

~Barbara Kingsolver

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It's the same struggle for each of us, and the same path out: the utterly simple, infinitely wise, ultimately defiant act of loving one thing and then another, loving our way back to life.

~Barbara Kingsolver

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It's one thing to carry your life wherever you go. Another thing to always go looking for it somewhere else.

~Barbara Kingsolver

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If you ask me, when something extraordinary shows up in your life in the middle of the night, you give it a name and make it the best home you can.

~Barbara Kingsolver

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Stop a minute, right where you are. Relax your shoulders, shake your head and spine like a dog shaking off cold water. Tell that imperious voice in your head to be still.

~Barbara Kingsolver

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There are days when I am envious of my hens: when I hunger for a purpose as perfect and sure as a single daily egg.

~Barbara Kingsolver

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THREE SPIRITUAL TASKS

Here are three spiritual tasks I'm working on:

1. to develop the capacity to thrive in the midst of raging contradictions;
2. to be discerning as I protect myself from people's flaws while at the same time being generous as I celebrate their beauty;
3. to refrain from dividing the world into two groups, those who help and agree with me and those who don't.

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Imagine you hear these words: "I'm here. I love you. I don't care if you need to stay up crying all night long, I will stay with you . . . There's nothing you can ever do to lose my love . . . I am stronger than Depression and I am braver than Loneliness and nothing will ever exhaust me."

(written by Elizabeth Gilbert)

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NEGATIVITY BIAS

Evolution has left your brain with all sorts of mechanisms that are heavily biased toward misery:

5. Your brain latches onto the bad stuff by design
4. Killing negative thoughts only makes them stronger
3. Negative feelings are addictive
2. You'd rather be unhappy than uncertain
1. Being happy takes effort.

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Science says that we actually take pleasure in the negative emotion itself. We willingly dive back into misery again and again for the same reason we willingly board a roller coaster or go bungee jumping: We get a rush from it.

That is, the pleasure/reward centers of your brain light up and release dopamine. And you can get addicted to whatever causes your brain to release dopamine, whether it's chocolate or fistfights.

tower. The results were quick. A deluge began in early January of 1916 and persisted for weeks. Thirty inches of rain fell, causing floods that damaged the local infrastructure. The moral of the story, as far as you're concerned, Aries: when you ask for what you want and need, specify exactly how much you want and need. Don't make an open-ended request that could bring you too much of a good thing.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

Actors Beau Bridges and Jeff Bridges are brothers born to parents who were also actors. When they were growing up, they already had aspirations to follow in their mom's and dad's footsteps. From an early age, they summoned a resourceful approach to attracting an audience. Now and then they would start a pretend fight in a store's parking lot. When a big enough crowd had gathered to observe their shenanigans, they would suddenly break off from their faux struggle, grab their guitars from their truck, and begin playing music. In the coming weeks, I hope you'll be equally ingenious as you brainstorm about ways to expand your outreach.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

According to Edward Barnard's book *New York City Trees*, a quarter of the city is shaded by its 5.2 million trees. In other words, one of the most densely populated, frantically active places on the planet has a rich collection of oxygen-generating greenery. There's even a virgin forest at the upper tip of Manhattan, as well as five botanical gardens and the 843-acre Central Park. Let's use all this bounty-amidst-the-bustle as a symbol of what you should strive to foster in the coming weeks: refreshing lushness and grace interspersed throughout your busy, hustling rhythm.

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

As a poet myself, I regard good poetry as highly useful. It can nudge us free of our habitual thoughts and provoke us to see the world in ways we've never imagined. On the other hand, it's not useful in the same way that food and water and sleep are. Most people don't get sick if they are deprived of poetry. But I want to bring your attention to a poem that is serving a very practical purpose in addition to its inspirational function. Simon Armitage's poem "In Praise of Air" is on display in an outdoor plaza at Sheffield University. The material it's printed on is designed to literally remove a potent pollutant from the atmosphere. And what does this have to do with you? I suspect that in the coming weeks you will have an extra capacity to generate blessings that are like Armitage's poem: useful in both practical and inspirational ways.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

In 1979, psychologist Dorothy Tennov published her book *Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love*. She defined her newly coined word "limerence" as a state of adoration that may generate intense, euphoric, and obsessive feelings for another person. Of all the signs in the zodiac, you Leos are most likely to be visited by this disposition throughout 2019. And you'll be especially prone to it in the coming weeks. Will that be a good thing or a disruptive thing? It all depends on how determined you are to regard it as a blessing, have fun with it, and enjoy it regardless of whether or not your feelings are reciprocated. I advise you to enjoy the hell out of it!

