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CULTURE WITHDRAWAL (n.) 1. The physiological and psychological effects of missing one or more issues of Eugene Weekly.

free will astrology

BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Jon Stewart, host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," is a big star now. But on his way to the top, he has sometimes had a laid-back attitude towards ambition. "As long as I can remember," he has said, "I wanted to sleep late, stay up late, and do nothing in between." Believe it or not, Aries, I suggest you adopt an equally leisurely approach in the coming week. The best thing you can do to serve your burning desires in the long run is to explore the healing mysteries of being a lazy bum right now.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Harvest time in March? That's what the astrological omens say for you Bulls. During the next few weeks you'll be reaping the fruits of all the seeds you've sown since your last birthday. One of the pesky weeds you didn't uproot will also be reaching full bloom, but the tiny bit of blight it engenders will be vastly overshadowed by the richness of your rewards. I suggest you throw a party or two to celebrate your bounty, express gratitude to your helpers, and offer forgiveness to your doubters.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Events in the coming week may be difficult for some of you to deal with. They will include intense encounters with peace, love, joy, and understanding, as well as possible brushes with extravagant beauty, lyrical delight, and inspiring discoveries. There will be a dearth of storylines that feature betrayal, abuse, pettiness, greed, extortion, disease, and explosions. Therefore, Gemini, you should proceed with extreme caution if you're a jaded hipster who's suspicious of feeling really good. Ask yourself: "Am I ready to stop equating cynicism with insight? Do I dare take the risk that exposing myself to uplifting encounters might dull my intelligence?" If you doubt your ability to handle all the relaxing breakthroughs, you'd better take strong measures to evade them.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): "The average river requires a million years to move a grain of sand 100 miles," says science writer James Trefil. The work you've been doing on yourself these past two years, Cancerian, must sometimes have seemed as maddeningly gradual. The good news is that you are now in the last few months of this slow-motion, long-term project. If you can sustain your focus, you'll finish up around your birthday, having created such a strong inner sense of sanctuary that you will forever after be able to feel at home in the world no matter where you are.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): I have a tricky assignment for you this week, Leo. It will require you to display an open-hearted curiosity as you live on the edge of your understanding. It will ask you to be cheerful and optimistic as you question as many of your certainties as you can. Your challenge is to embody the attitude suggested by Caroline Myss in this passage from her CD, *Spiritual Madness: The Necessity of Meeting God in Darkness*: "The moment you come to trust chaos, you see God clearly. Chaos is divine order, versus human order. Change is divine order, versus human order. When the chaos becomes safety to you, then you know you're seeing God clearly."

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In the coming week, people may have a lot to tell you about what you shouldn't think, how you shouldn't act, and whom you shouldn't hang out with. Their counsel will be useful mostly in its revelations about them. If I were you, I wouldn't actually heed much of what they say. What you should trust, though, is your calm, lucid inner voice, especially when it gives you intuitions about what you shouldn't think, how you shouldn't act, and whom you shouldn't hang out with. This is an ideal time to get clearer about the life you *don't* want to live.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Spankings can raise your intelligence, reports *The Weekly World News*. Experiments by the Lucerne Institute of Psychological Research showed that college students did better on their exams after having their buns whacked. Increased adrenalin flow may have contributed to this surprising phenomenon, the psychologists speculated. "The adrenalin combined with the endorphins generated to minimize the pain, and together they opened up previously

underutilized neural pathways—turning them into IQ hyperlinks," said one researcher. I bring this up, Libra, because you've got a big life test coming up. If I were you, I'd be willing to try innovative measures to make sure you ace it, including maybe even having a ping-pong paddle administered to your backside. The preparations that helped you through rites of passage in the past may not work this time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): In the coming days, Scorpio, you will almost certainly become pregnant—if not by literally conceiving a fetus, then by germinating the metaphorical equivalent. Do you have any idea about what's getting ready to sprout within you? I hope so, because if you do, it means you're attuned to the secrets that have been ripening in the fertile depths. But if you don't know anything about the new life that's stirring, drop everything and find out. You need to be a fully conscious participant in the gestation.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "Americans live inside their own private echo chambers," says syndicated writer Matt Zoller Seitz, "endlessly revisiting things they already know they like and avoiding exposure to anything new and different." Your assignment this week, Sagittarius, is to ask yourself if you fit Seitz's description, and then—if you do—to escape your private echo chamber. So for instance, if you're a tattooed pagan performance artist, attend a rodeo or NASCAR race; if you're a Christian Girl Scout leader, listen to Ani DiFranco or Radiohead, or read Noam Chomsky's radical critiques of American foreign policy. If you're an atheistic intellectual, take a workshop in ecstatic Sufi dancing or a class in Buddhist meditation. I think you catch my drift.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): I'd love to see you reach out to the people you think should have reached out to you by now. I'd love to see you heal rifts with former allies and rebuild bridges you burned down. Even if it feels like a slightly awkward compromise, I'd love to see you offer your services to X-factors and wild cards and loose cannons that aren't exactly making the best use of their powers. How about it, Capricorn? Are you willing to bend a little to gain a lot? Can you imagine giving more slack to flawed possibilities, hoping that your largesse will help them fix their flaws?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The astrological omens are unambiguous: In the coming weeks, the entire universe will be conspiring to help you add to your assets, increase your value, and acquire more resources. Does that mean you'll get a raise or inherit your great uncle's ostrich farm? Does it mean you'll enroll in a training program to upgrade your skills and expand your know-how? Or does it mean you'll cultivate a previously underdeveloped part of your personality that will then become more attractive and desirable? I can't say for sure, Aquarius. How it all unfolds will depend on your priorities – and on how aggressively you cooperate with the universal conspiracy.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): In her book, *For the Time Being*, Annie Dillard says that throughout history many people have thought civilization was on the verge of collapse. Around 300 B.C., Hindus believed they were living in a "degenerate and unfortunate time" known as the Kali Yuga – the lowest point in the great cosmic cycle. In 426 A.D., the Christian writer Augustine mourned that the world was in its last days. In the 1800s, renowned Hasidic Rabbi Nachman grieved for the world's "widespread atheism and immorality." Dillard offers more examples, concluding, "There never was a more holy age than ours, and never a less ... There is no whit less enlightenment under the tree by your street than there was under the Buddha's bo tree." Go sit under that tree, Pisces. The time for your awakening is now at hand.

Homework: We all have a part of us that's rather stupid. Identify what this is for you, and make plans to educate it. Testify at www.freewillastrology.com

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