

Wisdom within the wreckage ~

Dabbling with divinity in a tea cup

By Colette Gehr

“Tea is instant wisdom - just add water!”

--- Astrid Alauda

“There is a great deal of poetry and fine sentiment in a chest of tea.”

--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

One often wonders what secrets could be revealed within the sodden wreckage of tea leaves left at the bottom of a ceramic cup and that mystery can be easily solved with a visit to a spiritualist experienced in the ancient art of tealeaf reading.

Since my early teens, I have fond memories of my mother initiating me in this particular tradition, and I looked forward to the twice-yearly readings she would bestow upon me. The routine may have always been the same, with a selection of a special teapot and cups and certain customs to follow, but the tale of the cup would be heartwarming and different each and every time. With great purpose, she would remove her glasses and peer intently into the remains, taking immeasurable care to gather the messages left behind and voice them to me.

Reading for family and friends, she carried on a practice, passed down from her mother, that was, at times, chillingly accurate. In one case, she had read for one of her best friends and not only told her she was pregnant, but also she was carrying twins. The woman was astounded as she hadn't even told her husband yet and went on to deliver two babies many months later.

For others as well, a reading can lead to a restorative journey along with their soothing brew. “There are people who come to the tea room down and out and then have a reading after which they

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completely turn their life around in a positive way,” says Carole Navarre, current owner (along with daughter, Heatherleigh) of the Boston Tea Room in Wyandotte. “They often return with good news and thank us for our assistance.”

What initially began as a way to encourage business for The Nibbler Restaurant, the Boston Tea Room was created by then-owners Gerre and Phil Moisson, in the spring of 1982, to accommodate the growing demand for readings by Massachusetts native, Rita Moisson. “After dinner, they began holding Friday night readings. They became so popular that people began to come in just for readings and nothing else,” adds Heatherleigh. “Because of this, they created a special area on the second floor of the building and named it the Boston Tea Room for readings of all variations.”

At the time, it was illegal to charge for divination services so they conjured up a small lunch to harmonize with the readings. “Things have come a long way since then, when a lunch and a reading

was only five dollars,” remembers Carole. “To this day, I still have people commenting on the delicious chicken salad while reminiscing of the exceptional readings Aunt Rita gifted them with.”

While the location has moved several times, its reputation has endured the passage of years and maintains an eclectic clientele that includes doctors as well as FBI agents. Readings are generally most popular with women but currently the numbers of young adults and men coming through the door are increasing rapidly. “Interestingly enough, we are also seeing a trend of couples on a date coming in for a reading together,” says Heatherleigh.

Awarded many honors along the way, the Boston Tea Room has been named “Best of Detroit” by readers of *Metro Times*, the *Free Press*, and *Hour Detroit* magazine, and is one of the few establishments statewide to offer this type of service along with many other benefits inside its relaxing walls. Due to its popularity, a new location has recently opened in Ferndale.

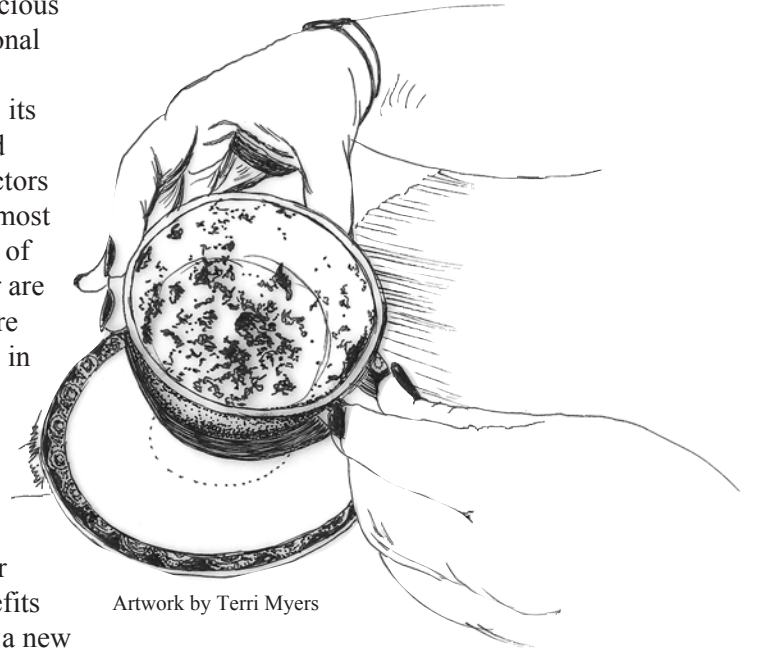
Ensnared within an intimate setting in a private room, clients immediately feel at ease in a happy bubble of coziness that would lead even the wariest clients to be open to the surprises that await them. “I have found that everyone’s reading is unique. I am often amazed at how diverse the readings can be with the small canvas you are looking at, and how much detail you can get from such a small cup,” adds Heatherleigh. “The most common reaction is surprise all the way across the board, that in this little brown mess left in a common cup are secrets about your life and the world around us.”

