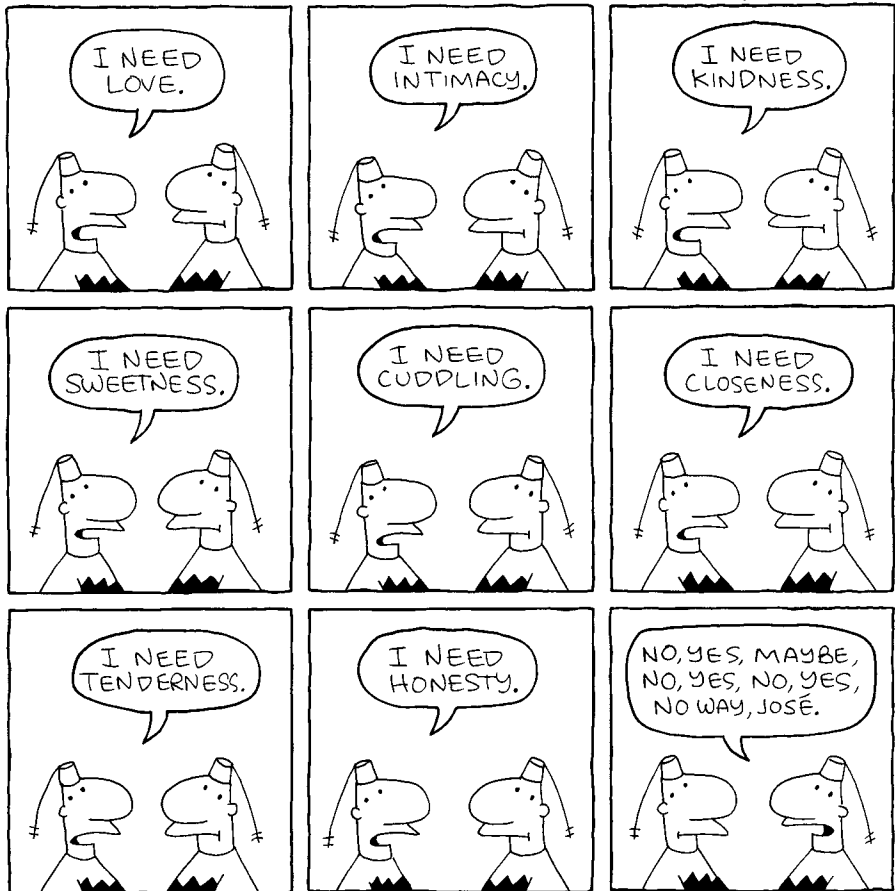


LIFE IN HELL

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ARIES (March 21-April 19): You're like grass sprouting up through a crevice in a boulder, Aries; like a hawk that has built a nest on the roof of a swank penthouse. You even remind me of an indie rock band that has somehow cracked the Billboard charts without selling out. I don't know how you've managed it, but I congratulate you on your ability to be capably opportunistic in difficult circumstances even as you remain true to yourself. Now comes the *really* hard part: staying humble, cultivating gratitude, renewing your commitment to unpretentious resourcefulness, and continuing to do all the other things that got you to where you are now.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Author Danny Cox is an "accelerationist," according to the promotional blurb on his website. His talent is to induce "faster movement, higher efficiency, and increased productivity." I call on you to be a different kind of accelerationist in the coming week, Taurus: one who inspires visions of the big picture, purges pettiness from all interactions, and agitates on behalf of the highest possible ideals. If that leads to faster movement, higher efficiency, and increased production, fine. If it doesn't, equally fine. Your assignment is to be a soul accelerationist, not an ego accelerationist.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): In his book, *Chronicles: Volume 1*, famed Gemini bard Bob Dylan claims that he never wanted to be the voice of his generation, let alone a prophet of protest leading a charge to overthrow the corrupt empire. "I really was never any more than a folk musician who gazed into the gray mist with tear-blinded eyes," he writes. "My deepest dream was a house on a tree-lined block with a white picket fence, pink roses in the backyard." I believe many of you Geminis will thrive in the coming nine months if you pursue a similarly modest path. Beginning next November, you may be called on to raise some beautiful and benevolent hell, but in the short run I advise you to bolster your foundations with tender loving care.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Five hundred British art experts recently voted to determine the most influential art work of all time. Was it Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" or Michelangelo's "David"? No. The winner was "Fountain," the white porcelain urinal that Marcel Duchamp mounted in a gallery show in 1917. "It reflects the idea that the creative process that goes into a work of art is the most important thing," said one of the voters, Simon Wilson. "The work itself can be made of anything and can take any form." I nominate Duchamp's urinal to be the most potent symbol in your world in the coming weeks, Cancerian. May it inspire you to place fresh thinking above all other values. For the foreseeable future, the greatest beauty will originate in imaginative departures from the way things have always been done.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby* is the best Hollywood movie of 2004, said A.O. Scott in *The New York Times*. But Salon.com's Charles Taylor panned the film, calling it leaden and boring, "a compendium of every cliché from every bad boxing melodrama ever made." I suspect that you will get equally contradictory reviews for your life and work in the coming week, Leo. For instance, some people may regard you as a magician who has transformed rot into splendor, while others may think of you as a dabbler with too much self-esteem. Both are wrong. More importantly, their opinions, whether good or bad, shouldn't concern you. Be your own judge.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The wife of lottery winner Jack Whittaker bemoans the day he struck it rich. Since collecting \$113 million in 2002, he has been in trouble with the law constantly, and has wasted a lot of time gambling and hanging out at strip clubs. "I wish I would have torn the lottery ticket up," says Jewel Whittaker. Let's hope you handle your growing solvency with more aplomb, Virgo. My guess is that although you're not going to win the lottery this year, your luck and hard work will conspire to raise your disposable income. Don't let it make you too crazy.