

JACK ROURKE

the
**RATIONAL
PSYCHIC**

**A SKEPTIC'S GUIDE TO
EXTRAORDINARY PERCEPTION**

 **sounds true**
BOULDER, COLORADO

Sounds True, Inc.
Boulder, CO 80306

© 2012 by Jack Rourke
Foreword © 2012 by Barry E. Taff

SOUNDS TRUE is a trademark of Sounds True, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the author and publisher.

Published 2012
Book design by Karen Polaski
Printed in Canada

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rourke, Jack.
The rational psychic : a skeptic's guide to extraordinary perception / by Jack Rourke.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 978-1-60407-804-6
1. Extrasensory perception. I. Title.
BF1321.R68 2012
133.8—dc23
2012007171

eBook ISBN: 978-1-60407-913-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The first reason for man's inner slavery is his ignorance,
and above all, his ignorance of himself.

Without self-knowledge . . . man cannot be free,
he cannot govern himself, and he will always remain
a slave and the plaything of forces acting upon him.

This is why in all ancient teachings the first demand
at the beginning of the way to liberation was:

Know Thy Self

GEORGE GURDJIEFF

CONTENTS

Foreword *by Barry E. Taff, PhD* . . . ix

Acknowledgments . . . xiii

Introduction . . . 1

- 1 The Beginning . . . 7
- 2 Laying the Foundation . . . 31
- 3 Psi, Psychosis, and Psychic Development . . . 51
- 4 Dissecting Paranormal Evil . . . 71
- 5 Redefining Reality . . . 103
- 6 Anatomy of a Psychic . . . 127
- 7 Emotions and Psychic Ability . . . 165
- 8 Seeing the Invisible . . . 185
- 9 A New Horizon . . . 211

Notes . . . 221

Index . . . 227

About the Author . . . 239

FOREWORD

There are numerous reasons why mainstream science has virtually ignored and rejected psychical research since its conception in the late nineteenth century. The primary reason is that what hard evidence the study of parapsychology has produced is not reliably reproducible for the most part, and has yielded no model or scientific theory that explains how paranormal phenomena function. However, the fundamental reason for science turning a cold shoulder is that the discipline of parapsychology, often referred to as “paranormal research” by the media, tends to attract the wrong people for the wrong reasons, both as practitioners and investigators.

I have witnessed and experienced many things in my forty-two-year career as a parapsychologist. In the beginning of my career, I was a research associate at UCLA’s Neuropsychiatric Institute (1969–1980) where I conducted initial protocol and methodology development for what later was referred to as “remote viewing.” I also conducted extensive field investigations of poltergeists, hauntings, and apparitions. My field investigations continue to this day and exceed some 4,500 cases, one of which became the bestselling novel and motion picture, *The Entity*.

Throughout my lengthy and eventful career, I have met literally thousands of individuals working within the paranormal field. These individuals were self-professed psychics, mediums, and channelers; men

FOREWORD

and women who ranged in age from their late teens through their sixties and seventies. The one thing most, if not all, of these people had in common was a strong essence of egomania combined with intense self-righteousness and emotional instability. For these reasons and many others, I have refused to work with *any* psychics whatsoever — until now that is.

In coming to know and work with Jack Rourke over the last several years, I have been continuously impressed by his psychic gifts. In my opinion, Jack is perhaps *the* most talented psychic I have ever encountered. Jack Rourke speaks not of himself, as is the norm, but of the work and research he is a part of. While others seek to resolve personal inner-demons, Jack Rourke is a conscientious seeker of truth, knowledge, and understanding for the improvement of the human condition.

What makes Jack truly remarkable and unique in a field littered with psychobabble and insanity is his intellect and emotional grounding. Along with this, he has a healthy ego and a comprehensive knowledge regarding spirituality, clinical psychology, and the paranormal. In almost every way, Jack is my peer. In some ways I view him as a superior.

I feel honored and privileged to know and work with someone as capable as Jack. I truly believe that Jack Rourke will one day come to replace me as the ravages of time catch up with me and take their toll.

In my professional opinion, Jack Rourke is a one-in-a-billion individual. He has written an extraordinarily powerful, meaningful, and entertaining book that incorporates knowledge, wisdom, and experience from a wide variety of sources. These sources thoroughly discuss the current state of parapsychology and the rut it finds itself in due to the proliferation of misinformation espoused over the Internet and through juvenile television entertainment that is continually being passed off as real.

Trust me on this one point if nothing else, Jack Rourke knows of what he writes. *The Rational Psychic™* is the cutting-edge of current

FOREWORD

parapsychological knowledge. If you want to know what is *really* going on “out there,” *The Rational Psychic* will point you in the right direction.

This book provides the reader with a wealth of specific information, research, experience, perspective, and insight, which is rarely seen in such books, especially from a man as young as Jack. The only way you might gain access to such a broad spectrum of relevant information in this field would be to read several dozen other books, none of which would likely cover the comprehensive database from which Jack writes.

In what might have been a bleak and foreboding future for parapsychology given the current state of the field, Jack Rourke is providing a sorely needed bright light at the end of an otherwise very dark tunnel, illuminating the best path forward.

Barry E. Taff, PhD
Parapsychologist

INTRODUCTION

If researchers knew exactly how ESP worked and could reliably replicate it, psychic perception would not be classified as a paranormal phenomenon.

The word *paranormal*, according to *Merriam-Webster*, means something that cannot be scientifically explained. The term *phenomenon* is defined as an observable fact or event. So when we say psychic perception is a paranormal phenomenon we are literally describing it as an event that defies scientific explanation.