Officially known as tasseography, this creative ritual, which relies on interpreting patterns or symbols lingering from tea leaves in a cup, may not be as well known as other divination practices (such as palm or tarot card readings), but can often be a deeply insightful experience. While the traditional practice has maintained certain procedures, the nature of the method has been modernized in these changing times. Reading for over 10 years, Rhonda Morgan of the Boston Tea Room feels the new way is much more specific. “As long as there are tea leaves, it is more about the texture than the type of tea,” says Morgan. “And the modern version requires so much more psychic talent along with an imaginative mind in which you can receive much more information in a reading.”

Beginning with placement of a small amount of loose tea in a china cup filled slightly with hot water, the client is asked to swirl the remains as she wishes and pour the excess liquid out when she desires. When done with the draining, the cup is placed upside down on the saucer by the reader for the client to rotate three complete turns clockwise. The reader then picks up the cup and articulates the meanings behind the images she sees and the time frame (usually within the year) associated with them, ending the session with any questions the client may have.

As one of the readers at the tea room, Heatherleigh comments, “You really have a small window you are looking into and you have to go beyond that and connect with the spirit, and find symbols with meaning to that particular person’s life, and rely more on intuition. It really takes focus, and connection with your intuition, to meaningfully read tea leaves.”

However, in performing readings on your own, it is not recommended that you cut open tea bags and attempt to read those contents, nor to completely rely



Artwork by Terri Myers

on symbol dictionaries for psychic intervention. “I feel that you should use caution when using symbol books as they don’t deal with the modern world,” says Morgan. “Limit those cheating guidelines and read from the true images before you.”

Going back as far as ancient Greece, when they read sediments left in their wine, the practice has been used for centuries by those seeking remedies to problems they are encountering --- whether they are of a physical or spiritual nature. Often passed down from family to family, the tradition is generally attributed to Gypsy fortunetellers. In fact, tea leaf reading has roots within the Middle East, Asia, and Ireland. “I have a real connection to people who come from European or Middle Eastern heritages, who are drawn to an esoteric or more mysterious divinity,” adds Heatherleigh.

For visitors who question if they, too, have the same gift to read the contents of a cup, the answer lies not only within themselves, but can involve class work as well. “I feel all people have psychic abilities and whether or not you develop it is up to you. Some people have stronger intuitiveness than others. Some are great and some only have an enough talent to keep them afloat,” adds Morgan, who also teaches a class in tasseography at the Boston Tea Room. “Anyone can learn it and if they work at it, they can become very good. For my classes, to truly be good, one must practice it. I can only teach a person so much... the rest has to come from you.”

Tealeaf reading can be a fun and inspiring way to take note of the messages we may not otherwise discover. “There is a resurgence of this type of divination because it is more uniquely specialized,” says Heatherleigh. “Now people seem to be embracing it and requesting this type of reading more often.”

For more information on the Boston Tea Room and the services they provide, call (734) 281-2244 in Wyandotte, or visit their website at www.bostontearoom.com. The phone number for the new Ferndale location is 248-547-2987.

Colette Gehr is a freelance writer based in Holland, Michigan. Her poetry was featured in the Fall 2008 issue of *The Crazy Wisdom Journal*. She can be reached at cooliedanc@hotmail.com.

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