

Fishing Guide to the Stars: 2003



"D.A.M." by Kramer of astrofish.net

by
Kramer Wietzel
of
astrofish.net

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Dedicated to the folks and places that make this possible, you know who you are.

Plus, Jo's Coffee, Amy's Ice Cream, Magnolia Café, that BBQ place. The list goes on forever. Thanks for all the fish!

For the Week of: 1/2/2003

"Beat him enough: after a little time, /I'll beat him too."

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* [III.ii.83-4]

That quote, while it might be a little misdirected, is surely how I feel right around now. Even as Mercury starts his little moonwalk action. Yee-haw. Happy New Year.

Capricorn: The fun just never stops! It's that simple. If you're not having any fun, there's not a lot you can do but blame yourself. You're entitled to a full 20 minutes of either self-doubt or self-pity, but it has to be one or the other—not both. After those 20 minutes of loathing are used up, though, we're back to fun times in Capricorn. The recent New Year's antics have been a little rough on you, and frankly, you've got no one to blame but yourself. However, and that's a big "however," it's still good from henceforth. Tied up a few loose ends, got something out of the way, and now there's miles and miles of smooth road ahead. Remember, that 20 minutes of angst is only available if you're a regular reader. Casual Capricorn readers have to adjust their amount of time spent agonizing over that one situation, it's all got to be squeezed into less time. So out of the next seven [7] days, you've got one, tiny, infinitesimally small window wherein you get a load of self-generated angst that ambushes your psyche. The rest of the time? Sun's in Capricorn, stretch that birthday celebration out for several weeks—I know you can. And we'll keep that moment of pity to ourselves.

Aquarius: It's a new year, right? It's a time when things are supposed to move forward. You're in the process of shedding a few items that are no longer required. Unload some of your baggage. Look, everyone has emotional baggage. By the time we're all two years old, it's because we were bottle fed, or maybe it's because we were all breast-fed, it's something like that, but by age 2, the damage has been done. Everyone I know is getting over something. Everyone has some kind of emotional baggage. Personally, I think about 90% of it is made up to keep self-help authors, lawyers and therapists employed. I'm willing to be wrong, though. Are you? Anyway, about this emotional baggage, everyone's got it. You're just a in unique position, exacerbated by the twin planets of good deeds [Venus and Mars], and you can get your own Aquarius baggage down to one, single, roller board, FAA"approved" carryon suitcase. Got it? Trim down the things that you think you need, that stuff

you cart around with you everywhere you go. Get it all down to one, single, slim, little package on wheels. Makes it easier to manage. Now, as you start the new year, you get to trim all this stuff down to a manageable size. Do it. Your back can thank me later.

Pisces: Nothing works quite as well as a little "Mercury going backwards" action to slam home a point or two. Even though "things are s'pose t'be good" over here in Pisces, there's a little hint of discontent, a little suggestion that something isn't lining up quite right. Relax. The year starts out well, the first week has a low point or two, but the long term, overall prognostication is good, if not excellent. Don't confuse a temporary low point, a momentary lack of action, as signal that everything is taking a turn for the worse. It's not. It's a trick of the light, maybe a sudden change in the weather, or just the effect of the seasons on your soul, but it's not drastic, dire, or even that big of a deal. The overall scenario in the "World of Pisces" looks rosy. In the next few days, you've got a big plan for the new year, and that one, big goal is going to get off to a halting start. It's like the truck I use, it takes a little while to warm up. You can't just jump in it, turn the ignition key over, and expect to take off right away. It may only have six cylinders, but usually starts up on four, then gets going on all six in a minute or two. Precludes any hope of a quick getaway. However, if I need a fast escape, I know to leave the truck running. Or use another vehicle. Means some of the plans you've got don't get off to a roaring start. Doesn't mean you don't win, just not as fast. Go slow.

Aries: Let's get the new year rolling along correctly. Of course, in different accounting methods, it's not really the end of the year. It's January, it's cold, it's dark, and us folks in the Northern Hemisphere are suffering through what feels like a long, dark winter. There's a feeling in Aries, and it's like there's a hole in your soul, and the wind keeps blowing through. Or, it could be more like a minor annoyance I get at this time of year: a hole in my boot's sole. It's not a big hole, but on those rare, wet days, it lets an extra measure of moisture through. Resolve to get that hole in your sole, or that hole in your soul, patched up. You stand a better chance than most at making one new year's resolution stick. Plan on it. Make the move, or do like I do, and drop off that pair of boots at the special "boot repair place." After the weekend, due to subtle change in her position, Miss Venus starts warming up your life a little, as

well. Just don't get too self-indulgent at that time—beginning of next week.

Taurus: I was in San Marcos, a town a few miles south of Austin, for dinner. During the school year, it's a college town, and when school lets out, the place goes back to being either a suburb of Austin or just another eccentric, little town on the Central Texas prairie. Because of its [relatively] large student population, there's sort of a young, transient feel to a lot of the local population. I was in a particular coffee shop on the square, locally owned, politically correct coffee, and the young person brewing up my double cappuccino saw a friend come through the door. My coffee was put on hold while she greeted him, then she went back to her immediate task of making me some espresso-based drinks. She was talking over her shoulder to her recently arrived friend, "What are you doing after midnight?" I couldn't help myself, "Dude, I don't know what your plans were, but you're suddenly available, I hope." The coffee maker had to interject, "No, it's not like that, I mean, he has a girlfriend." "So I have a mean girlfriend?" he asked. The coffee maker got more and more frustrated, and between the two of us, we kept the banter up long enough to dig someone a big hole. Problem being, you're like that girl making the coffee, your intentions are honorable, decent, even sweet, but the two opposing forces, even though we're just having fun, us pranksters seem to have the upper hand in your life. It's Mars, or it's Venus, or it's both, and they're going to be like two guys on the other side of the counter, twisting your words around to suit themselves. You can fight it, but you just keep winding up with things being worse because there's two of us and only one of you. Laugh at Mars and Venus—it's about all you can do.

Gemini: The cat got a hold of one of the stockings that had formerly "been hung with great care," and she decided that the stocking itself was the best toy. For an old lady, she can occasionally have some rather sprite-like energy. At one time, there had been something in the bottom of the stocking that she wanted to get at. See what I get for leaving odd decorations laying about the trailer? I don't know from personal experience, but what I've been told, from parents, sometimes a child will find the packaging as attractive, if not more so, than the gift itself. Such was the case of the cat in the stocking. She burrowed down to the bottom of the stocking, to get what was there. She has this unusual little meow

she lets out, too, and that was muffled by the green felt material. Whatever it was, she was displaying certain Gemini-like characteristics. Get to the bottom of it. Don't throw away any packaging material, as it might prove more useful than you think. Now, if you're like me, you found that cat's behavior amusing for a little while, but when the claws come out, it lost its appeal. I was afraid she was going to shred what she was burrowing for. Same applies to you—it's okay to get to the bottom of the situation, but be careful you don't tear it up. Happy New Year, too.

Cancer: One of my casual acquaintances is a waitress, down the road at the diner. She's a sweet and dear Cancer, always bring me a fresh glass of tea when I walk through the diner's door. For a while, she would bring both ice tea and coffee, but the coffee at that one place is just horrible. Great food, friendly staff, just bad coffee. I'm not going to let a little bad coffee get in the way of an otherwise excellent atmosphere—not as long as the food is good. There's a double effect from the planets right now, well, it's just from two planets, Mars and Venus, and you're going to be just like that nice waitress who brings me coffee and tea. You're trying something twice, but only one of the two efforts will really be successful. Come on, you know that the coffee is bad, and when it gets rejected, you can't be too upset—you wouldn't drink that stuff yourself. So when Mars and Venus suggest a double offering, a chance for you to make two offers, don't get upset with me, or the other recipient, when one of the two offers gets rejected. If this were baseball, it would mean that you're actually hitting one out of every two pitches—those are good odds. Excellent numbers. I've been kind enough to warn you, so don't get upset, take in stride. I'll leave a nice tip, just for your efforts.

Leo: Out with the old and in with the new. Nothing beats having a few items thrown back at you to make you realize what does work, what doesn't work, and some items you've been holding on to? Throw them away. I used to prowl thrift shops and charity stores for good, used Hawaiian shirts. However, I live in a small trailer, and there's no room for an extensive wardrobe. Means that I occasionally have to go through and prune my clothing. At last count, I could wear a different Hawaiian shirt every day for a month, and I'd still have one or two left on hangers. I think I have enough of this type of attire. I could outfit a whole row at a Jimmy Buffet concert. Maybe even a whole stadium section. Not that I'd

want to, but it's nice to know I could. A couple of the shirts are vintage, i.e., over 20 years old. A few of them have shrunk—I could wear them 20 years ago, but they don't have the right look anymore—not quite baggy enough. Time for some of these items to find a new home. Just don't make my mistake, I donate a bag of cloths to Goodwill, then a few weeks later, while shopping, I pick up one shirt, "I used to have one just like this, no this one doesn't fit, but in a few weeks, when I lose some weight, I'll bet it would fit...." Didn't fit when I got rid of it, won't fit again. If didn't work before, it probably won't work again.

Virgo: Time to come busting out of your shell. Time to get up and go. Time to pick up the phone, pick up the pieces, and get on with it. It's like that second cup of coffee in the morning. I'll sit outside [in what passes for clothing], look at the wilted plants on the trailer's patio, and sip a tiny cup of coffee. The river seems to be a mysterious body of water, lazily pushing itself downstream, and there's a gentle flow. It's quiet at that hour. Maybe there will be a winter fowl, floating on the surface, or some of the ducks, bobbing for breakfast. Take another pull on that cup of coffee, get ready to roll. You've got about 14 different new projects that need your attention. The deal is, with Mercury starting its backwards motion, all of those projects require your attention, like, right now. And then, there's only one of you, and you can't be everywhere, all at once. However, if you make a list, and then, start at the top. No, wait, that first item can't be attacked right now. Go slow. Do what you can, when you can, but the things you can't do anything about right now? That's why I suggested a list. Get to what you can, as you can, and don't worry about the details—details about stuff you can't fix.

Libra: There's one particular Libra that I've studied for many years. Makes for an interesting case study as this one particular Libra manages to look like he is always working hard when, in fact, he isn't. I wouldn't exactly use the term "lazy" because that implies sloth. But what does happen is this one Libra spends an almost inordinate amount of time working at not working. It takes a lot of energy to be lazy like that. There's some behind the scenes machinations, a little extra effort is required here and there to grease the skids, and keep things moving along. It's real important to make sure it looks like everyone else is doing all the hard work. It's not an easy task, but I know from my careful observations, that

this is possible. More and more, you're getting yourself worked up into a pitch. You've got a sales pitch, a task at hand, a job you want done, a goal you want accomplished. It's best to let as many informed and helpful individuals assist you in attaining your goal. It's not going to be without a few unforeseen problems, but that's why the little delays are called "unforeseen"--no one could predict that it was going to go like that. Gather up your entourage of assistants and accomplices, cohorts, as it were. You've got an amazing year ahead, and it starts with soliciting some assistance.

Scorpio: Just in time for the new year, Miss Venus exits your sign. She's had an extended stay in Scorpio, warming, cooling then warming things again. I had to fight my cat for some left over brisket I had on hand, in one of those "to go" styrofoam containers. BBQ is usually best the first time around, but really good BBQ is okay, even a few days later. The cat knows this, and when she saw that container come out of the ice box, she got real excited, howling and mewling like she hadn't been fed in days, weeks, or even months, according to the sound she was making. Poor, mistreated kitten, right? And poor, mistreated Scorpio, too. It's like you've been treated as unfairly as my cat, no one ever loves on you, no one pays any attention to you, or no one even feeds you. Poor Scorpio, left to fend for themselves out in the harsh, cold, cruel world. I tend to think you're a lot like the cat, rather pampered. Like that leftover brisket, though, you've been reheated one too many times. The coming year is most excellent, but it gets off to an awkward start with Mercury heading into a backwards position. If you fail to garner sympathy from other folks, that's because we can all see that things are going well for you. Take it easy, this is a time to assess your goal of taking over the world. Some of your plans need fine tuning, not major revision. Work on it.

Sagittarius: It's an immortal line, one that's etched in my memory, as if it were engraved in stone: "Man, it's January 1, I might have to wear long pants, that's just [byproduct of male bovine]." It was three, maybe four or five years ago. It was one of my drinking buddies, and we were out for a big New Year's Eve night on Austin's Sixth Street. Cigars in hand, swigging on bottles [actually, bottles of water], we toasted the new year. Unlike some parts of the world, Austin's merchants are in the habit of raising a giant Lone Star for the event. I kept my cell phone handy because I was expecting a call, any minute from one particular person I was hoping [in vain]

to hook up with later that night. Okay, so it wasn't a bad night, and the next day, it warmed up nice enough to sit outside and sip coffee on the trailer's verandah, and yes, that one girl did show up, looking a little worse for the wear. With the way the two romance planets are, do like I did, and do like I'll probably do again--take it easy the day after New Year's Eve. Some of the stuff that was supposed to happen--and didn't--that's coming around the bend. But for now? Mars and Venus are in a sign that comes in front of you. Let that Scorpio [energy] go first.

For the Week: 1/9-15/2003

"This pretty brabble will undo us all."

in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* [II.i.62]

Mercury is backwards-retrograde, Venus is in Sagittarius, and Mars is still steaming up Scorpio. I suppose that's redundant-I steam up Scorpio all the time [according to what they say]. Get the full scoop-Austin-last weekend. Next weekend? El Paso!

Capricorn: There are these rare winter days where it's really cold at night [here in Texas], then the sun pops up, and the day warms up nicely. It makes for an interesting fishing experience. Leave before the sun's up, and I have to dress in winter wear. What I've found easiest is to just wear a pair of loose pants over my shorts because around noon, instead of wishing I was in shorts, I can just peel out of the long pants and there I am, dressed for the weather. Again. Given my tastes, few people turn to me for fashion advice. That's okay-I'm not offended. But dressing for just about every contingency and permutation in the weather is what is required of your Capricorn self. You're going to want to be ready for it all. From freezing cold to a day that almost feels like spring. It's that Mercury stuff. Just when you thought you could put away the long coats and heavy mittens, there's a cold snap, and you're up to your Capricorn elbows in snow. Or, just when you bundle up for the cold morning the day becomes one of those idyllic frolics in the spring time [let's be honest, there will be another cold snap before spring gets here for good.] It's not you, it's not me, it's Mercury. Just carry a little bit of everything, and when it doesn't work out? Like that fishing trip, I know good catfish parlor, a place to eat afterwards. "So how was your fishing trip?" "I caught three great big filets at the 'all-you-can-eat' buffet!"

Aquarius: There are two kinds of voices. You've got the "voices in your head" sort of noise, and you've got the "what other people are telling" noises. Now, with the Mercury situation going on, you're inclined to listen to the voices in your head. The problem is, Mercury is also rather confusing right now, and you start getting a little battle going with those voices in your head. That's a problem. One hemisphere of the brain suggests one thing while the other lobe suggests that the first hemisphere is quite wrong in its assumptions, and therefore, the argument is not logical and rendered null and void. And that's just the internal dialog. Wait

until you start listening to your friends and family, those guys are all telling you what is best for you. Normally, this isn't a problem because you just check with your "inner Aquarius" and that will tell what's best for you. But with the two hemispheres having a little at fight upstairs—at the top of the Aquarius brain stem—you're not sure what is right. I'm not sure I can sort this out, between all the warring factions, it looks like a recent Middle East battleground, all over again, what with the changing alligences and all. Instead of getting a grip, why not realize that there's too much information, and you don't have to make an irrevocable decision now.

Pisces: We're well into the new year, and the first of the resolutions has fallen, now hasn't it? One of your "big plans" for this year has already flopped. Could be the work out regime you planned. You know, it was a great idea a few weeks ago, but getting up an hour earlier, especially on the mornings when it feels so cold, it just doesn't get it. So much for that big plan to get to the gym early every day. All is not lost, but it's okay that you're not quite living up to your own expectations. You're reading an astrology source [Fishing Guide to the Stars, in fact] so you know that you can effectively use the same excuse I use: Mercury is wayward [in Capricorn]. Therefore, it's not really your fault that you not living up to your own expectations. Having a handy excuse doesn't make everything okay, but it goes a long way in understanding that you might fall short of your own goal, and it helps to make it a little easier on your own psyche for the time being.

Aries: One of the best attributes of an Aries is the quick temper. No, really: quick to flame, but just as quick to cool off. Important characteristic because Mr. Mercury is going to hit one of your buttons, pretty soon. If he hasn't done it once, already. Not a cool time, not at all. You're going to jump to a conclusion, get passionately irritated about something, and then realize that you might be barking up the wrong tree. You might get really tiffed about one issue, only to find out that you don't have all the facts in your Aries hand. Look: this is one of the tricks of the eternal prank-maker, Mr. Mercury. Remember, he's the smallest planet in the system, so some of his tricks are really lightweight. All he's really doing is poking at your buttons, just to see which tender spot makes you jump. If you jump too fast, if you draw a hasty conclusion from incomplete data, then you might get in trouble. Personally, I think you look good when you're mad like that, but not

everyone shares my sense of wonder and amusement about your indignation.

Taurus: Relief comes in many different forms. Understanding the nature of Mercury's mayhem is a good place to start. He's going to give you some extra time to think about a few things. Being both a seasoned traveler and an astrologer, more than one person has wondered why I like to travel when Mercury is backwards. The trick is, I carry with me everything I need for survival. My needs are simple, though: a notebook computer, a handheld digital thing, maybe a phone, and, because it is Mercury, pen and paper, as well as a good book to read. I carry extra batteries, as well. And a toothbrush. More than one "Mercury is backwards" trip has resulted in me and my baggage arriving at the same destination at slightly different times. It's part of the appeal of this sort of travel. Get upset? Remember? I'm the astrologer, I knew that might happen. So you do get some kind of relief from the Mercury Machinations, but I still think you ought to be prepared, i.e., carry everything that you absolutely need, all the required stuff, keep it with you at all times.

Gemini: Saturn is close to really trying your patience by now. We're into the new year, and this was supposed to start with a blank slate, a clean starting point for your Gemini self. Too bad it doesn't work like that. The reason for paying attention to Saturn and Mercury, see, Saturn is associated with Capricorn, and Mercury is backwards in Capricorn, and Saturn is in Gemini. In typical Gemini fashion, you're going to attempt a half dozen different tasks, different goals as well as multiple ways of getting from here to there. With Mercury in his current state of disarray, most of these avenues are going to be blocked. Which doesn't mean you shouldn't try. See, we're back to the Saturn influence. One of your attempts turns out to be a success. A big success. A reward you've worked towards. Something pays off. One of your goals is reached. I tend to look at this as something from last fall, a little reminder of something that happened last October or so, and it's back, plus you win. In a sea of troubles, any port looks good by now. Take it. You don't win in every situation, but you do get to win-significant win-one out of three.

Cancer: My "workspace" is a desk with a laptop computer, a pile of astrology books, high speed modem, network lines, and various, assorted stuff scattered about the living room of a trailer in South

Austin. This shows I don't know what kind of workspace you have, and I seriously doubt your Cancer work spot resembles mine. But if it did, I would be urging you to do something to make that space a little more hospitable. One of my biggest fears is that, as the CEO, COO and Head Technology Officer of my world, I'm really afraid that I'll start putting up Dilbert Cartoons. Cartoons that poke fun at mismanagement. I would hate to think that I've become the archetype for a mismanaged outfit because, after all, I am the the boss. What does that say about my style of caring for the employees if I can't manage my own assets. Nothing is worse than finding a Dilbert cartoon-and to exacerbate this, what happens if I do it to myself? So when I suggest you clean up your workspace, make the place a little more manageable, do something to make everything nice, make yourself at home. Personal tastes vary, but given that Mercury is doing his dead-level best to confound you right now, why not dig in a little, make yourself at home in your work spot, and make yourself comfortable. It looks like you're going to be putting in some long hours correcting some one else's mistake, so it's up to you to be as cozy as possible.

Leo: A long term view is good-the further down that dusty Leo trail that you're willing to look, all the better for you. The deal is that Mr. Jupiter, even though he's making himself cozy in your sign, he's kind of like a holiday guest who just won't leave. Jupiter has kicked his boots off, his feet are up on your coffee table, and he's idly got the remote control, sort of lazy-like, flipping through the channels. He's not too serious about this stuff, either, but he will drink all your beer. He might make a call on your phone to a 900 line. "No man, see, the lady on the TV promised me I would win the lottery if I called her...." There's a smooth trick I've learned over the years, how to deal with Jupiter-slow down. You can't kick him out, and he's going to be retrograde in Leo for a spell. Got a couple of more months of this. Instead of banging into him, and trying to coerce him to do something productive, like, get a job, kick back with Mr. Jupiter the unwanted houseguest. [As one Scorpio author puts it, the "housepest."] Hang out with the guy. Take it easy. There's more than one way to get rid of an annoyance like this, and being a mirror for Jupiter's behavior works well. Plus, it's easy for you.

Virgo: I was fishing with one of my buddies, and he started to give me copious advice about what to do, what lure works best, where to

throw my lure, how to bait the hook, he couldn't understand why I was casting left-handed, and so forth. As a Virgo, your advice is well-intentioned. You mean well. You really do have my best interest at the center of your Virgo heart. I know you mean well—I'm the astrologer, I understand these things. However, not everyone you encounter will understand your advice. It is meant as sweet, factual, helpful hints. It comes across as a little complaining. The way you pitch what you're selling, the way you're letting us know that there's a better way, it comes across all wrong. It's not you, and it's certainly not your good advice—it's Mr. Mercury, and he's making some trouble. There were a couple of other planets to consider, as well—the troublesome couple of Mars and Venus. They're in this mix, too. You think you sound sweet. It comes out as a little too bitter, a little too acerbic, a little too biting. Slow it down, dear Virgo, you're still right. It's not the content of your message, the problem is how it gets delivered to us. Hint: try more pretty words.

