

Virgo & Pisces

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CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Every living thing has the stuff of stars in it. The cold moon, the bright summer sun and the gentle heartbeat of a newborn have roots in The Big Bang. It is no wonder, then, that from ancient Babylon to modern astronomy, humanity has looked to the night sky for answers. My



A crooked path forward

By Dustin Dandliker

This series is a first-hand account of the struggles and successes of overcoming trauma, mental illness, addiction, homelessness and more.

dad raised me alone. Like binary stars, we held each other against the darkness. Virgo is an earth sign and is represented by an angel with a bundle of wheat in its hand. Virgos are described as logical and modest. Virgo symbolizes justice.

My Dad, Richard Dandliker, is a Virgo.

He planned to study marine biology after graduating from Kansas State University. He loves to talk about the time he went scuba diving in a flooded strip mine. He often tells me about standing in a cornfield as a boy and spotting a seagull gliding in lazy circles

overhead. Dad saw the ocean in that midwestern sky.

He grew into a practical person, however. When I was born, he put aside dreams of an ocean-faring life and took a career selling building products. When my mom left him with an 18-month-old son to raise alone, he never wavered in his love and parental responsibility. He taught me to tie my shoes and took me to my first day of kindergarten. He spoke at my wedding. He took me in after my divorce. He was the first person to

congratulate me at my college graduation. His presence has been the foundation at my depth.

Pisces is a water sign and is depicted by two fish tethered together by a rope. The legend is that a goddess and her son were playing on the shore. A violent, fiery monster tried to devour them so they jumped into the water and transformed into fish. The mother lashed a rope between them so they wouldn't get separated in the

murky depths.

Pisces are known to be emotional dreamers. Pisces represents love and passion. Pisces sometimes represents uncertainty and chaos.

I am a Pisces.

I was born into difficulty. Mom took me for a few months after leaving Dad but signed over custody on a bar napkin and returned me to him. Dad worked all day and left me in the hands of neighbors he

trusted. Their sons, however, sexually molested me whenever we were alone. I tried to bond with my mother by living with her for a while. She was being assaulted by her husband at the time so she, in turn, assaulted me. I plunged deep in the abyss of depression and addiction.

All the same, I hold my mother's memory with love and compassion; my mother who suffered the same chaos I did. I do so because Dad loved and protected me. He taught me to do the same.

The ocean erodes the shore but does not diminish the land's essence. Likewise, over the years I mistreated, used and manipulated my dad. Yet, he said over and over, "Loving you was never a difficult choice."

We saw the ocean for the first time in the same place, in the same way but a year apart. Dad moved to Oregon to find work after being laid off in Missouri. As he rounded the corner on Highway 101 to Cannon Beach, the ocean rose above the land to touch the sky. A Kansas farm boy's dream came true.

I fled here from Mom's abusive home a year later. My first day in Oregon, we drove to Cannon Beach. I, too, saw the ocean embrace heaven. Although I had never been here before, I was home. I was with my dad.

When I dove into the bright, cold water of the Pacific I felt rescued, revived and reunited. I was whole again – reconciled to family and self. I have my dad to thank for that moment.

Virgo and Pisces together represent retreat and return. They shape each other and are inseparable. As the ocean shapes the shore with wicked, wild tides, all my rage and disorder carved dad's heart into a space deep enough to hold me. As the land sets limits on the sea with constant patience, my father endured my turmoil and gave boundaries to my pain. Dad and I are as different as earth and water but we belong to one another. Like soil and rain, our relationship brings new life and sustains our world.

I love you, Dad.

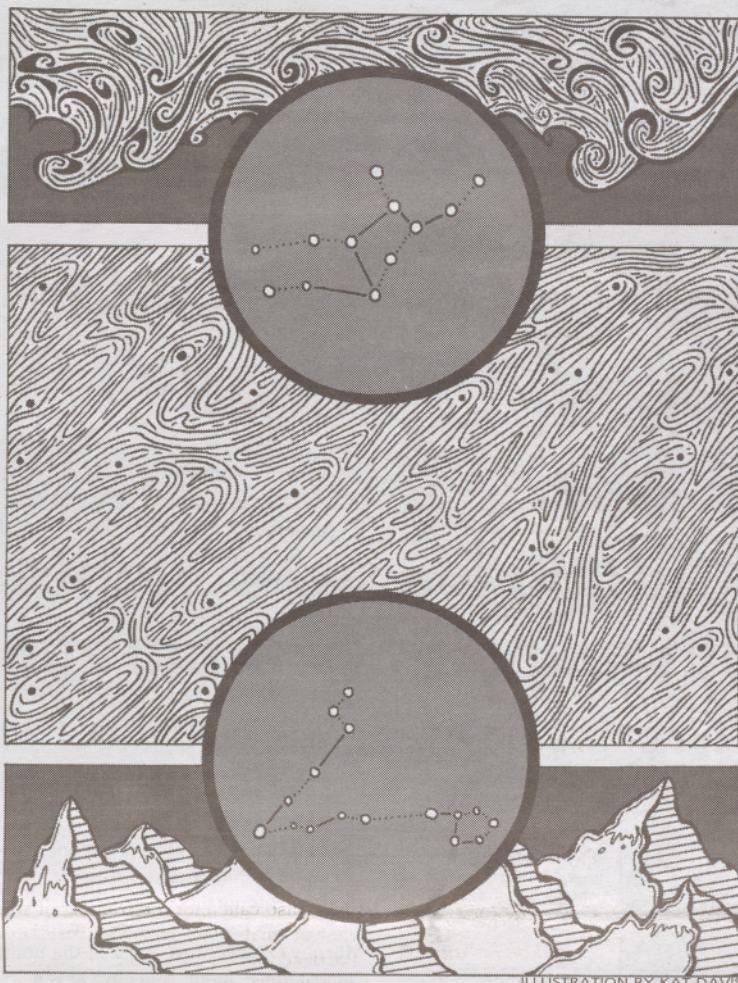


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