In February of 2009, journalist Bootie Cosgrove-Mather wrote an article for CBS News detailing the results of a network poll on psychic phenomena. According to CBS's research, "A majority of Americans — 57 percent — say they believe in psychic phenomena such as ESP (Extra Sensory Perception), telepathy, or experiences that can't be explained by normal means."¹

For those of us immersed in psychical research, it comes as no surprise that the majority of the population believes in psychic phenomena. The common misperception is that psychic ability is for eccentric personalities who avoid logic and indulge irrational mystical beliefs; admittedly, there is a fringe element among psychic enthusiasts. However the reality is that many normal, respectable folks — including attorneys, police officers, school teachers, white- and blue-collar professionals, and yes, even hardened skeptics — are secretly fascinated by the paranormal. As Bruce Bower points out in *Science News*:

Surveys conducted over the last century find 10 to 15 percent of US and British adults report having been startled by briefly hearing a voice when alone or seeing something that could not be seen by others. About three-quarters of bereaved adults acknowledge having heard, seen, or otherwise sensed their departed partners. People everywhere, including millions of Americans, have waking nightmares in which they lie frozen, eyes wide open, tormented by hallucinations of demons or other evil presences that sit on their chests as breathing becomes difficult.²

Interest in the paranormal ebbs and flows but always seems to rebound in times of crisis. In the midst of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln and his wife dabbled with spirit communication after losing a child. During the Great Depression, J. B. Rhine created a parapsychology laboratory at Duke University. And since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, public demand for proof of the afterlife has motivated television networks to saturate the media with paranormally themed programming like never before.

It is not a coincidence that concerns about the afterlife — masquerading as an interest in ghosts and psychic phenomena — correspond with social calamity. In times of great distress people look to the unseen world for affirmation of personal power. However, because what “reality” TV psychics and dramatic ghost hunters teach us about our alleged

INTRODUCTION

metaphysical future is mostly based on the subjective — supposedly extrasensory — experiences of comparatively few individuals, intellectually discerning *rational* people want to understand how psychic phenomena can possibly be real before they incorporate paranormal ideas into their daily lives.

When it comes to the paranormal there are few things that get metaphysical enthusiasts — and disbelievers — more impassioned than the controversial subject of whether or not extrasensory perception is real. Interestingly enough, both advocates and opponents of psychic ability are often guilty of the same thing: both frequently let their emotions and philosophical beliefs influence their opinions. However, genuine psychic ability is not based on a belief system. As such you should not have to change religions, surrender logic, or adopt any exotic metaphysical beliefs to accept that extrasensory perception is real.

I consider myself a skeptic despite the fact that I have been a practicing psychic for fifteen years. I understand saying I am both a psychic and a skeptic might seem counterintuitive, so let me clarify. When I call myself a skeptic, I am defining myself as someone who questions the validity or authenticity of something purported to be fact. Keeping this in mind, we can see the probing intellect of a skeptic is essential for any reasonable conversation concerning extrasensory perception. After all, to understand the true nature of psychic phenomena, we cannot rely only on our subjective points of view, especially if they are based on outdated scientific models, religious bias, metaphysical hyperbole, or self-validating spiritual beliefs. Therefore, I see healthy skepticism as a good thing. Skepticism is only problematic when it is confused with the rigid self-serving presumptions of cynicism.

Different schools of science use different languages to talk about ghosts and psychic phenomena. A psychologist might diagnose psychosis in an individual who reports seeing or communing with spirits. A neuroscientist might explain phantom perceptions as visual artifacts of an overactive limbic system or by-products of temporal seizures.

Meanwhile, a physicist or philosopher might claim that ghosts and ESP are simply manifestations of our interconnected consciousness. Until now, there has never been a comprehensive coherent explanation for extrasensory phenomena that works across all these disciplines, satisfying both the psychically enthused and the skeptic alike.

In the following pages, the languages of psychology, physics, neuroscience, spirituality, and biology are interpreted through firsthand precognitive experiences — offering a rational explanation for what psychic ability actually is, and why it is real.

My rational explanation for why extrasensory perception is real will not require you to adopt any new age beliefs. I understand that new age explanations for ESP, involving mystical beings like spirit guides and angels, can be helpful and a great comfort. Spiritual metaphors provide emotional reassurance that those things we do not fully understand are in some way under our influence through right action or an ability to communicate with invisible beings who are responsive to our needs. More importantly, with respect to ESP, spiritual metaphors also provide a logical framework for extrasensory perception. This framework enables psychic authors to illuminate a clear and easy path to development — while avoiding the more complex causes and implications of psychic ability. Yet, if we are to truly understand psychic perception, we have to set aside metaphors like ghosts, demons, and spirit guides, which can prevent us from seeing deeper into our own mental and emotional processes. This is why you will hear me describe the inner workings of the psychic process using psychological and analytical terms, rather than the more common metaphors that carry religious and pseudo-spiritual overtones.

Some readers may not want to consider that their minds, in many cases, are behind the paranormal phenomena they are curious about. Admittedly, it is easier (and perhaps more exciting) to think of paranormal and psychic phenomena as things that happen *to you* rather than things that occur in conjunction *with you* or that actually emanate *from*

INTRODUCTION

you. But I would be doing a great disservice to blindly encourage mystical explanations for psychic ability and ghostly paranormal phenomena, as I will explain further on in the book.

In the first pages of *The Rational Psychic*, I will discuss the experiences that inspired a nearly thirty-year journey to understand my psychic identity. I will talk about how I learned to recognize that I was psychic and my struggle to come to terms with a sensitivity I did not even know I had. Then in great detail, I will talk about what psychic ability is by discussing what it is not, for it is very important to distinguish genuine capability from paranormal dramatics and mental illness. Next, I will discuss how the nature of reality itself supports extrasensory awareness, and how people are conditioned toward extrasensory perception. Toward the middle of the book, I will teach how to recognize real extrasensory data within your mind. I will go on to explain where psychic data comes from, some of the emotional challenges of psychic work, and why psychics really can see invisible information outside of their minds as if it were actually in the physical environment.

Discussing psychic ability is not easy. Like politics and religion, the paranormal can be highly controversial. Some of what I share will challenge the spiritually-minded seeker's emotions and the intellectual's sense of logic. For spiritual people, it is not easy to alter beliefs that secure them emotionally, while for more cerebral folks accepting that not everything is black and white can also be challenging. Regardless which side of the feeling-versus-thinking fence you find yourself on (and it may be both sides at different points throughout this book), please remember that the religious and philosophical beliefs you rely on for inner peace and personal transformation are absolutely valid. I am not saying angels or any other invisible beings you hold dear are not real. It is just that one of the points of this book is to show you that extrasensory perception is not dependent on the particulars of such belief systems.

The Rational Psychic is a tool to help guide you to your own deeper understanding of your potential. If an idea expressed in this material

causes you to feel uneasy or upset, please know that you are not alone. If this happens, I invite you to look carefully at whatever triggered your emotion, as you may have encountered an important piece of information that could lead to great insight and incredible healing. Keep in mind that new ideas can be uncomfortable at first, but they can also help you create your own unique vision of what is possible.