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EXPLORING THE BIG PICTURE OF YOUR LONG-RANGE FUTURE

Would you like some inspiration as you muse and wonder about your upcoming adventures in 2019?

You can still buy access to my long-range, in-depth explorations of your destiny in the coming months. Each report in the three-part series is 7 to 9 minutes long.

Go to freewillastrology.sparkns.com to register and/or sign in through the main page.

Then access the horoscopes by clicking on "Long Range Prediction." Choose from Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3. Each part is a standalone report, not dependent on the other two.

Each of the three-part reports is seven to nine minutes long. The cost is \$6 per report. There are discounts for the purchase of multiple reports.

A new short-range forecast for this week is also available.

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"I always feel like I know myself better after listening to your audio 'scopes."
-June R., Austin, TX

"Your audio horoscopes calm me down when I'm too manic and pep me up when I'm down."
-Arthur T., Cleveland, OH

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VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

Based in Switzerland, Nestle is the largest food company in the world. Yet it pays just \$200 per year to the state of Michigan for the right to suck up 400 million gallons of groundwater, which it bottles and sells at a profit. I nominate this vignette to be your cautionary tale in the coming weeks. How? 1. Make damn sure you are being fairly compensated for your offerings. 2. Don't allow huge, impersonal forces to exploit your resources. 3. Be tough and discerning, not lax and naïve, as you negotiate deals.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

Sixteenth-century Italian artist Daniele da Volterra wasn't very famous for his own painting and sculpture. The work for which we remember him today is the alterations he made to Michelangelo's giant fresco *The Last Judgment*, which spreads across an entire wall in the Sistine Chapel. After Michelangelo died, the Catholic Church hired da Volterra to "fix" the scandalous aspects of the people depicted in the master's work. He painted clothes and leaves over the originals' genitalia and derrieres. In accordance with astrological omens, I propose that we make da Volterra your anti-role model for the coming weeks. *Don't* be like him. *Don't* engage in cover-ups, censorship, or camouflage. Instead, specialize in the opposite: revelations, unmaskings, and expositions.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

What is the quality of your access to life's basic necessities? How well do you fulfill your need for good food and drink, effective exercise, deep sleep, thorough relaxation, mental stimulation, soulful intimacy, a sense of meaningfulness, nourishing beauty, and rich feelings? I bring these questions to your attention, Scorpio, because the rest of 2019 will be an excellent time for you to fine-tune and expand your relationships with these fundamental blessings. And now is an excellent time to intensify your efforts.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

Michael Jackson's 1982 song "Beat It" climbed to number three on the record-sales charts in Australia. On the other hand, "Weird Al" Yankovic's 1984 parody of Jackson's tune, "Eat It," reached number one on the same charts. Let's use this twist as a metaphor that's a good fit for your life in the coming weeks. According to my analysis of the astrological omens, you may find that a stand-in or substitute or imitation will be more successful than the original. And that will be auspicious!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

The Space Needle in Seattle, Washington is 605 feet high and 138 feet wide: a tall and narrow tower. Near the top is a round restaurant that makes one complete rotation every 47 minutes. Although this part of the structure weighs 125 tons, for many years its motion was propelled by a mere 1.5 horsepower motor. I think you will have a comparable power at your disposal in the coming weeks: an ability to cause major movement with a compact output of energy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

In 1941, the Ford automobile company created a "biological car." Among its components were "bioplastics" composed of soybeans, hemp, flax, wood pulp, and cotton. It weighed a thousand pounds less than a comparable car made of metal. This breakthrough possibility never fully matured, however. It was overshadowed by newly abundant plastics made from petrochemicals. I suspect that you Aquarians are at a phase with a resemblance to the biological car. Your good idea is promising but unripe. I hope you'll spend the coming weeks devoting practical energy to developing it. (P.S. There's a difference between you and your personal equivalent of the biological car: little competition.)

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HOMEWORK:

Choose one area of your life where you're going to stop pretending. Report results to FreeWillAstrology.com.

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Submissions sent to Rob Brezsny's Astrology Newsletter or in response to "homework assignments" may be published in a variety of formats at Rob Brezsny'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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