

## Supermarket Superstition – Part 2.

*Previously: A Psychic Researcher is told about strange 'manifestations' in a suburban supermarket by employee 'Stan' (not his real name). They arrange to meet again but Stan fails to turn up...*

I spent some time looking for 'Stan'. He had proved a fascinating interviewee with his tales of exorcising underground car parks and deadly herb combining. And his partner DellaBonna with her magic goods stall sounded even more promising.

Still, no one is indispensable and the Superstition Research Project had to move on. But some two weeks later when I was looking for possible subjects in Lower Swileham, I turned a corner and there was a little street market in a cul de sac. And there was a stall. And there was a tall woman with long white hair dressed in a long black gown patterned with silver stars, moons and planets. All just as Stan had described DellaBonna. His *Meat avatar*, as he affectionately called her.

So I asked her. "Is your name Dellabonna by any chance?"

She turned and swept her huge deep black eyes over me.

"By every chance and by none at all, Stranger," she replied. "Chance is the cloak we throw over necessity to protect our sanity. So you are psychic too?"

Since a simple *Yes* would have answered my question, this clearly was the real DellaBonna.

She looked sad when I said I wasn't psychic but that Stan had told me about her. So I changed the subject and asked what she sold on her stall.

"Bric-a-brac," she replied. "What Stan called it Jic-a-Junk. Or Cric-a-Crap, if he was in a bad mood". She wiped a tear from her eye. "Sorry. I so miss that man with his big ears and twitchy nose."

I noted her use of the past tense and ask if Stan has 'passed'.

Her eyes flared. "How should I know? He could be in Tibet. Or Bradford. Or Dunstable. He spoke of the auras of these sacred sites and how much he wanted to visit them. He is a Free Spirit. So let him roam free as he wishes. Ask no more questions, Person With No Name who knows ours."

"So do you have no idea where he is?" I asked.

"Why do you keep asking me? Do you think I turned him into a mouse or something? Please leave me alone with my memories."

I apologised and walked the wrong way down the cul de sac. Coming back on the other side I saw a tiny shop with a multi-coloured door, just as Stan had described. When I knocked DellaBonna herself opened it and said with a smile, "Welcome to Practical Magic."

She showed me around the tiny shop with its glass cases and jars and ebony boxes. She explained that she mostly sold for the domestic market: Dog Finders, Moth Cursers, various Folk Remedies, and a range of Infallible Love Potions, Numbered 1 to 9.

Other popular lines were: Anti-Burglar Crystals, ("*FELONS! Enter at your peril. This property is protected by Gentian Vibrations.*") and Humane Mouse Traps. These latter being plain wooden boxes with a hinged front glass lid and a tiny tread wheel inside.

"It may not look like much," she said. "But leave the lid in the Up Position overnight and a cheesy ambience lures the hungry rodent inside. It is trapped... But should curiosity prompt it to rotate the little wheel it is transported painlessly to an alternative Universe where Mice are the dominant species."

She pointed at the Company motto: *An Empty Box means a Happy Mouse!*

"Your chum Stan always scoffed," said DellaBonna. "That is a load of old cobblers,' he'd laugh and roll his eyes. 'Even I can see that. Your brain must be on holiday, M A.'"

She sighed. "I'm sorry if I was rude outside. Thinking about Stan always upsets me. Can I make you a cup of my special herbal tea? I think you'd like it."

She turned the door sign to CLOSED and we sat at a table and I drank her tea. I couldn't quite place the taste but it certainly slipped down easily. This was a wonderful opportunity to do some fieldwork so, with DellaBonna's permission, I took out my copy of the VLS (Verloc/Le Saint) Attitude Inventory.

Amazingly, her answers gave her a 100% score. Dellabonna checked YES to belief in all the Traditional Divinations:

*Fortune Telling, Lucky Charms, Dreams, Omens, Astrology, End of the World, End of Days.*

She also had a complete score on the Odious Object Hatred Aversion (OOAH) Scale:

*Adders, Frogs, Sparrows, Leeches, Thunder, Cold Water, Draughts, Horses, Goats, Re-haired People, Bald people, Black Cats, White Dogs, Crickets, Pigeons, Crayfish, Cheese, Hares, Sticklebacks, Marathon Runners, and Marmite.*

Then I couldn't believe my luck when she offered me four new contemporary superstitions I had never heard before:

*"If more than 3 of your Lottery Numbers come up in a win, but each is out by one digit – e.g., the winning numbers are 6, 8, and 10 but yours are 5, 7, and 9 - then you have done something very bad and Fate is punishing you."*

*"If Parakeets chatter outside your window you will receive a tax demand from HMRC."*

*"Cross your fingers and whisper Mr D'Arcy three times to guarantee a perfect end to a first date."*  
(All Genders.)

*"If your country has 3, or more, Prime Ministers in one year then it has done something very bad and Fate is punishing it."*

This was wonderful material. I was so happy I felt light-headed. I even thought I heard DellaBonna muttering something to herself that sounded like *parsley parsley parsley*.

"Do you have anything else?" I asked her.

"Such as?" she smiled.

"Do those Love Potions of yours really work?"

"You tell me," she said. "You drank the strongest one just half an hour ago."

Then she carried me upstairs.

Everything about DellaBonna's room was delightful. Not least DellaBonna herself. Well, everything except for the Humane Mouse Trap she kept on a chair on her bedside table. We didn't sleep at all that evening and night. Though when we rested I could hear the frantic slapping noise the mouse made as it beat its tiny forefeet on the glass. But when the sun rose it was gone.