There is just one more thing to say: although the personal stories I relate in this book are all true, I have sometimes changed the locations, names, and distinguishing details to protect the privacy of those involved. I have also omitted nearly all of my private client interactions in order to maintain the integrity of those professional relationships except where unavoidable.

Thank you for reading this book. I am excited to rationally explain for you what psychic ability is and why it is real. Whether you are psychic or just curious about paranormal phenomena, I am confident you will enjoy exploring the following pages as much as I have loved writing them for you. So let's begin!

1

THE BEGINNING

It would be so nice if something made sense for a change.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

I hung up my cell phone and hurled it across the room where it lodged between the cushions of my couch. I do *not* want to do this, I thought. I put my hands on my hips and exhaled forcefully, attempting to calm myself by staring out my bedroom window. My breathing slowed and, as I began to focus more rationally on the issue at hand, it occurred to me I had never *really* looked at the tree outside my window. A silent moment or two passed. Mentally I was now inspecting the oak tree's bark and the texture of its leaves, all while appreciating the way the sunlight cut through its branches. It was then I noticed a curious squirrel who seemed to be studying me as well.

When I was a boy, I could watch squirrels for hours. Even now, when I need to relax I go to the park, sit in the grass, and feed the squirrels by hand. But that day I had no time to relax. I had just hung up with my literary agent. We had been discussing some suggested last-minute

revisions to this manuscript, which included writing a whole lot more about my own personal experience with psychic perception. I suppose explaining how I became interested in the subject is warranted. But I never wanted to write a book about me. After all, from its conception and through its many subsequent drafts, the only intention for *The Rational Psychic* was to provide real-world answers about psychic phenomena that could inspire personal transformation in others — answers that were not readily available when I first discovered my own extrasensory ability. Upon careful consideration, however, the value of sharing my backstory has become apparent. So in this first chapter I offer you my story. My hope is to illustrate how my interest in this material began with a very powerful personal experience — an experience that may be similar to your own.

There is a good chance you and I are very alike. Perhaps you too have had paranormal experiences and would like to understand them better. Maybe you even suspect you have psychic potential. Or maybe you already are a working psychic and you want to understand and enhance your ability by learning, from a more practical point of view, how and why your talent is real. Or perhaps you are skeptical and want to investigate all this psychic stuff before you make up your mind about it. If any of these scenarios describe you, we *do* have a lot in common. And I believe this book will help you.

I want to be clear. My personal stories are not meant to “qualify” me as a psychic. Any authority I might have has resulted from years of personal practice and public service. I speak to you about my formative years only to illustrate that, despite how emotionally meaningful past paranormal experiences can be, we should never use our past as an excuse to surrender sound reasoning in the present. With this understanding, let me relate the single most profound experience of my life: one that taught me that extrasensory perception is unquestionably real, and that you and I are much more than our physical bodies.

A Very Special Delivery

When I was a kid, I had a daily paper route. For anyone who has ever delivered newspapers, you know Sunday is the toughest day. On Sunday, the paper is more than double its ordinary thickness, there are more subscribers, and the paper has to be delivered early. Needless to say, Sunday meant working more, working harder, and getting up earlier. Getting up early has never been my specialty.

One particular Sunday, however, I awoke by 6:00 a.m. without any effort. I got up, bundled my newspapers, delivered them, and made my way home in time to clean my room, make my bed, and get dressed for church with time to spare. This had *never* happened in the entire history of my newspaper delivery career. I did not know what to do with myself. So I played some darts in my room, reorganized this and that, tried to read, and basically wandered from activity to activity until finally I was just plain bored. I looked at the clock and sighed. We were not leaving for church for nearly an hour and a half. I decided to lie down and rest my eyes.

Now, the people who know me best know that I am pretty neat and tidy. Even as a kid, my bed was always made good and tight. This meant that going back to bed presented a problem. I wanted to lie down, but I did not want to muss my bed or wrinkle my church clothes. So, dressed in my Sunday best, I gingerly placed myself atop my neatly made bed, arms relaxed at my sides, head on the pillow.

Before long my breathing became deep and rhythmic. I do not know how long I was “napping” when my whole body began to tingle ever so slightly. Then there was a sound I can only describe as a loud *crack* that echoed through my mind as a silent void opened up within the atmosphere around where I lay. This void was neither a dream in any conventional sense nor completely physical, yet it was experientially very real. The very next thing I remember is hearing a voice announce itself. In a firm soothing tone it said, “Do not be afraid.” It was then

that from within this void, a visitor appeared — backlit, concealed by shadow as he extended his hand to me.

I could see no details of the visitor's face. All that was visible was his brow ridge, his jaw, and the outline of his head and shoulders as he was concealed by a kind of muted light cast over him from behind. You would think I would have been frightened at “waking up” to a faceless ethereal visitor reaching out to me, but I felt an unbelievable comfort in this being's company, even though its presence was neither nurturing nor overtly warm.

It is important to understand that what I just described occurred at the speed of thought. It was almost as if I had closed my eyes and reopened them to see my visitor standing in a kind of doorway in the empty space above and to the left of my bed. This encounter was not a passive experience that I was merely witnessing. It was interactive and quite tactile. In fact I felt I had the choice to accept or deny the visitor's grasp. Thankfully, without hesitation, I took the being's hand and he gently lifted me from my body and guided me across what felt like an indescribable emptiness of space. I felt buoyant and emotionally detached from all physical concerns, yet all the while acutely aware of feeling myself reoriented from horizontal to vertical. The voice spoke again. He said without hesitation or emotion, “Do not be afraid. Your sister is dead.” That was the message, plain and simple. There was no beating around the bush. My messenger then said one final thing to me, one word to be exact. He said, “Look,” as he pointed to my right. It was then that I saw her. There was my sister.

My sister had never walked. She had spent her entire physical life in a wheelchair, dependent upon others for even the simplest of personal tasks. She required assistance to comb her hair, use the bathroom, even hold a glass to take a drink. She never really had any close friends, never had a school crush, and never had the opportunity to run and play like other children. However, what was most tragic about my sister's life was there was never a moment when she was without pain or discomfort.

