

# 'I can uncover your destiny'

**Shelley von Strunckel** reveals how the stars aligned, paving the way for her to become a world-renowned astrologer

## Born in Hollywood to atheist parents, what set you on your spiritual path?

When I was 10, I received a beautifully illustrated book from my older half-brother, Ken, about all the religions of the world, with detailed explanations on each faith. It fascinated me so much it inspired me to study different spiritualities at the Vedanta Society, in Hollywood, when I was 16.

It's a worldwide organisation founded by Indian saint Ramakrishna that recognises all spiritual practices as being equal. I loved its ancient Hindu philosophy that promoted peace and equality for all human beings. Then, in my twenties, I was working as a retail fashion buyer in Los Angeles when my colleague, Fran, introduced me to the Theosophical Society, founded by spiritual medium Helena Blavatsky in 1875.

Members of the society believe ancient wisdom offers a path to enlightenment. Fran invited me to a talk where I met Boris de Zirkoff, Blavatsky's last living relative.

I became his protégée and when I was 29 he took me to India, to the society's headquarters. I helped him work on a new edition of Blavatsky's major work, *The Secret Doctrine*.

Events have happened in my life guided by the hand of god. I was a constant spiritual student from childhood and attracted wonderful teachers into my life. Recently, I found the book on world religions that Ken gave me, and which set me on my path all those years ago.

## How did you make the leap from the fashion world to astrology?

My friend Fran was also into astrology and taught classes. I went along to find out what it was about and was fascinated to learn about planetary cycles and how your horoscopes are



**'I was a constant spiritual student from childhood'**

a map of the heavens from the moment you're born, telling you what your soul needs to learn in this life.

I then studied on my own, going on to do personal horoscopes for family and friends, which lead to getting clients coming to me from the world of rock and roll to lawyers and vicars, in Hollywood, New York and London.

One of them was English music producer and songwriter Pete Waterman, who recently thanked me on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*. I quickly realised being an astrologer was a better profession than retail!

## The famous astrologer Patric Walker handed over writing horoscopes for the London Evening Standard newspaper to you in 1991. How did that come about?

I was working as an astrologer on women's magazine *Mirabella* in New York and got a call from Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch, who published the magazine, asking if I'd like to meet Patric. 'Would I? I'd kiss the hem of his robe!' I told him.

I'd already studied Patric's horoscopes, he had such a special voice, writing directly for the archetype of each sign.

We arranged a meeting in August 1991 and there he told me he liked my horoscopes and was looking for an heir on the Standard. I've been writing for it for 26 years now.

## How can astrology advance us along our spiritual path?

It's a wonderful tool for personal self-awareness and a helpful way of figuring out what you need to learn. Each sign is an archetype and your parents, brother, sister and partner are not like you if they're a different

## PROFILE...

**Name** Shelley von Strunckel

**Career** Shelley launched the first astrological column in the *Sunday Times* newspaper in 1992 and writes astrology columns in newspapers and magazines globally.

Described in the media as 'the voice of reason', Shelley has shared her astrological analysis of current social and political trends on the BBC World Service's *Hard Talk*.

A lecturer on meditation and positive thinking, Shelley is developing a TV series exploring these disciplines.

**Did you know?** Shelley is known as the 'Champagne Mystic' because of her penchant for the fizz, as well as her bubbly personality.



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Queen Boudicea's daughter, Portia, is Shelley's spirit guide

archetype. There are planetary cycles too, which is why each year in your life is different from the last, because you have different things to learn during different cycles.

For instance, Saturn's a great teacher and when it's in your sign you should study something or a situation will arise in your life that will force you to research something you need to learn.

I'd always encourage people to get their astrological charts done so they can get a clear perspective on what they're meant to be learning in this life. We all have different stuff to learn to be able to move on. My purpose as an astrologer is to give that information to people.

**Do you believe we have more than one life to learn our lessons?**

Absolutely. You only know you've learned your lesson when you stop bugging it up!

I've believed in reincarnation from a young age. I was six when I watched a TV show where one character said to the other, 'that's a painting of you in a previous life' and it instantly made sense to me. I knew in that moment I'd had previous lives, even if I couldn't remember them.

I've no idea how many lives I've had. But I believe I came back to be a spiritual teacher in this one. I designed this life to get the message out that life is more than a physical experience, and once I finish this life, I'll have another.

**Have you ever communicated with the dead?**

When I was 28 my brother, Fred, and my boyfriend of two years, Ralph, died within hours of each other. Fred of emphysema and Ralph from a heart attack. They were both 45.

I was on my way to hospital to collect my brother's possessions when I felt the energy link between him and me diminishing and said to myself, 'So this is what happens when someone close to you dies'. When I got home a couple of hours later I heard about my boyfriend and was completely broken up.

Shortly afterwards I was in bed, curled up with grief, when I sensed Ralph's presence and felt his loving energy. He'd come back to comfort me. He came to see me many times after that. The last time Ralph visited he said, 'You're okay now.' And, yes, I was.