Libra: One of the greatest ways of getting out of something that I've done—a good excuse—is to start by saying, "I feel...." Like, "I feel like not going to work today." Or, I'll be looking at spot on the carpet, "I don't feel like I'm responsible for this...." The term is great—I use it to get out of a lot of trouble. Your uses might vary some, but it's a good bet that what you're feeling is not quite the same thing as what other folks are seeing. Or believing. Or even understanding. Culprit? Mercury. Easiest course of action for Libra? Explain what you're feeling about the situation. Don't try and be rational about this: reasonable [to you] thought processes don't seem nearly as reasonable to other folks. That's why my wonderful way of working with this: starting out with the "I feel" words is so effective. And yes, I don't really feel like working this week, either.

Scorpio: Once again, I'm going to the top of the Scorpio's "list of folks who need to be corrected." Obviously I'm mistaken about something. But as I looked at your chart for the next few days, like, especially this weekend, I couldn't help but notice that there was a special influence, that Mercury thing again, and I have some advice. Keep quiet. Look like the good-looking, mysterious Scorpio you are. But put a sock in your mouth. The deal is, if you choose to put a sock in your own mouth, you can choose a clean sock. Doing so also effectively gets you to keep quiet. "Oh sure, you just don't want any of us Scorpio's to correct you—which you obviously need." That may

be the case, but if you'll just keep quiet at this point, you'll notice that other folks are starting to say incredibly stupid things. Logic seems to fail them, and yet they keep talking, digging that hole deeper. So before you join everyone else in the bottom of the ditch, consider saving yourself a lot of trouble. Don't blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. Don't even make a comment on that comment. Wait. You'll get your chance. "Timing is everything," and now's not the time.

Sagittarius: You would never believe how much junk a small [less than 400 square feet] trailer can accumulate. I figured I would do a little spring cleaning, one of those days last week, the nice weather, couldn't resist. So I started to pile everything outside the door, intending to remove all my possessions, then blow the place out with compressed air. It's a handy way of dealing with cleaning—one of the pleasures of mobile home living. You wouldn't believe how many books I have. Then, the skies started to cloud up and cool off, and I was hastily trying to load everything back into the trailer. My place was a complete wreck. Looked like a disaster area. There is no good news in this sad tale of woe and cleaning—other than I might just give up on cleaning altogether. Nothing much got accomplished. I didn't stumble across any old love letters worthy of posting. No fond remembrances with odd objects. Just a giant pain in the upper body area from all the lifting and moving. Spring cleaning is an activity I'm going to leave for a more spring-like day. Given that Mercury is doing what he's doing, and Venus has just entered our sign, maybe it's a good idea that you put off some of that forward-looking "spring cleaning" until a later time. Sit back and enjoy what is.

For the Week of: 1/16-22/2003

"Music oft have such a charm/To make bad good, and good provoke to harm."

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* [IV.i.14]

This is the last of the little "Mercury is going backwards" time. As such, some of the usual problems associated with this fellow doing his cosmic review and revision stint are just about over with—the worst is done with. Still, you can never be too cautious during times like this. Get the live scoop in El Paso, last weekend.

Capricorn: A "Texas Rig" is a way to put a hook in a plastic worm, variations on a "Carolina Rig" theme. I'd like to think that the fish are just naturally bigger in Texas; therefore, we use a larger rig. Only makes sense to me. There are variations on these variations, and you can buy this sort of thing "store bought," or you can do it yourself. I'm of the "do it yourself" mode of thinking. As the weekend arrives, you're going to find yourself in the "do it yourself" mode, too. Doesn't much matter where you are, a good, home-built Texas-rig, a fresh start, all of that appeals to you. We're still dealing with the situations brought up by Mercury and his errant ways, so you need to be aware of that. When you're starting out on that little project, you might want to allow a little extra time, and you might figure that it will take three times as long to get your little project done. You will get it finished, and whatever it is that you're rigging up, that's going to be 100% better than anything you could buy at the store. Just takes a little longer. Allow for that extra time, and remember that those hooks are sharp.

Aquarius: You know you want it. It's time for another good party. Your month is about to begin. Or will be beginning, just after the weekend. My suggestion? Take this weekend off, and use it to get your "Aquarius is the best party sign" muscles in good working order. I know there are few of you still complaining about what it was like for the whole New Year debacle. That's why I'm suggesting you get your party muscles into top shape, get everything ready for the big month. See: this year started out with Mercury going backwards, but Aquarius starts about the same time Mercury stops, so the two are pretty wonderful indicators that life will be very, very good. Let's get our Aquarius selves through this coming weekend properly. I'd suggest sticking to the New Year's

resolutions for now. Then, next week, it's time to get fast and free again.

Pisces: One of my Pisces friends just got back from a "most excellent" Xmas vacation with the family. Like 99% of the rest of us, this particular family unit is somewhat less than completely functional. Like this is any surprise? Hardly. So the plan, perhaps the best Xmas plan I've heard, is their family unit, such as it is, all got together in Las Vegas. When I flew this idea past my own family, no one liked the idea. Still, I find something appealing about saying, "Yes, great Xmas Day dinner, right at the 'all-you-can-eat' buffet in the casino." But let's look at this idea: it's both tacky and useful—everyone can find something to do in Las Vegas. Everyone has an interest that can be satisfied there. High art? Gambling? Other nefarious activities? Yes, that town's got them all covered. Now, what's this got to do with your next few days? Mercury, still backwards, is brewing up family trouble. Nip these problems in the bud, get a head start on some holiday planning, looking at your next vacation. Las Vegas? For Xmas? Have I flipped? Maybe. Then again, maybe not. It's a good idea, and you'll be surprised how well your weird ideas are received at this point—Mercury or no Mercury.

Aries: A good number of my fishing buddies are vastly amused by my collection of articles supplied by non-fishing persons. My immediate family, distant loves, adoring fans from all over the country, I mean, I get it all. I've got more T-shirts with funny fish sayings on them, more pens, flashlights, even beer coolers with amusing fish motifs. Most of that paraphernalia that my fishing buddies look at it? The most common question is "Where'd you get this one, bubba? Har-har!" The problem being, a real fishing buddy came up with some good gifts for me. Now, the trick, when Mercury is retrograde like this—still backwards as of yet—is to sort out what belongs on the Aries fishing boat, and figure out what doesn't really belong there. I've got a couple of pens molded from old fishing lures. Way cool for a fishing guide. But absolutely useless at 6 in the morning, on the lake. I can barely see, and I don't need to take such gear when I'm actually fishing. A lure, even if it's really a flashlight or a pen, makes a great trophy gift, but it can confuse a fisherman on an early winter morning. Mercury is all about what you're supposed to leave behind.

Taurus: Two words: jump start. I just couldn't shake the image of a guy standing there with a set of jumper cables, grinning, "Always

carry these things, never know when you might need them...." Get the picture? It's like coming out of the Taurus trailer on a cold winter morning, finding that the Taurus truck won't start, and needing those jumper cables. You also need a decent soul who's got a set of cables and battery strong enough to crank over the Taurus truck. It's just a little trick from that eternal prankster, Mr. Mercury, and he's just having a little cold winter morning fun-at your expense. The only problem herein is that your "coping skills" are sorely put out by now. There are some days, when all you can do is just let out a little Taurus yell, scream, rant, rave, something like that. It's all very unsettling. Now look: this isn't as bad as it seems. A quick jolt of electricity, a real or metaphorical jump start, that's all that's required. Given that this influence is almost over, and that it's really not that bad, if you're just patient enough, you'll find that kindly soul showing up, grinning, with jumper cables in hand. Some guys, we just live for that chance, an opportunity to jump [start] a Taurus.

Gemini: I've got this one Gemini client I see fairly regular-like. When I see her, she's in her workout attire, hair up in a bun, or she's wearing the "I just cleaned the bathroom" casual clothing. Like most Gemini's, she has a heck of a time with this Mercury Retrograde stuff. Mercury mixes stuff up-and nowhere does this show up more than in Gemini land. Okay, so I haven't seen my Gemini regular for a couple of weeks, and she shows up, on my trailer's front door step, dressed up. Business suit. Hair down, long flowing locks [almost as long as mine, in fact]. Despite the recent spate of nice weather, it's still bitterly cold at night so I'm wearing some flannel pajamas, little pictures of bacon and eggs on them, sky blue background. Rumpled. Hair messed up, more or less a typical "Mr. Astrologer just woke up" look. This is a situation where everything is reversed, see? I'm the one looking a little rough [or very rough] and the Gemini is all dressed to thrill. And, after the last communication problem, looks like she's ready to kill someone, too. I mean that in a highly metaphorical sense, but there could be murder in those lovely Gemini eyes. So Gemini is dressed up and the rest of the world hasn't caught up yet. Know the feeling? Don't let our apparent state of undress, the sleepy look in our eyes get in the way of your mission. Mercury has done his worst, go ahead and hit the ground running. Just be aware some of us aren't quite up to speed yet, not Gemini speed.

Cancer: I got a nasty "collection notice" from an agency, a company I owed some money to, and I didn't like the tone of the message. "Pay up or else...." I was pretty sure I had sent them a check, like, last month or something. Pretty sure. I started digging through the paperwork, though, and I couldn't find the check number. As I continued to delve into the problem, stuck behind an astrology text, I found that bill, still unpaid. In my mind, I was already on the phone to the "customer service representative," reaming them a new one for their mix-up. Only it was my fault, not theirs. Glad I looked it up before I placed the call. So I did get on the phone, and I did humbly beg for forgiveness, and promised that I was mailing a check, and there was screw-up in the book keeping, and the cat had balled the bill up and batted it around the trailer, and it was finally going in the mail. So before you call up the folks with the bad news, better check your own records first. Make sure you're right before you start off on a rant. I can attribute this either to the cat or to Mercury. Before you stridently try to make a point, make sure you're completely right.

Leo: I'm really a lot less concerned about Mr. Mercury and a lot more worried about the way the sun slides into Aquarius next week. Then there's always Mr. Jupiter, and he's still trekking backwards through the lovely Leo sign. Means you've got a false start going on. Something that looks good, something that seems like the best of all possible situation, that doesn't quite work out the way you want it to. I mean, it will work out, but not quite fast enough for your delicate Leo tastes. I'm not saying anything bad is going to happen—just the opposite. Something good is about to happen. You're just going to get a little more anxious, anticipating this "good stuff." Like the joke about males goes, I'm just full of "promises, promises." But from the chart, I can easily predict that there are some rather tasty events headed your way. The deal is, you have to wait a little bit. One cold morning, not long ago, I was at the lake, fishing my little heart out. Like your Leo anticipation now, I kept expecting to catch something, out there, the cold water, the cold air, hoping for some cold fish to take my cold bait [it's winter in Texas, more or less]. Nothing in the first two hours. Some folks would've packed it in. But I persisted, and eventually the fish got caught. Just took a little longer than I planned.

Virgo: It's just been one of those times, now hasn't it? Most of the good little Virgo's that I know, they all look forwards to correctly

starting out a new year. Didn't go like that this year, and it's just now--after the coming weekend--looking like it will be better. All right: the deal is this: you've got some relief from one seriously frustrating situation coming along just about any minute now. (The term 'any minute now' means it could arrive anytime in the next seven [7] days.) But this relief might carry a small price. It's like you get one form of relief only at the expense of another problem. Personally, I'm going to let my Virgo self feel much happier about the whole scene. Some battles are worth fighting, and some battles, really don't warrant our good attention. Get the hint? Win some, lose some, and sometimes, like until next week, it's best not to show up, if you can avoid it altogether.

Libra: The other day, one of my Libra friends calls me, hysterical, "I got fired!" Now, as it turns out the hysterical approach was a little overly dramatic. Wasn't quite the situation this Libra faced, it was more like a nice offer to buy out an existing contract. What one person was spinning as a big, huge negative turned into a three-week vacation, followed by new employment. So the dramatic excess I was treated to wasn't really required. This weekend: you want to make a big, over-wrought display about some situation. Maybe it's a work thing, maybe it's a relationship thing. I would tend to suggest that it doesn't much matter what kind of thing it is, the use of "over the top" dramaturge is not recommended. I realize that, at the time, it sure feels like a big deal. But is it really that critical? I know it might be to you, but to the rest of us? To suggest that you're acting a little too much would disparage your sensibility, but you know, to a lot of non-Libra folks, it looks just like that. Might be a good time to tone down the hysterical approach to one [or more] of your problems. Remember, in my example, Libra comes out ahead at the end.

Scorpio: I'm not sure about you. It's not like I'm ever really sure about Scorpio's, as I do have a unique ability to really irritate them from time to time. It's not like it's anything I ever set out to do--personally, I'm rather fond of many a Scorpio. But they aren't always fond of me. This seems to be a communication problem. Now: after this weekend, Mr. Mars scoots on around into Sagittarius. About the time that happens, you get a welcome sigh of relief. That problem with our little lack of communication? That's still some trouble. It's like no seems to be listening. No matter how many times I write that I love Scorpio's, no Scorpio seems to

understand what I mean. "Sure, you're just saying that, we know how you really are." Actually, you don't know that. But it's not going to stop us from having a little problem getting our collective point across. Folks don't seem to be listening. In the reality of the situation, I actually am listening to Scorpio, it's just you guys fail to appreciate my comments about your comments. So this is a difficult situation. No one seems to pay attention to your wise words of wisdom, no matter how hard you try. Try this line: keep it to yourself. You might feel like you're about to explode, and that's not a good idea, but for this weekend, keep it to yourself: you can thank me later.

Sagittarius: I live in a small space—it's not like a trailer in S. Austin really has that much room—and I decided it was time to redo the correct, artistic, aesthetic placement of the limited furniture. In other words, I was thinking about rearranging the living room. Such as it is. I moved a few items out the front door, vacuumed up the dust balls, and put everything back where it was. It's not so odd to see someone doing just this in a trailer park like Shady Acres. On any given weekend day, all of someone's belongings can be found out on the lawn. There's one couple, and I do believe that marital discord is way of life for them—at any given time, there's usually some article of either his or her clothing being tossed out the door. Just sort of the way it goes. In this scenario, you can undertake cleaning your own Sagittarius trailer, or you can come home one day and find some, if not all, of your personal effects getting the boot. Make a decision, then stick by what you decide. Is it all going out the door for a little early spring cleaning? That's what I was doing. That plan to rearrange everything? That flopped. But it was good to move everything, then move it back. Some plans don't go quite the way you want them to, but that doesn't mean it's not a good idea.

For the Week of: 1/23-29/2003

"For they are worthy/To inlay heaven with stars."

In Shakespeare's *Cymerline* [V.v]

The good news is that Mercury is no longer in a retrograde position. More or less. Still poking along in Capricorn, though, and that's like getting stuck behind some guy in a slow-moving pickup truck, probably has a ponytail, maybe a Grateful Dead sticker on the back window of the truck. And he's not moving quite as fast as the rest of the of the vehicular traffic. I've always considered it safer to err on the side ofcaution, myself.

Aquarius: As an "honorary" Aquarius, I figure it's a good time for an Aquarius-only party. My honorary status is much like the two pieces of paper I proudly display on the wall of the trailer where I live. One is an ordination certificate from a mysterious church someplace, making it legal for me to marry folks. [No, really. It's true.] The other is an honorary doctorate degree in Metaphysics. So I can legally be addressed as Rev. or Doctor; however, I usually get called "hey [bad words omitted]!" So I have a right to be anhonorary Aquarius this week. In fact, I'm planning on going out with my other Aquarius friends, and while everyone is being sad and forlorn, us Aquarius types are going to play. We've earned it. Unlike my proudly displayed diplomas, this Aquarius right to have a good time is real, earned favor from the planets. And me. It's also overdue, as the last few weeks have been less than wonderful. But this is a time to start enjoying the new year, the way it's supposed to be enjoyed. So if you're in the mood, or even if you're not in the mood, get out and enjoy yourself some. We're overdue for some good times, around here in Aquarius. And happy birthday, too.

Pisces: There's this one Pisces, and she's thinking, "I'm not reading Kramer's Fishing Guide to the Stars horoscope for Pisces this week. He hates all of us." Just the opposite, the only thing I want to hold against a Pisces is myself. But you've heard that line in its various forms, so I'm not going to try it on you. However, I'm probably the only person not trying to hand you a line-particularly this weekend-but this influence stretches right on into next week, too. You've heard them all before. If the lines weren't so stale, it would be amusing, but after a goodly amount of time, you're starting to think that everyone is reading from the same book, and you've heard all this stuff before. You're looking good, you're feeling okay,

but the folks you encounter all seem to want something. Look: these horoscopes are often referred to as a "train wreck." You don't want to look, but you do. And I'm not warning you about the way you feel, I'm warning you that some folks might be handing you some line about how good you look. If it's not from me, I'd be a little suspicious about the true intent.

Aries: "Good energy" is a slippery term. I hate it. But there's a useful, rather sublime quality that's floating around in your own, personal space right now. I'm not talking about dealing with other folks. I'm not suggesting that this is the way it is with other people, but in the Aries realm, on "Planet Aries," or wherever [or for that matter, however] you choose to perceive this, there is that "good energy" floating around you. The trick, the way to harness this energy, is to get and do something that you enjoy. If it were my Aries chart, I would be doing one thing today: fishing. Me, the boat, some new lures I just picked up, a man-to-fish fight to the finish, I'm over the mindset that the real trick in fishing is to release what one catches. "Free the fighter!" is our fishing mantra. Or, my personal fave, "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but pierced lips." Problem being, that one slogan never caught on. Can't figure out why, either. Every time I use it, I get the most quizzical looks from people. But like the Aries world, that slogan works for me. You may not please a lot of other folks right now, but you will be amused by yourself, if nothing else.

Taurus: Not long ago, when I was in Far West Texas, I set a new, personal record. In one afternoon, I proposed to no less than 17 different clients. I have to be careful when I do that. First off, I was wearing a wedding ring. Then, in the course of the reading, I had to make sure that the female in question had a boyfriend or husband, before I would slip my proposal in. Finally, I had to make sure that I had an "open return" airplane ticket so, if someone was ever foolish enough to take me seriously, I had a quick way out of there. I'd propose to you, too, at a time like this, because relationships are an important topic, as highlighted by the placement of a couple of key astrology players. Either you have too many [most likely], or not enough [less likely], but you're still wrestling with the big "R" thing. Doesn't much matter what you do with it, there's still some stuff going on that demands your attention. I'd watch the relationship stuff, though, you might wind up with a crazy astrologer guy trying to marry you. Hint: it's not a good idea to take him so seriously.

Gemini: So you're feeling better, right? You're not? You're supposed to be. I usually get this one e-mail from a particular Gemini, complaining about the state of the world, some of those current events, and the fact that their [Gemini is plural] significant other is not doing what he's supposed to be doing. Besides that one, lone, dissenting voice, crying "wolf" in the wilderness, though, life is supposed to be better, all the way around. I realize that this could be an invitation to have my mailbox fill up with Gemini mail, which, in and of itself, really isn't too bad. But there is still that pesky effect from Mercury Retrograde, and while the worst is done with, there's at least one further, slightly esoteric astrology theory that suggests until Mr. Mercury gets out of his own shadow, then life isn't back to normal. But then, why be normal? The worst is supposedly over, and you, all of your Gemini selves, should be a feeling a lot better.

Cancer: I was noticing that the Cancer section of the e-mail "inbox" seems to be rather quiet as of late. Either you don't like me, or the effects of Mercury are that disconcerting. I'm not sure which one it is. I tend to lose popularity points when that particular planet does this, because he's in the sign opposite Cancer, and for some reason, that becomes my fault. This is like some fishing I was doing, actually last summer. Or last fall, sort of depends on how you tell the seasons. Anyway, the fish were definitely not interested in anything we had to offer. It wasn't a bad time, the cool morning mist on the lake, the gentle sunlight, a few clouds overhead. But that was last fall. It was almost as if the fish were anticipating our every move, and the fish were doing their best to avoid our friendly temptations. Know the feeling? It's that way, right now, for Cancer. It's not bad, in fact, a bad day fishing is still a heck of a lot better than a good day at the [real] office. Even if every attempt seems to be thwarted. Enjoy what's there, consider hooking a fish as a bonus, not always a necessary event.

Leo: Just slow down for a second. Just take it a little more easy on me, yourself, and some of your fellow compatriots. You've got an itch that no one can scratch. Instead of worrying this one situation to death, instead of overworking it, instead of pushing, again and again and again, and instead of trying too hard, why not just lighten up some? In fact, lighten up on yourself more than anyone else. It's not you. It's not about you. Or maybe, just maybe, it is about you. You're in a situation where you tend to push yourself too

hard. Lower your expectations for yourself. This isn't about anyone else; this is about that little Leo voice in the back of your magnificent Leo head, that quiet little voice who keeps say, "It's not enough--you can do better--much better." You're a Leo, you're already the best. Tell that little voice to shut up. That's pretty simple advice, it's just, if you're not careful, you'll just keep pushing yourself to a point of exhaustion. Tired kittens are no fun to play with.