By the time my sister was a teenager, she could no longer attend school because her afflictions even made sitting upright too painful. Yet despite her debilitation, my sister carried herself with a unique dignity. She never complained. She cared about others, and for her years was the wisest person I had ever known.

I would sometimes feel guilty for how much my sister suffered. We were twins, after all, and somehow my body was whole and strong while hers was severely infirm. That said, I secretly had a very unusual perspective on my sister's life: one no one else knew or, I believed, could possibly appreciate; one I have shared with only an intimate few until now.

For as long as I can remember, I've had two distinct memories about my sister and myself. The first memory is of feeling cramped inside the womb together and the second . . . well, it's of a place before our time on earth.

Since I was very young, I have carried with me a memory from a time when it seemed my twin sister and I were preparing to depart the ever-after and begin our physical life on earth. Somehow we were viewing the lives that lay before us from what seemed like some kind of precipice. I remember being side-by-side energetically, looking down from wherever, in however way we were able to see the life paths before us, when suddenly I became deeply frightened by the suffering and limitations one of the bodies waiting for us to inhabit it would impose. My secret reluctance to commit to this life was worsened by the embarrassment I felt for being afraid. My sister, however, was not afraid. In that moment of weakness, she spoke to me telepathically and said, "Don't worry; I'll take the broken one."

And so it was; we arrived two months prematurely. Ironically, I was unable to put on weight at first, but to everyone's surprise I rebounded and am still here, while the broken body my twin received is not.

So there I was that Sunday morning, caught between this life and the next, having what Dr. Raymond Moody coined an "empathetic near-death experience" (ENDE). An *empathetic* near-death experience is

not the same as the more commonly known near-death experience. An ENDE is a *type* of near-death experience that coincides with a loved one's death, rather than your own. Sometimes the ENDE is just an overwhelming emotional reaction that occurs the moment a loved one dies, even though you may be miles away from the decedent. Or, as in my case, the ENDE can be a shared transcendental experience where the living person journeys into death — literally sharing the death experience of their loved one — only to return to tell the tale.

As a teenager, I had no idea there was such a thing as an ENDE nor would I have cared. I was outside my body and someone was telling me my sister was dead. As fascinating as this may sound, being out of my body is not the most important thing about this story. What is significant is what I witnessed when the messenger pointed at my sister. For the first time in my entire life, I saw her standing upright — strong in her body, her back straight — smiling directly at me, radiating absolute pride as if to say, “I did it!” For her part, she had bravely accomplished what she had come here to do. Then with a twinkle in her eye, she took off running and laughing into the afterlife.

When my sister transitioned, my heart overflowed with joy. For a few microseconds, I could literally feel the liberation and unbound elation she was experiencing. All the freedom, all the excitement, all the relief, and all that cannot be captured in words filled us as though we were one for one last time. I felt like a hundred-watt bulb lit by a million terawatts. Believe me when I tell you there are no words colorful enough to describe the magnitude of what I experienced when I saw my once-crippled sister running and laughing her way into the afterlife.

It was personally empowering for me to see that my twin had survived the transition called “death.” In my heart, I knew she was free and on her way home. Tears silently fell from the corners of my eyes, sliding down my cheeks and into my ears, bringing my awareness back to my body. The messenger was gone and the vision was over. Only the paralysis common with out-of-body experiences remained. My eyes fluttered

open briefly and I tried to close them and go back. I wanted to see and feel again what had just happened to me. However, unlike a dream that can be resumed, my empathetic near-death experience was over. My mind was once again physically oriented. All I could do was lie there motionless and savor the experience with my eyes closed.

My bedroom door burst open. My peaceful private sanctuary was suddenly flooded with panic. I recall hearing hysterical words informing me my twin had died. As I had not yet recovered from the sleep paralysis, I did not respond. Not that I wanted to.

I was trying to maintain my link with my twin as she passed beyond the reach of my consciousness. Not knowing what I was going through at that moment, my older sister repeated herself. She told me my twin had been rushed to the hospital but was already dead.

I lay there looking at the undersides of my eyelids as if staring up from inside the depths of a deep well. It took every ounce of energy in my body to climb out of my stupor, turn my head, open my eyes, and whisper firmly, "I know."

I never cried or mourned my twin's passing in any conventional way. The events that transpired between us the moment of her passing utterly changed how I feel toward and relate to life and death. A few months after her demise, however, I was sitting alone in the house after school one day when a wave of sadness did pass over me. This sadness had been building for some time. Since I had kept my ENDE a cherished secret, I endured a lot of criticism and misunderstanding for my apparent lack of grief. But that afternoon, something or someone reached out from the beyond to affirm all was well.

When my sister had been alive she collected porcelain dolls. Bug-eyed, pasty-faced, creepy porcelain dolls. Now, in my life I have seen ghosts objectively, in conjunction with other witnesses. I have seen apparitions and I have experienced lucid dreams where dead relatives and friends have come to visit. I have had zillions of odd experiences with clients during personal readings, and I have dealt with people who

believe they are possessed by the devil. I have seen, felt, and experienced things I cannot explain. Ultimately, none of these things has ever frightened me as much as my sister's doll collection.

After my sister's death, my mother collected her dolls and put them on display in the living room. That afternoon — sitting alone, feeling sad about my sister's death and for not mourning as others seemed to think I should — I began to doubt the reality of my ENDE. And, with only those awful dolls as witnesses, I cried.

I was sitting in a chair near the bay window at the front of our house. I rested my head back in the recliner and stared out the glass as tears silently fell down my face. And for the first time I said a prayer for my sister and asked for a sign that all was well. I wanted reassurance. I needed to know that I was not crazy and that what had happened the morning she had died was indeed real.

At that moment, I heard what sounded like a creepy lullaby. I turned my head slowly. One of the bug-eyed unblinking dolls seemed to stare right at me as it rotated in place while its musical stand chimed like an old-fashioned music box. A shiver ran through my body causing my arms to erupt in goose bumps. I was the only one in the house. No one, let alone I, had wound up that spooky doll. I got the message loud and clear. I said thank you for the sign, and almost immediately the doll stopped spinning. I will never forget that. It absolutely helped me believe I was not crazy after all.

