

# Life choices

## Tarot reading can't compete with chocolate



**Debra Cumberland**

*"A cold hand clutched my heart. Ice cream, or enlightenment? Ice cream, or the meaning of life?"*

Last Sunday, seeking clarity and guidance in my life, I went and had my tarot cards read.

Although previous experiences with the occult had been negative, I still had faith. Being in Nebraska only increased my desire to believe in alternative realities.

My first brush with the occult occurred a year after I moved to Lincoln. Suffering from woods, hills, and liberal deprivation, I turned to palmistry and psychics in hopes that they would see a Nebraska-free and job-filled world in my future.

Results were disappointing. Four friends of mine and I showed up at a psychic's doorstep on the edge of town. She opened the door gingerly, peered out, and yawned as she ushered us into her incense-filled living room. She yawned as she told us that she would see us in a minute, and yawned as she guided me into her office. Her Siamese cat leapt into my lap and yawned along with her.

"You must be that man's wife," said the psychic, pointing to where my friend Sam was pacing up and down.

"No," I said, frowning. I took this as a bad sign of her abilities.

The psychic shrugged, her long, glittering earrings jangling. She pushed her dark hair behind one ear and asked for a personal possession. I handed her my purse and watched avidly as she closed her eyes and meditated for a while. Minutes later she yawned and stretched. The Siamese yawned and stretched too.

I took this as another bad sign. Judging from the yawn, my future did not look terribly exciting.

Neither was her reading. Two children figured in my future, but they might or might not belong to me. I would have a job, but it might or might not be in the arts. A friend needed to have a gynecological exam. Someone called "Tommy," who died tragically in a car wreck in the 1950's, was trying to reach me

tastefully arranged books at my side and read about what Shirley MacLaine was up to in a previous life.

After 40 minutes, however, I became restless. The search for enlightenment seemed to be taking a long time. I shuffled my feet impatiently, and scanned the rest of the enlightenment customers, to see how they were taking the wait.

I got to my feet and stood in the doorway, staring out onto the fresh October day. From somewhere in the distance, I heard the soft tinkling of the ice cream truck.

A cold hand clutched my heart. Ice cream, or enlightenment? Ice cream, or the meaning of life?

I glanced back at the table. The tarot card reader and her customer were bent over the table, intently involved in conversation. If I beat it out the door, I should be able to make it back in time.

But when I returned, another woman was sitting in my place. The tarot card reader glanced at me apologetically.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "I looked for you, but you weren't here. You'll have to come back next month."

I stood there, temporarily shattered. I was so close, and by my own carelessness, I had missed out on clarity and guidance. I headed to the door, my shoulders slumped with disappointment.

Then I turned to the chocolate. My spirits lifted as I unwrapped the frosty bar. The sky was blue, the birds were singing, and I had chocolate in my possession.

Somehow, it didn't seem such a bad trade-off. After all, psychics were tricky, and tarot card readers could get tired. A bar of chocolate would never let me down.

Enlightenment or ice cream.  
Pick a card.

Cumberland is a graduate student in English and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

from the spirit world with a very important message.

Unfortunately, the psychic said that the message was garbled.

Once again, my search for enlightenment was foiled. The psychic stared at me accusingly, as if it were my fault. Perhaps I simply didn't have faith enough to enable her to successfully communicate with the spirit world.

Still, I persevered. And when I heard about the tarot card readings, I knew I had to shuffle on down.

It might be my last chance for clarity and guidance.

From where I sat, I could see the tarot card reader, and she wasn't yawning. She exuded sincerity and hip heartland values from her black sneakers to her black glasses and open, honest Midwest face. She smiled as she flipped the 20 tarot cards over for her current customer, and he smiled back. I relaxed, leaning into the comfortable paisley chair.

Someone else sauntered by and offered me a steaming cup of coffee while I waited. I slipped through the

# Knocked out

## Anesthesia opens wide world of wonders



**Ted Taylor**

*"Unlike most macho males, I am not one for pain. Nope, I would much rather do without it."*

There are probably a bunch of you out there who have never had the chance to experience the wonderful world of anesthesia.

And a wonderful world it is.

Unlike most macho males, I am not one for pain. Nope, I would much rather do without it.

I've been called a wuss for my lack of endurance of pain — but hey, if you have a chance to visit the world anesthesia makes available to you, you'd be a fool to pass it up.

So, in the name of science and as a service to my readers, I have, under various conditions, sampled that vast world.

There are three basic schools of anesthesia, and funnily enough, they are named after geographical regions. There is local, general and regional. Huh, go figure.

On my last visit to the dentist to have a very routine wisdom tooth extraction, I chose the whole kit n' kaboodle of local anesthetic options.

So, what do you get when you combine nitrous oxide (that's laughing gas to you and me), a pretty powerful intravenous penothol solution, and that old stand-by novocaine with a really comfortable reclining chair? A round trip ticket to La La land for Ted.

Call me what you will for not wanting to feel the dentist rage upon my poor wisdom teeth — and with the help of every one of those ingredients listed above, I surely didn't.

Well, actually that might not all be true. I may have felt it. I may have been writhing in pain, teary eyed for all I know — but I sure as hell don't remember it, and that's just the same to me.

