



Source: AFP, 'Pilgrims arrive for the big squeeze', *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 27/12/06.

Tags: [animals](#), [fortune](#), [water](#)

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These are the days when the tectonic plates shift. Gaps yawn in the surface of the land and time falls through. Or stretches wide, over the void. These are the days when the earth quakes, seas go crazy, tidal waves rise, fire storms attack and pilgrims mass on the ancient ways. I'm talking actualities here. I'm talking about the Asian tsunami, the Iranian earthquake, the 98 Sydney to Hobart yacht race, the Canberra fires—they all happened in the same niche on the calendar. Days of shock and awe, miracle and wonder, chaos and carnival. Holidays.

Every year I have a succession of days—I never count them because that would break the stretching spell—starting with the day of Christmas and coming to an end with the first day of the new year—a succession of days with nothing in them but life.

From the time when I was old enough to remember my thoughts, I've thought of these days as the best days of all. But I'm learning that you have to be wary of their powers, because they don't discriminate. Whatever is visited on the planet in its tectonic stretches can be visited on you, so it's best not to draw attention to yourself. It's best to stay very calm and very quiet. Don't look behind you and don't look ahead.

You see, a couple of years ago I made a mistake. A big one, maybe, though it hasn't played out yet so I'm lying low and trying not to mention it. Except to you. It's only you I'm telling about it, so keep it to yourself.

It would have been the day after the day after Christmas—or possibly the day after that—I got out of bed first thing and went to the window to watch the light spreading across the garden—and I thought: so what's next? Suddenly I really wanted to know what was coming next. And I wanted it to be something big.

So I got on the internet and googled for a psychic. It took a while to narrow down the options and find the best choice, which I did with the most rational parts of my brain. Area—local. Price—reasonable. Credentials? Well, that was a bit trickier. I was torn between Stella, who had been '20 years a professional clairvoyant' and Pixi, who said she was 'from a long line of seeing minds.' I rang Pixi.

'I'm interested in having a reading,' I said.

'Uh—huh.' The voice didn't sound very likely somehow.

'That is Pixi, is it? Pixi the clairvoyant?'

'Yuh.'

'What do you use? Tarot cards?'

'Nuh—uh.'

'So do you take it off a personal item?'

'Can do, but not today. I wouldn't do that today.'

'Doesn't have to be today,' I said. Although in fact I was hooked already and I actually wanted it to be now. She must have read my mind.

'Of course it has to be today. Where's your nearest beach?'

Turns out what Pixi likes reading is jellyfish—the transparent kind that get washed up as the tide goes out. And it turns out Pixi is all of about sixteen years old, at most. Half my age. I was starting to feel a bit of an idiot, following this kid in white shorts and pink bandeau top stomping across the sand.

She stopped at the edge of the water.

'Alright then, what you got to do is you got to pick one.'

'What?' My mind had gone blank.

'Jellyfish. I'll give you a tip. The clearest ones are the best.'

There was a little round blob at my feet but it looked milky and exhausted so I flicked it back into the waves and went looking for a better bet. There were plenty of them around, and every so often a wave came in with a couple more to swell the number. The fresh ones were the clearest, but when I looked closely they all had a milky cast.

A ripple crossed my toes and something made me turn around. Pixi was right behind me, gazing straight ahead as if I was transparent, and at her feet was a shining crescent shape.

'That one.' I pointed.

We sat there just out of reach of the waves and she stared at the crystalline tube and began to talk. The voice is still with me—a shallow childish voice that scrapes against the edges of the words as if they didn't really belong to her.

'It won't happen yet, but it isn't too far away. And it won't happen here—well, not right here, but all this will be affected. There'll be people all along there. Masses of them, all clumped together.' She waved a hand in the direction of the white unit blocks and hotel buildings on the beach-front. 'And you'll be in amongst them. They're in a panic and you're in the crush but you're a survivor so it's going to be up to you. Afterwards it's going to be up to you.'

'After what? What are the people panicking about?'

Pixi had already got to her feet and she was holding her hand out. 'Sixty dollars.'

As I fumbled for the cash, she smiled and said, 'Nice bag. And didn't you lose a pair of shoes around here one time? Try looking up there. Where that coke can is.'

She ran off and I headed up towards the dunes, spotting the coke can amidst some clumps of grass. How she could have seen it from back there I didn't know.

I found the shoes. They were sand logged and all out of shape, so I buried them again but the trouble is now I know where they are, and that's not all I know. But I'm not sure how many days it is till the new year because I don't count them.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Jane Goodall.*