Virgo: It's been so long since I've had a regular job, I'm not sure that I understand anything more than the concept. Show up, punch in with a time clock, stay there for 4 hours, take one coffee break, go to lunch, come back for another four hours.... I think that's how it's supposed to go. Does that sound right? I work several weekends in row, so my schedule is a little different. And although I'm supposed to work a single, 8 hour shift, by the time I include everything, it's a lot more like a 12 hour shift. One of those West Texas Business trips can mean one day that's just interminably long, as well, starting before sun up in Austin, and finishing long into the wee hours of the night in some town way west of here. I don't get much sympathy when I complain about the long hours I work, either. It's still the first month of the new year, and you're going to find yourself getting the same treatment I get, not a lot of sympathy, either. Well, except from me, of course. But no one else is going to notice that you've been working extra hard, or that you've done a really good job, as of late. Or, for that matter, no one is going to notice that you managed to clean up some one else's big mess. You straightened out a situation or two, through your own good Virgo efforts. That's good news. Getting noticed? That's a problem. Aren't you glad that I appreciate all your hard work? The only problem? I might be the only one giving you your due on your efforts and results.

Libra: A good friend once pointed out a particular piece of--I'd like think Texas--wisdom, on a bathroom wall. "Talk is cheap because the supply is greater than the demand." Your mind is racing. Your mouth is racing. Wouldn't it be nice if we could get these two items on the same track? That's the problem. See: it's Mercury. He accelerates the whole mess, but it doesn't happen to everyone. Not everyone is of the same frame of mind as you are. Not everyone can keep up with your thoughts as they race from pinnacle to peak, to pinnacle. Then, there's your vocal delivery system, not everyone

can keep up with what you're saying. If you go back and listen, you'll find that you've missed a spot or two. You make a leap or three, one of those points where you can only hope that everyone is following what you're saying. But we're not able to keep up. Slow down. Keep track of the mental exercises and thought process, you're doing rather well in that department. The problem is your vocal delivery system—we can't quite keep up. Slow it down, make sure you show all your work.

Scorpio: No Scorpio ever likes to feel like he or she has missed the boat. You haven't. No, the boat didn't leave without you. You're fine. You're just fine. As soon as I windup like that, your Scorpio Sixth Sense starts to flash a little red light. There is no down side to this scope. Not now. You're cruising into a space that's a little murky, but that's like lake water that's gotten stirred up by the recent weather patterns. You haven't missed a thing, but there are a few items that become less clear after this weekend. Worry about it? Why? Let me try and pitch it to you like this: if your excellent Scorpio vision can't make it out, do you really think any of the rest of us can see it? Probably not. There is one catch, the Sagittarius friends you've got? We're going to be blithely stumbling along as if we can see our way. Here's a hint: we're just as blind about this issue as you are, if not more so. We just act like we have sort of insight. So don't be perturbed when you think you've missed the boat, or the point—we all have. It is just some non-Scorpio folks are better at hiding their confusion.

Sagittarius: I made a pact with my Sagittarius self, two months back. I wasn't going to gain an excessive amount of weight during the holidays. I knew that I would fail, but I was hoping for a small failure, not a big failure. But between work, travel, the crush of the new year business, all that stuff, I just haven't had the time to get out and burn off that little bit of extra girth. It's just a little unnerving when the "large" pants fit a tad too tight. I was busy asking myself, "Aren't these supposed to be baggy?" It's not a pretty sight. The deal is, now is the time to start exercising that self-restraint. What's worse, Miss Venus is in our sign, and as such, she's busy pestering us not to use any self-restraint. There's a delightful little BBQ joint not far from Shady Acres, and I was meeting with a client for some comfort food and some astrology. Knowing about this Venus thing, I declined on the dessert. But when I saw my client with a Peach Cobbler topped by Vanilla Bean

Ice Cream, I gave into temptation. Who could resist? So the waist on the jeans is still a little too tight. Sometimes, it's just darn near impossible to resist certain Venus temptations.

Capricorn: I had big fun, years ago, with one sign's scopes, always plugging in a conspiracy theory link. It was amusing--for me--and the return mail was equally amusing. I'd do a link or two like that now, but my dear Capricorn friends would find this stuff a little too close to home. The creeping, suspicious, paranoid fantasies abound. There's a major dogpile of planets in the sign that precedes yours. [That would be Sagittarius.] That pile of planets is extracting a toll on your psyche. Doesn't help that Mr. Mercury is starting to pick up speed, flying through your sign, making your brain work a little overtime. So the deal is, "Nothing is bad, but thinking makes it so," to borrow from Shakespeare's Hamlet. The more you think about it, the worse it gets. While I can't stop your brain's little ears from engaging each other, and I can't stop those cogs in your Capricorn gearset from churning out these "paranoid fantasies" as I call them, I can suggest you that a lot of this is mere fantastical imagination stuff. Less real, more surreal. That being noted, I don't need to remind you, just because you're paranoid, that doesn't mean that they are not out to get you.

For the Week Starting: 1/30-2/5/2003

"[He's] a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity, and devours up all the fry it finds."

Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* [IV.iii.212-3]

Mars, in Sagittarius, and Venus, moving from Sagittarius, over into Capricorn, next week.

Aquarius: Pork ribs. There's a little place, not far from the trailer, where BBQ is an art form. And your weekend is going to be like the pork ribs at this place. Just the other day, I sat down, ordered up the usual fare, which includes a couple of pork ribs, and I was astonished. The first rib I tasted was perfect: crunchy, with a hint of mesquite, a delicate yet pert sweetness, the outside of the rib's meat was perfectly crunchy, the inside just fell right off the bone, the meat was so tender. It was a masterpiece of fine, culinary work. Now, the next rib, it was fatty, had a lot of those "bone ball bearing" knuckle parts, wasn't really that well cooked. I usually only get two pork ribs on the combo plate, but when the Leo server returned, I politely pointed out that the second rib was just not up to the usual standards, and she let me have another couple of slices of tender brisket to make up for it all. Hey, it wouldn't be such a big deal, I mean that first rib was just so excellent, a second rate rib just seemed bad after that. Deal is: part of the next few days is like that first rib: perfect. Better than perfect, even. But part of your weekend, or more likely, next week, is going to be less than wonderful. I got real lucky with that Leo server, but I'm not sure your luck will be as good. If you find it necessary to complain, though, do so as compassionately as only an Aquarius can.

Pisces: "I live in my own little world...." I saw it on a T-shirt. The rest of it included: "It's okay they know I'm here," or, "It's okay, they know me here." I can't remember exactly what it said, but either one of those lines work well enough to get a message across. And while the second part of the message is substantially different with each second line, there's still a point and it conveys the feelings you get to look forward to. It's mostly Mars that I'm concerned about, and a few other players hanging close to his position, and that makes all the difference. Or all the problems. Find a T-shirt like I just described, or, better yet, make your own T-shirt with your own special, Pisces message on it. The more time you spend in Pisces land—bereft of other folks' problems, the

happier you'll be. The second line to that T-shirt was the clue—it starts out, "It's okay...." That implies, in my mind, that whatever or wherever you are in your mind is okay. From there, it's up to you. But it never hurts to retreat to Pisces land, not just for a little vacation from the rest of us.

Aries: I was in furthest West Texas, at a chocolate shop, on the town's square, doing the tourist "thang," and I noticed sign up over the kitchen, "Ask about our erotic candies...." I asked. The girl I was with that afternoon, she giggled. So I bought her a special chocolate bar, which, all things considered, seemed to be anatomically correct, then, because my dear, sweet Scorpio mother was ailing some, I got her a chocolate "get well soon" bar. One is very dear, the other is tacky. The girl traveling with me at the time, she reminded me not to confuse the two gifts. Just imagine the surprise on Ma Wetzel's face if I did confuse the two items. Hey, I did get the right one in the mail, and I did get the correct concept across to the correct party. Ma Wetzel seemed very appreciative on my special gift. With planets where they are, don't confuse the two packages, when you're at the post office. Not everyone would appreciate your humor.

Taurus: "Linda's Bait Camp: Fish Naked." It's a bumper sticker for a place down on the coast. No, there really is a "Linda's Bait Camp," although, I'm pretty sure it's a lot more like tourist bait shop. Because I'd mentioned this one bumper sticker to a friend, he was kind enough to send me a picture of an absolutely naked female, holding up two decent bass in the front of a fishing boat. Since it was a computer file, I just forwarded it on to another one of my fishing buddies. In keeping with the tone for the Taurus week, my buddy sent back a quick rejoinder, "So what kind of lure was she using?" Not the kind of comment I was expecting. You've got a chance to have a good laugh, a little giggle, and some prurient fun, if you're quick enough. Given what's going on, planet-wise, I'm sure you can come up with the perfect, snappy comeback. Be prepared. Special note: I'm pretty sure she was using a Texas-rig to catch those fish.

Gemini: I've got this one Gemini buddy, "Man, when Kramer's on, he's ON." It's nice to amaze a Gemini from time to time, but in this case, his question and my answer was just a simple piece of deductive logic. It wasn't an amazing prognostication or anything like that. Didn't require great insight, or even tax my intimate

knowledge of what the planets are doing. Before you start off with the various oracles you consult, myself included, before you worry yourself sick with horoscopes, soothsayers, naysayers, and astrological consultants, before you spin those Gemini mental wheels and mouths looking for someone else to tell you the answer, think it all through. More than one of my non-Gemini clientele has complained about the apparent lack of coherent logic in a Gemini mental task. The deal, is, you've got a chance to see something either with unfailing clarity or you will see it all wrapped up in tendrils, roots, and other obfuscations that make impossible to see correctly--the first time. Think it through. Step back, given it a proper amount of assessment. Dare I say, "sleep on it"? Sure. That Gemini buddy [Bubba], his idea of sleep on it means he waited 15 minutes. I'm suggesting this is more like a cooling off period, like about 72 hours. Think about it before you make that decision, but I'm trusting your own mental process instead of my own astrological one, this time.

Cancer: I was chatting up a nice Cancer girl last week. She was none too happy about much of anything, as work, which was first quiet, then busy, was getting to her. I don't have any words of wisdom about work. Work has never been a popular topic. Then there was that other, persistent and pernicious problem, the "boy fiend" thang. [It's not a typographical error, that's just the best word combination for last week's scenario.] Now, none of this stuff looks too good as the weekend starts. Work takes too much time, and the significant other isn't giving you enough time. I know--I've heard it all before. But look: the planets keep moving, and with this forward movement, if you'll be patient with me, and with your significant other, and with your work thing, you'll find that life gets better. Not in leaps and bounds, but by Monday, the deadline has been shifted to accommodate your work schedule. The significant other is listening more attentively--and paying attention. And the astrologer starts suggesting that there's some good stuff coming along pretty soon--if it hasn't started to happen already.

Leo: There are tons of books about cats. There's "the ten lessons I've learned from my cat," there's "Shakespeare's cats," "cat astrology," "cat horoscopes," and even "cat management techniques." Add to this mix of "cat wisdom lore" from my ubiquitous house cat. I guess she really should be called a "trailer cat" these days. Her favorite place to nap is on whatever pillow I

want to rest my own head on. Failing at that, the foot of the bed or the couch works as an acceptable alternative. Then, in the middle of the day, especially these winter days, when it's kind of cool out, she has the cutest way of putting her front paws over her cat face. I guess it blocks out the light, the cool weather or the annoying human in her presence. Sometimes, you have to do what you have to do. But after the way this year has started out, sometimes, a long nap with your Leo paws over your face, you know, that just sounds good. If I had more Leo in my chart, I would adopt the same pose. I can't make any of the extraneous influences go away, but I can suggest that you do your best—using cat wisdom and poise—to avoid some of the problems.

Virgo: Rough weekend coming up. Sorry about that. It's one of those times when no one seems to get on track the way they're supposed to. No one seems to be paying attention to the fine, perfect even, Virgo advice you've got. No one seems to be listening. I'll listen but even then, I might not respond as fast you desire, nor, for that matter, my answer might not be the one you really want to hear. This is a little problem or a big problem, depends on what you intend to do with the information. Like many things in life, this will change. Next week. Long about Monday, maybe Tuesday, but even before the next scope becomes available, you're going to notice that the folks who definitely were avoiding you on all weekend, those very same people are suddenly listening. They will be listening with rapt attention, paying heed to everything that you say. Your perfect advice and sage wisdom? All of a sudden, the former detractors all agree that you are full of wonderful bits of knowledge. My only concern is that you get a little upset with people for not paying attention before hand. Go easy on us.

Libra: This one's etched in my very fallible human memory, I don't have it in print, but I'm notoriously bad at stock market predictions. But I couldn't help but think about my lack of ability in stock market picks when I was perusing your chart. See: you have a "buy and sell" thing in your chart. The problem is, you're going to be tempted to buy at just the wrong time, and then, sell at an even worse time. This doesn't just pertain to business transactions, either. It applies to buying and selling a number of different items. My immediate suggestion is that this is a good time to "hold." Might be a good idea to shop around a little, too. There are a couple of different "superstore" places where I buy fishing tackle. Local

chains, national chains, those sort of places.... The actual retail price of particular lure I favor changes from location to location. As near as I can tell, it's some sort of a rule about local conditions versus supply, demand, and other arcane factors. Like the phase of the moon. Which, as long as we're talking about astrology, is one of the reasons that I'm suggesting that you "hold 'em" for the next couple of days. Ride this one out, remember that you're just like me, we're both not very good at stock prices this next couple of days, and while it's a good time to shop, it might not be the best time to buy.

Scorpio: Not so very long ago, I found myself in a boat, in the middle of the lake, languidly tossing a lure out over the water, watching said lure splash in the water, then half heartedly dragging it back towards the boat. Kind of cool out, low, gray clouds overhead, sort of a dispirited attempt at fishing. When I'd roused myself out of bed, I was raring to go. On the road, fetching up that pre-dawn coffee, I was excited. Later in the same day, after catching only 1 [one] fish, I was feeling pretty good. In the middle though, there was that low point. Must've been my blood sugar or something. I nibbled on a granola bar, noticing that some granola bars look a lot like pressboard. Might have been flavored sawdust, for all I know. But that little meal, or snack, picked me up enough to keep trying, and I did snag that one fish. Not a great day, but not bad at all. Long about the beginning of next week, you're going to hit a similar low point. I tend to look at this as the Monday Morning Blues, but your chart shows it could be Tuesday, instead. The weekend is good, full of hope and adventure, like that pre-dawn run to the lake. The start of next week has a low point, but nibbling on something to help boost your blood sugar might help. Worked for myScorpio side.

Sagittarius: I was flipping through my notes from last month, last year even, and I came across something from Xmas time. Mars is in Sagittarius at this point, but by next week, Ms. Venus is leaving. So, last Xmas, I went to church with the family, being a dutiful son and all. There's the candle lighting part of the ceremony that's pretty enjoyable. But we were at the late afternoon service, not the midnight mass, and as such, there were a lot of kiddies. I watched as one young girl squealed in mock pain as a little hot wax dripped on her hand. I couldn't help but think that, in about ten or twenty years, that child will be paying someone good money to pour hot

wax on parts of her body then peel/rip it off. See, Mars is a hot planet. Mars can be painful, but in the long run, he's good. Watch what makes you squeal-and don't complain so much, it could be something that you'll be paying for later. Just be careful with hot wax.

Capricorn: One BBQ place close to Shady Acres boasts about being "The second best barbecue in Texas." The rest of the copy includes that no one can remember where the best barbecue is, so being "Number Two" works well. As I recall, that place that rated itself second best wasn't really that good. Ribs were a little greasy, and not really that flavorful. Might just be my own tastes, too. Besides, they never laid claim to being Number One, so it's okay if it wasn't that good. Think about it, though, and that advertising works a lot better than you realize. Look at some company that's a leader in its field, like maybe Dell. Then look at a little company like Apple. Sometimes, being number two is a lot cooler than being number one. The competition improves the breed, so to speak. Dell, dependable, number one source for computers. Apple, really cool stuff, you know, artists and astrologers use them. Being number two isn't such a bad spot, not when you think about it. You're in a number two slot these days, at least, that's how you're feeling. Enjoy it, it could be worse. Those guys in the pole position? Everyone is shooting to take them down.

For the Week of: 2/6-12/2003

"What trust is in these times?"

Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part II* [I.iii.100]

San Antonio: last weekend-Gonzales Convention Center.

Aquarius: I get so irritated at folks who insist on using the term, "Think outside the box." It's trite, overworked, and to be perfectly honest, every Aquarius I know has been "thinking outside the box" ever since they were born. This isn't like, you know, a big deal or anything. Being able to perceive the outside world from a slightly different, somewhat askew perspective has always been a strength, not a weakness. The problem we're facing as this Aquarian weekend rapidly approaches, is that there are still people populating your perfect Aquarian world who fail to understand your unique point of view. There are a couple of ways to deal with these folks. You can get upset. You can pitch a fit. You can throw a hellish temper tantrum. Regrettably, this sort of behavior just results in folks seeing you as a weirder and weirder [hard to imagine, folks thinking you more strange than you really are]. Those outward displays of emotion don't really achieve their desired results, either. That's part of the problem. Maybe just realizing that most folks aren't quite as advanced, or, for that matter, most other signs can't seem to keep up with you during this next few days, perhaps that would help.

Pisces: Some of the days are warm, some of the nights are bitterly cold. There's a party atmosphere floating around, too, but that doesn't amount to enough to overcome the general way you're feeling. It's not so much that there's really a big deal as it's just a little deal that seem to be working overtime. This little deal is eating away at you, maybe not in major, "I think I'll develop an ulcer" way, but it's one of those little problems you've been worrying over-perhaps, you've been worrying too much. Now, slow all of this worry, troublesome mind games, and the rest of the stuff that's set you on edge, put all of aside for a spell. Buddy of mine called me up the other day. "Want to go fishing?" Course I do. We chased back and forth, worrying about it being too cold in the morning, and finally, I got the straight answer from my Pisces fishing buddy: he didn't much care when, or where, he just wanted to get out of the house. I book out up to a week or three in advance, but I know you've got at least one fishing buddy you can call up. Go

ahead, admit it: you just want to go fishing to get out of the house. This weekend is good for just such a pursuit.

Aries: There are lots of songs about waiting. Name a few. Hum a few bars. Sing one, quietly to yourself. It's like "Waiting on the train," or "Waiting for the rain," or any combination thereof. There's a local singer/songwriter who's actually a Pisces, but for the sake of his annual birthday parties, we'll call him an honorable mention Aries. Then there's always that ultimate Country and Western song, by David Allan Coe. What's with all the sappy country fried music, and why the copious allusions to "waiting"? Because you're stuck. Aries is stuck waiting on something to happen. Aries and patience are like, well, insert your own cliché here. Oil and water? White and rye? Educated redneck? It's like a question I got stuck on, one time, "What's the difference between trailer trash and white trash?" It's a subtle difference, I guess, you have to have a little of both to understand the nuance of the language. And I suppose that difference varies from location to location. It's a convoluted example, but the point is clear, you're waiting on something to happen, and it's not happening fast enough. If I could turn back the hands of time, and make it happen yesterday, or even last week, it still wouldn't be fast enough for your Aries taste. Slow down, we're moving as fast as we can. Just like those "Desperados waiting for a train." Or waiting on the rain. Or waiting for a horoscope that doesn't have a gratuitous Country and Western allusion.

Taurus: It's no secret that I occasionally buy a Texas State Lottery ticket. Unlike some astrologers, I don't do this based on astrological timing. The one time I won something, I mean more than three dollars, it was a fluke because, astrologically, I shouldn't have won a thing. But win I did. It was, in retrospect, at a time just like you've got going on. Sort of weird, a little lost, a little frantic, a little confused. Perhaps you're a little unsure about what's going on. Instead of trying to see some of this in a clear light, do like I do, go and buy a single lottery ticket. Or, if you want, you can just shoot me a dollar, and I'll buy the ticket. I can't promise either one of us will be particularly lucky, but it never hurts. However, I've got to stress that the maximum amount of money to bet is a single dollar bill. No more. In fact, if there's an independent coffee shop populated by strange characters close at hand, maybe go over there, instead, and get a decent cup of coffee, and drop that dollar

in the tip jar. None of this advice is costing more than one thin dime, that's the good news. And you know you're going to be a little confused about some directions, but ultimately, things are good. There's a weird event or two, most likely after the weekend. Be patient; this stuff turns out for the best.

Gemini: One of my clever Gemini friends, Bubba, has this old Chevy he uses to commute to and from the farm to Austin. Seeing as how he got a day job and all that, he needed to cut down on the cost of getting from way out yonder to the "big city" [such as it is]. He was driving, talking to me on his mobile phone, and he was busy extolling the virtues of his new form of cruise control for that old car: duck tape. "Yeah, so I doubled over piece, and slid it under the gas pedal - that should work fine...." Right. No, wrong. Great idea, perhaps it would be efficient if he lived in Far West Texas, where highways stretch for miles and miles. Or if his commute didn't wind up in a city with bad traffic and worse drivers. After a suitable expletive, I figured it was best if I didn't stay on the phone to hear what happened next. It's my guess that the cruise control didn't work as well as it could. It's also an example of a Gemini shortcut that might not be as expedient as you would like. The culprit is the relative position of Mars, and the answer is not duck tape under the accelerator pedal. Stay tuned, I'll find out what happened next week.

Cancer: Pecan Pie. Peach cobbler. A homemade brownie. Imagine each of these specialty dessert items with a big, heaping scoop of genuine store-bought, homemade vanilla-bean ice cream on it. Each one of those desserts has a special place in my culinary memory. Regrettably, there's also a problem associated with each of those tasty treats, and this next couple of days is a time when you want to consider indulging yourself. Let's face the [astrological] facts: you're going to indulge yourself at some point soon, if you haven't already done it. The deal is, work out some kind of a self-limiting arrangement with yourself. While there are seven days in this horoscope, and I've only listed the top three options, there are certainly variations on these themes. However, if you think about it, maybe you don't want to be including every possibility over the next few days. I'd suggest you pick one dessert option, try it once, and then use good, sound judgment and take a pass on the dessert indulgence over the next few days. Temptation is one thing,

actually giving in to it another. Me? My Cancer self is going to try the Pecan Pie. Or the peach cobbler. But just once, not all week long.