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): In a recent study, researchers could not train blue jays to postpone their desire. After a thousand repetitions, the birds still kept gobbling down a tiny chunk of food instead of waiting a short time for a much bigger piece. Many scientists believe that humans are similarly hard-wired for instant gratification. If that's true, Libra, you must resist it with all your power in the coming week. A better, more substantial prize will soon become available if you can stop yourself from grabbing the meager treat that's in front of your nose right now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): I beg you not to do what Robert Chamberlain did in his room at a Motel 6 in Chenango, New York last May. Please don't buy 14 jars of petroleum jelly and smear the stuff all over yourself, the walls, and the furniture. On the other hand, Scorpio, I do recommend that you become as slippery as possible in the coming week, metaphorically speaking. Don't stay too long in one place, don't commit yourself to long-term plans, don't get stuck in dogmatic perspectives, and don't get pinned down, period.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): At a recent press conference, a reporter asked President George W. Bush to explain what seemed like inconsistencies in his previously announced intention to revise the Social Security program. Bush said, "I'm not going to negotiate with myself" about the issue, and avoided making a substantive response. I advise you to take the opposite tack in the coming week, Sagittarius. It's crucial that you negotiate with yourself profusely, maybe even debate and argue - though I hope you'll stop short of getting into a fight with yourself. The fact is, the life issues you're dealing with need vigorous input from all the voices in your head. Even the seemingly irrational ones must have their say in order for you to reach wise decisions.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): "One of the strongest characteristics of genius is the power of lighting its own fire," wrote essayist John W. Foster. While you may not be a genius in the same way that Albert Einstein or Emily Dickinson were, Capricorn, I believe that one of your special talents deserves the title. The only problem is, you haven't consistently given that talent the nurturing it needs to flourish. Would you consider correcting this neglect in the coming weeks? No later than March 1, I hope you will put into action a disciplined, long-term plan to create a metaphorical greenhouse for this natural endowment of yours.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Every year the people of Dharni in India celebrate Sati Pradha Mela, a raucous stone-throwing festival. I won't go into the specifics of what they do, because I merely want you to steal the basic idea. Why? Because according to my reading of the astrological omens, it is now a perfect time for you to unleash your pent-up aggressions in a flagrant yet harmless ritual. You can of course do this in any way you see fit, but here's my suggestion: Wander out into a wild place and hurl about 20 big rocks in the direction of heaven.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Three times recently I've been driving home after 11 p.m. when I've spied a strange scene unfolding at a neighborhood house. The couple that lives there has been sitting around a festively decorated table in the front yard. A group of maybe eight to ten other people has been with them, and they've all been drinking from champagne glasses, making boisterous toasts, laughing heartily, and singing loud songs. I've been tempted to crash their little parties; it's exhilarating to see such late-night outdoor merriment in drizzly 30-degree weather during the bleak post-holiday season. I propose that you make these weirdoes your role models in the coming week, Pisces. Let them inspire you to be lavishly celebratory, convivial, and cheerful, even in seemingly inhospitable circumstances.

HOMEWORK: Imagine that thanks to scientific breakthroughs and good luck, you're still alive in 2090. What's your life like? Testify at <http://www.freewillastrology.com>.

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