

# FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

BY ROB BREZSNY

**ARIES** (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): Author Susan Sontag defined “mad people” as those who “stand alone and burn.” She said she was drawn to them because they inspired her to do the same. What do you think she meant by the descriptor “stand alone and burn”? I suspect she was referring to strong-willed people devoted to cultivating the most passionate version of themselves, always in alignment with their deepest longings. She meant those who are willing to accept the consequences of such devotion, even if it means being misunderstood or alone. The coming weeks will be an interesting and educational time for you to experiment with being such a person.

**TAURUS** (APRIL 20-MAY 20): In the 1930s, Taurus-born Rita Levi-Montalcini was a promising researcher in neurobiology at the University of Turin in Italy. But when fascist dictator Benito Mussolini imposed new laws that forbade Jews from holding university jobs, she was fired. Undaunted, she created a laboratory in her bedroom and continued her work. There she laid the foundations for discoveries that ultimately led to her winning the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. I foresee you summoning comparable determination and resilience in the coming weeks, Taurus.

**GEMINI** (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Religious scholar Karl Barth (1886-1968) wrote, “There will be no song on our lips if there be no anguish in our hearts.” To that perverse oversimplification, I reply: “Rubbish. Twaddle. Bunk. Hooey.” I’m appalled by his insinuation that pain is the driving force for all of our lyrical self-revelations. Case in point: you in the coming weeks. I trust there will be a steady flow of songs in your heart and on your lips because you will be in such intimate alignment with your life’s master plan.

**CANCER** (JUNE 21-JULY 22): “It is not easy to be crafty and winsome at the same time, and few accomplish it after the age of six,” wrote Cancerian author John W. Gardner. But I would add that more adult Crabs accomplish this feat than any other sign of the zodiac. I’ll furthermore suggest that during the next six weeks, many of you will do it quite well. My prediction: You will blend lovability and strategic shrewdness to generate unprecedented effectiveness. (How could anyone resist you?)

**LEO** (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Staring at flames had benefits for our primitive ancestors. As they sat around campfires and focused on the steady burn, they were essentially practicing a kind of meditation. Doing so enhanced their ability to regulate their attention, thereby strengthening their working memory and developing a greater capacity to make long-range plans. What does this have to do with you? As a fire sign, you have a special talent for harnessing the power of fire to serve you. In the coming weeks, that will be even more profoundly true than usual. If you can do so safely, I encourage you to spend quality time gazing into flames. I also hope you will super-nurture the radiant fire that glows within you. (More info: [tinyurl.com/GoodFlames](http://tinyurl.com/GoodFlames))

**VIRGO** (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22): Physicist Victor Weisskopf told us, “What’s beautiful in science is the same thing that’s beautiful in Beethoven. There’s a fog of events and suddenly you see a connection. It connects things that were always in you that were never put together before.” I’m expecting there to be a wealth of these aha! moments for you in the coming weeks, Virgo. Hidden patterns will become visible. Missing links will appear. Secret agendas will emerge. The real stories beneath the superficial stories will materialize. Be receptive and alert!

**LIBRA** (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22): Jungian psychoanalyst and folklore expert Clarissa Pinkola Estés celebrates the power of inquiry. She says that “asking the proper question is the central action of transformation,” both in fairy tales and in psychotherapy. To identify what changes will heal you, you must be curious to uncover truths that you don’t know yet. “Questions are the keys that cause the secret doors of the psyche to swing open,” says Estes. I bring this to your attention, Libra, because now is prime time for you to formulate the Fantastically Magically Catalytic Questions.

**SCORPIO** (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): In April 1933, Scorpio-born African American singer Ethel Waters was in a “private hell.” Her career was at an impasse and her marriage was falling apart. In the depths of despondency, she was invited to sing a new song, “Stormy Weather,” at New York City’s famous Cotton Club. It was a turning point. She later wrote, “I was singing the story of my misery and confusion, of the misunderstandings in my life I couldn’t straighten out, the story of the wrongs and outrages done to me by people I had loved and trusted.” The audience was thrilled by her performance and called her back for 12 encores. Soon thereafter, musical opportunities poured in and her career blossomed. I foresee a parallel event in your life, Scorpio. Maybe not quite so dramatic, but still, quite redemptive.

**SAGITTARIUS** (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): I love to see you enjoy yourself. I get a vicarious thrill as I observe you pursuing pleasures that other people are too inhibited or timid to dare. It’s healing for me to witness you unleash your unapologetic enthusiasm for being alive in an amazing body that’s blessed with the miracle of consciousness. And now I’m going to be a cheerleader for your efforts to wander even further into the frontiers of bliss and joy and gratification. I will urge you to embark on a quest of novel forms of rapture and exultation. I’ll prod you to at least temporarily set aside habitual sources of excitement so you’ll have room to welcome as-yet unfamiliar sources.

