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YOUR LIFE IS A MASTERPIECE?

"Everything has been figured out, except how to live," sneered the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. That's bombastic and untrue. I find it hard to believe he never encountered any of the countless humans whose lives have been exquisite creations.

Did he refuse to read biographies? Was every person he knew inept at the art of being real? Was he so discouraged by his failure to find meaning that he blindly assumed everyone who has ever lived suffered the same handicap?

In rebellion against Sartre's startling ignorance, I invite you to make your own destiny a tour de force. Regard it as the ultimate art project -- a labor of love that you craft with imaginative zeal.

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FIERCE COMPASSION?

'Tsültrim Allione says: "I was at a lunch with the Dalai Lama and five Buddhist teachers at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. We were sitting in a charming room with white carpets and many windows. The food was a delightful, fragrant, vegetarian Indian meal. There were lovely flower arrangements on the table.

"We were discussing sexual misconduct among Western Buddhist teachers. A woman Buddhist from California brought up someone who was using his students for his own sexual needs. One woman said, 'We are working with him with compassion, trying to get him to understand his motives for exploiting female students and to help him change his actions.'

"The Dalai Lama slammed his fist on the table, saying loudly, 'Compassion is fine, but it has to stop! And those doing it should be exposed!' All the serving plates on the table jumped, the water glasses tipped precariously, and I almost choked on the bite of saffron rice in my mouth.

"Suddenly I saw him as a fierce manifestation of compassion and realized that this clarity did not mean that the Dalai Lama had moved away from compassion. Rather, he was bringing compassion and manifesting it as decisive fierceness. His magnetism was glowing like a fire.

"I will always remember that day, because it was such a good teaching on compassion and precision. Compassion is not a wishy-washy 'anything goes' approach. Compassion can say a fierce no!"

- Tsültrim Allione, from her book *Wisdom Rising*

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INTOLERABLE IMAGES

In the opinion of psychologist James Hillman, we can actually get sick from "intolerable images." I agree. The psychic garbage we take in from the media sometimes poisons our mental hygiene in a way that can degrade our physical health.

But that's not the only threat. As we try to explain to ourselves our most challenging experiences, we sometimes allow our imaginations to conjure up ugly and alienating pictures.

Perhaps if we had more self-love and mental discipline, we would protect ourselves with greater vigilance, both from the careless nihilism of the media and the inner fount that oozes toxic visions.

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

Week beginning June 28

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CANCER (June 21-July 22):

In the coming weeks, you will have an excellent chance to dramatically decrease your Wimp Quotient. As the perilously passive parts of your niceness toughen up, I bet you will encounter brisk possibilities that were previously off-limits or invisible to you. To ensure you remain in top shape for this delightful development, I think you should avoid entertainment that stimulates fear and pessimism. Instead of watching the latest flurry of demoralizing stories on Netflix, spend quality time summoning memories of the times in your life when you were unbeatable. For extra credit, pump your fist ten times each day as you growl, "Victory is mine!"

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

It's not so bad to temporarily lose your bearings. What's bad is not capitalizing on the disruption that caused you to lose your bearings. So I propose that you regard the fresh commotion as a blessing. Use it as motivation to initiate radical changes. For example, escape the illusions and deceptions that caused you to lose your bearings. Explore unruly emotions that may be at the root of the superpowers you will fully develop in the future. Transform yourself into a brave self-healer who is newly receptive to a host of medicinal clues that were not previously accessible.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

Here's my list of demands: 1. Avoid hanging out with people who are unreceptive to your influence. 2. Avoid hanging out with people whose influence on you is mediocre or dispiriting. 3. Hang out with people who are receptive to your influence and whose influence on you is healthy and stimulating. 4. Influence the hell out of the people who are receptive to your influence. Be a generous catalyst for them. Nudge them to surpass the limits they would benefit from surpassing. 5. Allow yourself to be deeply moved by people whose influence on you is healthy and stimulating.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." Activist author Audre Lorde said that, and now, in accordance with your current astrological and psychological needs, I'm offering it to you. I realize it's a flamboyant, even extreme, declaration, but in my opinion, that's what is most likely to motivate you to do the right thing. Here's another splashy prompt, courtesy of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: "We only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made us."

