

DRAG ME TO THE FUTURE

Seeking my fortune under the McGrath overpass

By Gabi Gage

On a dreary morning in early October, I stood below the McGrath Highway overpass, contemplating my own mortality. Today was the day of my psychic reading at the Spiritual New Age Boutique located at 153 McGrath Highway. Taking one last look at the hilarious hotdog billboard looming overhead, I crossed the street and prepared to meet my future.

When Scout editors had first suggested I take a visit to the mysterious new fortune teller, I was more than a little reluctant to take the assignment. Amidst rational fears of scam artists and identity theft, I found myself harboring an irrational fear of triggering an age-old curse. The 2009 cinematic masterpiece, *Drag Me to Hell*, is largely to blame for this. If you haven't seen the film, *Drag Me to Hell* features demons, fortune teller, and a career-minded protagonist who is literally dragged to hell by a terrifying old woman's curse.

Apparently, I was not alone in my suspicions. Last year, a new fortune teller's attempt to set up shop in Magoun Square sparked a debate. Questioning the legitimacy of fortune tellers and their potential benefit to the city, alderman-at-large Jack Connolly registered his misgivings. When a second fortune teller, Dolly Lupe Costello, sought to open a similar establishment on McGrath, the aldermen decided it was time to address the absence of specific regulations concerning fortune-telling in Somerville.

The board passed a resolution last April creating a fortune teller-specific ordinance that requires would-be soothsayers to apply for licenses, subjecting them to appropriate zoning regulations and background checks.

Since Spiritual New Age Boutique had been approved prior to the ordinance's issuance, and was therefore no longer subject to retroactive denial of its application, I was intrigued.

Upon entering the dimly lit "boutique," a friendly thirty-something woman named Lupe greeted me. Calling herself an "intuitive psychic tarot card reader" in English and a "powerful woman" in Spanish, Lupe's bilingual website advertising is a mixture of new age zen and traditional psychic lingo.

While the Spanish description guarantees satisfaction, I could find no such offer in English. Lupe specializes in tarot card readings, psychic intuition, palmistry, spiritual guidance and renewal, soul retrieval, chakra balancing and yoga meditation. She also sells candles, incense, crystals, essential oils and amulets. I decided to skip the soul retrieval, instead booking the classic choice — palm reading — for a standard rate of \$25.

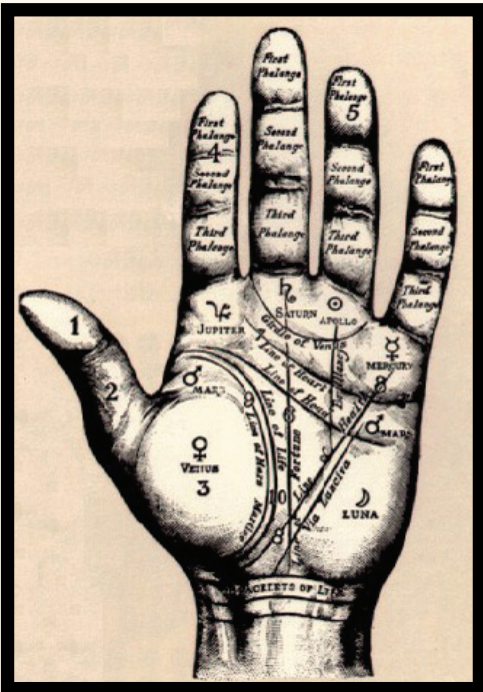
Despite a healthy dose of Somerville skepticism, I do have a superstitious underbelly, one reinforced by generations of Italian cultural mores. For example, I once ate a mysterious, foul-smelling "fish bone stew" from a would-be cauldron on a 95-degree day simply because I had a sneaking suspicion my friend's mother was a witch. From what I could gather despite the language barrier, to not eat the stew would be an insult, and to insult an ominous old woman baring an ancient family stew could have grave consequences. Only after I consumed the entirety of the stew, successfully dodging fish bones and bay leaves alike, had I passed the test. My reward — a frightening though well-intentioned smile from my friend's mom and unfortunately, more stew. Another friend had refused the stew, to grave insult. We do not speak her name.