Despite the apparent spirit visitation and associated out-of-body experience (OBE) the morning my sister died, it never occurred to me that my perception was any different from anyone else's. Yes, as a child I had invisible friends and a wonderful imagination. I also had other OBEs and amazing lucid dreams that occasionally were precognitive. None of these things made me exceptional — in my opinion — but the fact of the matter is, I *was* different.

In the five years after my sister's death, although I continued to have lucid dreams from time to time, and even had one very cool ghost

sighting, I had not experienced anything profoundly extraordinary since her transition. For all intents and purposes, life had become normal. Until a culmination of extrasensory experiences — and the intervention of a friend who witnessed them — forced me to redefine who I was and what I believed was possible.

I was about nineteen years old and was working two jobs to make ends meet. My days were spent at a trendy record store, which was an absolute bore. But at night, I worked at a local comedy club. I was a doorman, seating guests and managing the showroom. Socializing with my coworkers after work, despite the fact I was underage, was one of the hidden perks of being employed in a bar. Since I was the youngest of the group, sometimes the girls I worked with teased me, often in ways I did not understand. Still, they always watched over me when we were out on the town. One waitress I particularly liked was Monica. She was older than the other girls and a bit of a mother hen.

Monica's Italian heritage gave her amazing deep brown eyes. She was a tough city girl with a heart of gold and a dry, cutting wit. She could size up any person or situation in a heartbeat and was not afraid to look people in the eye and tell them what was what. Believe me when I tell you, no one messed with Monica. But underneath her sometimes gruff exterior, Monica always had my best interest at heart.

She would often fill me in on things I was clueless about. She would warn me which of the girls I dated were trouble and whether particular plans I had for my life were practical. From time to time she would spontaneously share observations about how I related to the customers. I liked Monica and appreciated her insight; she cared, and I liked that. I never minded how she seemed able to see right through me — until one night, when our friendship took a turn I did not understand.

It was a Friday night and the place was packed. I was having a rough time seating the showroom because the other doorman hadn't shown up for work. Because of this, I did not have a second to breathe until

everyone had been seated, the show had opened, and the girls had gotten to work serving cocktails. Before long the comics were in high gear, the audience was laughing, and everything was going well. As the drink service slowed, it started to look like what had begun as a wild night was going to be just fine after all. I smiled to myself and quietly leaned up against the wall, taking a moment to congratulate myself on a job well done. I was feeling pretty good until Monica came along and muttered something critical about me being “paternal” under her breath. I did not even know what the word *paternal* meant, but before I had a chance to ask, she walked off.

It was not uncommon for a waitress to get angry about how her section was seated. This time however, the room was packed to the point of being overfilled, and as a result I had no idea why Monica would be upset with me. So for the rest of the night, I was a little preoccupied with what I could have done to make Monica mad.

Later that evening after we closed, I finally asked Monica why she was angry. Instead of answering my question, she launched into a barrage of questions of her own.

“Did ya know those people?” Monica glared up at me from the corner of her eye as if she could see right through me.

“What people?” I asked.

Apparently I had said something that really upset a couple I had seated in her area. I hated dealing with the girls when they were mad. I especially hated it when Monica was upset. Consequently, I would do almost anything to appease her, but not this time. Whatever I was being accused of was definitely not my fault. So, Monica or no Monica, I was not going to take the blame for something I did not do. I held my ground and braced myself for the earful I was sure I was about to get. Instead of a tongue-lashing however, Monica relentlessly rephrased her question.

“What’d ya say to those people?” she asked in her distinct neighborhood accent.

Her tone was firm and her eyes were fixed on me in a penetrating gaze that was beginning to unnerve me, but I still did not know who she was talking about.

“Those people,” she asserted, while nodding her head to indicate a table at the back of the showroom.

“When you sat them, you told them you had to seat them in the back instead of in their assigned seats by the stage. When they asked why, you said the rest of their party would be late because they’d gotten stopped by the cops.”

I drew a blank at first, but then I remembered to whom Monica was referring. I quickly began to stammer that somebody had told me their friends had gotten a traffic ticket, so I had to change their seat assignment with another group that was on time. Monica continued staring at me, evaluating whether I was telling her the truth while I continued to plead my case. By this time, I was starting to think maybe someone had complained and that perhaps I was indeed in real trouble. I eagerly explained, at a near frantic pace, how management had yelled at me in the past for leaving stage-side seats vacant after show time. I went on to say that I had been instructed to fill the stage seats with people who came on time. Guests who came in late had to sit in the back or off to the side so they would not disturb the show, regardless of their advanced seat assignment. So, if her guests were upset, it really was not my fault.

I was now borderline freaking out. Monica was patiently waiting to speak. She shifted her weight to one side, folded her left arm across her chest, and placed her palm under her right elbow to support her cigarette hand. She took a deep drag of her smoke and as it glowed brightly, I could see a twinkle in her eye as if my distress was somehow amusing her. Monica smoked intently while I talked and talked with emotional urgency until I was out of breath and confident I had made my innocence clear. Despite everything I had said, Monica did not respond. She just continued staring at me as if looking through to my very soul.

After a long moment, Monica looked away and exhaled a steady cloud of stinky gray smoke. Her eyes thoughtfully followed the carcinogenic fog as it dissipated. Then, after a second's pause, she turned her gaze back to me and again asked, "*How* did you know those people's friends got a speeding ticket?"

I was a bit more relaxed now but still my mind was blank. I was really confused. Did I not just answer that question? Why was she doing this to me? Why was moving this table such a big deal? I was getting agitated. It had been a long night. Why was she torturing me over something so trivial? I did not know what to say, so I just stood in shock with my mouth gaping. Monica stood fast, gesturing after a second that she was waiting for my reply. Finally, in a near fit of desperation I blurted out, "They *told* me!"

Monica immediately countered, "Who? Who told you?" She was challenging me. "Who told you about the speeding ticket?" Monica scoffed, punctuating her accusation by pointing her cigarette finger at me.