**CAPRICORN** (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Capricorn poet John O’Donahue suggested that a river’s behavior is worthy of our emulation. He said the river’s life is “surrendered to the pilgrimage.” It’s “seldom pushing or straining, keeping itself to itself everywhere all along its flow.” Can you imagine yourself doing that, Capricorn? Now is an excellent time to do so. O’Donahue rhapsodized that the river is “at one with its sinuous mind, an utter rhythm, never awkward,” and that “it continues to swirl through all unlikeliness with elegance: a ceaseless traverse of presence soothing on each side, sounding out its journey, raising up a buried music.” Be like that river, dear Capricorn!

**AQUARIUS** (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): “Is life not a thousand times too short for us to bore ourselves?” wrote philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In response to that sentiment, I say, “Amen!” and “Hallelujah!” Even if you will live till age 99, that’s still too brief a time to indulge in an excess of dull activities that activate just a small part of your intelligence. To be clear, I don’t think it’s possible to be perfect in avoiding boredom. But for most of us, there’s a lot we can do to minimize numbing tedium and energy-draining apathy. I mention this, Aquarius, because the coming weeks will be a time when you will have extra power to make your life as interesting as possible for the long run.

**PISCES** (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): I know of four different governmental organizations that have estimated the dollar value of a single human life. The average of their figures is \$7.75 million. So let’s say, for argument’s sake, that you are personally worth that much. Does it change the way you think about your destiny? Are you inspired to upgrade your sense of yourself as a precious treasure? Or is the idea of putting a price on your merit uninteresting, even unappealing? Whatever your reaction is, I hope it prods you to take a revised inventory of your worth, however you measure it. It’s a good time to get a clear and precise evaluation of the gift that is your life. (Quote from Julia Cameron: “Treating yourself like a precious object makes you strong.”)

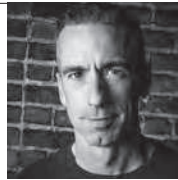
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# SAVAGE LOVE

BY DAN SAVAGE



*I’m having a weird reaction to someone I’m involved with. I find myself wanting to punish him for the slightest transgressions and scold him or give him the silent treatment until he apologizes. The poor guy hasn’t done anything very wrong — nothing wrong wrong — he’s just failed to meet my unreasonably high expectations for him. To make matters worse, we seem to have fallen into some sort of roleplay, verbally at least, where I order him around. He seems to want me to punish him and give him orders and I’m doing both, but I’ve never been a Dom or had a sub or whatever it is we’re doing. Honestly, I’m confused about what we’re doing but he seems to be inviting it somehow. How do I navigate this?*

— **Problems Understanding Nuances In Situationship Here**

“This situation reminds Me of the kinkster classic *Secretary*,” says The Funny Dom. “It’s a fascinating look at a Dom and a sub who don’t fully understand their identities or how to pursue the dynamic functionally. It’s sweet and hot watching Maggie Gyllenhaal and James Spader fall into a problematic spanking scene, but in real life we know better.”

The Funny Dom is the pen name of a 44-year-old Daddy based in Melbourne, Australia. A long-time kink practitioner and educator, The Funny Dom has been “holding light-hearted (but stern!) space” for Doms, subs, and switches online since the start of the pandemic.

“It sounds like these two have developed a kind of Dom/sub dynamic,” TheFriendlyDom says. “PUNISH should think of it like a particular kind of dance they’re both loosely following. And while it’s all well and good for her to say he’s inviting it, it takes two to tango.”

Maybe your boyfriend already knew he was a sub when you met and he’s subtly training you to dominate him — by rewarding the punishing behaviors he wants to see from you — I’m guessing your boyfriend is just as confused about the dynamic you’ve stumbled into as a couple. But since you seem to enjoy punishing him, PUNISH, and since your boyfriend seems to enjoy being punished by you, this sounds less like a problem and more like the beginning of a beautiful (and very hot) relationship.

“It’s obvious from the way PUNISH and her boyfriend respond to each other’s behavior that D/s resonate for both of them,” TheFunnyDom adds. “They have a real opportunity here to explore a big juicy part of their identities. But to take those steps, they need to have a conversation about the moves they’ve both been pulling — and what those moves mean to them — and then discuss whether they’d like to pursue this dynamic further. And if so, how can they pursue it mindfully?”

