a spell - something to draw someone to them," she said. "They want to know what to do to make other people love them. I tell them it can't be done. The other person has a free will."

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