At this point, I was completely stymied. Monica could barely contain her Cheshire cat smile as she plucked tobacco off the end of her tongue while she waited for my reply. She seemed to enjoy how uncomfortable she was making me. Truthfully, I did not have an answer. I had not even thought of the incident with her customers since it had occurred. They were just two of three hundred people I had interacted with that evening. I mean, I *thought* I remembered the customer telling me, as I walked him and his girlfriend into the showroom, that their companions got pulled over by the cops but that they were on their way. After all, I recalled greeting the couple at the showroom door. The gentleman then made some kind of joke about actually being a foursome as he took his girlfriend's hand. I was confused by the joke since there were only two of them, which caused the gentleman to explain that they were being joined by two friends. The next thing I remembered was envisioning a man and a woman sitting in a car while a police officer handed them a traffic ticket. With this in mind, I recalled that the man whom I was seating told me

about their friends' detainment. What was the big deal if he forgot he mentioned it? Why was I getting blamed? Why was I in trouble?

I started getting worked up again as the confusion in my head began to build. I was just doing my job. It was not my fault the customers' friends got a speeding ticket that caused them to lose their good seats. I was really flustered at this point, but Monica just kept smiling and shaking her head. At first I had thought she was going to yell at me, and now she was laughing at me?

By this time I was totally stressing out and about to have a complete meltdown. Seeing my distress, Monica finally retreated. She gently patted me on the chest over my heart and said, "Don't worry babe, it's OK. Why don't you let me finish up here and we'll go get some coffee."

After work, Monica and I walked to a local diner where, over a cup of tea, we chatted about how some people are *different*. She said she had been observing me for some time because she knew that like her, I was one of the different ones. Different? Again, I did not understand.

Monica laid it out for me. The people I had seated in her section earlier that evening, she said, did *not know* that their friends were running late. More importantly, they had absolutely no way of knowing their companions had indeed gotten a speeding ticket. (This was more than a decade before cell phones and text messaging, after all.)

I thought very carefully about what Monica was telling me, but it was late and I was tired. I could feel my brow tightening up as I tried to grasp in vain what she was explaining, but I just did not understand. Then, it all became clear to me. If the couple I had seated had no way of knowing anything about their friends' traffic stop, then how did I know?

This realization struck me like a flash of lightning. I know Monica was trying to make things clear for me, but after our talk at the diner my mind was blown. There really was no way I could have known about the traffic citation. The more I thought about it the more my thoughts swirled out of control.

I felt like I was waking up inside a bizarre nightmare. I tried to figure out how this ticket business might be a misunderstanding, but there was no way to logically explain my knowledge of the traffic stop. The facts were all there. This was real. I was not dreaming no matter how surreal it felt. There was simply no way to explain how I gained advanced knowledge of something that had nothing to do with me. I had fallen down the rabbit hole, and there was no going back. My eyes were now open.

That night in the diner, Monica helped me understand I had an ability to ascertain information in an unusual way. I wish I could tell you that the first time someone suggested I was psychic changed my life for the better, but that would not be true. Learning some part of my mind could apparently perceive and then organize information into false memories without my being aware of it confused and concerned me. I am sure Monica would have been happy to help me understand myself more realistically if I had been willing to accept her guidance. But finding out I was psychic, although intriguing, frightened me. It made me feel like I had lost control over my life. To be honest, while Monica spoke that evening in the diner, my attention drifted to a disheveled homeless man who was dancing around a parking meter outside our window. His belongings were piled next to him in a collection of grimy, mismatched bags. It was freezing outside, and there were patches of dirty snow on the ground left over from a week-old storm, yet this man seemed oblivious to the cold. He just laughed and appeared to do a jig with an invisible partner, stopping only to make eye contact when begging for money from the passing drunks exiting nearby bars. I was mesmerized by his charisma. Clearly he was out of his mind, and yet in those few seconds after hearing Monica accuse me of being psychic, I could not help but wonder if this man's life was also my future.

I think my low-key reaction to being told I was psychic was not what Monica expected. I barely asked her any questions because I did not know what to say. What I heard her saying was that I had a weird way of looking at things, which caused problems. I felt condemned to be an

embarrassment to myself, my friends, and my coworkers. This was not true, of course, but it was how I felt at the time.

Monica suggested I develop my psychic ability by learning to read tarot cards. She thought I would be very good at them. She withdrew a deck from her massive purse, and placed them on the table as a gift to me. They looked kind of scary, so I turned down her offer. Not long after that night, I never saw Monica again.

I am grateful Monica took the time to sit down with me those many, many years ago. It was nice to finally understand why she had always looked out for me the way she had. It was also invaluable to learn how my extrasensory perception affected my interpersonal relationships.

I did not run out and try to “be” psychic. I did not even do any research on what being psychic meant, nor did I join any classes to develop any of my supposedly natural abilities. My story is not that I discovered I was psychic and then, poof, my new life opened up for me. Life as a teenager was hard enough. I did not want to give anyone another reason to criticize me, and despite that night’s evidence to the contrary, I was not sure I even *believed* in psychics. How could I consider myself one if I did not think ESP was real?

The first image of a psychic I ever saw was during my childhood while watching *The Wizard of Oz*. Remember how the traveling gypsy dupes Dorothy into closing her eyes so he can look at the photographs stashed in her basket? Well, twenty-plus years ago, when I was first told I was psychic, that scene — and some limited experience with dubious tourist-trap fortunetellers — was all I knew about being psychic. (I hadn’t connected my invisible childhood companions, frequent out-of-body experiences, and deep curiosity about paranormal phenomena with actually being “psychic.”) So I actually tried to distance myself from anything psychic the best I could. The hope, I suppose, was to avoid exposing myself to the humiliation of being “different.” What soon became clear, however, was that it did not matter what I believed. I was who I was, and I *was* different.

Over the course of the next half-dozen years, I forgot about Monica and her psychic nonsense. It seemed that my strange perceptions had stopped. I had gotten on with my life, distracting myself with travel, relationships, and having a good time. But no matter how much fun I tried to have, or how far I traveled, I always felt a sort of emptiness within me that I now attribute to denying who I really was.

By my mid-twenties, I got caught in the trap of trying to fix myself—instead of accepting who I was and building my life from there. Each day was a struggle as I tried to be a good person while wrestling with regret, self-judgments, and the consequences of a difficult childhood. Then, while grieving the simultaneous loss of a job and a romantic relationship, I felt propelled inward to search for deeper meaning to my existence. After eighteen months of twice-daily meditation—hoping to develop some measure of inner peace—a still small voice, hidden within the chaos of my mind, awakened. From this point forward, the strange perceptions returned. This time, instead of feeling overwhelmed by what I felt and saw, something wonderful began to happen.