Leo: I have a place in my mind where I live in a huge trailer, a doublewide, which can be towed behind a new truck. In my mind's eye, I also have that new truck, and it's painted to match the bass boat. Plus, in that imagination of mine, I have some pretty hefty sponsorship decals, which means I'm getting paid to run their ads. This is my fantasy world. This is not the real world. Here, in my version of reality, I live in a space that's a lot smaller than that imagined one. [I think this place works out to a little over 300 square feet.] The truck's old and broken down. The boat's borrowed. Now, my imaginary world, and the real world, those two seldom match up. I'm self-aware enough to distinguish between what's real and what's not real. For my dear Leo friends, though, the line between what's real and what's not real gets to be a little difficult. It starts to get real blurry this weekend, and this just gets worse—or better—as next week unfolds. What are you going to do about it? How about nothing? Why not go ahead, since it's such a strong influence, and be confused for the time being? Besides, sometimes that imaginary world is ever so much better than the real place. Reality can be such an ugly concept.

Virgo: When I travel, always for business, I keep it simple. I look at my schedule, log onto to the airlines' web sites, scoop up a discount ticket, and then I'm booked. Log onto a hotel's web site, book a room. Log onto a rent car site, book a rent car. I usually do this late at night, when the phone, the cat, and clients aren't around to bother me. Makes it a lot easier. No travel agent, no way to change the cheap seats I buy. Makes life a lot easier. Folks at one end or the other get upset, and I realize I'm cutting some travel agent out of a commission, but I have to watch costs. The other advantage of traveling like this is that I can easily say, "It's booked, those are the dates." Makes it an open and shut case. Try it, especially over the next couple of days. Instead of worrying with something, changing it, changing it back, adding, subtracting, and making further emendations, leave it. "It's booked. Those are the times." Your Virgo self will find that the other parties involved will be a little more accommodating.

Libra: I had the worst time with a local astrologer. No, I mean she really hated me. Not in a polite, smile at your face way, I mean in a terrible, say bad things behind my back way. It's part and parcel of

the nasty world of business. The difference is, that one particular astrologer is no longer in the business of astrology. It didn't work out for her, I guess. I kept getting referrals from her, too, not directly, but quite a few in indirect referrals. "Man, after what she said about you, I just had to come see you," was what I usually heard. Same thing works for you. You're finding a few of non-Libra, non-friendly types are running you down. You find that you seem to have a lot of combative types. You find that someone seems like they are trying to sully your good reputation. Fear not. Just like me, time and patience, plus a certain amount of perseverance, will help you through. Besides, you'll find that you enjoy getting some of these referrals, even if the source seems a little oblique. It's all part of the job of being a Libra.

Scorpio: When I fly business class on some airlines, they have this cute little kit the flight attendants hand out. It's got a set of footy things, a toothbrush, and some other stuff. Earplugs, for one. I like the earplugs. I don't need them for air travel. I don't need them for hotel sleeping. But I do use those earplugs at rock concerts, or, even here in Austin, at certain venues, those "sound containment devices" are useful. This just bothers me a little, as I feel like I'm getting old. Think about it. Needing to stuff something in your ears because the music is deafening? At one point, though, self-preservation, and a little nod towards the day after the big event, such foresight is useful. That's one reason you're reading your horoscope. What I'm suggesting—it might not be earplugs but—is that there's something you can do that goes a long way towards self-preservation. Yes, I'm perfectly aware of the bumper sticker saying, "If it's too loud then you're too old." All I'm suggesting is that your taste and your sense of self-preservation need to get together. It could be something as simple as earplugs.

Sagittarius: Read the Gemini scope, the story about the duck tape and the accelerator pedal [true story]. It's a cautionary tale, one about trying to take a shortcut in order to make your life a little easier, only, some shortcuts have disastrous consequences. You're a Sagittarius, a wonderful sign, but we do have a tendency to try and take the easy way out, whenever possible. All I'm suggesting, what with Mars frying his way through our sign, is that this ain't the best time to try the shortcuts. The old idea that, "if we just cheat a little, this would faster and easier" doesn't apply. See, I'm looking further down the road than the average Sagittarius. I'm

looking into the week after this week. This week, you get away with your timesaving shortcut. Next week, the week after, sometime like that, you get caught shaving a few seconds off your time, and you get in trouble for it. In other words, skipping a step right now might be beneficial, but if it's something you can get caught for, then go ahead, save us both the trouble, do it the hard way. Do it the right way. Do it the way you're supposed to. I'm just offering to save yourself from your Sagittarius self.

Capricorn: Sweet, gentle, delicate Capricorn friend. "What's he really want? An introduction like that, he wants something, I know...." Seems to me that your Capricorn self is a little on edge about now. I was going to use this expression about "shooting yourself in the foot," but that's so cliché. Instead, I'll use a different warning. One Capricorn buddy supposedly went duck hunting last fall. He was covering his tracks for a secret rendezvous. On his way home, after the weekend, he stopped by another buddy's place to "borrow" some game, proof that he'd been hunting. During a time like this, you open up a package that's supposed to be pheasant, or quail, and it turns out to be deer meat. Busted. You can cover your tracks, but with Venus in your sign, and Mr. Mars fast approaching your sign, maybe a little more truth, and a little less misinformation would be useful. Either that, or get your story and corroborating evidence synchronized better. Deer and duck are not the same thing.

For the Week of: 2/13-19/2003

"Were kisses all the joys in bed,/One woman would another wed."

From Shakespeare's "The Passionate Pilgrim" [IV.8]

St. Valentine and his big day are a little weird this year, as Sr. Neptune's mysterious influence in Aquarius is right, straight across the sky from Jupiter and his appearance in Leo.

Aquarius: I've whined and complained about this cosmic joke that's played on us Aquarius types for years. Given the gift of intellect, my dear Aquarius friends are not given to great, outward displays of affection. Note: I didn't not say that us Aquarius types are not affectionate, nor, for that matter are we not unfeeling, it's just that some of our emotions get displayed in a highly irregular manner. Personally, that's what I find so intriguing and amusing about the sign of the "Water Bearer." So it's some kind of a cosmic joke, to have this really [according to the hype] romantic holiday smack dab in the middle of your [our] sign. When fishing, there's something that's really useful: polarized sunglasses. The lenses let one see into the murky depths, see where the big boys are lurking. The shimmering surface of the lake doesn't fool us. So this holiday weekend, as we celebrate the romantic thing, consider using polarized sunglasses. I know, it's a birthday time for some, but the polarized glasses, instead of "rose colored" shades are a lot more useful. Don't be surprised by anything, no matter how unusual it is, either, as there's one or two fun incidents prompted by all this romantic hype.

Pisces: There's just the nicest little, somewhat sleazy, somewhat of a dive restaurant here, serves good Tex-Mex cuisine. It's been flooded out, burned down, it's been closed down, it's been a number of things like that, and yet, they keep on turning out decent quality Tex-Mex with a piquant picante sauce that's acceptable. In my way of seeing things, a decent hot sauce tells me whether or not the place is any good at all. Me and my friend Bubba were sitting out there, the other night, and after a couple of rounds of Tequila, his tongue got limbered up. "So if I understand this right, it's the crass, commercial economy that continues this whole Valentine's Day thing, right? And I can blame the almighty dollar for feeling like such a loser because I'm single, again, on V.D. You wonder about those initials, too." He's got some Pisces in his chart, this one Bubba, and it was sorely affected by the way things are. Were. I

looked up, and I noticed that there was, indeed, a ceiling fan over us. The motor was on, the hub was spinning, but there weren't any fan blades. I do believe this is a South Austin form of art, or decoration, or something like that. Nominally winter nights in Austin are cool, so I was glad that there weren't any fan blades in that one fan. As I looked around, I realized that there were several fans, just like the one over us, spinning but no blades. You're like that. The hot sauce is good, the attitude is bad. The motor's spinning, but nothing is getting anywhere. Now, this could be a bad event, or this could be a good thing—like us, if those fan blades had really been stirring the air, creating a breeze, we'd be too cold. Some situations aren't nearly as bad as your Pisces mind makes them out to be. Like no fan blades.

Aries: Sometimes, it's the soft, gentle kiss, the way the lips barely brush past each other, like the butterfly touch of an eyelash. Other times, like, when Mars is in Sagittarius [where he is right now] and when the Moon is cycling between Cardinal signs [where she is over this next few days], it's a lot less of the delicate touch, and more of mash. Or a mush. You're going to feel, in my analysis, mushy, sappy, and occasionally quick-witted. The problem with vacillating between the extremes is that most folks figure that you're just a little manic. You're not in the least. It's more to do with Moon Phases than anything else. There are a couple of other influences, and one of them is strange, almost mysterious. Lean on Mars for some support. More activity helps you maintain that critical balance point that some folks think you've lost.

Taurus: One of the greatest secrets I've found in my line of work—or any type of endeavor—is being able to ask the right question at the right time. It could even be the wrong time, given my propensity for bad timing, but still, ask the question. The type of questions that come to mind, as I look at a particular influence in your chart, have a lot less to do with love and romance, than you might like. "But it's Valentine's Day!" Work with me here. Questions like "Why did you do it that way?" and the ever popular, "What were you thinking when you said that?" are a lot more useful than the usual stuff bantered about. There's a right way to ask a question, and there's a wrong way to ask a question. Even seemingly stupid questions can be asked correctly, as long as you keep your voice down, give that innocent look, and pretend like it's just a silly thing. I will not

pander to the little cupid and stupid marketing hype at this point. Ask the tough questions, but do so in a sweet, Taurus way.

Gemini: I was born in Texas. I was raised in Texas. Part of my education is from Texas institutions. To me, nothing is sexier than a girl who knows how to handle a firearm. Or a horse. Maybe even both, but in this day and age, I'd prefer them not to be together, that is, the firearm and the horse. Guns belong on the shooting range, and horses belong in the pasture, or out on the trails in the desert. Where you live, maybe what one finds "sexy" varies slightly from my definitions. I'm willing to work with that. There's an element of danger with both the items I've listed, though, and while danger can be inherently sexy, in and of itself, it might not be the best route to follow during our little romantic holiday weekend. Then, there are those who would suggest that even trying to date a Gemini is dangerous enough as it is. Now, Mr. Mars is opposite you, and Miss Venus is lining up just past him. Even though I find girls with guns and horses an attractive, desirable thing, that doesn't mean you need to advertise your dangerous qualities. Matter of fact, given where Mars is, you might want to just imply that you're dangerous rather than actually packing a piece.

Cancer: Work is weighing heavy on your soul. Or, worse yet, if you're not really a fishing guide and if you don't get to ride around in boat from time to time, work probably feels like it's sucking the life right out of you. Not everyone is lucky like me, and not everyone can combine a real love of the natural world plus a chance to spin tales about astrology and such, and make this thing work. I've had office jobs. I've had dead-end work situations. I've sat there and looked at a computer screen, fearful that my life was slipping away from me. I feel your Cancer pain. I understand the frustration. On a lighter, more hopeful note, this sense of doom and frustration is really just a temporary situation. It's a matter of the way you see yourself, and the way we [the other 11 signs] see you. Realize that the work situation is a passing feeling, and it might even feel a little better by next week. Then, too, understand that we still think you are every bit as lovely as you are. [Or ruggedly handsome yet compassionate, I mean, whatever works.] The problem is you're feeling all alone, and the answer is to listen to your good friends a little more. That, and maybe a little excursion to lake for some Valentine fishing....

Leo: It's hard to imagine that a Leo would make a stupid blunder. Frankly, I just can't see it like that. However, sometimes the planets exert a little push that might not be in your own best interest. Call it impulse. I was in a fancy casino, not so very long ago, and there was a boutique shop with horribly over-priced apparel for sale. Now, I like a good Hawaiian shirt, but I just can't see paying more than a few dollars for one—I tend towards secondhand and thrift stores, as well as charity. This store, on the concourse leading to the parking garage, it had the coolest shirts, loud, tacky and at a price where I could afford to buy ten shirts at my discount stores. I did stop, and I did look. One was particularly attractive, loud colors, real silk, made in Hawaii, and the price scared me. "Impulse," get this: that was the name of the store. As much as it's fun sometimes, you might want to check those impulse buys. Does your Valentine really need something that expensive? [Yes, you do deserve it, but this might not be the best time to buy, no matter how good it looks.]

Virgo: I once extolled the virtues of buying a single design Valentines' card in bulk. Same card, to all the folks, that way, I didn't have to stop and figure out which card I sent where and to whom. Great idea. Don't ever put ideas like that in print. More than one recipient let me know that she was onto my tricks, and she didn't find it amusing. So much for trying to handle my own romantic life by being smooth. Then, I got to kicking around some words, Valentine and Virgo both have that same letter to start with—coincidence? I think so. Yet there's something extra special nice about this weekend, something extra special nice about what's going on in Virgo, and this particular weekend, if in the last few weeks haven't been that great, this one weekend looks good. The problems start next week, as the Sun moves into Pisces, and you guys start to notice that I pulled that same trick again, the bulk mail Valentine card thing. Get upset? Why? When the sun moves into Pisces, life in Virgo land gets a lot less precise. Don't worry about next week, it'll get here when it does. Until then, have a good weekend with that someone special.

Libra: There's a slightly crude side to your Libra psyche. It's like me and the boys, when we're out in the boat, not catching fish, the conversations, the jokes, the manly posturing, it gets a little raunchy. Or it gets really raunchy, as only adolescent males can be. Now look: this is the big, romantic holiday weekend. All that sick

humor, the bodily function jokes, the sexist, perverted humor, that all has a place—on the boat, when we're fishing. It does NOT belong in your Libra sweet entreaties to your lover, or would be Libra lover. The big goal is to keep the sick, twisted, puerile humor out of the romance stuff. Sure, some of it's funny. I know a nice little specialty shop, they have great cards, just chock full of this evil humor. Bad stuff. Don't give into the temptation to send out something a little too risqué. I think it's wonderfully amusing. Your target audience, unless it's me, they may not be as amused.

Scorpio: Nothing is better than giving a Scorpio a little warning. This weekend is good. You might not feel like getting out much, but then, a weekend sequestered in your trailer with your favorite Valentine person isn't all bad. We call that "playing house." Give it a try; see if it works for you. You have a little bit of reckoning coming along. Scorpio detractors ["I pity the fool"] will read that and gleefully respond that it's about time. However, real Scorpio's, like yourself, will understand that the reckoning that's headed your way is really a good thing. I once advised a Scorpio not to do anything about a situation. He was so sure he should mete out a degree of justice. However, a little less action at that time resulted in the whole situation turning around, coming around, and being good all around for him. Patience may be a virtue, but I'd look at it another way: I'll let someone who deserves it, get it. With no help whatsoever from your Scorpio self. Entropy, the way the world turns, and the cosmic forces at work, plus a liberal dose of Fate will take good care of you. Enjoy the weekend, and don't doing anything about that "situation." Nature will take care of you.

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Sagittarius: Properly harnessed, Mars energy is good stuff. Properly directed, given the correct outlet, Mars energy is wonderful stuff. However, Mars is hitting a point where he is almost directly opposite from Saturn. No, we're not quite there, but this is coming up. "Not that Saturn thing again!" Yes, it's going to turn a high energy weekend into an awful Monday morning sort of feeling. It's like this: I'm not, what you would call, a "drinking man" these days. I just don't bounce back like I used to you. Temperance is an important factor in my Sagittarius life [believe it or not]. I was at a concert venue, not so long ago, and I was looking around at the crowd. I just feel like I'm supposed to be too old to go to a

place where guys wearing Mohawks are part of the crowd. There's something just not quite right about being in a group of folks where that sort of attire is not only permissible but commonplace. [Actually, I had a great time.] And even though I'm not a drinking man, the next day, I felt like something the cat caught, tortured, bit the head off, and left on the doorstep. Even though we have this wonderful Mars drive right now, don't let it push us to excess. Next week promises to be a hangover kind of a time, even if you're not drinking.

Capricorn: I was just exchanging electrons with a Capricorn buddy, she was bemoaning her fate—that is, she was worried about her own, personal romantic climate at the moment. Apparently, it reflected a drought pattern, one where there seemed to be no hope of any sort on any horizon, as far as the eye could see. Now, in between e-mails from me, she started to get some stuff that looked like unsolicited commercial e-mail, the bane of our existence. She was deleting some stuff, and she almost missed a note from a former lover. If she hadn't been more careful, she would've missed it completely, trashed like so much useless offers to make money, or see some really disgusting invitation to web sites that cost a lot of money for no value. Her problem, the Capricorn problem for the time being, is one and the same. How do you filter out the good stuff from the bad stuff? How do separate the wheat from the chaff? How do you delineate the difference between what's good, what's that one little romantic offer, a valid piece of information, from the onerous tons of junk? How to do this? If you've got any great ideas, use them. Be prepared for shifting through a bunch of stuff, though, and realize that you're actually panning for gold, and liable to find anugget soon.

For the Week Starting: 2/20-26/2003

"Violent fires soon burn out themselves. Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short."

Shakespeare's *Richard II* [II.ii.34]

What could be more perfect? Sun in Pisces and Corpus Christi, Texas: last weekend.

Pisces: For the longest time, I've used a little teakettle to heat up water for the morning coffee. It's aritual. Cat food and coffee. The two just go hand in hand, I suppose. Now, that teakettle I use for boiling water, it virtually lives on the stove top [yes, trailers come equipped with dainty little kitchenette places, complete with a stove.] Some mornings, I put the kettle on a low heat, and wander off to the computer, almost forgetting that there's some water getting ready to boil. With the music turned up loud, I don't hear its faint rumbling, indicating that water is about to turn to steam. That kettle finally hits "full steam" and it sounds like it's about to explode. The deal is, you set something up a while back, and it's about to explode. Good or bad? Sort of depends. After I get over the shock, I can look forward to that wonderful elixir: coffee. The part that's important is the way things seem to blow, squeal and make a generous racket right before the good stuff happens. You've got something a lot like my teakettle heating up in your own, Pisces life right now. Careful, don't be too shocked when it whistles. Happy birthday, Pisces baby.

Aries: For several years, I would buzz down to the Texas Gulf Coast sometime after Valentine's Day, ostensibly to work. It's more along the lines of a working holiday, though, because the Gulf Coast is a relaxing place for me. There's fishing, beaches, seafood, beaches, scantily clad females, beaches, and best of all, there's that ever-present "island" spirit. Did I mention beaches? So maybe, what with visible oil derricks just off shore, maybe it's not exactly the most picturesque of island scenes, there's still a local sense of that beach attitude. Mars, frying his way through Sagittarius still, is lending you some energy. What would go a long way in making your next couple of days more enjoyable is to adopt that "island attitude." When someone says, "I need it right now," you reply, "I'll get right on it, after I go for a dip in the ocean, do some surfing, walk along the beach at sunset, eat some fresh seafood..." Don't get in an Aries all-fired up hurry.

Taurus: The opening quote from Shakespeare, about big things that burn out fast, and long, slow events that last for hours, some might think I picked that just for Taurus, for your week. Almost. When I started, I was looking at the "after Valentine's burn out," but when I looked at your chart, I couldn't help but marvel at how well that one quote applies. Fast and furious is fun. A punk rock song that blares for 2 minutes can be quite energetic. But sometimes, a slow symphonic song that last for two hours is more enjoyable. You're looking at one situation for the next couple of days, and you have a choice to make. This means, it's a binary question, requires a "yes" or a "no" from you. Which one do you want? Fast and furious? I love that stuff. Highly energizing, but I'm burned out on it pretty fast. So are you. Long, slow, and steady? That's sometimes a lot more fun. It's your choice.

Gemini: Last pass. I hate using sports metaphors, and I detest Dallas Cowboys stuff—it has nothing to do with the team or pro football, I just get worn out from being exposed to an excess of, "Go Cowboys" spirited material. It's a Texas thing. If you know any diehard sports fans, people loyal to one team with an almost religious fervor, then you understand. Over the next couple of day, Mr. Saturn, who's been making most Gemini's rather unpleasant, lines up for his last pass through the trailing edge of Gemini. Over the next few days, it's time to consider heaving that one, last chance, "Hail Mary" pass. It's a long shot. To be honest, it's not that long of a shot, it's just that some things seem so hopeless now, you just don't figure that there's much of a chance that anything will work out. Give it a shot. At one time, in the distant past, the Cowboys saved themselves with just such a move. It could work for you, too.

Cancer: Ever have one of those days when you seem to spend a lot of time assuring folks that things aren't bad? Every time you turn around, there's another person, and you say, "Don't worry, be happy!" The folks you encounter all seem to be a little glum, a little frustrated, and little out of sorts. As an astrologer, I get a myriad of stuff dumped on me. Some weeks, I'm just as irritable as the next guy, only I have to keep up an appearance of everything is "okay." Know that feeling? Even if you are not personally conversant with that feeling at this very moment, over the next day or two, maybe on into next week, it looks like you're going to have "one of those days" when everyone else is unhappy. You can only use that lyrical

little mantra, "Don't worry-be happy" so many times without it starting to sound a little hollow. You're the sign of the crab. Use your exoskeleton, that carapace you've got, employ its ability to shield you. Negative thoughts and downtrodden folks are a luxury you don't need to afford.

Leo: It's so good right now, but after what it's been like for the last [day, week, month, year, decade, century], you're not trusting me about this. So, as I see it, there are a lot more positive influences in your Life of Leo, there are too many good things going, and you don't need to let the good outweigh the bad. To be sure, I'll get one note from that one Leo, about how wrong I am, but if you look around, you'll see the good stuff, too. The reports are just starting to trickle in, but yes, the Bluebonnets are starting to poke up through the soil in portions of South Texas. It's a 'lupine' flower, pretty a can be. Before too long, vast fields of these pretty wildflowers will adorn the Texas highways. You can see your Leo Highway of Life as a desolate road, a wide swath cut through the South Texas scrub oak and thorny mesquite, or you can look a little closer and notice that the flowers are starting to spring up. You get to make the call.

