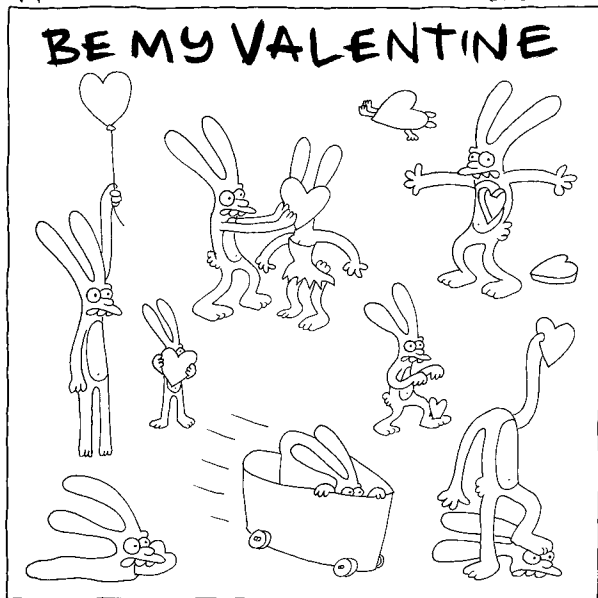


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BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Happy Valentine Daze, Aries! During my quest for the advice that might be most helpful to your love life, I gathered the following words of wisdom. 1. "There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness." —Friedrich Nietzsche. "Love is not about losing freedom; it's about sharing freedom with a partner who's as talented a liberationist as you." — my friend Sarah. 3. "I hunger for your sleek laugh and your hands the color of a furious harvest. I want to eat the sunbeams flaring in your beauty." — Pablo Neruda.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Happy Valentine Daze, Taurus! After careful meditation about what suggestions might enrich your love life, I'm advising you to celebrate an Honesty Festival with the person you love best or with the person you *want* to love best. Speak from the depths as you reveal the hidden fears and longings and joys that have been unspoken until now. And let these words of wisdom from Thoreau be the motto that guides you: "Between whom there is hearty truth there is love."

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Happy Valentine Daze, Gemini! Have you heard of the Mile-High Club? Anyone can become a member. All you have to do is get jiggy in an airplane at least 5,280 feet above the earth. Another flamboyant group of pleasure-seekers is comprised of mountain-climbers who boink during their trek up Mount Everest. Then there are the people who travel to far-flung spots where they have sex outdoors during total eclipses of the sun. I urge you to be inspired by their examples in the near future: Enjoy your own brand of adventurous eroticism. The astrological omens say it's a favorable time for lovemaking that breaks a taboo or two as it blows your mind in the best ways.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Happy Valentine Daze, Cancerian! As I meditated on what advice might purify and supercharge your love life, I got to thinking about a statement attributed to French poet Paul Valery. "Love is being stupid together," he said. There's an element of truth to this notion, but it's too corny and degenerate for my tastes. I prefer to focus on a more interesting and complete truth, which is this: Real love is being *smart* together. If you weave your destiny together with another's, he or she should catalyze your sleeping potentials, sharpen your perceptions, and boost your IQ. Your relationship should be a crucible in which you deepen your understanding of the way the world works. If you can't share your love with such a person this week, don't share your love with anyone.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): In a *Village Voice* piece on New Yorkers' New Year's resolutions, Allison Sommers testified that she aspired to "recognize joy when it bites me in the ass." That so happens to be your main assignment during this season of love, Leo. It shouldn't be too hard: The bliss coming your way will not be of the elusive, ephemeral variety. It's got teeth, and won't be in the least shy about using them. Happy Valentine Daze!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Happy Valentine Daze, Virgo! If you're like me, many of the most accomplished people you've known have the same blind spot: their intimate relationships. As brilliant as they may be as artists, scientists, fund-raisers, or humanitarians, they're often dumb about how to carry on a thriving marriage or loving partnership. Their plight is typical of the rest of us as well. Though we may have mastered countless skills, we're likely to be relatively unripe in our ability to achieve closeness with another human being. That's the bad news, Virgo. The good news is that this Valentine season and the ensuing six weeks will be an excellent time for you to take dramatic steps to cure your own version of this ignorance.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Happy Valentine Daze, Libra! I hope you don't mind if I gush about how much you resemble an elegant Cabernet right now. In a sense you're a fermented intoxicant with the potential

to loosen inhibitions, arouse delight, and promote conviviality. Or, to use the words of Thom Eljer's wine review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: You're like sniffing a fresh shot of espresso after a bite of dark chocolate; like a delicious flood of caramel zing and baking spices in the mouth that lingers forever. I say, take advantage of your nearly irresistible appeal.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Happy Valentine Daze, Scorpio! The three love offerings I have might be a challenge for you to receive in the same generous spirit with which I'm giving them. Nevertheless, the astrological omens suggest this is one of those rare times when you can truly benefit from their bracing advice. So here are my gifts, starting with an insight from author Zora Neale Hurston: "Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place." Your second oracle comes from writer James Baldwin: "Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within." My third offering is from novelist Iris Murdoch: "Love is the difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Happy Valentine Daze, Sagittarius! Borrowing the words of poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, I've prepared a love note for you to use as your own. Feel free to give it to the person whose destiny needs to be woven more closely together with yours. "I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you for the part of me that you bring out."

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Happy Valentine Daze, Capricorn! After careful meditation about what advice would be most likely to energize your love life, I've decided to make three suggestions. First, bring more boldness and daring to the part of your life where intimacy is of crucial importance. Second, take to heart the idea that loving another human being is an epic, heroic, monumental enterprise. Third, write down this quote from poet Delmore Schwartz and carry it with you for the next 14 days: "Love is the most difficult and dangerous form of courage. Courage is the most desperate, admirable, and noble kind of love."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Happy Valentine Daze, Aquarius! I want to remind you, in case you've somehow forgotten, that you'll never be able to bask in the love you want to receive from another person until you master the art of loving yourself with great skill and imagination. I'll go so far as to say that it's pointless to search for a perfect partner if you're not already your own perfect partner. Here's what Buddha had to say about the subject: "You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, but that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anyone, deserve your love and affection."

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Happy Valentine Daze, Pisces! The astrological omens say that right now you need love more than you need food and drink. Not just any old kind of love, though: It has to be high-minded and mysterious, and neither sentimental nor tormented. Hoping to steer you towards what you *really* need, I'm offering you the poetic words of Pablo Neruda. Say or write them to the person whose destiny needs to be woven more closely together with yours: "Our love is like a well in the wilderness where time watches over the wandering lightning. Our sleep is a secret tunnel that leads to the scent of apples carried on the wind. When I hold you, I hold everything that is — swans, volcanoes, river rocks, maple trees drinking the fragrance of the moon, bread that the fire adores. In your life I see everything that lives."

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