I cannot tell you exactly when I accepted I was a psychic person. It was a gradual process that occurred over a period of years. It required a lot of positive reinforcement and critical assessment of my personal experiences. During those early years, I had a helpful reading by a very talented psychic and spiritual counselor named Norma Smith. Norma, who was the aunt of a trusted friend, was the first person who demonstrated to me that psychic ability is real. Later, a palm reader outlined a pattern on my hand she claimed indicated I was psychic. A world-class astrologer showed me with pen and paper why my exact birth date and location predisposed me to a psychic ability. She even said I would write a highly influential book one day. Each of these experiences intrigued, supported, and influenced me in its own way.

But it was really the love of a young woman—and our little, gray baby schnauzer—that psychically awakened me by softening my heart.

Together they allowed me to glimpse my authentic self through loving and being loved.

Psychic development requires a safe environment within which to express and experience your vulnerabilities. The home I shared with my then-partner and our dog was like a chrysalis, and my psychic abilities were the butterfly. I came to trust my perceptions and my out-of-the-ordinary sensing ability through my partner. She would look at me and lovingly say, “Honey, you’re not supposed to know these things about people—you freak them out.” Because I trusted her so much, I was forced to reevaluate who I thought I was.

One example from that time took place at the Hollywood Hills home of an actress who had just moved from New York City. It was the middle of the day and we were getting together to discuss a project we were working on. Before long and without being asked, I found myself speaking to her about her back injury. I asked how she was feeling and shared some simple advice on how to care for it. This, in turn, led her to confide that she had been struggling. She began to reveal the very personal story that had led to her injury, and the subsequent surgeries and methods she employed to cope with the pain she suffered.

I have always had a rather informal way of engaging people, so we chatted for quite a while without either of us recognizing that I had no way of knowing about her injury and chronic pain. She confessed that what she missed most was riding horses, and that her family back east had horses. Right then a flash image of a sweaty thoroughbred raced through my mind. I cut her off mid-sentence saying, “Yes, but your family raises racehorses, not the kind of horses that you should . . .” Her demeanor changed instantly. Her posture closed off and the color drained from her face. A spark of fear flickered in her eyes. I could feel she sensed that she was in danger. My new friend was now looking at me as if I was some kind of stalker.

The actress’s family did indeed raise racehorses. My knowledge of that fact made her question the many intimate details of her life and

injury I seemed to know. Was I an obsessed fan? It sure looked that way. I quickly apologized and explained my accidental “knowing” ability. Slowly, she relaxed her guard and began to inquire about my psychic skills. Thankfully, she was intrigued by such things. In the end, we developed a successful working relationship.

My girlfriend often caught me in such situations — psychically putting my foot in my mouth. So I started to make a real effort to be more mindful before I spoke. I thought I had found a good way to stop attracting unwanted psychic attention, but before long, something curious began to happen. People started asking me for readings. One particular time, a perfect stranger approached me with a deck of tarot cards at a Thanksgiving dinner party requesting a reading. I had no idea what I was doing, but I closed my eyes and started reporting on the words and pictures I saw. The images turned out to have deep meaning for the stranger. Within days this person referred me to a friend, and then another and another. Then I panicked. I had found a degree of happiness through my relationship and my spiritual practices. I’d hoped it meant that my psychic sensing would stop and I could lead a normal life. But for some reason, the happier and more fulfilled I got, the more psychically sensitive I became. What kind of madness was this, I wondered.

Since it didn’t seem to be going away, I decided it was time to learn more about extrasensory perception. I immersed myself in metaphysics. I read everything I could get my hands on, searching for evidence that ESP was real and information on how it worked. This was especially humbling for me. I thought I knew a thing or two about life by then, but once I began to investigate my psychic self I saw that many certainties I had taken for granted — things I had learned in school, church, and just from living life in general — were not so certain after all. I was quickly changing, and even as I wanted to grow, I also resisted. It was then I realized my pursuit of knowledge was not a search for truth. I was really looking for justification for what I *wanted* to believe, so I could retain a sense of control over my life.

I like to think my stubbornness keeps me from being too gullible. During the course of my psychic studies, I was often too proud or perhaps too afraid to really give myself over to new age thinking. Don't get me wrong, I was fascinated by what metaphysics was teaching me. I liked learning alternative views on human consciousness and personal development. I was now looking for ways to incorporate psychic ability into my life rather than conceal or kill it. But I still did not want to lose myself in what I thought of as new age mumbo jumbo.

Adopting new age thinking to explain my psychic ability just didn't feel right to me. Much of what I was learning concerning the afterlife and psychic ability seemed to be based on imaginative assumptions rather than direct experience. It all sounded like a lot of illogical old wives' tales to me, and as a result I felt a bit disenfranchised among metaphysical thinkers. In turn, I started doubting my own psychic abilities. So one morning, as I knelt down for meditation with my baby schnauzer next me, I said out loud, "OK god, if this psychic business is real, then do it again."

Immediately, in a shocking show of force, the image of a woman named Maria burst into my mind's eye. Maria, as it turned out, was the mother of a friend of mine. I had never met her and didn't even know her name. In fact, she had died years before I met my friend and he rarely spoke of her, as she'd died under suspicious circumstances. When I told my friend what I'd seen during my meditation he was astonished. Immediately following the appearance of Maria, I had a vision that depicted the deceased grandfather of another friend. This was followed by a vision of another friend's father who had died several years earlier whom I had also never met. I knew nothing of either of these men, but somehow, as in Maria's case, I was able to confirm their identities using specific details learned from observing my mind. What the hell was going on?

That night I attended a mediumship demonstration at my local metaphysical bookstore. I intended to see if the psychic demonstrating that

evening was for real. If so, I had a list of questions I wanted to ask her. I was on a mission: I wanted more proof that what was going on with me was real.

I do not remember what I expected to see when psychic Jane took the stage, but I can tell you she was as unassuming as unassuming could be. Once she started working, those of us in attendance were mesmerized by her abilities. She called me up to the platform where she began speaking a laundry list of things only my twin could know. In fact I interrupted Jane more than once to prevent her from revealing things I did not want mentioned publically. After a gentle pause, Jane began sharing the very private last few moments my sister and I had shared as she crossed over. I was dumbfounded as Jane recounted my empathic near-death experience from my dead twin's point of view!