Virgo: I read a lot of mail. Fan mail, hate mail, pleas for clemency, diatribes, and tribal news. Plus the oddfishing magazine. It's all a part of what I do. I still look forward to some quiet evening when I can stretch out and work my way through one of my dog-eared copies of a Shakespeare play as I always enjoy a little scholarship, even when it's not expected. I suppose, though, that would be a more private pleasure. There's something that gets lost in an exchange of mail, unless the note is very carefully written. Tone. While electronic mail offers those hideous smiley faces, the little typographical equivalent of suggesting a smirk, a grin, a wink, or even a frown, the tone of the note itself should be able to speak for itself. Too often, this is not the case. Look: over the next couple of days, you're going to be tempted to drop a note to the astrologer, the author, the editor, or a similar figure. And while it's supposed to be a wry, droll and funny expression, the chances are, it comes across as a heavy, pedantic, whining note. Look at what you write before you send it. I'm not talking about a proof read for spelling errors, no, this more along the lines of making sure your cute, wry, droll, witty self is truly expressed in the note. You don't have to

humor me, but it would help if you would humor whomever you are addressing.

Libra: I used to frequent this one catfish parlor, and I'll admit I still love the place. The problem I have, it's either Monday or Tuesday nights, they have an "all you can eat fried catfish" deal. Consider the price, then weigh that against what you reasonably think you can actually consume. Consider that this comes with a full compliment of side dishes, too, there's potato salad, cole slaw, crisp fried okra, all the necessary fixings. There's cocktail sauce, horseradish, tarter sauce, fresh baked bread with soft butter, and I think you're starting to get the picture. This is less of a single meal and more reminiscent of one of the deadly sins: gluttony. A little indulgence of the finer things in life is okay. Certainly, around here anyway, fried catfish is one of the finer things in life, a true delicacy. You really think you can break the bank on the "all you can eat" deal?

Scorpio: Slow down, take it easy and realize that some folks are just a little cranky at this point in time. Not you, but people around you. Normal folks you interact with on a day-to-day basis. Some of them are little "underwhelmed" with your bad Scorpio self. It's really easy to let out a typical, snide Scorpio comment like, "Oh, just get over it," but the problem is, the folks you encounter don't want to get over it. Some battles are worth it, and some battles really don't merit the energy required to fight in an effective manner. Perhaps a better way to look at this, instead of telling someone else to just get over their bad selves, maybe you should try that for yourself. Looking at the heavens, it's Mars, it's Saturn, it could even be Venus, but all of these planets are making things good in Scorpio land whereas, the other signs are suffering some. Don't gloat. Don't rub our faces in it. Especially don't brag about how good things are for you--let's try another Scorpio trick: keep it secret for the next few days.

Sagittarius: Mars, especially when he lines up with Mr. Pluto, can bring up some "anger" issues. Nothing is worse than getting really bent out of shape about something, getting all up in arms, getting really worked up over an issue that, as it turns, isn't that big of deal. The real problem, though, is giving your Sagittarius self enough time to realize that the issue at hand doesn't merit the kind of attention that you think it deserves. On one lake, there's a special spot that should yield a ton of fish. Weeds grow in the

water, there are overhanging branches, willows and oaks come right down to the water's edge, you can't walk to this place—the only way to get there is by bass boat. [Maybe other boats can make it, but I'd like to think it's my own, private place.] Never caught a single fish in that one spot. Never even got nibble, nary a hint of fish being there. They should be there. I can feel them in the lake, mocking my efforts. Fishing, last weekend, with my buddy, we didn't go to my secret spot. You know what? I wasn't as frustrated. This issue can be avoided. It didn't work before—maybe skip it this time, and avoid the frustration.

Capricorn: Everything changes. Simply put, "Everything changes." Venus is rocking and rolling through your sign, but Mr. Mars is still cooking along—with gas—in Sagittarius [that would be the sign that precedes lovely Capricorn]. Venus in your sign is good. Mars in Sagittarius brings up old fears. What this means, you're going to have a good time—in spite of yourself—but you're also going to worry that you're having a good time. Before you send me a note to tell me that I'm not making any sense, think about it. Things are good. Life is okay. The haunting sense that something bad is about to happen is still there, but after looking at your chart, I'm pretty sure that this is merely a reflection of the stereotypical Capricorn need for a degree of worry. I love the way I can go out with a Capricorn, and one minute we are discussing the finer points of high art, while sitting in a sleazy taco stand in East Austin with grease dripping down to our elbows. It can be the best of both worlds. And quite worrying about the fat content of that taco. The fresh hot sauce has two properties: One, it will burn off any microorganisms that harbor diseases, and two, it will also burn up the negative effect of the grease.

Aquarius: There are big problems and little problems. The big problems are less of a hassle right now, in fact, in at least one situation, you should have an authority figure in your life [boss, employee, fishing buddy, expert witness, cop] come along and say something like, "Wow, you were so right!" Better yet, that one person will go on and apologize. There was a thing going on the last few weeks where you and I knew you were right but no one else agreed with us. I kept telling you it was their loss, and now, during the next few days, this will be revealed that yes, you were right. I knew it all along—too bad no one else agreed with us. That's the good news for the week. The bad news is next week, like starting

Monday morning. Due to the relative position of the moon and her phase, this is going to feel like a hollow victory. Being right doesn't always feel that great. Work with this mood swing though. Or, rather, don't work with it. You're doing a victory dance, and no one else seems to understand that you're doing okay. In a situation like this, I suggest you don't let the little things get to you.

For the Week of: 2/27-3/5/2003

"Those moral laws/Of nature and of nations speak aloud."

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* [II.ii.184]

Big news is up ahead, in short order. Ain't here yet, but I've covered the topic in depth elsewhere. But for the next week or two, it's still a holding pattern.

Pisces: Given my basic, South Texas sensibilities, I don't get along with cold weather too well. It's just not my style. Like this last week's snow and ice. My style doesn't adapt to cold weather too well. One activity that isn't a cold weather pursuit at all is the water parks. While I much prefer a tube ride down one of Nature's versions of a theme park [the Guadalupe River comes to mind], there's another river around that more closely resembles what this is truly like about now: the Frio River. [Hint: that's a Spanish name that means "cold" water.] I got off on thinking about a water park because we were going to go fishing last week, me and my Pisces buddy, but the weather turned a little sour. Then, I thought about water parks, and those big slides, you know, you spend half an hour climbing to the top for 15-second fun ride to the bottom, then splash into the tepid stuff at the bottom. This time of year, though, it's too cold. Way too cold for some of us. I was thinking about this, about fishing, and about Pisces because the next few days, like the water slide, is an interesting trip. See: you spend a lot of time getting to the top, then it's quick slip to the bottom, and you do it all over again. It's just, with that last cold snap, I wonder what it would be like to go the water park with a surfer's wet suit. Water's still a little cold, but it's a good image for the next few days, that water slide.

Aries: Get ready. I know, to some, telling an Aries to "get ready" is a large waste of breath as every Aries is ready all the time. For everything. But I'm warning you, just this once, see, unless you read this on the very last day that it's applicable, you'll get lulled into a false sense of well-being. It's like Texas weather, late in February, we get a couple of warm, spring-like days, followed by sudden drop in temperatures. Just when it feels like our week of winter is gone, we get a quick reminder. Before you let Mars lull you into a false sense of security, let me help you a little. March means Aries birthdays are not far off. Mars moves out of Sagittarius, which also means that some [person, situation, thing] is

going to jump up and start raising a ruckus. How bad is this? It's only as bad as you let it be. At one point, you learn to let the folks railing back and forth, just let them alone. They can burn themselves out without any help from your fine Aries self. That's what you need to get ready for.

Taurus: You ever get that feeling no one understands? Ever have that feeling that no one seems to listen to your scintillating words of wisdom? You and me, Taurus and astrologer, we can compare notes. No one ever listens to me, either, or when they do, they don't hear anything but the words they want to hear. In over 10,000 personal consultations, I've started out, "I'm going to tape this because you're not going to remember any of the good stuff, just the bad parts, I know...." Consider a similar idea for yourself. Maybe a tape recorder, maybe a cassette recorder, maybe one of those high-tech voice recorder toys that fits on a keychain—I don't care, just get something to record your conversation, thoughts, plans, ideas, and more important, you want to be able to set the record straight. That's your record, you want to make sure every other sign understands that you were right.

Gemini: Sometimes, I can report big stuff happening with the planets, as they affect the world of Gemini. Other times, it's not the big things, it's the little things. Problem: it doesn't happen until AFTER the weekend. Good news, though, Mars will finally sashay right on out of Sagittarius, and into another sign. Frankly, you didn't much care for Mars and his ways while he was in Sagittarius because that was on the opposite side of the wheel from you. However, now that he's about to shift right on out of there [here, for me, really], like I've suggested, life in Gemini Land will improve. Or maybe it's the quality of life, or maybe, just perhaps, someone special will start listening again. You thought we weren't listening before, when, in fact, some of us were. The deal is, we'll look like we're finally paying rapt attention, like we should, once again. Next week. Since that's still a few days away, be patient when you think we're not listening like we should be. You might find out that some of us are listening to you.

Cancer: It wasn't so long ago, on an island just off the Texas Gulf Coast, and it was me and my fishing buddy. We were dining in a little shack by the beach. My fishing buddy [non-Cancer] was into drowning his sorrows with hard liquor. Not being a drinking man myself, I can't say that I shared the feeling, but I was amused by

his dispirited diatribe about the state of the world, the way things were going in his life, and the various interactions he had with other folks. Since it's my business to know about peoples' signs, I asked the waitress. She was an obnoxiously perky Cancer type. Cancer women are like that, in the face of certain adversity, they can be so happy and carefree. My scopes tend to be "non-gender-specific," so it doesn't matter if you're a male Cancer or a female Cancer, but you're the perky one at this point. What's that mean? Even when a couple of motley fishermen are sitting there in your Cancer Station of life, be your ebullient, joyous self. You probably won't be able to cheer up the drunkard, but that doesn't mean that we won't leave you a good tip. Any efforts should be rewarded in the next few days.

Leo: Bluebonnets are a tough call. I suppose, there is some discernible combination that can accurately yield a reliable reading on what the wildflowers will be like each year. It's an arcane computation, something about the amount of rain last fall, the time the last crop went to seed, local weather patterns, enough sunlight, not too much rain, the relative acidity of the alkaline soil, or maybe something as esoteric as the movement of certain planets. Now, I realize that wildflowers in Texas are just a local thing, not something everyone gets to enjoy, but there will be a few stray stands that crop up even in the Shady Acres compound. I figure it reflects a relatively lax form of grounds keeping, but that's just my opinion. Look: wildflowers, and yes, I'm partial to the local ones, are special. They don't respond to any outside care. It's a trick of nature. Same thing for Leo, can't predict when, or how, or what, but it will be a delightful trick of nature. Just when you don't expect it, where you don't expect it, there's this one stand of bluebonnets-in all their morning glory-brightening you day. Can't tell you when, but soon. Very soon.

Virgo: Just about every winter, I get some kind of a cold. It's not like this is any surprise, nor, for that matter, is it a big deal. Proper vitamins, a little exercise, fresh air, some bed rest, and the body's natural immune system, it all works out. This last time, though, I saw a doctor, and he prescribed some cough syrup for me. Awful stuff. Terrible taste. Worked well, but I was careful not to operate any heavy machinery while taking the stuff. I was riding along with Bubba one day, and I took a swig from the bottle, "What is that? It smells terrible! And who thinks that it has a 'cherry' flavor? It

seems more like grease remover to me...." Valid point: not the paint-thinner flavor, but the aroma that was supposed to seem like cherries. Wasn't close. Wasn't even in the ballpark. Wasn't even, for that matter, close to said ballpark. The good news? That stuff worked. The problem being, the carrier, the method to get that stuff into my system was a bitter brew. No large amount of imagination could cover the medicine's bitter taste. I'm sure your perspicacious Virgo senses can detect where this is going.... The medicine for the next few days might, indeed, have the flavor of paint remover, the aroma of road tar, and the consistency of 30 weight motor oil. Worse yet, some marketing guy might suggest that the flavor is genuine fake cherry. Still, if it works, it works.

Libra: Let's take a quick spin, and look at what's going on around the other signs. See: it's Pisces birthday time. That means you need to extend a little extra attention towards your own work. This can mean a couple of things, like it could be that noxious career stuff that needs a little attention. It could be that special project you're doing on the side, which could use some extra help. It could be a pass time that requires some extra effort. As the Moon goes dark, then slowly emerges from into its "new" phase, you're going to want to spend a little extra time cleaning up, preparing, doing that extra bit of work to make your exertions go smoothly. I tend to think of this in terms of spending an afternoon sitting down with the fishing gear and getting it a little better organized. Dig through the old tackle box, figure out what belongs, and, for that matter, what doesn't belong. Then there's this special oil that I use on most of my fishing reel, and it's a good time to do a little maintenance like that. This type of endeavor is really rather pleasing, in its own, tedious way. There's something relaxing about sitting down for an afternoon, and wiping the grime off the old gear, straightening out the lures, getting all the plastic worms put back up in their respective places. In theory, this is labor. In practice, though, it's the most pleasant of endeavors. You've got a little of work like cut out for you. I'd suggest you look forward to concentrating on it.

Scorpio: I had these special, custom made, dining room chairs. They don't fit in my present domicile, so I don't worry about it too much anymore. The chairs themselves are large and roomy. I used to use one of the chairs as a desk chair, as well. The cat, for the longest time, loved it as we could both fit on the chair. When it's cool in the Texas mornings, as it usually is this time of the year, we would

both be perched on one of those chairs, her stretched out behind me. Then, over the years, as the cat's girth increased, she began to wonder what was happening. You can imagine her trying to get comfortable, with parts of her body hanging off the edge of the chair, in her little cat mind, "When did he get so fat? There used to be room for both of us, now he's got to go...." The deal is, the chair stayed the same size. I stayed the same size. The only change was with the cat herself. But in her [Scorpio-like] mind, that cat was wondering why the chair was getting smaller, or why the label on the waist of my jeans was misrepresenting my relative size. Things are changing in your Scorpio world. Some things are staying the same, but things are changing. This is one time when I suggest you don't imitate the thinking of my cat. Look around and note what's different. Just because something no longer fits quite right, it's not always a bad change.

Sagittarius: Two planets make moves over the next couple of days. Venus slips into Aquarius, and a little later, Mars "exeunt" Sagittarius. All this planetary slipping and sliding makes life a little more comfortable in our little Sagittarius world. We all have dreams. I dream about a doublewide trailer, up on a permanent foundation, with a wrap-around porch. I can almost see it in my mind's eye, me, sitting on the porch, using an extra long pole, I'd be able to fish from that porch. Now that Mars is just about done frying his way through our sign, it's possible to make the big dreams come true. Or, if that doesn't work, at least we can have a little more quiet to dream about the ideal set up. Sitting a singlewide travel trailer, parked not too very far from the edge of the river, it's possible to have such dreams. Just be careful, though, as sooner or later, during the next couple of days, someone is going to come along and tell us Sagittarius types to get our heads out of the clouds and back to the real world. Such harsh language! Real world. As long as we're stuck in the land of imagination, I'm all for staying there. Your mileage may vary some, but it's still a pretty good time as long we can keep these untimely interruptions to a minimum.

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Capricorn: Part of being good at what I do involves being observant of human behavior--and foibles. Observation is important. Sometimes it's the little things. I was watching this guy in traffic

the other day. His [late model American sedan] was lodged tightly between two other vehicles, a truck and another compact thing I couldn't begin to identify. He was upset that that the other cars were parked so close, leaving him with almost no room whatsoever to extract himself. The local downtown meter patrol folks are notorious for sticking tickets on anything once the time is up. Like a good person, he starts "rocking" the car out of that tough parallel spot, inching forward until his bumper kissed the car in front, backing up until he bumped into the car behind him. I can't say for sure, but I'd bet the guy was in a rent car—it had that "non-descript late model" look to it. After the third or fourth bump, shift, bump, I think he was getting a little restless, upset or even just plain angry. He must've hit the car in front of him a little harder than he planned. A couple of words, here: installed safety devices. His driver side airbag inflated in a puff of gas and dust. I wanted to help, but my laughter was too much, so I left. I don't know what happened to the guy. Capricorn: watch it. Mars is moving in a weird way right now, big shift with a little planet. Do not, I repeat, do not make the same, impatient move that one guy did—unless, of course, you're doing that for strictly comic effect.

Aquarius: Ease and grace. Two words. Simple message. Maybe not so simple to apply in your Aquarius life, but I'm here to suggest that maybe, just maybe, there is such a thing as ease and grace, a chance for something to start working well for you. Part of this is brought about by Ms. Venus, as she eases on into your sign. She's like an old girlfriend of mine, she shows up, and we have us a fine time, swapping tales about the past, reliving certain moments of shared hilarity, and generally catching up. It's a good thing. Part of this, too, is the idea that we are catching up with where everyone is these days, the ups and downs of what's gone before. There's something reassuring about seeing an old friend, even if there's no current romantic tie between the two of us, there's still something good about this. So Venus is like that old friend showing up, grabbing a cup of coffee, and spending a certain amount of time just sort of catching up. Wait: not all the planets are this nice, not now, but if you hold onto that ideal as presented by Ms. Venus, things can be good. "Ease and grace," repeat as needed.

For the Week of: 3/6-12/2003

"This is the very coinage of your brain."

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* [III.iv.139]

SXSW rolls through Austin, starting this weekend. About the same time, Uranus slides in Pisces, heralding some much-trumpeted changes.

Pisces: I switched my address to the downtown post office because it was far more convenient, and it costs a lot less. Problem is, that its parking lot is right in the middle of an alternative "entertainment district" and as such, it gets a lot of traffic on the weekends. Between heightened security, and the chance to capitalize on extra parking spaces, there's now a parking lot attendant most evenings and weekends. I wheeled into the parking lot late one Saturday night, after a night of revelry in Austin, intent on checking the P.O. Box. [Kramer Wetzel, astrofish.net, P.O. Box 684516, Austin, TX 78768-4516.] It's my address. I rented it for year. It's just up from the Lamar St. pedestrian bridge, just a short hop on the trail from Shady Acres. Very cool. But that parking lot attendant tried to get me to pay five bucks just to park there. "But I'm only checking my mail," I swore up and down. It's not like I was going to get out of the truck and just leave it there. The guy wanted some kind of a deposit. Best I could offer was my date for the evening. She didn't take too kindly to that. Don't mix business and pleasure. And remember, some folks just don't have the same good sense of humor that you have these days.

Aries: I've got this one fishing buddy, and he can't leave some things alone. It's not like there was a problem before, but I have to wonder if he sometimes invents trouble where there wasn't any trouble previously. To compound this situation, to take a bad deal and make it worse, he has a way of worrying the problem, even if it's a little problem, he can take it and by the time he's done talking through it, analyzing, analyzing the analysis, and asking everyone for expert advice [none of which this Aries guy takes], he's created a monster out of relatively insignificant problem. Mars. Mars and the relative position of the Sun. Those are the two we're dealing with here, in Aries Land. Those two are causing minor irritations over the next couple of days. The deal is, you can just about talk this stuff to death, or talk it into the ground, or talk until no one is listening. That's a problem. My solution? Go fishing. Or, at the very

least, step back and try to look at the problem, the minor troubles, in light of a bigger picture. Any kind of perspective helps.

Taurus: It wasn't exactly by choice, but I found myself in the sporting goods store the other day. The woman I was running around with that afternoon needed to buy, and I'm not making this up, shin guards, kneepads, elbow pads, and a new helmet for her rollerderby debut. While she shopped for armor, I looked at, naturally, fishing gear. I scooped up a couple of these lures that really caught my eye. Bright colors, not something that I would normally fish with, neon feathers and stuff. Completely different than equipment I usually use. Radically different, but yet, oddly enough, visually very appealing—at the time. That's the kicker, it was visually appealing, at that time. The combination of neon green, orange, and purple looked good—to me. Given my widely documented sartorial tastes, these color combinations should come as no surprise. When I tried these lures a few days later, they were spectacularly unsuccessful. I mean, they were so bad, even my fishing buddy was laughing at me, "Hey, toss it over there, see that big one, right there? That lure'll scare him over towards mine." Then he laughed. You're normally good Taurus taste just ain't what it's supposed to be. Go easy with stuff. Maybe this isn't a time to make a selection based on your tastes. I did, eventually turn one of those lures into an earring, so there was happy ending to some of it. Another one, thought, is now at the bottom of the lake.

Gemini: Every Gemini I've dealt with has a small amount of Taurus in them, in some capacity, in their Gemini chart. Look at what it says about buying stuff up in Taurus. Think about it. While things are actually quite different over here in Gemini, there's still a little problem with tastes and sensibility at this point. The Moon, too, she's exerting an undue influence over some of your more rational abilities. In other words, you might not be thinking quite right. Certain astrological elements might cloud some of your normally good Gemini judgment. Instead of jumping on a particular [looks like a work thing to me, but I could be wrong] situation with your normal fervor and zeal, hold off for just a second or two. In Gemini terms, you need more information before you can render a correct decision. Never hurts to go easy on some of this stuff. You're going to be face to face with a situation, like me, where I agreed to a weekend fishing trip before I looked at my schedule. I had other clients I was previously engaged with. As much as the

trip sounded good, I had to stick to what was important, that work thing. Keep your Gemini priorities straightened out.

