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free will astrology BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Here's the first rule of panning for gold: Go to a slow-moving stream where flecks of the precious metal have been found by others in the past. The second rule is this: Although gold is carried along by the current, it's heavier than water and thus rarely appears right on the surface. Look deeper. A third pointer is that if you do ultimately find substantial treasure, it'll be because you will have gradually accumulated a number of flakes and nuggets over an extended period of time. You've got to be patient. Now, Aries, apply everything I just said to your search for metaphorical gold.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): In his song "Get Behind the Mule," Tom Waits tells us to "Never let the weeds get taller than the garden." That's advice you should heed in the coming weeks. But don't go overboard and become a fanatic who acts as if weeds are evil demons from the ninth level of hell. Keeping a few well-trimmed wild plants and a mushroom or two would be quite healthy. You need a bit of messy serendipity mixed in with your law and order.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): In her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard notes that there is only a tiny difference between the lifebloods of plants and animals. A molecule of chlorophyll contains 36 atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon arrayed around an atom of magnesium, while a molecule of hemoglobin is exactly the same except for an atom of iron instead of magnesium. I offer this as an apt metaphor to illustrate the choice you have ahead of you: As similar as the various possibilities may seem, the simple thing you put at the center of each option will make a tremendous difference.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): It's Beautify Yourself Week, dear Cancerian. A conspiracy of cosmic proportions is preparing the conditions necessary for you to capitalize handsomely on this opportunity. At this very moment, there is beauty behind you and beauty in front of you. There is beauty to your left and beauty to your right, beauty above you and beauty below you. All you have to do is inhale, drink in, and otherwise suck up this lushness. It will interact synergistically with the splendor that is also welling up in you, and you will transform into an almost unbearably gorgeous work of art.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Are you up for some cutting-edge slashing and smashing and crashing? I'm talking about slashing the price you've been paying for following your dreams; smashing beliefs that made sense years ago but are irrelevant now; and crashing parties where your future teachers and allies are gathered. Once you get the hang of all that, Leo, you can move on to other brilliant demolitions, like cracking codes, breaking trances, and shattering spells cast on you by the past.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): When Tom first arrived in Santa Cruz from South Carolina at age 22, he was homeless and had \$110. He quickly scored a temp job as a laborer, doing menial tasks at construction sites. His first assignment was at a place where a delivery truck had accidentally dropped a load of lumber at the bottom of a hill instead of at the top where a new house was to be built. Tom's job was to carry the heavy boards and beams up the hill one by one. He felt a bit like Sisyphus in the Greek myth – that forlorn character whose punishment by the gods required him to push a boulder up a hill again and again, only to have it plummet down each time as he reached the peak. Unlike Sisyphus, things got better for Tom. During the next 15 years, he became a successful real estate agent. One day he sold the million-dollar house that had been built from the wood he'd once toted up the hill. This is a perfect time, Virgo, for you to predict and plot out a long-term personal triumph that will match Tom's.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): It's the Power-Gathering Season for you, Libra. A good way to energize your efforts would be to define clearly and imaginatively what power means to you. I've got two riffs to get you started. First, here's one from a famous French ruler whose name I'll withhold so as not to distract you from the riff itself: "I love power. But it is as an artist that I love it. I love it as a musician loves his violin, to draw out its sounds and chords and harmonies." Here's the second definition, from poet Dennis Holt in his newsletter "Quincunx": "Power is what sends the woodpecker down from his tree to poke for worms in the muddy road one morning after all-night rain on a ridge above the Pacific within earshot of the surf."

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): I'm not a big fan of Disneyland, but that doesn't mean I can't borrow its ideas for your use. The fact is, Scorpio, the coming weeks will be an excellent time for you to identify your own personal versions of Frontierland, Adventureland, or Tomorrowland. I'm not talking about experiences and places that resemble glitzy theme-parks, but rather the wild and thrilling things that gently shock your mind into expanding. You're in a phase of your cycle when you'll tend to generate good luck and helpful synchronicity by pushing your imagination beyond its usual fantasies.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Beginning in 1951, the U.S. government regularly set off nuclear bombs in the desert 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Most of the 1,021 explosions occurred underground, though for 11 years some were also done in the open air. Tourists used to flock to Las Vegas to watch the mushroom clouds, which were visible from that distance. As far as we know, the detonations ceased in 1992. Also as far as we know, the unusual lifestyles of Las Vegas's inhabitants are not the result of mutations in their DNA caused by radioactive contamination. Let's use this scenario as a departure point for your own personal inventory,

Sagittarius. What dangerous or tempestuous events from your life are now safely confined to the past? Are there any lingering consequences from them? If so, what might you do to heal?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): By the year 2100, some human beings will be married to sophisticated robots. So concludes David Levy, who got a doctorate from a Dutch university for his thesis, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners." Let's use his prophecy as a jumping-off point for your meditation, Capricorn. In your fantasies about togetherness, are you unconsciously harboring any unrealistic desires for robotic perfection? If so, are they interfering with your ability to have deep and satisfying relationships with interesting but flawed people? Take inventory of any tendencies you might have to want artificial partners. Then dissolve those delusions.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): *Dear Rob: After a long stretch of patiently putting up with God's mean-spirited tricks, I decided I'd had enough. So I fired Him. Now I'm going to create a brand new deity from scratch. Do you have any recommendations on what qualities a truly cool divine being might possess?* – *Awakening Aquarius.* Dear Awakening: One quality your fresh god should have is an appreciation for your originality. You also deserve a deity who likes it when you take your fate into your own hands. That's all I'll say. It's a good time for you Aquarians to shun other people's ideas about the divine influences and brainstorm extravagantly about what's true for you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): What are the differences between tacky, meaningless fun and beautiful, constructive fun? What are the distinctions between dumb, trivial pleasure and smart, life-exalting pleasure? I'm hoping that meditations on these subjects will inspire you to overcome any laziness you might have about cultivating happiness. It's a perfect time for you to attempt this monumental accomplishment, you see. You're at a potential turning point in your astrological cycle, a time when you could get in the habit of treating your hero's journey as if it were an ever-evolving celebration.

HOMEWORK: True or false: You can't get what you want from another person until you're able to give it to yourself. Explain why or why not. FreeWillAstrology.com.

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