

# Time Out New York

# Heavens help us

A mystic, a seeker and a cynic test their fates in the hands of some of the city's star astrologers

By Julia Goldman, Valerie Stivers and Zoë Wolff  
Photographs by Seth Kushner



Go ahead, ask: "What's your sign?" When the subject of astrology is mentioned, most people can't resist giving their rendition of the most clichéd pickup line in the book (which we hope none of you actually use). Maybe that's because, while everyone knows their sign, few understand what astrology really is. Horoscopes (like *TONY's* own Planet Terry, see page 185), are just a slice of it. Geared to a wide world of readers, they aren't tailored to the individual. Conversely, having your chart read by an astrologer is a highly specific method of human analysis. (Long before shrinks, man had astrologers.) The process is seriously low-maintenance: All

you have to do is give the stargazer your time, place and date of birth, then show up and listen to him or her talk about you for an hour. So we three—one a confessed horoscope junkie, one a cosmically curious horoscope reader, one a confirmed skeptic (in order of the bylines, above)—each consulted two of the city's most renowned astrologers. Here's what's in store for you if you give them a try. We see it in the stars.



## THE COSMI-CURIOUS

**JILL DEARMAN**  
ASTROLOGER, TAROT-CARD READER  
(212-841-0177, or write to [JillDearman@aol.com](mailto:JillDearman@aol.com))

"In the seventh house, your house of relationships, you have Chiron—it's an asteroid," says Jill Dearman, astrologer for *HX* magazine and author of two books, *Queer Astrology for Men* and *Queer Astrology for Women*. My lips twitch and, I can't help it, I burst out laughing. "An asteroid?" I say. "That explains everything." In the cosmos of love, I get the obscure chunk of rock.

Dearman, a solid, cheery woman in her early thirties, rushes to assure me that this doesn't mean my relationships will be less than heavenly. She admits that Chiron tends to be "kind of heavy," but puts a constructive spin on it. In my case, the presence of Chiron indicates that I might be inclined to seek out father figures but, she says, "You may be shooting yourself in the foot by seeking out people who will take care of you."

This interpretation isn't exactly how I'm used to seeing my love life. Furthermore, my attitude on astrology is a mixture of disbelief and a sucker-love for the uncanny. I was secretly hoping for an eerily accurate summation of my past; instead, I got something more serious to mull over.

Don't get me wrong. I'm enjoying my session at the living-room table of Dearman's cozy fifth-floor walk-up in Greenwich Village. Two candles burn, and the air is pleasantly redolent of incense. She's doing a natal reading on me, which means she's going through my chart, house by house, and explaining what the position of the planets means about my personality, strengths and interests. For example, I'm Virgo rising (the most hardworking sign in the zodiac), yet my house of money is empty (all too true).

"I think [a person's chart] gives us a hidden view of things," Dearman says. "Astrology is similar to Freudism or any religion. It asks: What are we meant to do here on this earth? Each person's chart tells us their particular role."

Dearman also outlines upcoming planetary events for the next year, noting ones that will create or limit opportunities of the otherwise significant for me. Generally when she does a reading, there won't be a follow-up for six months, but if a client wants to talk to her more often, she's flexible.

While our session doesn't have any pose-bump-inducing revelations of the "Oh, my God, how could I have known?" variety, it most feels more authentic because of it, which of what Dearman has to say strikes me as insight and common sense. I feel enriched for having talked to her and for an astrologer, she'd down to earth.

**LINDA ASHLAND**  
ASTROLOGER, NUMEROLOGIST

(212-750-8560); rates vary; \$600 for a private consultation, including chart reading and numerology with six months' follow-up; \$200-\$400 for a telephone consultation.

She wasn't Nancy Reagan's infamous adviser, but Linda Ashland, known as the Park Avenue astrologer, has an all-star, power-broker clientele (whom, of course, she isn't at liberty to name, although *New York* magazine linked her to the sad story of New York State Chief Judge Sol Wachtler and Republican fund-raiser Joy Silverman).

During our brief walk from the library at the Regency Hotel, where we have our reading, to her home in the Delmonico, Ashland calls a flirtatious hello to a well-known executive, whom she claims to advise on when the fish will be biting in Florida.

I'm totally charmed by her, and not only because she introduces me to the exec as a "very pretty little girl." When we first talk about her participation in this article, her first question is the dates the story will be on the stand: October 12 to 19 is good; later would have been bad, because Mercury goes into retrograde on the 18th, causing misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Of course, Mercury being in retrograde also means that old friends come out of the woodwork. "And that will be true, because people I haven't seen for years get in touch with me every time there's something about me in a magazine," she says. "There, you see?" I must admit that I do see. This is exactly the kind of "Coincidence? I think not" moment that intrigues me about astrology.

Not that Ashland claims to predict the future. "All the astrologer can do is tell you what

the aspects are," she says. After she's done a chart reading, there's a free six-month follow-up period when clients can call with questions. Executives phone her to find out the best time to schedule a meeting, or ladies who lunch ring up to find out if a new chauffeur or maid is celestially compatible.

The reading she does of my chart brings up several of the same personality traits that Dearman's reading did, though with Dearman I felt that the approach was deeper and more psychological. Ashland airily pronounces that I'm controlling in relationships (which strikes me as close to the truth) and that there isn't love on my immediate horizon (I blame the asteroid). Near the end of the session, she tells me to call her later and she'll run a chart on a friend of mine to see if we're meant for each other, a prospect which makes the high price of the consultation seem almost a bargain.

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