Cancer: Let's look at Mars, where he is, and computers. See: the computer I use has a delightful graphic user interface. Little pictures, icons, a virtual "desktop" with its picture of trash can, documents that look like they're pieces of paper, you know, it's all standard stuff these days. I've been working on one of these for so long, I'm rather used to it. In the computer, though, that underlying structure, the stuff that makes it all tick? That boils down to nothing more than either a "one" [1] or "zero" [0]. It's all becomes binary. "On" or "Off." "Yes" or "No." All that fancy stuff in the computer, all that cool stuff in the Cancer world, with Mars starting to oppose you, it all becomes a binary situation. It's either on or it's off. No middle ground. As Mr. Mars heats his way through Capricorn, opposite you, remember this one word: binary. There's a time and place for my extended fishing stories with extenuating circumstances. There's a place for a Cancer to weave tale wherein the facts become obscured. All this belongs in your world at one time or another, but for the next few days, think: binary. Yes or no. Not a lot of middle ground. And no fishing tales, either, about how the really big one shook the hook.

Leo: On an album by a group called "Los Super Seven," one of the liner notes thanks a local restaurant, "Las Manitas." It's a legendary place. Scummy politicians, struggling artists, even some tourists, they all enjoy the atmosphere. It's a cool little, typical, Austin dive on Congress Avenue, just a few blocks south of the Capitol Building. A couple of years ago, they added a back patio for the overflow traffic. I seriously doubt that they were trying to capitalize on the "al fresco" trend at the time. See: to get to the patio, you have to walk right through the kitchen. As the name would imply, Avenue Café [Las Manitas], serves basic Mexican fare. Good stuff, too, judging by the consistent crowds. Think about that, though, that's pretty daring to let the public walk through the kitchen in order to get to the patio. Means the kitchen has to be clean. Since the building itself is probably over a 100 years old, the kitchen is even more challenging to keep clean. They do a great job, though, the unused utensils are artful arranged on hooks, the walls are faded, but clean. All the work surfaces are sanitary. The deal is this: between a couple of elements pushing and pulling on your Leo self, the key idea is not what you've got, but how you present it.

Like that spotless kitchen redolent in the fragrant aroma of Mexican cooking, the subtle efforts are readily apparent. Make sure your work space, the place where you make your Leo magic happen, make sure that space, your table top, desk top, or in my case, the boat, make sure it's clean and in good repair. It doesn't have to be new to be the best, just in good shape.

Virgo: I was at the airport the other day. Heightened security and all, I'd gotten there a little early, just to make it easy on myself. For some reason, I seem to be a suspicious person. There were four little old ladies, checking in for a flight to Las Vegas. I thought that was pretty cute, in and of itself. These grey-headed matrons were all loaded up in wheelchairs, at the baggage check station, having a grand time. The baggage handler, porter, valet, whatever the customer service rep was called, he was busy trying to figure out how to manage four wheelchairs, all at once. He had a little beleaguered look, a little drawn. He wasn't too sure what to do. The ladies themselves, they were chattering along, pretty happy to be going someplace, I guess. More power to them. He finally figured out a way to get the all herded up and corralled together. Each lady grabbed the chair next to her, forming a chain of four wheelchairs, then that poor guy started pushing the first one, the other three in tow. Last I saw of them, headed towards the departure lounge, the last one in the group giggled, then said, "Wagons Ho!" Between Mars and the Sun in their positions, you can either be the guy pushing the first wheelchair—or you can be that last one in the line, "Wagons Ho!"

Libra: I seem to spend a fair amount of time walking on the Hike and Bike trail. It's my exercise, my chance to be still and enjoy nature, a respite from the day's hectic activities, and, for me, a kind of meditation. I've also been told that it's a mild form of cardiovascular exercise. I wouldn't know a thing about that. In my walks, I've grown accustomed to being a nodding acquaintance of several homeless people. One of them had the neatest trick for saving himself a choice bench for napping on. He has a "wet paint" sign that he puts on his favorite bench. Now, an observant person would realize that this is a clever ruse, because the Parks Department isn't anywhere around, and this is the only bench with a perennial "wet paint" signage—especially considering that the sign looks a lot like "will work for food" lettering. You see the setup here? You find that bench with the wet paint sign, and you think to

yourself, "Libra dear, this is just a trick, I can sit here...." Given where the planets are, relative to your sign, I'd suggest you test the paint, first. The one time it's not a ruse, that's the time you decide to sit without testing first. Don't trust what the signs say, or don't trust what the pattern has been. Test the hypothesis first. Make sure that the sign is just a clever gimmick. You can never tell when it might be real wet paint.

Scorpio: I used to fly a lot, especially on some older airplanes that had an "emergency exit row." Which was the place I liked to sit. First off, if I put my boots-or sandals-up on the seat opposite me, even if it was crowded flight, chances were no one would sit there. Then again, facing a person makes it easier for light conversation. "You're an astrologer? Cool, then you know we're safe on this flight, right?" Right. The standard line, from the flight attendants was "You know you're seated in an emergency row, and you agree to perform the duties of opening the door, if so instructed..." [or something like that.] So on this one flight, a gorgeous [I hate stereotypes, but she was blond and you can figure the rest] female sits down next to me. The flight attendant starts her little safety line, and the girl next to me gets up, "I've got move, opening that door, why, I might break a nail." She moved so fast I never got a chance to point out that I was raised Southern [Ma Wetzel], and I would've opened the door for her. I'd also like to point out that if the emergency exit situation ever arouse, breaking nail might be the least of the worries. Scorpio dear, you've got to watch out what you say. I'm not suggesting that you're acting like dizzy female, but you know, some of the things you're saying these days, if you're not careful, can come across that way. Like breaking nail on the emergency exit.

Sagittarius: Mars and Red Tail Hawks. It's pretty common, even in downtown Austin, to see Red Tail Hawks. Poor guys, they often get called "chicken hawks," which is a misnomer because these guys much prefer field mice and other rodents as a food rather than chickens. Brings a whole new meaning to "tastes just like chicken," doesn't it? On a warm and sunny spring day in Austin, while it's still a little cool out, it's possible to see some of these hawks, out, drifting around on the air currents, hunting for a meal and a thermal. Big, blacktop parking lots, especially ones that have been recently resurfaced, and vacant, those make good targets because the warm spring sun heats up the parking lot thus creating a

generous little up current. I was observing one of these guys, swooping low, just gliding along, searching for one of those thermals. Perfect example of what our Sagittarius selves should be doing about now. Maybe too lazy to flap our wings, cruising low, seeking that generous uplift. Look for the rise up, but try gliding along for a change. Don't force the issue—you might be flying low, but it's supposed to be a glide, not flapping our wings hysterically, that's just too much trouble.

Capricorn: Mars has just started getting comfortable in your sign. Okay, work with me on this, I was riding shotgun with a buddy of mine, and we were cruising down the Interstate, on our way towards the beach. Modesty forbids me from mentioning the driver's name, other than he's usually called "Bubba." I pointed out a rapidly approaching rest area and suggested a quick stop. His truck was set on cruise control. We blazed through the rest area at 77 MPH. Don't try this on your own. We went flying up the access ramp, he swerved once through the parking lot, and we narrowly missed an 18-wheeler rolling back down the other side. That was the fastest "in and out" I've ever been party to. Never took it off cruise control. I didn't suggest another stop, as my buddy driving was obviously in a big hurry to get wherever it was we were going [the beach]. He was really lucky, doing that interstate rest area at a few miles an hour over the posted limit. Since it was dark, and there was nothing on the truck's grill when he finally did stop, I'll assume we didn't hit anything. What's this got to do with you? You're going to feel just like I did when the truck I was riding in hit that ascending exit ramp, and the speed didn't vary one bit. It's a Mars thing, that feeling that something isn't quite right. It's been suggested before, most of my friends aren't "quite right in the head," but they do have a lucky streak. Use their lucky streak. Don't try this sort of maneuver yourself—Mars, remember him? Let some else do the stunt driving.

Aquarius: My cat is a great source of entertainment for me. My cat is also a great listener. She let's me know she's listening because I see her fur ripple a little, or I'll catch a glimpse of the tip of her tail flicking once or twice—it's how I know she's actually listening to me. At one time, I was worried that I was turning into a crazy old cat person, you know, just me and the cat, and the cat gets pampered a lot. Might still be the case, but my Aquarius self isn't too worried about that—not now. The problem I have with the cat, it was close to

ten years before I realized she was actually listening to me. It took a while before I noted the various eccentricities that indicated she was actually paying attention. If I position myself just right, I can see her tail twitch. Or if I'm speaking crossly, at some situation, just sort of venting, and I feel like she's not listening, I watch closely and her copious backside has a little ripple. That's how I know I'm getting through to her. Unfortunately, times like now, what with Mr. Mars so firmly entrenched in the sign that precedes you, it seems like you're like me, you're spending a lot of time addressing a somnolent, supine feline. You know what? Some weeks are just like that, the cat might be the only person listening. Watch for that tail, just to see if I'm right about this.

For the Week of: 3/13-19/2003

"Pardon me, sir, your bad entertainment."

Shakespeare's *12th Night* [II.i.32]

Until a few years ago, Midland and Odessa were just tiny points on the map, not famous or anything. Right in the heart of the Texas Oil Patch, as it were, the Permian Basin. Midland earned its name from the fact that it was halfway between El Paso and Ft. Worth, two very fine towns, I might add. Odessa sports a personal favorite, too, the Odessa Jackalopes [ice hockey].

Pisces: We're wrapping up the last of the Pisces times for this year. Got a fun-filled full moon early next week. Got a lot of things going on. Work's been a little too busy for your refined Pisces tastes. And then there's that pesky social life that keeps inserting itself into you schedule, too. This translates into a lot of frantic activity, especially with that lunar phase. What are you to do? I have a solution, an idea. I'm going to try it with the Pisces here at the office to see how things work. It's singular idea, a way to deal with the information overload, the over-abundance of mundane chores that take up too much of your precious Pisces time. Instead of two containers, one called the "in box" and another labeled "out box," why not try just one box? One container, labeled in a Zen-like fashion, "in/out." I know you get it. I'm not sure any of the other signs will understand, but you know what? That's their problem, not yours.

Aries: Plain and simple: no. I know that's not the answer you want. I know it's not what you're looking for. And I'm fully aware that no Aries likes that kind of an answer. But it's simple, see? Instead of charging off in the wrong direction, instead of battling insurmountable odds, instead of working yourself up over something you have no control over, just answer a simple, "No." Makes life much more bearable. Aries is nothing, if not straightforward. That's why a simple "no" is the answer to this week's Aries question. Before you get long winded, worked up, and want to go at length about this or that, the extenuating circumstances, and what not, hold off. Planets: Mars in Capricorn [squares your sign], Sun in Pisces [right before you, might be your 12th House], Uranus just entering Pisces for a flirtation. All of this energy shows up as a confrontation. You can take the bait, if you

want, but then, like as not, there's some hook in that bait. Think about it. "No" is a perfectly acceptable answer.

Taurus: South by South West is an annual big deal in Austin. There's film, software and then the music. The town gets overrun with foreigners. At least two local restaurants raise their prices to reap some extra benefit from, as my friends who work here call it, "south by." I was wandering through the convention hall, killing time between workshops, and I ran into one of my clients. She was in a panic. She was clutching her cell phone, complaining that the battery was almost dead, and she needed to talk to one of the organizers right away to handle some perceived emergency. Come on, this is in Austin. It's a business event for musicians.

Think about it. How many musicians are always on time? Yes, I know, there are some, but these are the amateurs, the aspiring teen-pop-idols, the next greatest thing, and some seasoned industry professionals. The schedules are guidelines, not "etched in stone" mandates. It wasn't, in my eyes, a real emergency. No blood, nothing broken, a band was running a little late, a workshop lasted longer than its allotted time. Don't get worked up into a panic over something that might seem trivial. You've got plenty of extra energy—use it wisely.

Gemini: I was dropping a friend off at the airport. I call a trip like this "airport karma" because it means I can depend on some kind soul to drop me at the airport next time. It's never the same people, but it's all part of that great cosmic "can you give me a ride" thing. Most travelers understand this. There's a long, sweeping curve going into the airport, perfect for a high-speed approach. The posted limit is also ridiculously slow. Being the kind of driver that I am, I tend to obey the posted limit. Good thing, too, as there was an airport cop with radar gun, waiting on people who were running late, just so he could make them more late—and have an extra expense of a traffic fine.

Here's where it all gets a little silly, if you ask me. It wasn't like, a cop in car. It was a bicycle cop. How bad is that? Speeding tickets from a cop on a bicycle? Try explaining that one to your friends. "So I was running late, and we came into the airport at about twice the posted limit, and I got ticket from a cop—on a bicycle." Feels pretty silly, now doesn't it? At least one Gemini I know is going to write back and ask if this means she should slow down at the airport. Yes, that too. But there's more: be careful with certain

authority figures, no matter how silly it seems at the time. Failure to heed my warning can result in seriously stupid error-like getting a speeding ticket from a cop on a bicycle.

Cancer: My dear, sweet, much put-out with her son's career, mother is an endless source of interesting tales. Not long ago, I picked up a T-shirt for her. It had something nice on the front of it. Must've been an opera shirt. Or the symphony. Or something akin to that. Might have been a Shakespeare shirt. Or even one of my own astrofish.net shirts. Whatever. Her comment was priceless, though, "Oh look, it's black," then as an aside to me, strictly off the record, "I like black, I don't have to wear a bra underneath it." Then she giggled. After Pluto got done frying me, some years ago, I got used to wearing black – makes it a lot easier to color coordinate my outfits. One shade. And black hides coffee spills, too. For some reason, black T-shirts seem like the thing to wear. Mars is making a scorching trip through Capricorn, and in doing so, he's upsetting your world a little. It could be something as simple as a little spilled coffee on the front of your shirt. It could be something much more difficult to handle, like your own mother telling you she likes a certain shade so she doesn't have to wear a bra.

Leo: How about a little astrology lesson? Leo is a fire sign. It's also a fixed sign. That means, amongst the other fire signs, ya'll tend to be a more stable. Or more rooted in reality. Or more grounded, or as other astrology types suggest [not a word I would use], stubborn. I prefer to think of Leo's as "tenacious." The problem with that is that it can be seen as a fault. You lock onto a scenario, scene, a situation, a significant other, and you just don't let go. You don't give up until that Leo fire is thoroughly and completely satiated. Astrology lesson is over.

The problems, especially for almost a decade now, is that Mr. Uranus, that big spooky planet we don't know a lot about, he's been making your Leo world more unstable than you would like. That's a problem. Good news: he's leaving you alone now. You have some little changes over the next couple of days, but the big, "where did that come from" type of radical change should be over with for a little while. It's almost, not quite, but almost time to relax some. Life in Leo land should always be a party, and now's the time to start thinking like that again.

Virgo: I was opening package of trailer repair goods, and the little gadgets were held in place with the universal zip ties. You know,

those little plastic tie things that hold together almost as much stuff as duct tape? When they're fresh, the plastic wire ties are rather flexible, but after they've sat on the shelf for a while, or in a display case, or hanging around hardware store, those ties harden. I suppose that plastic really doesn't last as long as suggested, or maybe there's some kind of a curing process that occurs. So I whipped out a pocketknife, snaked the blade under the plastic zip tie thing, and tried to saw my way through.

My first efforts weren't rewarded. I put more upward pressure on it, and finally, the blade cut through the plastic. And it kept on cutting, too, right into my palm. Not a Palm Pilot, the fleshy portion of my palm. Bright red blood, everywhere. Quite the mess. I went through a half dozen paper towels before I staunched the flow. Didn't hurt so much as it was annoying. There are a couple of morals to my story, and they really apply to you.... Careful with the sharp objects, either a real knife or the sharp edge of your sarcasm. Little things, like plastic ties, can present a better than estimated challenge. Be a little more careful when doing something that you think is routine—the forces opposing you are greater than you estimate. You might want to make sure your tetanus shot is up to date, too.

Libra: I've got one friend who claims he can actually feel the movement of the planets, like now, when Uranus transits into Pisces for a little while. He claims that it affects him, he feels the shift in energy, and I think he's been consuming too much local flora and fauna, myself. His claim isn't a recent one, but the effects of Uranus moving into Pisces has a weird little echo effect over here in Libra. It's strange one, that's for sure. What this does, in one way or another, is to open up some new avenues in your work scene. Good avenues? Paved streets? Dirt roads? I was thinking more along the lines of cobblestones and similar antique paving. Walking on cobblestone streets in cowboy boots—I have extensive personal experience with this—is a challenge, to say the least. So you have a new avenue opening up, but it looks like it's paved with something really old. That means you need to watch where you're putting your feet as traverse this new avenue. Look on the bright side: it is a paved street, just maybe not paved with what you think is the easiest stuff to navigate.

Scorpio: I was listening to a political commentator just the other morning. He was fascinating to listen to, although, if I did any kind

of critical analysis, it would be clear to see that he was working a strong rhetoric backed by somewhat limited facts. In the absence of facts, a strong emotional case is always more interesting, and it's possible to whip up the masses into a feverish pitch over some perceived slight. Critical thinking is important. I'm sure a few Scorpio's will reply and suggest that they always think critically, but that's not really been the case lately. You're in a position where thinking critically is important. It's about examining the facts before you render a judgment call. It's about looking beneath the surface before you go off on a tangent. As long as you understand that the facts are a little on the thin side, and as long as you are good at that Scorpio rhetoric, then you're okay. You're good to go. But remember, there might be a listener out there in the audience, one just like me, who sees through the fancy words and emotional hooks. Make sure you're using real facts, not just ones that seem to fit your Scorpio "cause de jour."

Sagittarius: Living in Texas, with our mixed heritage just means that I get to see weird things on a day-to-day basis. Last week, I think, I was running around with one of my "hippie-chick" friends, you know the type, too young to be a real hippie, but she fits the mould for "neo-hippie" person. In the backyard of her house [typical South Austin abode] there was a hay bale. At one end of the bale, there was a set of faux cow horns. In case you miss the reference, this is a dummy used to practice roping. You know, like the cowboys on TV? In the movies? The Westerns?

Yes, it was a real roping dummy, in her backyard. No, it didn't come with the house, it belonged to her boyfriend, or roommate, or whatever one calls that significant other thing. What's important about this? Sometimes, you don't have to go any further than your own backyard to get just exactly what you need. While sometimes I urge a Sagittarius to look further a-field, sometimes, what we seek is right there, just look out the window. Yes, a roping dummy in the backyard is about par for the course around here, to mix up the sports allegories. Yet, there's something oddly familiar about this, too. Instead of ranging far and wide, as is the typical Sagittarius habit, try looking in your own backyard. You might find the variety there just as pleasing. Plus you could sharpen up those cowboy skills.

Capricorn: For the longest time, I didn't own a TV. Still don't. This has evoked many amusing responses, like the time one of my

fishing buddy's significant other [wife] took one look around the trailer's living room, asked where the TV was, and seeing that there wasn't one, promptly asked what I did for entertainment. I guess the overflowing bookshelves weren't a good enough clue. So when I make a TV reference, like to a cartoon I saw, folks do wonder where I saw it. I think I'm just about the only person without a TV. Neighbors, hotels, family and friends all provide me with plenty of TV footage.

The image I was thinking about, after looking at your chart, is simple. It's nothing more than a cartoon version of a rapidly, wildly vibrating uvula. That's the little thing that hangs down in the back of your throat. Cartoon characters have greatly exaggerated ones, especially when there's trouble. Or when they are trying to emphasize that someone is screaming. Know the feeling? It's even better when it's an animal character -- they don't really have uvulas. The land of fictional yelling is good ground for Capricorn. It's Mars and he's creating a situation wherein a good scream just feels right. After you have a good, cartoon-like scream, after you let off some of that Mars steam, you'll find that you can see the problem--and the solution--much more clearly. But let off some steam, first.

Aquarius: There's a legendary Steak House just east of El Paso, sort of a dude ranch and restaurant. They board horses there, and they keep a small flock of Shetland Ponies for the tourist kiddy appeal thing. There's this one little male Shetland, his head doesn't come much above my knee. But he just thinks he's the baddest of the bad dudes ever. He seems to think he's a ladies man, in horse terms, whatever that is. The last time I was on the ranch, I was amused by the way this little guy kept trying to flirt with one mare. She's a stately, elegant horse, a good saddle horse, so she's about 5 times taller than that little pony.

The thought of those two trying to mate is an amusing picture, to say the very least. I'm not sure, but in horse terms, I couldn't tell if she was flattered or annoyed, or maybe, like your Aquarius self, a little bit of both. It's flattering when someone flirts, even if he's from a different species. But his persistence can be annoying, too, and that's the problem. Don't get upset when someone starts making nice with you. Even if it gets a little annoying at times, be gentle. Don't let it get to you. Venus makes you appealing, and just because the person who "doth protest too much" is a wrong breed

for you, that doesn't mean you shouldn't indulge some of their intentions.

For the Week of: 3/20-26/2003

"[He] wears his wit in his belly and his guts in his head."

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* [II.i.75]

Uranus in Pisces, Sun in Aries, and Mars in Capricorn.

Aries: Happy Birthday Aries! You're feeling better, I just know it. You've got to be. I won't tolerate anything else from you. In my ongoing quest for excellence in horoscopes, I keep checking back with certain signs, just a chance to see what's up, as a form of research for my own work. In doing so, I've found that birthdays are a time when folks typically try to do too much. Reach for a little too far, over-consume the good things in sickening proportions.

Or, remember that game? As kid, you would twirl around and around until you were dizzy? There's no reason to try a trick like that, not during the next couple of days. See: you're going to feel really good, possibly over-exuberant, but there's a problem, too: you're going to be a little more clumsy than usual. You'll find that you're more prone to making those "less than graceful" mistakes that are usually reserved for other signs. As long as you're the center of attention, go ahead, act like a clown and enjoy yourself.