Leaving the skeptical Gabi Gage under McGrath, I introduced myself as the open-minded Ella, a nickname given by my Irish grandmother in passive protest of my overly Eye-talian first name. Staring at Lupe's welcoming smile, I repeated the following internal mantra one last time: No personal information. No credit cards. No curses. No direct lies if they can be avoided. I figured it wasn't a fair assessment of Lupe's powers of divination if I stacked the cards against her by concocting a series of elaborate fibs.

I timidly offered my palms to Lupe as if begging for alms. Lupe took only a cursory glance at my palms and then began my reading. She seemed to take in the entirety of my countenance as she assessed my past, present, personal traits, hopes, and fears. Without any personal information, Lupe accurately painted me as a paradoxical

Somerville cynic and destitute creative type. Interestingly enough, Lupe left the front door wide open, inviting the highly audible sounds of rainy McGrath traffic into our reading. I considered asking her to shut it, but something about having a clearly visible exit was reassuring.

As she pored over my chakra and third eye, I began to notice a pattern. Whenever she saw something especially good in my future or a positive character trait, Lupe would nod knowingly, saying "God bless you!" I counted the blessings, each time feeling a secret sense of accomplishment. I began to wonder whether I was indeed lucky, or if the opposite of "God bless you!" in fortune telling lingo was simply, "I curse you." Either way things were looking up. While cynical Gabi patiently lurked under the overpass, the new age mystical Ella was feeling pretty good. I would not be dragged to hell today.



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I did notice that as my own skepticism subsided, Lupe's suspicions of me intensified. I had appeared in a rainstorm seeking an oracle, bearing only a modest wad of cash and an antiquated name. Perhaps sensing I was writing a story, she paused twice to issue the following, semi-ominous warning: "Do not share your reading with others. For luck, keep it to yourself."

Well, damn. Was I was treading toward hell? I decided it was inadvisable to share the details of my reading and personal life with the entire city of Somerville anyway. But the experience of reading was fair game, I rationalized.

Ominous warnings aside, Lupe advocated positive thinking, meditation and yoga, and offered sensible advice



you might hear from a trustworthy friend. There was the expected extended reading sales pitch at end, but Lupe never forced the issue. Instead, she suggested I return in three months when I had witnessed the changes she foretold.

With one final "God bless you!" Lupe promptly shut the door of Spiritual New Age Boutique behind me. I found myself Gabi Gage once more, standing at the McGrath crossroads of cynicism and magical realism.

If I had just been dragged to hell, I decided it had been a fairly pleasurable 15 minute visit. While I can't vouch for her mystical powers, I will say Lupe had an eerily keen intuition and should seek employment as a behavioral analyst and life coach if this whole divination thing falls through.

As to my future, and the future of fortune-telling establishments in Somerville, it's too early to say. I'd suggest checking back here in three months. ♦

Your Five-Star Holiday Wow Factor



With holiday dinners and parties just around the corner, everyone is looking for five-star primping to look their best or freshen up their look for the New Year. Somervillians in the know flock to Anthony Capalino for the signature coloring and sculpting services that made him a legend on the Newbury salon scene before his move to Assembly Square.

The salon's welcoming and knowledgeable staff take the individual time to find the perfect cut and color. Every style session in the sleek, modern vibe starts with a one-on-one chat. It's a true conversation, with careful listening and valuable input from your stylist, all in the name of finding what works for your personality and style. Loyal Capalino clients agree: a little bit of hair therapy goes a long way!

Whether you're coming in for a sculpted standard cut, or want a fresh new look from the European runways, Anthony and his talented stylists and colorists deliver dazzling results that last for weeks after you leave the salon. The unique and chic experience of visiting Anthony Capalino Salon is sure to have you feeling savvy, stylish and eager for your next session.



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