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

André René Roussimoff, also known as André the Giant, was a French actor and professional wrestler. He was 7 feet, 4 inches tall and weighed 520 pounds. As you might imagine, he ate and drank extravagantly. On one festive occasion, he quaffed 119 bottles of beer in six hours. Judging from your current astrological indicators, Scorpio, I suspect you may be ready for a binge like that. JUST KIDDING! I sincerely hope you won't indulge in such wasteful forms of "pleasure." The coming days should be a time when you engage in a focused pursuit of uplifting and healthy modes of bliss. The point is to seek gusto and amusement that enhance your body, mind, and soul.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

On her 90th birthday, my Great-Aunt Zosia told me, "The best gift you can give your ego is to make it see it's both totally insignificant and totally important in the cosmic scheme of things." Jenna, my girlfriend when I was 19, was perhaps touting a similar principle when, after teasing and tormenting me for two hours, she scrawled on my bathroom mirror in lipstick, "Sometimes you enjoy life better if you don't understand it." Then there's my Zen punk friend Arturo, who says that life's goodies are more likely to flow your way if you "hope for nothing and are open to everything." According to my analysis of the astrological rhythms, these messages will help you make the most of the bewildering but succulent opportunities that are now arriving in your vicinity.

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WHAT'S AHEAD FOR YOU?

BRAINSTORM ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE OF YOUR LIFE

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The Expanded Audio horoscopes cost \$6 apiece if you access them on the Web. There are discounts for the purchase of multiple reports.

They're also available for \$1.99 per minute if you want them over the phone.

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

In accordance with the astrological beacons, I have selected two pieces of advice to serve as your guiding meditations during the next seven weeks. You might want to write them on a piece of paper that you will carry in your wallet or pocket. Here's the first, from businessman Alan Cohen: "Only those who ask for more can get more, and only those who know there is more, ask." Here's the second, from writer G. K. Chesterton: "We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

Ecologists in Mexico City investigated why certain sparrows and finches use humans' discarded cigarette butts in building their nests. They found that cellulose acetate, a chemical in the butts, protects the nests by repelling parasitic mites. Is there a metaphorical lesson you might draw from the birds' ingenious adaptation, Aquarius? Could you find good use for what might seem to be dross or debris? My analysis of the astrological omens says that this possibility is worth meditating on.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

I suspect that sometime soon you will come into possession of an enchanted potion or pixie dust or a pouch full of magic beans -- or the equivalent. If and when that occurs, consider the following protocols: 1. Before you use your new treasure, say a prayer to your higher self, requesting that you will be guided to use it in such a way as to make yourself wiser and kinder. 2. When you use it, be sure it harms no one. 3. Express gratitude for it before and during and after using it. 4. Use it in such a way that it benefits at least one other person or creature in addition to you. 5. See if you can use it to generate the arrival or more pixie dust or magical beans or enchanted potion in the future. 6. When you use it, focus on wielding it to get *exactly* what you want, not wha

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

Your best ideas and soundest decisions will materialize as if by magic while you're lounging around doing nothing in a worry-free environment. So please make sure you have an abundance of relaxed slack and unhurried grace. Treat yourself to record-setting levels of comfort and self-care. Do whatever's necessary for you to feel as safe as you have ever felt. I realize these prescriptions might ostensibly clash with your fiery Aries nature. But if you meditate on them for even two minutes, I bet you'll agree they're exquisitely appropriate for you right now.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

"It is always what is under pressure in us, especially under pressure of concealment -- that explodes in poetry." Taurus poet Adrienne Rich wrote that in an essay about the poet Emily Dickinson. She was describing the process of tapping into potent but buried feelings so as to create beautiful works of literature. I'm hoping to persuade you to take a comparable approach: to give voice to what's under pressure inside you, but in a graceful and constructive way that has positive results.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

Introductory offers are expiring. The bracing thrills of novelty must ripen into the cool enjoyments of maturity. It's time to finish the dress rehearsals so the actual show can begin. You've got to start turning big, bright fantasies into crisp, no-nonsense realities. In light of these shifting conditions, I suspect you can no longer use your good intentions as leverage, but must deliver more tangible signs of commitment. Please don't take this as a criticism, but the cosmic machinery in your vicinity needs some actual oil, not just your witty stories about the oil and the cosmic machinery.

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HOMEWORK:

Describe the tree house you would like to build for yourself one day, and what pleasures you would like to pursue there. Write: Truthrooster@gmail.com.

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Submissions sent to Rob Breznsy's Astrology Newsletter or in response to "homework assignments" may be published in a variety of formats at Rob Breznsy's discretion, including but not limited to newsletters, books, the Free Will Astrology column, and Free Will Astrology website. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, style, and content. Requests for anonymity will be honored. We are not responsible for unsolicited submission of any creative material.

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