That night, I finally accepted that psychic ability was real. More than ever, I still wanted to understand how it worked in order to truly accept that *my* ability was real. I needed to know how people could see invisible things like ghosts and angels, and, more importantly, witness events like my sister's crossing-over. If someone could just explain that to me, I reasoned, I could accept that what I saw when my sister died was real and that maybe my blossoming psychic ability was genuine.

Jane had lit a fire under me. I wanted to put all of this psychic business behind me and move on with my life but I just couldn't, not until I learned how ESP worked. I made a list of serious questions whose answers I thought would satisfy my hunger. I even set a date for my epiphany.

I am not kidding! I told myself this would be my last effort to get the answers to my questions. I actually gave myself a deadline. I had a busy weekend planned, so Tuesday was the day. By Tuesday I was going to answer every question on my list. Tuesday was going to be the day I changed my life!

Tuesday afternoon I drove all over the greater Los Angeles area, bouncing from bookstore to bookstore and metaphysical center to metaphysical center, until finally I found myself standing—with

growling stomach and a disgruntled attitude—in a major bookstore at my local mall. They had countless metaphysical books whose authors all seemed quite accomplished. I scanned dozens of books, but found nothing relevant to my needs. Then, finally, I picked up a hard-cover by a commercially successful PhD who—according to the dust jacket—had vast experience with the paranormal. At last! I thought. This person *must* have the answers I was looking for. My hopes and mood began to rise as I flipped to the index, looking for any content about how to see angels and dead people. My eyes followed my finger as it traveled down the page until I found what I needed. Right there in the index was a listing for how to see angels!

Nearly tearing the binding to bits, I flipped to the page in question and scanned its contents. I was surprised not to see anything about angels. I expected a chapter heading, large print, a sidebar, or some kind of bold marker highlighting the subject, but I did not see anything. I double-checked the index and then flipped back to the page in question where I finally spotted a single sentence mentioning angels. It said: “Seeing angels is achieved by observing flashes of light out of the corner of your eye.” I froze. I read it again, and this time I could not help muttering an expletive to myself. Was this some kind joke? Flashes of light out of the corner of your eye? I felt like a fool. I had let myself get my hopes up, only to find another old wives’ tale regurgitated back at me as if it were some kind of spiritual revelation.

Please know I am not trying to disparage anyone. Writing a book is difficult, time-consuming, tedious work. Naturally there are many varying opinions on the paranormal. I was fine with hearing opinion. What I was *not* OK with was an author passing off folklore as mystically discerned fact.

I realized as I stood there that I had been looking for more than an explanation of my psychic abilities. I was looking to understand the most fundamental questions of my life. My twin suffered and died of a genetic disease. I needed to know why. Why her and not me? Was there

some divine purpose to our lives — and to her death? If so, was that why I was allowed to witness her transition to the afterlife? I hadn't realized it before, but my paranormal quest was really a search for answers to the “big” questions we all ask ourselves. Who am I? Where am I going? What is my purpose, and where do I belong?

I came across that particular author's book at a time in my life when I genuinely needed answers. What I got was “flashes of light out of the corner of your eye.” After reading this, I recall standing there — inside that massive bookstore surrounded by dozens of people — feeling completely alone. I knew that somewhere, someone had to have a rational explanation for paranormal and psychic phenomena. But who? I was now officially disgusted with the commercial exploits of self-proclaimed experts and I had no idea which way to turn. Science seemed dismissive of the paranormal, and spiritual writers often seemed skewed by their own personal beliefs. Could anyone out there help me understand my extrasensory experiences from a rational, objective perspective? Would I ever understand what had happened with my twin?

In the midst of my despair, something very important occurred to me that had nothing to do with the paranormal. I simply and very suddenly realized how angry I was. It did not matter what was or was not written in any book. It did not matter what any “experts” had to say. I was frustrated because I resented feeling powerless to explain what was going on in my life. Amazingly, once I correctly identified my anger, I became aware of the isolation and sadness I had been feeling for perceiving myself as different. It occurred to me that maybe, by trying to find answers to paranormal questions, I was avoiding the more difficult issues I needed to address: my feelings of loss and about love, and my question about my purpose and how to better contribute to the world around me.

My mind drifted back to the day I lost my sister. It did not matter that so much time had passed since the “angel” had lifted me from my body so I could say one last goodbye to my twin. The experience remained

vivid in my mind: the shape of his torso, backlit so as to shield his face; his arm; his hand; and the tenor and steadfastness of his voice. All had stayed with me. Assuming the being who appeared to me *had been* an angel, then the author who professed angels are visible as “flashes of light in the corners of your eyes” had no idea what he or she was talking about. In that moment, I realized I should feel blessed to have had the experience I had, not angry or confused.

I quietly set the angel book down. I had just learned the biggest lesson I could have ever been taught about my life and my ENDE without ever turning another page in any book. I discovered I had the power to find my own understanding and to speak with my own voice the truth of what I knew.

Years later, I was deep into a private session where I was psychically detailing a series of events for a client I had no way of knowing. I drew a unique pattern on a legal pad, correctly identifying a series of scars hidden on her lower back. “Stop,” she exclaimed. “I’m psychic too, but how are you doing this to me?” Shocked by her emotional interruption that seemed almost like a victim’s cry for help, I refocused my awareness on the here and now. I could see tears in my client’s eyes reflecting the light of the setting sun. I reached over and took her hand to reassure her that all was well, allowing her a moment to recover her boundaries so she might feel secure. For some people, how exposed and transparent they can feel during a psychic reading can come as a shock. Few people realize intense emotions highlight private memories, thereby attracting a psychic’s attention. This means the very thing you may want kept secret is the exact thing a gifted psychic will probably see. Based on our private conversation, it seemed my client was expecting our reading to consist of metaphysical stories about past lives and soul mates. But telling imaginative feel-good tales based on esoteric beliefs that cannot be objectively verified is not a demonstration of extrasensory perception. This is a point I will reiterate throughout the following pages.

THE RATIONAL PSYCHIC

Seemingly psychic people are not exempt from misunderstanding what it is they report doing. I've devoted my life to researching and explaining how successful psychics do what they do. What I have learned I am now happy to share with you.