Taurus: How good are you at picking up subtle astrological influences? Too often, your basic sun sign astrology horoscope addresses Taurus as "The Bull." Faulty assumption. There's this delightful, sensual side – one that responds rather well to that delicate touch. And it's that very "delicate touch" that's required now. Easy, easy, go easy. Don't rush. No big deal, don't push too hard.

There's a fine line between "aggressive" and "pushy." It's certainly all right to be aggressive. Don't be pushy. The gentle push is from Mars, gently urging you to attain a goal that is actually easier to obtain, easier than you thought. The pushy stuff comes from an Aries Sun, and you don't want to be too forceful. Get the picture? Pursuing is okay. Chasing is not okay.

Gemini: Let's agree to disagree, you and me, Gemini and astrology fishing guy. I say, "You're over the hump, Gemini." You respond, "No, we still have yet to make it to the summit, and we're here at base camp right now, and it looks like it's a long, tiresome haul from here, all up hill, all difficult, all hard, no hope in sight...."

Given the divergent opinions here, I'd suggest that there is some kind of trouble. But from where I sit, in the back of the bass boat, on the astrological lake of life, it looks like you really have surmounted the most difficult of all the obstacles. I understand that it looks tough from where you are, but I'm in another astrology sign, and I can offer a perspective that you can't get yourself. It's not nearly as tough as you think it is. Here's a hint, since I think you're really over the worst of it: don't take a simple situation and complicate it to the point that no recognizes the original problem. You'll be a lot happier that way. Shoot, I'll be a lot happier that way, too. You don't need to take something simple and make a mess of it, especially not for the sake of just taking something easy and adding more features than are really required.

Cancer: I was listening to some Rev. Horton Heat [Spend a Night in the Box], and some lyrics really moved me—made me think of the Cancer stuff going these days, "Here in my castle, I'm king of the house/My throne is just a Lazy-Boy/A hotrod Ford is just a toy/I maybe rude but I can't be mean/I still must answer to the queen" [music & lyrics by Jim C. Heath].

Some things in your life, like a hotrod Ford—you might consider that a necessity—I would agree, but let's tell the truth, it's nothing more than a toy. Then there's fact that we all have to answer to someone. It's that pesky authority figure thing going on—again. I've got it easy, the Queen of my trailer is the cat. I do have to answer to her, and she's been getting up earlier and earlier these days, now that the sun is coming up earlier. Interferes with my sleep patterns, you know the "astrologer who sleeps until noon" myth. You can live like, in that one song, in a world where you're the king, or you can, like the rest of us Cancer types, bow to the authority figure in question, and answer like you're supposed to. I've found, after years of painful research, it's just easier to do what I'm told to do. Times like this, I just listen to the boss, as my boss still has a complete set of claws.

Leo: I wouldn't want to suggest that any local merchants would be unscrupulous, but when the usual convention masses descend on our bucolic town, I've noticed that at least two or three places raises their prices by a dollar or so, with "special convention-time only" menu items and so forth. It's a lot like this one carpet place I know of, it's been "going out of business" for years now. At least, that's the idea I get, judging from the sun-faded "Going Out of

Business Sale!" signage. Just makes me wonder a little bit. Now, in the case of the local merchants jacking up their prices, I've often felt like I should take the same action as the crowd control requires more staff.

Most of my staff wants the week off, to attend the events. Can't say I blame them, but crowded bars, crowded restaurants, streets clogged with people and cabs, it's a good time not to be here. Some place else. Anyplace else. Any place but here. You need a break from the heavy-duty stuff that's been going on, and this time starts now. Take a break. Give yourself a well-deserved Leo pat on the back. You might not be getting the attention that you want, but I'm noticing that you've been working hard, and here's to you.

Virgo: The last time I bought groceries—I shop at the "warehouse grocery place"—I picked up a carton of frozen waffles. Must've been about 48 of the individual waffles in that box. I've just about eaten them all. I discovered, a long time ago, that a frozen waffle suits my tastes as the perfect food. It has texture, flavor, the right balance of grain products and chemicals, as well as a few other important things, like, straight out of the freezer, it tastes good [to me.] "But Kramer, if you toast it, it will taste better, maybe add some butter and syrup." Too much time, besides, all that other stuff contributes unnecessary calories.

It's a guilty pleasure of mine. A little odd, but good, nonetheless, at least, by my standards. One Virgo buddy's girlfriend once saw me munching away on the frozen delight, and she forcefully remarked, "That's so white!" Yes, I am a [male] Caucasian. It might be an ethnic slur, but it's still a pleasure for me. Guilty little pleasures, maybe you're like me in that you find the syrup and butter just aren't as important, these little things we enjoy, these are important at times like this. It's high time you enjoyed some low cholesterol, fat-free, or whatever, guilty pleasures. Maybe you don't like frozen waffles right out of the carton, but I'm sure you've got something that most of your friends look askance at. Go ahead, enjoy, your astrologer told you it was good idea.

Never hurts to get a second opinion on some events: individual chart reports with e-mail delivery might help.

Libra: Got a couple of things hitting you. One is the very real and tangible world of local activity. You know, friends and family, extended family, cohorts, fishing buddies, and partners in crime.

The other is more personal, along the lines of a little bit of soul-searching. We're back to the original question of family. Now, in the strictest of astrology terms, "family" is supposed to mean folks known as "blood relatives." I tend to look at a slightly broader definition, though, as I consider my family to include friends and neighbors, plus that one girl at the diner. To be honest, at certain times, she's more kin to me than my own, blood relatives.

Where you place your Libra loyalty is the question, and it can apply across the whole line, from distant friends to the more immediate family and such. The business world, as we once knew it, used to display incredible loyalty. These days, though, the business family is just as fickle as that last girl I dated. Personally, I tend to rank my fishing buddies as the most important of friends. Who else is willing to come fetch you out of jail at 4 in the morning? Now, in this one example, the jail thing, it was because we were supposed to go fishing, but never mind that now. Look around and figure out the folks you can really count and depend on.

Scorpio: The other week, while I was staying at my parents' homestead, in fashionable Dallas, I watched one morning as my own, dear, sweet Scorpio Ma Wetzel prepared to rush off to a meeting of some kind. She left. Ten seconds later, she rushed back in, "I forgot that book I was going to return to the library," she said. She left again. 20 seconds later, she was back, "And that movie to return," she added. She left again. She came back in 30 seconds, "I was just pulling out, and realized I could go straight from the meeting to yoga class, I'll just grab my outfit and change there," she added.

I hadn't left the kitchen table yet. I was reading the morning paper, about to plug my laptop into their phone line, while I was still nursing a cup of coffee. I'm not sure, but I think she forgot one other thing, and there was a fourth trip. At this point, by my reckoning, she was at least 7 minutes late.

For all that activity, for all the distance she covered, for all the little Scorpio quips, she wasn't getting anywhere too fast. The whole time, her wood-panel station wagon was idling in the front driveway. Although the car was stationary, she was busy spinning her Scorpio wheels pretty fast. You can be just like her, or, you can set yourself down, have a nice cup of coffee with your son [or something similar], get your little list of things to do all together,

then leave. Doing so can keep you from having to install a revolving door at the front of the Scorpio house.

Sagittarius: I was set to go fishing with one of my buddies the other day, and I had a more pressing arrangement pop up at the last minute. "Don't worry, buddy, I'll 'pre-fish' for you." Oh great, just like the big bass tournaments? Some deal from a friend? "Pre-Fishing" is fancy way to play with fish in the lake—you cut the hooks off the baits and lures, don't want to leave the fish too wary. You can test all the stuff you want, without having to worry about catching anything.

Hint: this is a professional trick. I'd call it a "dry run," but with the lures and stuff soaking in the lake, it's not exactly a dry run. So over the next few days, as there will be some upsets in your schedule, don't worry about it. Offer to "pre-fish" the area for your buddies. It's the least you can do. Or, if you're like me, and get left behind, just remember that your friend is doing nothing more than a little research, on your behalf. At least, they should be. I'm not sure how much I trust my fishing buddies to "pre-fish" a lake for me. I sometimes wonder if they aren't really just fishing, and telling me what I want to hear. Know the feeling?

Capricorn: Wasn't it at lunch, just last week? My Capricorn friend called me up, wanted to "break bread together," and we hooked it out to the place by the lake for a quick meal. She was upset over something, and wanted to talk about it, but I'd had a rougher morning, and she no sooner showed up at my place than I started to cuss. Do about three or four phone readings in a row, listen to the same sad stories, blame the planets a couple of times, and I can get quite animated about what's going on. So even though this was supposed a meal where she could vent, I wound up doing most of the talking, at least, at first.

Same situation, different week: you've got some stuff on your heavy Capricorn chest that you want to unload. You've got a dear friend that you want to "dish" with. You're also going to have to listen to a long, rambling diatribe about someone else's troubles before we get around to talking through your problems. Capricorn patience is in short supply. You don't want to listen to us, but look at what you're going to put us through, "us" being the other 11 signs. Let us unload first, then I promise you'll get your chance. Let the other signs go first, and that way, you'll be the last and, therefore, most important. Like it should be.

Aquarius: Ever get that feeling in the pit of your Aquarius stomach that something is about to happen? Venus is flying through the trailing edge of your sign, and she gets mighty close, at the end of this scope's duration, to your ruling planet. That's the source of the rumbling in your Aquarius tummy. I wouldn't want to suggest that this is just a ruse, or a chance for the planets to fake you out, but I'm not so sure that there really is a source for that premonition you've got. The way I see it, it's close, but not in your sign. Strange things are, indeed, afoot.

But that sense that something is about to happen? That feeling gnawing away at the peripheral Aquarius vision? That sense you get in your abdomen that something is about to go horribly awry? You know what? I think you're just hungry, and good meal will satisfy those cravings. Go ahead, give into the temptation. You'll be surprised how a little indulgence can make you feel a whole lot better.

Pisces: I like Pisces. Pisces can be quite passionate. Whether it's a discussion about local High School football, the all-important topic of barbecue, or other, more mundane topics, my Pisces friends can be quite animated and display great passion about these various threads of conversation. This is stuff that's usually very important. Completely unrelated, I know one Vegetarian Pisces, and she's particularly good at finding excellent, out-of-the-way barbecue places. Go figure.

It only makes sense, though, it's part of that Pisces passion, that quest for excellence. Regrettably, after looking over your Pisces planets, there's a sense that you can't be bothered about this. What was a big deal last week, last month or even last year is not longer that important-Pisces, and I quote, "I just can't be bothered by this right now," unquote. If it's bothering you, put whatever it is off until later. But if you're like I suspect you are, you just can't be bothered with our mundane, unimportant problems. That's not your problem, either. Tell them-or us-to wait. [Guerilla astrology tip: put everything off until Miss Venus makes it into your sign, next week.]

For the Week of: 3/27-4/2/2003

"[You are] a stony adversary, an inhuman wretch,/Uncapable of pity, void, and empty/From any dram of mercy."

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* [IV.i.4-6]

Looked like some of the unsolicited flame mail from last week. It's that "start of Aries" thing, always gets us here at the office. Big event in Austin coming up. Tell the admissions folks, "I'm in Kramer's band," and that might be a way to beat the cover charge. Usually works for me, anyway—but no guarantees.

Aries: Happy birthday! That doesn't cover all the Aries, but those of us here at the office, we all want to make sure we get that out of the way before we get onto business. The business side of life is the problem for your usually excellent Aries judgment. I'm not usually questioning your ability to see something for what it exactly is. I've talked about this before, the way a television camera doubles the weight of a fish. No, I'm serious.

The other day, I landed a bass that weighed maybe an optimistic four pounds. My fishing buddy pointed out that if it had been on a fishing show, that bass would weigh at least six pounds—it's a trick of the camera. Or maybe it's the press kit. Anyway, you're liable to believe that camera instead of what your own, good senses say. Your Aries eyes lead you to believe, like the cameraman says, "That thing's huge! Must be six or seven pounds!" Right. More like three, but who's counting? The deal is, Mars is weighing in to obfuscate the way call things the way you see them. Go easy with the hyperbole, and careful, make sure you see what you really see. 3 pounds, tops. At least I was being honest.

Taurus: When this last happened to me, the way your astrology stuff is stacking up, I wandered into an old "Grain & Feed" store in a small town a few hours west of here. It had that smell of a small town "Seed & Feed" place, the faint aroma of paint, tar, fertilizer, odd bits of hardware floating around. Up near the front of the store, there was a pocketknife display case. In one corner, there was a small pocketknife. For me, this was a holy grail. After opening the case, and peeling the wire off, I discovered an item that had been in that display case for over 30 years. As a collector of such things, it was my big find. Near-mint condition, a little sun-bleached, untouched by humans for over 30 years. On the backside of the main blade, there was small amount of corrosion, in the shape of a

thumbprint. Talking to the storekeeper, I suspect it was his print from a while back—like 30 plus years.

This is the sort of thing that can happen to you. The value of that particular pocketknife, in collector circles, is quite high. However, the monetary value of that knife is outweighed by my sentimental attachment. You're looking for something, and some patient work, plus a little barbecue, can turn up just what you're seeking.

Gemini: Last Christmas, one of my family members stuffed a few fishing lures into my Xmas stocking. Cool enough, I guess, but they weren't lures that are particularly useful on area lakes. But it was a nice gesture. I was digging through my tackle, looking for something to fish with, and I pulled one of those lures out. Tied it on the end of the line, and started casting. In late March, there is this occasional heavy wind on area lakes. I was grateful because that one lure had some serious heft to it. Fun enough. It cast pretty well. Now, when working with monofilament fishing line, especially on light tackle, I have to use a special knot for attaching things like lures, and hooks, the various baits I use. That kind of knot isn't like a regular knot because those seem to slip right out of the slippery lines. I was running the trolling motor, trying this new lure, and I wound up for a good cast, the lure went sailing through the air, unraveled my special knot, and just kept right on going.

My buddy in the back of the boat got a good laugh out of this, as did I. Sometimes, when events—or fishing lures—don't go quite the way you want them to, you just have to laugh about it. I did point out that it was good cast. The only problem was that lure was no longer attached to anything. These things happen. Do like I did, laugh about it. In the proper perspective, it really is an amusing few days in Gemini.

Cancer: I'm real big on "catch and release" fishing. It makes for much more tidy sport, nothing to clean up at the end of the day, at least, there are no "internal fish parts" to dispose of. More sporting. Besides, the biggest of the sport fishes are usually pregnant females, and who wants to added karmic implication of taking—and keeping—a pregnant critter? Whoever heard of "Bass Cavier"? Even if it's only an onerous bass?

Keep that idea in mind, the "catch and release" mantra. Between two major planetary influences, one would be the position of the Sun in Aries, and the other would Mars, you're going to land a big

fish—or something. Think about it, though, is this something that you want to keep hanging around? Is this an item you want to slice open, remove its entrails, pick out all the little fine bones, and then go through the whole process of cooking it up? Or is this a trophy item? When I'm really in good form, I figure a typical fish gets about anywhere from 30 seconds to five minutes of my time, I take its picture, and then I let that fish go back to do its fish thang. You've got one on your Cancer hook right now, and you need to think about it, "catch and release"? Or are you going to try and keep that one?

Leo: A typical Leo manager gives direct orders. A typical follower of that Leo, does exactly as instructed. These are not typical times, and since you're looking at this horoscope, you're not a typical Leo. You're "THE Leo." To move things forward for you, let's turn the tables, so to speak, on the rest of the non-Leo types. I'm not asking you not to be honest, and I'm not asking you to be outright nefarious, but I may suggest that you need to be a little more sly than usual. Instead of the usual, "Do this for me," verbal Leo directive, what I'm suggesting is something a little more indirect—"Could you, please, maybe, think about doing this one little thing for me?"

Look around, a couple of other signs are bouncing off the walls. It's sometimes a whole lot easier to get what you want by being extra nice rather than being too straightforward. This is one of the times when an extra layer of tact and diplomacy is necessary. Use that Leo charm—you'll get much further.

Virgo: Exuberance is a good thing. Yes, I'm aware that there are a few rather pejorative influences, but then, there's also this thin veneer on top of it all, like a glossy coat of paint on an old truck, a sweet layer of good feelings, floating around in Virgo land. Careful with the exuberance, though, as it can get a little carried away. Imagine that you're a little guy bass [fish]. In the local lakes, right after the girl fishes spawn, the guy fishes are supposed to guard the eggs. Supposedly. Now, some unlikely Fishing Guide to the Stars comes along, and lays a brightly colored worm down, right in front of you. You snap at it, doing the fish equivalent of flexing your pectoral muscles.

The two of us struggle, and you win—hey, it happens, remember the exuberance and thin veneer of good stuff, lacquered on top? Here's the catch: you go home to the girl fish, and there's this bright

orange worm and hook hanging out of your large mouth. "What have you been doing?" she demands. Like most guys, that boy bass, just says, "Murmur. Murmur, murmur." [Translation from fish speak with a hook in the mouth: "Me? Nothing! Why do you ask?"] It's hard to argue with something like a big orange worm hanging out of the side your mouth. Watch the exuberance. And I'll bet it's not a good week for me catching Virgo fish.

Libra: Not far from where I live, just across the river, there's a small neighborhood that's not quite gentrified, still maintaining some of its original Austin charm. A couple of weekends ago, I was killing time on a Saturday night, and we were sitting around her kitchen, a bit drafty on a cool March night, and she picked up a guitar. "This one is for my last boyfriend," as she has a propensity [and marked attraction] for the musician types. Each song she did had a nice, light upbeat tone, until she got around to the punch line in the song. Whoa. Punch might be a little weak, it was more like a kick. Each tune was amusing, light, airy, that sort of "girl with a guitar" kind of song.

Then came the kicker—"I'm like, SO over you." Those weren't the exact words, but that's the idea. My friend was bemoaning her fate, and how the guy she got back together with hadn't changed like he'd promised, and she was crying every night, and it was all a sad story. That's why the music was so good. Write your own songs. I'm pretty sure you're not nursing a broken heart. I'm pretty sure you're trouble is slightly different, but it's a time to look long and hard at that one situation, and then, if the actual facts merit it, kick it to the curb. Then you can write some funny songs about the experience, just to remind us that you're over him/her/it.

Scorpio: There's a little branch of a creek, right behind Shady Acres, and then, of course, a tall bridge fording that creek, as well. One of the trees along the bank of the river is a really old willow, must be six or more feet in circumference. Because this tree is so close to the edge of the river, the bank has started to give way a little, and that willow leans out over the creek at almost a 45-degree angle. To the right young person, this looks like a perfect spot to crawl up the tree's trunk, and jump into the cool water of that creek. Some daring souls have even taken up jumping from the bridge, but that's not a trip I want to make.

Given that Ms. Venus moves around some over the weekend, though, something like crawling up on that big tree and dropping

into the cool, refreshing water of that creek is a good idea. It's still just a little early to think about summer time pass times, but there's a hint that this isn't such a bad idea. Those silly, summer joys are a rewarding pleasure, and once Ms. Venus picks up speed in Pisces, it's worth considering.

Sagittarius: My neighborhood in South Austin is a political hotspot. It's a seething bed of liberals with some die-hard conservatives thrown in, just to make sure it's all a good mix. The 'hood doesn't vote just one way or another. However, if you ask the local politicians, my 'hood is famous for one thing: letter writing. With the advent of computers, electronic mail, and web pages, activism has reached new heights. Or lows, depends on which side of the fence you're on. As a good Sagittarius, you can see both sides of the fence. I've got a friend, lovely lass, and she took it upon herself to modify a Republican sign in the front of her neighbor's yard. While my heart goes out to her, she did this when there were a lot of motorists tooling by. The Democratic motorists offered verbal support whereas the Republicans were busy trying to call the cops.

As a true Sagittarius, I applauded her efforts. However, as a responsible citizen, defacing a sign in some one else's yard isn't a good idea. [Yes, she got in trouble. Worse yet, she had to go and replace the sign as her penance—it was either that or face a fine.] The real problem? My friend wasn't that offended by the political statement or the candidate, she was offended by the enormity of the sign, its relative placement, and the way it obscured a hazardous corner. The point is, sometimes, the best impulsive action, all though it gets a message across, maybe you want to think it all the way through before you take it upon your Sagittarius self to modify that sign.

Capricorn: One book says to assert your Capricorn self. Another text suggests that you be careful about making your point, as you're liable to irritate most people. So much for looking this stuff up in books, as the texts always seem to contradict themselves. So what's the right answer? There isn't one. There is a chance, though, for you to move yourself ahead, but I'd be a little careful. I've got one friend, and she makes her points, clearly and concisely, only, it take her about forever to get her point across. Listen carefully, though, and you'll find that she carefully plots her course using infallible logic. Follow her lead. It might take you a little longer than you want, to get from where you're at to where you want to be, but

carefully plot this course, and show how you got from here to there. Just having the correct answer isn't always good enough; be prepared to show how you used irrefutable logic to arrive at your correct answer to the problem. "Just because," doesn't work. Trust me, I've tried it before.

Aquarius: I used to be a guest on an early morning radio talk show. I've done this a number of times, and the problem is the hour of the day that I'm expected at the radio station. I've had to be at various stations at 5 or 6 AM. That's just too early to be up, vivacious, and talkative. It just doesn't work. When I depart for the lake, for fishing at that hour, polite, kind, and considerate chatter is not required. The usual greeting is more along the lines a grunt rather than any kind of intelligible speech. Your chart resembles how I feel about that early morning talk radio spots. I'm not eager, pleased, or even thrilled to be up at that hour, much less pleased to be the guest of some hyper-animated jock, talking, joking, and laughing a mile a minute.