'I won't come back again,' he added and I said, 'That's fine, thanks for helping me through it.' He never did return.

**With this experience in mind, have you ever witnessed any other supernatural phenomenon, like seeing a ghost?**

Not so much in LA, because it's a new city and the buildings aren't that old, but certainly all over England because of its history.

I see a ghost in London around every corner, a bunch of them! I know they're ghosts because they don't have a physical body, they're like how ghosts appear in the movies, made up of wispy energy. I'm never scared by this, though, they're just a natural concept to me.

When I came over to England in 1985, I used to stay in a friend's manor house in Wiltshire, which had several ghosts. I stayed in a bedroom where someone had died and woke to see a face looking down at me saying, 'You're in my room'. 'No!' I retorted. 'You're in my room, honey.'

It was an officer who'd died in the Civil War – I sensed his energy. He was attached to the place where he'd died. What I didn't know then was that he needed to be reminded to move on. Now when I see ghosts lurking around I say, 'You don't need to hang around. Bye!'

**Do you have any spirit guides?**

Zillions. Two of my spirit guides were involved in the founding of the Theosophical Society. When I studied with Boris, I was very aware of their presence around us. I also call on the elementals – nature spirits – for guidance, as well as various ascended masters.

I am also sure that, in 2008, one of my guides drew me to my home by the Regent's Canal in King's Cross, London. The area is called Battlebridge Basin,



Famous astrologer Patric Walker was a fan of Shelley's work



**'I see a ghost in London around every corner'**

where Boudicea, a queen of the British Celtic Iceni tribe who led an uprising against the Romans in AD60, fought her last battle. She had two daughters, one was killed and the other, called Portia, was raised by Druids. When Portia died she became an ascended master and she's my teacher.

I had a spiritual reading in Australia two years ago and the medium said, 'Who's Portia? I have her here as your guide.'

She's a presence around me in my home, giving me inspiration and an occasional nudge. I'm honoured to have her look after me. It's useful to have big guns on the other side, given what I do.

**Any regular spiritual disciplines you practice at your waterside home?**

I meditate to connect with the Essence (universe) or if I feel off centre and need grounding. I do it for five or 10 minutes, sitting or standing, until I feel recovered – I've even done it on the underground.

I also do rituals as a useful anchor to focus my consciousness on my intentions. If I need to bless someone or encourage something to happen in my life, I may light a candle or incense, say a mantra out loud, draw something or use an image to meditate on. I manifest through ritual. As a conscious being, my intention creates the reality I live in. And I've done yoga since I was in my twenties as a form of fitness for strength and balance.

**So, what do the stars predict for Shelley this year?**

My astrological chart shows I have the capacity to be on the world stage as a spiritual teacher – I possess friendliness, a desire to share, an unshakeable spiritual conviction – but I also have free will and have to make it happen.

One of my missions, inspired by my guide Portia, is to anchor the feminine consciousness in the world. We're entering a new era for the role of women, we're undergoing a change in perception. For the past 2,000 years most of our spiritual masters have been male, it's my job to provide a balance to that masculine tradition, as one of many women in a public position with a voice. And, collectively as women, we may discover other roles we can take on along the way in this new era.

**More info**

Shelley's astrological columns and spiritual insights can be found on her website. Visit [shelleyvonstrunckel.com](http://shelleyvonstrunckel.com).



Learn to speak the language of the stars

**Do you know your astro A to Z?**

Shelley explains what different astrological terms mean

**A**strology has its own language,' explains Shelley. 'Everyone is familiar with the signs of the zodiac, but other terms can be puzzling.'

**ASPECT:** The relationship between two planets. Each planet has its own energy - some easy, others more challenging. Each aspect reveals how well this energy will flow between planets and what this will result in for you.

**ECLIPSE:** There are at least two solar eclipses each year, in which the moon passes in front of the sun, and usually two lunar eclipses as well. These progress through

the 12 signs of the zodiac over a period of 18 years and symbolise a spiritual turning point for those born under the sign the eclipse is passing through.

**NEW/FULL MOON:** The new moon symbolises a fresh start and a full moon marks the peak of this cycle.

**PLANET:** One of the bodies which moves across the heavens. Each planet symbolises a type of energy - Mars is called the red planet and its energy is the energy of youth and represents activities from athletic competition to war. For astrological purposes, the sun and moon are also considered planets.

**RETROGRADE:** Every planet, except the sun and moon, are retrograde at some time. This signifies a slowdown in that planet's area of activity. The most frequent of these is Mercury, the planet of communication, which is retrograde two or three times each year. During this period, which lasts about 22 days, confusion and mix-ups in communication increase.

**RULER:** Each sign is associated with one particular planet, which is said to be its ruler. When the ruler of a sign is well positioned in the sky, those born under that sign benefit.

**Did you know?**

Shelley is a humanitarian and has produced a film for the Red Cross on their work dealing with the AIDS crisis in Africa.