

J. HOWARD

CRISTINA OF THE LIGHT

A Profile
Hunnicutt Rd., Forsyth, GA

This profile was a project assigned for school that I enjoyed immensely. I wrote the story after interviewing Cristina de la Luz, who is easily one of the most interesting people I know. I also filmed and edited the accompanying video. I photographed her as well, editing and publishing the photos.

You can find the whole experience here:

www.jmhoward.atavist.com/cristina-of-the-light

Jenna Howard

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Cristina of the Light

This twenty-something brunette can't get enough of matches, sinful shades of lipstick, and the otherworldly.

Cristina de la Luz absent-mindedly twirled a wooden dragonfly between her fingers and said, "Have you ever experienced a glitch in the matrix?" She claimed she hasn't, but she said she was having strange coincidences with the number 1177 and Otis Redding's, "The Dock of The Bay."

Her black cherry lipstick and jet black hair shimmered as she sat in a thin black robe at her vanity and discussed these occurrences. She said she was haunted by the number and would see it everywhere. "I don't know what it means," she said, "but it's kind of cool." Otis Redding was a different story. De la Luz, 21, claimed she noticed the song would play at the strangest moments and compared the timing to in a horror movie "when a certain song starts playing you know something is about to go down."

De la Luz researched the song to try and understand the significance. She explained that Redding was from Georgia and had written the song after moving to San Francisco; he wasn't at home there. De la Luz translates to "of the light," but she is no stranger to feeling lost. This UGA senior and philosophy major was recently in Amsterdam, Italy, London, Peru, Puerto Rico and Spain. She said traveling helps distract her from her inner chaos.

In her hometown of Bolingbroke, this wandering woman lives off of a dirt road past cows huddled together for warmth and chickens clucking about. De la Luz is a rare breed of southern

belle who spent the day discussing aliens, love and other favorites. There at her parents' house, she was entirely at ease. Her dark hair and white shirt seemed to always catch the breeze. She loved the crisp crunch of the bright fall leaves beneath the heel of her combat boot.

She led the way to a spot in the woods that her family refers to as, "the landing pad." It is a semi-circular clearing on the edge of their property. Apparently no unidentified flying objects have landed here yet, but De la Luz said she has no doubt that extra-terrestrial life exists, has visited Earth and continues to visit us today.

She sat in the middle of the open area and explained her thoughts on the tension between scientists who research the possibility of extra-terrestrial life and those who experience what she said, "could very well be natural phenomenon." "Science that tells us that extra-terrestrials and earth-like planets are not only very possible but that they're a statistical reality," she said. Yet according to De la Luz, it's too easy to dismiss the people who experience these phenomena (UFO sightings, abductions, crop circles, etc.) because they are not legitimized in acceptable common culture. She thinks those who experience these things are unable to understand them and must label them as alien, but that the whole idea of humanity being within a cosmic society speaks to a much deeper urge in us to project meaning onto things we can't explain.

"E.T. culture is about how we see ourselves as a species," she said. "And it's how we perceive a grander purpose." After talking about aliens for at least a few hours, she smiled and said, "I think I might have gone to high school with a few."

Then she got up and floated towards the house. Before reaching the door, her whole body tensed and she pointed to something about twenty feet from her: a rooster. Her parents have a chicken coup in their backyard that houses some hens and one mean rooster. He was known to attack, and as De la Luz said, "he will hurt you."

After running from the notoriously macho bird, she stands in her kitchen eating macaroons when an ungodly squawking begins outside. Fearing the rooster, De la Luz sent her mother to shoo it with what appeared to be a broom handle. Instead of getting into a brawl, De la Luz's mother came back inside and placed something warm in her hand. The noise had come from a hen laying a fresh egg on the back porch.

De la Luz placed the egg gently on the edge of the kitchen sink before bounding up the stairs to her room. Her bed is large and neat yet inviting. Next to her bed is a small dresser. On top of it there are small objects such as a glow-in-the-dark star and a crystal. She called it her altar and snatched a box of matches from atop it to light incense with.

Attached to her bedroom is a small studio that houses many of her paintings that she is entirely too humble about. Her bathroom houses the important vanity. De la Luz loves makeup. From her eyes to her lips, she enjoys taking time to do it. The vanity has two mirrors and directly faces the large bathroom mirror over the sinks. When she sits at her chair here, she is reflected three times. Three Cristinas looked up and said, "Love is all about respect."

Her mother, who had been lurking nearby, came into the bathroom to chat. She was embarrassing Cristina as she reminded her that it was Diane van Furstenberg who said, "The most important relationship in life is the one you have with yourself." Mom's favorite thing about Cristina is her "old soul," she said. "It's an old soul, with depth and understanding."

De la Luz's roommate in her apartment in Athens agrees. Aurora Atienza, 21, is also a UGA senior. She grew up in Macon and has known Cristina for a majority of their lives. "She honestly has the kindest heart," Atienza said. Although she has a very eccentric personality and different interests, Atienza said the weirdest thing about De la Luz is that "she is addicted to the internet and has a serious interest in extraterrestrials."

When her mother finally left to answer a call from her other daughter, De la Luz was caught letting an eye roll escape. She threw on a sweater and climbed out to the upstairs balcony. Legs crossed, she sat on a bench and thought about her favorites. She said her favorite color is purple because it's underrated. Her favorite day of the week is Friday and her favorite meal of the day is breakfast. "Hands down," she said. Her favorite artist at the time was FKA Twigs. Her favorite time of the day is early morning, because she said she feels like anything can happen.

She pointed to the balcony ceiling and explained why it was painted light blue. She said it's to keep birds from nesting there because they can't tell the difference between the blue sky and the blue ceiling. She's unsure of how scientific this theory is but she's never seen a nest. She shrugs and dismisses the thought.

Her last favorite was her favorite moment from this past year's travels. She went to Peru with her parents in February. She said she got to meet family for the first time and see the sights. They went to Machu Picchu where she and her father were supposed to climb Huayna Picchu. Her dad got sick the night before and was unable to climb. She said she was faced with the decision of not going at all or going alone.

"I thought, 'I have to go,'" she said. "When would I have a chance to do this again?" So she did. She said it was exhausting and "really, really hard." Every step is tall and she was unsure if she could do it. She finally made it to the top where a temple sits that used to house the high priest and local virgins.

"It was really amazing," she said. "I felt like something had happened to me and I suddenly felt like an adult." When she was standing up there, Machu Picchu looked small down below. "The whole thing took on this incredible symbolic significance to me," she said. "I'll never forget it."