One of you needs to say, “Hey, what are we doing here?”, and since you’re the one who wrote to me first, PUNISH, I think you’re the one who needs to say it. And if you’re concerned about where this is heading — if you’re worried about this dynamic escalating in ways that make you feel uncomfortable about your actions — identifying what it is you’re doing and will help contain it. Right now, PUNISH, you’re punishing your boyfriend and *kindasorta* hoping he likes it as much as you think he does; once you’ve talked about it, you’ll be able to punish your boyfriend confident that likes what you’re doing. And remember: this conversation isn’t just about identifying your boyfriend’s limits as a sub, PUNISH, it’s also about identifying your limits as a Dom.

“To start the conversation they can watch a decent kinky movie together,” The Funny Dom says, “something like *Secretary* or *Love & Leashes* — a much less problematic and even sweet depiction of a male sub dynamic — and then talk about what they liked, what they didn’t like, and what, if anything, reflected what’s happening between them. They can also grab a how-to book — and there are many — and look for a kink class or workshop to attend together and independently.”

One how-to book you might want to pick up and read with the boyfriend: *The Funny Dom’s Guide to Kink* (Vol. 1 and Vol. 2), which is available now.

“PUNISH and her boyfriend — really, all couples who interested in kink — need to remember that kink is a big, big, hot, transformative, messy, wonderful adventure,” The Funny Dom notes, “and it shouldn’t be done in a non-conscious vacuum, folks.”

In other words, PUNISH, you gotta talk about it. Or as we like to say here at Savage Love, Inc., *you gotta use your words*.

*Cis-het dude here in my 30s. I’ve had to spend several multi-month periods away from my wife over the last couple years for work. During the last long separation, I started writing letters — long letters, horny letters, emotional letters and lots of smut. I sent notebooks filled with horny letters and erotic short stories, drawings and elaborate choose-your-own-adventure-style pieces. I let her in on some of my kinks. (I know, Dan: I should’ve done this when we first started dating, but I wasn’t listening to the Lovecast then.) As it turns out, she’s pretty vanilla and she asked me to pull back on the kink. Since the letters and stories were gifts, I obliged. I’m not great at talking about my feelings and desires, but I can write them down. Not everything was horny — I sent love letters, not just lust letters — but I never get much of a response. For example, I wrote her an “ice cream menu” with codes aligning with different themes and kinks. The idea was that she could pick what she wanted to read in future notebooks. I got a couple requests, but she never used the menu system, let alone asked for “lavender honeycomb” or “mint chocolate chip” options. (Yes, vanilla was also on the menu!)*

*I guess the issue here is that I feel like I’m not getting much back. Are these projects worth pursuing? Should I put my kinks (mostly subby stuff with me as the sub) back in my stories or does that come across like I’m trying to pressure her? We’re going to be back together full time for the next couple years. I love the heck out of this woman — that’s why I married her — but it doesn’t feel good to be the unreciprocated lust letter writer.*

— **Boy Overconfidently Oversharing Kink Stories**

“First of all, one cis-het bloke to another, a big bloody well done on the beautiful and creative outlet BOOKS found and explored and here’s to making space for sharing, vulnerability and playful kinky discussions,” The Funny Dom says. “Our fellow cis-het blokes could do with more of this. Unfortunately, I’m thinking BOOKS transformation from a not-very-comfortable-speaking-about-feelings-and-desires guy to something like a coked-up-Aaron-Sorkin-like pen pal may have overwhelmed his partner.”

You say it wasn’t your intent to make your wife feel pressured — not pressured to respond in kind, not pressured to embrace your kinks — but it sounds like she feels pressured, BOOKS, and it sounds like you actually are disappointed she hasn’t responded in kind and embraced your kinks.

“I totally understand that BOOKS is feeling a little underwhelmed by the lack of reciprocity here,” The Funny Dom says. “That’s only human. But he’s gotta remember that no one asked him to cook this five-course meal. Before anyone does something like that for you, you gotta discuss tastes, appetites and menu options before playing chef. Kink-dynamic wise, sending someone smut and possible scenarios for play that place your partner in the Dominant role — without clearly ascertaining whether that’s who they are or what they want — is a form of manipulation you often see in relationships that have been essentially vanilla but now one person wants to explore kink.”

Needless to say, it’s not a recipe for success. So, what can you do?

“BOOKS shouldn’t put the pen down,” The Friendly Dom says, “but he should keep the writing for himself — start an anonymous blog or write for a smut lit erotica type platform — and then, when he’s home, have a face-to-face conversation with his partner how he’s feeling and, most importantly, how she’s feeling and whether she wants to explore any of this at all. And if not, well, BOOKS needs to take that into account before spending the next umpteen years together. Fundamental kink compatibility is not like simply going for different footy team. It’s bloody vital to a functional relationship.” Follow *The Funny Dom* on Instagram and Threads @thefunnydomreturns. *The Funny Dom* is available for one-on-one online coaching sessions with couples and individuals.

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