More recently I underwent another dental procedure. This time

phine shoots through your body.

It ain't no Tylenol.

Finally, there is what they call general anesthesia, the one I enjoyed the most, hands down. General anesthetic with a touch of basil served in an IV bag for me, but hey, personal preference may vary.

General anesthesia is the medical term used to describe knocking one cold.

I have told many a friend; the best feeling in the world is the 10 seconds before and the 10 seconds after being put under a general anesthetic.

Doctors realize this, which is why they don't administer the really fun drugs until you've had a chance to see all the instruments they plan on using to cut you like a grapefruit.

When the anxiety becomes overwhelming, they say, "you should start feeling something pretty soon," and ask you to start counting backwards from 10.

On eight, you start spinning a little, on five, you begin asking nurses for the meaning of life, on three you say, "hey wait, I've got a good joke," (thinking it may be your last chance to tell it) and by one — forget it. Lights out baby.

Some people have reported feeling queasy or actually vomiting upon returning to consciousness, others have told me they experienced nightmares and cold sweats.

Not me. I only remember becoming very inquisitive about many things.

I'd have to say I enjoyed all my drug induced excursions. The problem is, you have to get cut open to (legally) justify the trip.

Taylor is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

# From the INTERNET

## Unabomber rants of humanity's end

**The Unabomber's manifesto, all 200k of memory, can be downloaded from the net. I have edited it for typos and numerous problems of grammar (as well as length — these mad bombers do go on so). Nevertheless, it obviously represents a good deal of work for somebody. But as Mr. Bomber says, everyone needs a hobby. Here is an excerpt from a subheading he calls THE FUTURE.**

First let us postulate that the computer scientists succeed in developing intelligent machines that can do all things better than human beings can do them. In that case presumably all work will be done by vast, highly organized systems of machines and no human effort will be necessary.

Either of two cases might occur: The machines might be permitted to make all of their own decisions without human oversight, or else human control over the machines might be retained.

If the machines are permitted to make all their own decisions, we can't make any conjectures as to the results, because it is impossible to guess how such machines might behave. We only point out that the fate of the human race would be at the mercy of the machines.

We suggest that the human race might easily permit itself to drift into a position of such dependence on the machines that it would have no practical choice but to accept all of the machines' decisions. As society and the problems that face it become more and more complex and machines become more and more intelligent, people would let machines make more of their decisions for them, simply because machine-made decisions would bring better results than man-made ones.

Eventually a stage may be reached at which the decisions necessary to keep the system running will be so complex that human beings will be incapable of making them intelligently. At that stage the machines will be in effective control.

People won't be able to just turn the machines off, because they will be so dependent on them that turning them off would amount to suicide.

On the other hand it is possible that human control over the machines may be retained. In that case the average man may have control over certain private machines of his own, such as his car or his personal computer, but control over large systems of machines will be in the hands of a tiny elite — just as it is today, but with two differences: Due to improved techniques the elite will have greater control over the masses, and, because human work will no longer be necessary, the masses will be superfluous, a useless burden on the system.

If the elite is ruthless it may simply decide to exterminate the mass of humanity. If it is humane it may use propaganda or other psychological or biological techniques to reduce the birth rate until the mass of humanity becomes extinct, leaving the world to the elite.

Or, if the elite consists of soft-

hearted liberals, it may decide to play the role of good shepherd to the rest of the human race. It will see that everyone's physical needs are satisfied, that all children are raised under psychologically hygienic conditions, that everyone has a wholesome hobby to keep him busy, and that anyone who may become dissatisfied undergoes "treatment" to cure his "problem."

Of course, life will be so purposeless that people will have to be biologically or psychologically engineered either to remove their need for the power process or to make them "sublimate" their drive for power into some harmless hobby.

These engineered human beings may be happy in such a society, but they most certainly will not be free. They will have been reduced to the status of domestic animals.

But suppose now that the computer scientists do not succeed in developing artificial intelligence, so that human work remains necessary. Even so, machines will take care of more and more of the simpler tasks so that there will be an increasing surplus of human workers at the lower levels of ability.

On those who are employed, ever-increasing demands will be placed: they will need more and more training; they will need more and more ability; and they will have to be ever more reliable, conforming and docile, because they will be more and more like cells of a giant organism.

The system will have to use any means that it can, whether psychological or biological, to engineer people to be docile, to have the abilities that the system requires and to "sublimate" their drive for power into some specialized task.

But the statement that the people of such a society will have to be docile may require qualification. The society may find competitiveness useful, provided that ways are found of directing competitiveness into channels that serve that needs of the system.

We can imagine a future society in which there is endless competition for positions of prestige and power. But no more than a very few people will ever reach the top, where the only real power is.

Whatever else may be the case, it is certain that technology is creating for human beings a new physical and social environment radically different from the spectrum of environments to which natural selection has adapted the human race physically and psychologically.

If man is not adjusted to this new environment by being artificially re-engineered, then he will be adapted to it through a long and painful process of natural selection.

The former is far more likely that the latter.

It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences.

The "Manifesto Compleat" is available at <http://www.pathfinder.com/@/jp18GGCj5gEAQBNC/pathfinder/features/unabomber/manifesto.html>