

ARIES (March 21-April 19): The English word "silly" comes from the German "selig," meaning holy, blissful. In accordance with your current astrological omens, I invite you to seek out experiences that blend the ancient and modern senses of the word. For example, explore the possibility that goofy joy is not at all incompatible with a yearning for the sacred. Treat yourself to fun that fills you with both giddiness and reverence.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): In ancient Greek myth, Prometheus stole the gods' fire and bequeathed it to human beings, allowing them to cook, stay warm when the weather was cold, and make tools and bricks and pottery. According to my reading of the astrological omens, a Prometheus-like influence is now hovering at the peripheries of your world, angling to provide you with a boon that's pretty damn good, even if it isn't as monumental as fire. There's a catch, however. This benefactor will not be able to bestow the gift unless you aggressively ask for it and unless you are alert for its arrival from an unexpected direction.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): "Our needs are few," said Chinese sage Lao-Tse. "Our wants are endless." His observation jibes well with my own belief that life is always conspiring to give us exactly what we need, exactly when we need it—though not necessarily what we want, when we want it. Your assignment this week, Gemini, is to get very clear about the difference between these categories. Write out two lists, please: a short one of the few substances, influences, and experiences you absolutely require in order to stay alive and be yourself, and a monster list of the millions of things that it might be nice to have but which you can live without just fine.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): "If I had to live my life again," said actress Tallulah Bankhead, "I'd make the same mistakes, only sooner." These should be your words to live by in the coming weeks, Cancerian. In my astrological opinion, the smartest thing you can do is to try the iffy adventures you've been postponing and experiment with the chancy turns you've been wondering about. In order to set the stage for your greatest victories in 2006, you will have to learn lessons that these potential mistakes can help teach you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Writing in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, Lauren Collins marveled about a novel called *The Apprentice*. It was published in 1996 by Scooter Libby, the former Bush administration official who was indicted in October. Though Collins was impressed by Libby's copious invocations of snot, pus, bad breath, lice, blood, body wastes, and torture, she was even more boggled by his references to incest, bestiality, and pedophilia. To fulfill your astrological omens in the coming week, Leo, you may want to do something similar to what Collins did: Excavate the past to discover the hidden sides or little-known qualities of people who have had a lot of power and influence.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In the coming week, don't eat in restaurants that serve food you hate, and don't try to operate heavy machinery while you're reading a book. Sleep on a nice, soft mattress, not on a piece of plywood covered with nails. Praise and listen to the people you care about, and resist any urge you might have to call them stupid and ugly. Spend money on experiences that make you feel good, not on absurd games that would exhaust you even if you won. It may sound like I'm telling you what you already know, Virgo, but I'm doing that because the astrological omens suggest you may be tempted to violate or override your own common sense in the coming week. I'm just giving you practice in remembering all the basics.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "If it can't fit on a bumper sticker, it's not a philosophy." That's the message I read on the back of an SUV I was driving behind today. Now I offer it to you, Libra, because it's one of those weeks when short, snappy, pithy advice

is what you need most. In accordance with your current astrological omens, here are four gems to guide you. (1) The road to success is always under construction. (2) If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried. (3) Good taste is the enemy of creativity. (4) Don't rub the lamp unless you're ready for the genie.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): "There is work that is work and there is play that is play," said the comic author Gelett Burgess. "There is play that is work and work that is play. And in only one of these lies happiness." Your job in the coming weeks, Scorpio, is to increase your share of work that is play by at least 15 percent; 30 percent would be better, and is very possible. To inspire your rebellion against the cultural conventions that insist joyless, fun-free work is supremely valuable and important, arm yourself with this observation by creativity expert Roger von Oech: "Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Wave farewell to your old self, Sagittarius. Maybe blow a few kisses as well. But don't linger too long. Refuse to get bogged down in ambiguous rituals filled with interminable good-byes and meticulous inventories of the past. It's time to go! Off with you! You've got urgent appointments with the unsettling but fascinating future, and it's best to part ways with habits that have dulled your initiative and comforts that have numbed your courage. You're ready for more change than you think you're capable of.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Writing in the *Robb Report*, Jack Smith reported on the fate of a bottle of 1787 Chateau Lafite claret from Thomas Jefferson's personal collection. In 1985, it sold at an auction in London for what would today be \$187,000. A few months later, while it was being displayed, exhibition lights dried out the cork, which fell into the bottle. The prized collectible was spoiled. The moral of the story, as far as you're concerned, is this: When you obtain a valuable resource from the past in the coming weeks, either use it or protect it from prying eyes. Don't show it off or boast about it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): In 2000, I named "Free Will Astrology" the Official Horoscope Column of the Sydney Olympics. This year I dubbed it an official sponsor of the Warped Tour, a festival of 135 alternative music bands that traveled throughout North America. In my own mind, "Free Will Astrology Stadium" is now the name of the ballpark where baseball's San Francisco Giants play, though only a few of my readers have joined me in believing that. I invite you to follow my example in the coming weeks, Aquarius: Dream up out-of-the-box approaches to promoting your own brand or product or service. It's a perfect astrological time to do as media coach Susan Harrow recommends, which is to sell yourself without selling your soul. Hey, for the right price, I might even consider letting one of you be the official sponsor of the Aquarius horoscopes for December.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): As you slip into astrological prime time, you'll be shedding inhibitions and becoming more forthright about being yourself. Secrets that were inaccessible to you until now will finally reveal themselves, spurring you to peak performances. Exciting insights you were too timid to own before will erupt, empowering you to express creativity that has been dormant. There's just one small downside: Your rise to the next level could attract the disapproval of people who prefer the safety of mediocrity. My advice? Tell them to go to hell—in the most tactful possible way, of course. (P.S. For inspiration, keep in mind this idea from Friedrich Nietzsche: "Those who were dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.")

HOMEWORK: What gifts do you need and want and deserve most this holiday season? Send your outrageous demands and humble requests to www.freewillastrology.com

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THE WIND strut through the door this morning as if invited for coffee. It hung around my kitchen, daring me to open a bag of flour or a vial of cocaine. My skirt wouldn't stay down, and the dog was wild with delight. Strangely, I noticed, the curtains remained still. With no warning, the doorbell rang and the wind left, spooked like a cornered adulterer.

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