

else was going on inside of me as I ordered my latte. I felt disarmed, like I'd been caught off-guard by this man's presence. As I fed Buddy his coffee shop doggie treat, the man left, stepping around us on the sidewalk. I glanced up at him, smiling again as he passed. He didn't seem to notice.

Stepping back inside for my drink, I said to Marcia, "Hmmm. New face in town?"

Evan glanced up from cleaning an espresso machine to see who I was talking about. "Who, what?" he said, like he'd just awakened from a dream.

Marcia and I both laughed at his clueless look. "She's referring to Ira," she explained. She looked back at me, smiling. "Nice looking man, huh?"

"Yeah, I guess. Who is he?" I tried to sound casual. I was way too curious, and she knew it.

"He lives down by the river. I don't know much else. He's only been in a few times. Always alone," she said, raising an eyebrow and smiling suggestively as she handed me my drink.

Over the next few weeks I hoped to see Ira again at the coffee shop, but no such luck. Then one morning walking by the river, a runner approached. As he came closer I saw it was Ira. He nodded as he passed. I smiled.

So, he's a runner, I said to myself. God, I hate running. I noticed, however, how fit he looked for a man his age, guessing him to be in his mid-fifties.

Who is this guy? I thought, suddenly embarrassed by my lack of fitness.

One spring morning in 1993, I was jolted out of bed around 5:30 a.m. by the sound of a particularly loud semi-

truck on the freeway. Or so I thought. As the stillness returned, I closed my eyes, drifting back to sleep. Suddenly the whole house shuddered and began rocking. I bounded to my feet. By the time I reached the kitchen it stopped. My whole body trembled.

"An earthquake. An earthquake," I said, trying to calm down. Slowly I walked to the radio and turned it on.

"That was quite an early morning wake-up call," the DJ was saying, "Yes, Portland, we've just experienced an earthquake."

I sat down, shaken. I've lived in Portland all my life, and have never experienced a quake, although the year I was born, my parents told me, an earthquake moved my crib across the room.

"It's been confirmed, folks; the national earthquake monitoring center has confirmed a 5.6 earthquake at 5:34 a.m. Not that we need any confirmation," the DJ chuckled. He cautioned that we should expect aftershocks for the next few days.

Great, I thought, expect more shaking. I suddenly remembered Buddy outside. I opened the back door and there he stood, tail wagging.

"Come on in and keep me company," I said as he pushed past me.

Later that day Ginny, my realtor, called.

"Suzanne, you did know that was coming, didn't you?" she asked accusingly.

"What do you mean?" I said, puzzled.

"Remember at escrow?"

I thought back to that day nearly a year ago, and then laughed. Ginny had gone with me to sign and had read and scoured the paperwork with me. When we got to the

list of closing costs she'd stopped abruptly at the homeowner's insurance line item.

"Why is your homeowner's insurance so high?" She asked, looking for a copy of my policy.

"Oh, here it is. Looks like you added earthquake insurance." She paused, removing her glasses. "Okay, I got to tell you, it concerns me when my psychic takes out earthquake insurance. Is there something I should know?" She said this in all seriousness. I burst out laughing at her look.

"No, no," I said, shaking my head. "It's just such an old house, I want to protect my interests all the way around. I promise."

"Well, okay, if you're sure," she said warily as she returned the policy to its place among the stack of paperwork.

We laughed now as I maintained my innocence.

"So, any damage?" she asked.

"None that I can see, although I've not been down in the cellar yet," I told her.

As we hung up I thought about other friends through the years who'd accused me of knowing something just because it had come up somehow. It was hard knowing where the psychic ended and the person began. It made it difficult being casual with friends. I've tried hard through the years to only be psychic when I'm doing readings. From time to time, however, I'll respond to something I hear someone say, only to see that look on their face as they tell me they didn't say it...but they had thought it.

It's also hard for me as a friend knowing that people listen to me in that way. I guess in part, that is why I've always longed for peers in my field, or at least a mentor.