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free will astrology BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): In recent years, groups of students at Yale and other Ivy League universities have pioneered a unique cultural trend: naked parties. Those in attendance at one of these invitation-only affairs agree to spend the evening in their birthday suits. "The dynamic is completely different from a clothed party," reports Yale coed Megan Crandell, quoted in *The Scotsman*. "People are so conscious of how they're coming across that conversations end up being more sophisticated." Your assignment, Aries – should you choose to accept it – is to bring the phenomenon of the naked party to your own locale. According to my reading of the astrological omens, you're meant to be a social catalyst who inspires people to strip away their defenses and practice the art of radical authenticity.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your web of allies is a crucial part of your pursuit of happiness. The stimulation and support you ask them for are vivid evidence that you love life and have a strong sense of what's good for you. Every now and then, however, you need to remember that it's important to avoid falling completely under their influence. You've got to resist peer pressure, and declare your independence from the crowd's power to shape you. Now is such a time, Taurus.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): "Never eat food you did not prepare yourself," wrote journalist David Filipov about the lessons he learned while traveling in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, "and never eat out of the same dish as 12 paramilitary stormtroopers you've just met." Draw inspiration from Filipov's approach, Gemini. Dare yourself to explore an exotic frontier, but exercise great discrimination while you're learning the ropes and getting the lay of the land.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): It's Be Your Own Muse Week, Cancerian. How should you observe this festival? Here's one suggestion. First, visualize in detail your dream lover ... your ideal soul mate ... the embodiment of everything you find attractive. Second, imagine that though this person feels the same way about you, there is a very good reason why the two of you can't make love or be together as a couple for a long time. Next, feel the sweet torment of your unquenched longing for each other, the impossible ache of fiery tenderness. Finally, picture all the ways you will work on yourself in the coming years to refine your soul and perfect your love, so that when the two of you can finally be united, you will have made yourself into a gorgeous genius – a pure blessing and exquisite gift for your beloved.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Chinese scientists have discovered that the behavior of snakes is a reliable predictor of earthquakes. In the lead-up to a temblor, the reptiles act oddly, slithering frantically out of their nests if they're in their natural habitat, or hurl-

ing themselves head-first against walls if they're being kept in laboratories or zoos. I mention this, Leo, because I've had two dreams recently about snakes wearing party hats, sipping cocktails, singing karaoke, and dancing on tabletops. Each dream also featured several of my Leo friends acting pretty much like the snakes. If I factor in these nocturnal portents with my analysis of the current astrological omens, I interpret them as prophecies that the Leo tribe will soon be experiencing metaphorical "earthquakes" of liberating pleasure and cathartic fun.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The swan is a beautiful bird, right? If you see one gliding across a pond, it evokes in you a feeling of calm. In fairy tales, it's a symbol of natural grace, an emblem of animal elegance. But those lovely associations are becoming irrelevant in England, where swan populations have grown so massive and voracious that they're threatening ecosystems and damaging biodiversity. I guess we could say that their destructive overabundance exemplifies the theme of *too much of a good thing*. It's an apt metaphor for the challenge I believe you'll face in the coming days, Virgo.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You recently went through a phase whose quality I might compare to a dry, crunchy, bran-heavy breakfast cereal without milk. It fed your hunger, though it wasn't particularly tasty or thrilling. It was highly concentrated and good for your digestion. Now you're slipping into a kind of Cracker Jack mode, with lots of airy puffs of popcorny sweetness and an occasional nut, climaxed by a toy surprise. The Cracker Jack phase will be more like a snack than a meal, though, and it won't last too long. By next week at this time, I'm guessing your life will have resemblances to a hearty, organic, five-grain hot cereal sweetened with maple syrup and cinnamon.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Don't feel bad if you come from a dysfunctional family. Studies done by The Institute for the Study of Universal Addiction indicate that 97 percent of all families are dysfunctional. You should, however, feel bad if you pass up the opportunities you now have to heal the ravages caused by your dysfunctional family. Here's a good place to start: By trying to dissolve your habit of feeling victimized, damaged, or burdened by the people with whom you shared your original home, you could release yourself from a curse you've been casting on yourself – and magically set in motion overdue changes in your other family members.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person," observed Oscar Wilde. "Give him a mask and he'll tell you the truth." Using that as our hypothesis, Sagittarius, I urge you to adopt playful disguises to help you express yourself this week. You could go to a costume store and buy a mask of one of history's great communicators. (How about Winston Churchill,

Abraham Lincoln, or Eleanor Roosevelt?) Or you could simply pretend to be a slightly different person than your normal self. Speak in a foreign accent. Take on the body language of a hip-hop artist or professional wrestler. Or imagine that you're already the person you'll be three years from today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): My analysis of the astrological omens suggests that you'll be more animalistic than usual in the coming weeks. Your instinctual intelligence will be high, which means you'll have a good sense of who to trust and who not to trust. In fact, your body will be offering you a stream of valuable information about other matters as well, from tips on how to rise higher in the pecking order to clues about where to find the best hunting grounds. It's also likely that you'll be hornier and wilder than usual. That could be quite fun or it could get you into trouble. Which way it goes will depend on how well the human in you both respects and controls the animal in you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The cosmic powers-that-be are encouraging you to be a brazen instigator of novelty, a pioneering magician who dares to initiate inspired trends that may upset the status quo. If you can summon the charismatic nerve to cooperate with this prod, Aquarius, there's no telling what drastic acts of benevolent disruption you could conjure up. And they would ultimately lead, I have little doubt, to constructive innovations. (P.S. Would you believe me if I told you that a previously dormant section of your genetic code is primed to spring into action?)

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): In her book *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley created a monster who was smart and sensitive. He felt empathetic pain for the suffering of Native Americans. He desperately wanted a mate. He read Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and felt a grieving kinship with the struggles of Adam depicted therein. In accordance with current astrological omens, Pisces, I encourage you to acknowledge and express love for your own inner Frankenstein monster – the tormented, disfigured, and yet powerful part of your psyche that needs your compassion. I'm sure that this will prevent it from doing what Shelley's fictional character ultimately did, which was to go on a rampage – and will maybe even set it on a course to become a force for good.

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