You're like me, not pleased with the level of enthusiasm you're face to face with. I'm not saying you're not a morning person, and I'm not saying that you're not happy that you're reaching out to hundred or thousands of listeners, I'm just suggesting their timing isn't convenient with your schedule or time frame. That's a problem. It's an inconvenience. Look: at times like this, if someone is trying to help your career, it's your duty to get up and put your best Aquarius foot forward, show your pretty Aquarius face to the world, in other words, do what you got to do. More than once, I've thought it would just be easier to keep going from the night before in order to make it to those morning shows.

Pisces: Dearest Pisces, we have trouble right now. Last week, I beseeched you to put everything off until now. Well, it is now. The scope of this horoscope starts out with a bump in the road, as Venus goes careening past Uranus. Makes for an auspicious start to the weekend. Or it can rattle your nerves, and make you wonder if you need to contact your chiropractor. Remember that attitude I was talking about last week? Try that, as best you can, for the Thursday-Friday time period. After that, you may still need to see your health-care provider. Or, you might just find that some of these problems have worked themselves out.

I was introducing two friends to each other via e-mail. "Bubba, this is Bubbette, Bubbette, this is Bubba. Talk amongst yourselves." With

e-mail, this is particularly easy because I could just cc: each other on the deal. In case you're wondering in your Pisces mind, no, this wasn't a romantic set-up. They had business to discuss. The part that's important, what your attention should be drawn to, is the little bit about "talk amongst yourselves." You set stuff up. Let it work itself out. Venus creates a nice flow, once we get halfway through the weekend, and from thence forth, you should be back to your usual Pisces self.

For the Week of: 4/3-9/2003

"Where the greater malady is fixed,/The less scarce is felt."

Shakespeare's *King Lear* [III.ii.77]

Mars is in Capricorn; Venus is in Pisces. Want a personal take on your own chart and what the planets portend for the future? Big event in Austin last weekend.

Aries: There are two useful methods to get one's attention. The first is a polite and gentle "ahem" comment or a cough, a subtle pause intended to draw the speaker's attention to a fact. In print, this can be a well-timed space, maybe an extra comma or even a "!" an exclamation point. Some media designers use underline, bold or set the comment off "in parenthetical quote marks." These are the less dramatic ways to get someone's attention.

Then, there is always the tried and true method often employed around here, a strong vocal statement in a decibel range that is bound to attract attention. "You. HEY YOU!" Get the idea? Two methods, one is soft and sweet, the other is loud and often times, quite irritating. My friend Bubba has a third method, it involves a "Louisville Slugger," but I don't advocate this method myself. Personally, I think he keeps that around as a threat more than as an actual method of communication. Mars and the Sun square off at each other [lucky Aries, huh?] and during this stand-off, you're going to try to get someone's attention. Let me suggest that you try the first method in all its iterations first. Only when that fails should you try anything else. For the record, I strongly do not recommend Bubba's third, "trailer park" version.

Taurus: It's funny to me, not ironic, just amusing how I see all this good stuff, and your Taurus self doesn't see it that way. In a recent exchange of mail with a Taurus, it was suggested that my "Bubba Baseball Royal Shakespeare" hat was adjusted a little too tight because I was obviously missing the point. But the point is, don't take something that's not broken, and break it, just for the sake of stirring up some trouble. Trouble's a sure bet, and if you look for it, that trouble will find you. What I'm suggesting is that you don't look for problems this next few days.

I'm sure, like anybody else down here on the earth, you will encounter a few people who think you're wearing your hat a little too tight. Doesn't mean that you really are, and it doesn't mean that you have to buy into their problems. There's a certain amount of

charm that you exude and the careful Taurus uses this charm with a modicum of discretion. There's something rather unusual cooking up in various quadrants [looks more slices of pizza instead of quadrants, but that editor kept changing the words] of the Taurus Heavens. It's okay to be a little weird; just remember that you add class to what you do.

Gemini: So my good Gemini buddy was having a tough time of it. "I'm doomed right? I mean, I that one girl, she was interested for a little while, but she's not answering my e-mail, and then that other one, she's out of town, and that third girl? She won't return her calls to me. I must be doomed, right? I'll be single the rest of my life, I just know it." If you take the situation apart, though, if you really look at it, the obvious becomes apparent, this guy was trying to date at least three women at one time. From my own, youthful indiscretions, all I can advise is that this is not a good idea.

I'm not one for male bashing, but if one guy can't even keep one woman happy, how can someone expect to keep three entertained? That's quite the juggling act. The deal is, with all your Gemini skills, no matter how good your interpersonal skill set is, you just can't keep everyone happy, not now. You can please some of the people some of the time, all the people none of the time, and something else goes here. It's not an incomplete thought, it's just not fully flushed out. That's the problem. Nothing is worse than being on of those three people being juggled, either. That's a problem. Saturn expects work, and Saturn will also drain away some of your usual ability to juggle situations. Slow it down, and take these items [and people] one at a time.

Cancer: There's this great bit of advice from the collected astrology books I use for reference, some sort of line about, "It's a great time for some selfless work." Sure. Do something nice for someone else. But you're Cancer. You do that, anyway. So I wonder about that suggestion. Too often, too, the good intentions go horribly awry. You complain, "But I was just trying to be nice, you know...."

Yes, I know. And I'll even agree. But that's the problem, as well, you have to make sure, when you're trying to be nice, it some how blows up. I'm with you on this. I bought a handful of new lures, as a gift, for one of my fishing buddies. I was motivated to purchase stuff strictly based on color. Bright greens, lovely yellow hues, the lures were shot through with verdant striping, odd shaped dots, and tipped with treacherous hooks [like any good fishing lure

should be]. The problem? The lake we fish on most frequently? Those lovely lures don't do anything there. Apparently the fish don't like that particular color scheme. On my part, on the part of Cancer's everywhere, it was a rather nice gesture. On the part of the receiving end, though, my fishing buddy, he just looked at me, "What?" I'm sure there was some subtext, like a cartoon character thinking, "What the heck? These are near useless." Try and be nice, but you might want to hold off on actually buying something for your fishing buddy. Your intentions are good. Your tastes, like mine, might be highly suspect.

Leo: I've enjoyed good luck and less than wonderful luck and occasionally, I've lost almost everything. One time was memorable because the only thing I didn't lose was my shirt. In fact, I always kept a "reserve" credit card, one without much of a limit, no charges, just in case I needed it. I did charge a T-shirt, a special "I lost everything but this shirt" souvenir to remind me about my mistakes. Why are my losses your benefit? Your luck is changing. No, really, it's changing. From that sense that you know everything is supposed to be good to that feeling that you know everything is starting to work to having events conspire to actually work out—here's the kicker: in your Leo favor. Yes.

One word, an affirmative, yes. I couldn't be so wonderfully positive about how life is in Leo land, and I couldn't cite my own mistakes in those dens of sin without there being a catch: timing. Close may work in some government functions, state agencies, and when using a shotgun, but close is all we're getting for the next couple of days. However, I want you to know in your Leo heart that, yes, it is about to change all for the better.

Virgo: Ever have a brush with fame? It's happened so many times to me, I don't worry about it anymore, I start out with my usual comment, "So what's your birthday?" I also try to keep the fawning, servile, sycophant behavior, on my part, to a minimum. Stars, like rock stars, movie stars, other media personalities, they must get this all the time. Be nice. Be sincere. Don't overdo it, either. Why worry about this? I'm pretty sure you've got just such a "brush with fame" coming up. These events never occur at a good time. Your hair will be all out of place, you'll just be getting in from a workout, and you'll have that thin sheen of Virgo perspiration on your upper lip, just when you feel like you look your worst.

Deal with it. I figure that a hot and sweaty Virgo is, in reality, a lot more attractive than one who's all cleaned up. There's that special, somewhat earthy essence to a Virgo. Use that, especially since this big deal occurs when you least expect it, and when you feel like you're rather under-prepared. Remember: when you're "just yourself," you appear to me a lot more real, and after all, them big stars, they like real people. My worst example of a brush with fame was a certain rock group, and I didn't realize that the whole band was comprised of guys who are all so short, "But I always thought you guys were, like, GIANTS." [They are.]

Libra: I think it was last month, but we'd gone fishing, and the sky was overcast. Low clouds kept scudding up from the south, bearing portents of rain. More like mist than rain. When we finally packed it in for the day, there was the slightest little drizzle, not really rain, just heavy dewdrops forming in the air around us. "Don't bother with a rain suit," I admonished, "we're only about 30 seconds from the dock." That's more like about two minutes at three-quarters throttle, or 50 knots [per hour]. Those raindrops at 60 miles an hour are lot different. This isn't like a spring shower, this is like "super shooter" water gun in the face at very close range. The "gentle spring rain" stings, pelting us with hard droplets.

It's almost like a face-full of pea gravel, only, it was like being sand blasted. "30 seconds, huh?" my fishing friend asked, "sure." By the time the boat was on the trailer, the rain stopped, and it was steamy again. We were dried off before ever pulled out onto the highway. Point is, there's some discomfort, but ask yourself, "Self, is it really that bad?" You might be able to tough it for 30 seconds [now 3 minutes], and you'll probably be dry thanks to the Mars/Sun roasting [Mars is in Capricorn, the Sun is in Aries, and you're the focal point for their attentions].

Scorpio: I like combining elements that don't fit well together. Take something as simple [and complex] as Bass Fishing in Texas. Then consider some of the lesser-read Shakespeare texts. See? Two items in a list that don't belong together, yet, I can combine them with a modicum of success. Other times, though, there are things that don't go together, and should never be mixed. There's a couple of "authentic Irish pubs" here in town. You know the places, the look and feel of Ireland, in your own neighborhood? I met Bubba at one of them the other night.

He was drinking Irish liquor that was "old enough to drive my car." After a little while, I was getting hungry, and I suggested Mexican food, another local flavor favorite. The effect on Bubba wasn't good. Apparently, there are some things in life that should never be mixed.

According to Bubba's Irish-Texas heritage, European liquor and Mexican food is an "Evil combination." Might have been the mood he was in, and I certainly didn't see the problem, but when a feller's had a fair amount of Irish whiskey, I've found it's best not to argue. So there was no late night run for Tex-Mex. Some things work well in juxtaposition to others. Some items, though, don't work well together. When you face up with two items that don't want to get along together, follow my lead: don't argue. Arguing with someone full of antique Irish whiskey goes beyond the usual category of "stupid things to do."

Sagittarius: It's sometimes painful to admit to certain mistakes, but the good fishing days are upon us with a vengeance, and I'm pressed for time. Really short tale about tail, a fish tail, to be precise. We were just sort of hanging out, not really catching much because the fish were certainly not interested in us or our lures, when we spied a couple of fish, lurking in the shade of the bank. We tossed lures, plastic things that looked like salamanders, frogs, crawdads, and everything else in front of those fish [it's called "sight fishing" when you can see them]. I finally tried my old faithful, a small "spook," and that one worked.

As I was about to reach down and haul my catch up by the jaw, for the requisite picture, my fishing partner made a hilarious comment. The edge of the boat is slippery, the fish is still wiggling on the end of the line, I'm trying to grab the camera, the still-moving fish, and get all of this done at once, and I fell to one knee, almost went over the edge of the boat. Fish got away. Pole fell in the water. I feel on my backside, convulsed with laughter. Hey, look on the bright side, I didn't go swimming, and we were in a shallow creek bed so I could reach in and get the pole. Maybe you don't see the humor here, but I had to be grateful for little things. Look, nothing is going quite right. It's not quite wrong, either. That means you don't have to get upset about a little slip like that. We all make mistakes. At least I'm enough of a Sagittarius to look at it with good humor. Try it, you'll find it's amusing.

Capricorn: It was a Gulf Coast trip, not long ago. The price for a motel room with a certain chain-mind you, not the kind of place either I or a Capricorn would ever stay at—was advertised in big letters. North Austin? \$42.95/night. South Austin? \$40.95/night. Although there is a shorter route, at times, just sticking to the Interstate is easier, so to continue with the trip, by the time we passed through San Marcos, \$39.95/night, and San Antonio, \$38.95/night, we could see that the further south we got, the less expensive the cheap motels were. No consistency in prices, other than lower and lower. By the time we got to the outskirts of the Bay, the motel in the refinery area was a low, low \$29.95/night. Notice the spelling. [Notice, too, the distinctive aroma of the refinery.]

Don't stop at the first place, and don't take the first deal that comes along. I think you'd be paying too much, and if you're willing to go a little extra distance, given Mars in your sign and all, I think you can find a great deal, if you just look far enough away.

Aquarius: Delicious stuff: Pecan, Jalapeno, Pesto. I'm not sure the order that the ingredients and the name of the concoction is supposed to go in, but it was—as far as I knew—an Italian dish, only, it was made from very Texas ingredients. The peppers, the pecans, all of that is more native for me than, I suspect, in the land of Caesars. But it's good, and you'll have to trust me on that, if you can't find it in a local store. It's weird combinations like that, which are important, when looking over your next couple of days. As one of my Aquarius friends is fond of saying, "Who'd a-thunk it?"

Still, consider something very traditional, and then consider a localized version, something to suit your own, somewhat strange set of Aquarius sensibilities. Indulge some flights of fancy, maybe whip something up in your Aquarius kitchen that's similar to my little indulgence. You deserve a break, and there's no reason why you can't have something that's both traditional and non-traditional at the same time.

Pisces: Stop. Right now, just stop. Halt all forward, backward, sideways motions. Just halt for a minute, all right? No, I'm not saying you should just drop everything, but I want to your stop and consider a few items. Action is good. But you're going to find that it really, really helps if you plan what action you're going to take. Instead of just doing something for the sake of doing something,

consider the output, and the amount of energy required to get from here to there.

Look: I've got this one Pisces friend, and she was in a mood like this, so she painted her bedroom. It was a terrible color. It reminded me of the results of drinking too much tequila, then being forced to leave the content of your stomach--and everything you ate--in the porcelain bowl. Yes, the color was that bad. I can still recall what she was doing, at the time she picked the color, "The paint chip looked so good, and when I held it up against the wall, it seemed like it would be so soothing and inviting." Sure. Looks good on paper, or, in this case as a paint sample next to the blank wall. But when you put this idea into action, when you cover the whole wall, in fact, every wall in the room, with this stuff, it takes on a different attitude.

For the Week of: 4/10-16/2003

"Slander, Whose tongue is sharper than the sword's."

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* [II.iii.84]

The term "maverick" is from derived from a San Antonio native. In 25 words or less, offer up [with proper citations for sources] the root of the word. Winner's are eligible for a free [e-mail delivery only] "el-cheapo" chart report. Or similar prize. Graft, gratuities and similar inducements are encouraged. Address all essay answers to the cat. (Some restrictions apply; contest ends at midnight 4/15/2003.)

Aries: The pressure should be lessening by now. I mean, by the time you get around to reading this, you should be feeling a little bit better. Last week, and the start of this week, it's kind of like one of those lingering hangovers. I wouldn't know anything about that myself, not being what you call, "a drinking man," I don't know exactly what this is like. But I've read about it often enough, and I've seen my friends, the morning after, the day after, and in one case, poor guy, a week later.

He really did swear off drinking for forever, not sure how good that was. Instead of swearing off forever and ever, though, given where Mars is in your chart, maybe think about just using a little more moderation. This doesn't have to apply to drinking, either, it could be any number of excesses that you've been engaging in. You should find that the pressure looks like it's more of an Aries internal pressure, is starting to go a little easier on your own Aries psyche.

Taurus: "So did I tell you about the one...." Yes. "How about the time that...." Yes. "Or there was that situation where...." Heard that one, too. My fine Taurus friend, instead of repeating old stories, instead of sending out jokesthat have long outlived their usefulness, how about using some of this recent influx of Mercury energy to do something useful? I know, it reminds you of a time when, and then you launch into another story.

That's nice. My suggestion still stays: we've probably heard your stories a time or two. Nothing new. I'll agree that usually you're the most mellifluous of the signs. And I'll tell you that I like listening to you talk, most of the time. But I'll also warn you, over the course of the next couple of days, you're going to be inclined to rattle on and on, and frankly, none of us [any of the other signs] are interested

in hearing what you've got to say. Got a friend like this, no story is complete until he's told it about three different times. I've always been amazed at his extemporaneous content, and the way he can change the story just enough to make it more amusing. Never let the facts interfere with the plot or the tale. Sure, nice idea.

The problem is, my most excellent Taurus friend, we've heard all your stories, jokes, jibes and diatribes a time or two. Sit on your hands for a little while, I'll promise you a good, attentive audience in a little while, but not over the next couple of days.

Gemini: I wonder if that teacher ever realized what she was doing. She once told me I had a "golden tongue." I acted dismayed. She clarified, "It's more like a 'golden shovel' with you." I'm drawing your precocious Gemini attention to the "golden tongue" and "golden shovel" analogy. Yes, here in Texas, when we pile it on, we pile it on really deep. Of course, we also have mannerism and affectations of speech that assist us in our endeavor to win our ways with words. It's a matter of talking pretty. I know you can do. If you seem to be losing the battle with spare, sparse prose, try ratcheting the noise up a notch. Use that ability you've got to make the whole thing more palatable under a torrent of Gemini ad-lib, humorous, anecdotal, evidence.

There are a two ways to win folks over, and if the facts don't seem to be working in your favor, then modify what you're telling us in order to get your point across. "Facts," in fact, can be quite malleable. Modify as you see fit to make the story line a little better. A little, pretty, wording can sure help matters.

Cancer: Look: not every Virgo person is an anal-retentive, obsessed with cleanliness, detail-oriented person. Not every Virgo is like that. To be sure, they all have there moments, and I'm sure you know at least on Virgo-typeperson. You get this picture? You know the one I'm talking about, the ones who worry about obsessively worrying about details, who can't do anything if the entire area is not sterile and hygienic, the ones who are so worried that some minute detail might elude their grasp? Yes, that obsessive Virgo stuff will drive some sane people rather crazy.

Look: you're not a Virgo. You're not obsessive-compulsive about cleaning, hygiene, or being tidy. But there's a hint, from Mars, the Sun and even a couple of other planets. Think about that obsessive trait, especially when it comes to cleaning your own home. I'm

leading up to something here, a little extra time spent cleaning up the Cancer trailer, and you'll find, as the next few weeks and months unfold, this is a good thing. The efforts you expend over the next couple of days, getting your own stuff in order, the better off you are, a little later. Consider a little "spring cleaning" is in order for your Cancer self. [It is springtime in the Northern Hemisphere, for that one reader in Australia, consider it "Fall" cleaning, I guess.]

Leo: Make a wish list. Make it this weekend. Set aside a little time to daydream, a little time to make imponderable, improbable and seemingly unreachable goals. Fetch yourself a little ink, some parchment, and list out what it is that you really want. It's called a "wish list" for a reason -- these are dreams. Items, events, circumstances that seem impossible to ever attain.

Me? I keep hoping I'll make it to a Fishing TV program, one where folks listen to every word, and a place where every cast catches something big [besides underwater vegetation]. Your goal might not be a your own fishing program on TV, but it could be something like that. A little bit of good stuff. There's this really cute little card and knick-knack shop, not far from an Amy's Ice Cream, on Sixth, next to Waterloo Records. With ice cream dripping down the side of the cup, me and whomever, would usually wonder into the shop. They used to carry hats, among other items. That one time, I found a hat, with a fishing lure, and the date of the lure's design. Which, coincidentally, matched my year of birth. I took it as a sign. That hat's pretty beat up now, the bill is bent in an irregular fashion, some of the color has started to fade, and it doesn't retain any of its original shape [or glory]. But it was the perfect hat for the time. And it continues to bring me good luck in certain situations. Look at that wish list, you could wind up with a lucky hat like I did. Not as good as a TV show, but you know, it's lasted a lot longer.

Virgo: Talk about your natural fit. We had a cold night, last week, and as I was shivering, I realized that there was an easy solution to being so cold [it was getting well below an acceptable 75 degrees], I could put some clothes on. By the time February rolls into a town, I'm ready to be barefoot and in shorts until my birthday comes up again.

Local events and the weather don't always agree with me, but that recent cold snap made me think about the way my particular, hand-made in Texas, cowboy boots fit. They fit just like slippers. What's even better, I couldn't go out and work a shovel, ankle deep in

"compost" like I've done before. Slippers don't provide ankle coverage. Don't roll your Virgo eyes at me--this is important. "Ankle-deep might be right, but I think Kramer's shoveling something this way," your Virgo self thinks. Nope, this isn't an ad for particular brand of boots.

This is about comfort. What fits, what works, and what is efficient for your Virgo self. Not everyone can wear boots, and not everyone thinks that we should all be barefoot and half-naked in April. But these are my comfort zones. You've got comfort zones, as well-defined as mine, and you can really benefit from sticking to those comfort zones for the next couple of days. It's like slipping into a pair of comfortable boots.

Libra: Stop. Listen. Look. Three, very short, commands. I was just getting through security at the little Dallas airport [Dallas Love Field], and after being cleared, turning on my computer, and so forth, I winced as the metal detector went off when a cop came through. I stopped in my headlong rush to make a nice comment to the officer, and I asked if this wasn't just about the cushiest gig possible.

"Man, this better than retirement. Hardest part is sitting at the desk, we have a two hour limit on that." I had to allow as that would be a big problem, trying to sit at a booth and look authoritarian without getting bored. Or without getting a seriously sore backside. Maybe I don't look really suspicious. Maybe I'm not much of a threat. I carry as little metal as possible when I travel, just to make this sort of thing easy--all the hardware goes in the checked baggage.

I've got this down to a fine art, this traveling thing. And I like being friendly with the guys who've got the sidearms. Just sort of a nice gesture, I figure. You might want to try this sort of line, as well, especially since you're in a position where being friendly with certain authority figures can help pave your way through this mess of the next couple of days. Before you take action, stop, look and listen to what the authority figures have to say.

Scorpio: Ma Wetzel went to Paris [that would be Paris France as opposed to Paris Texas, which would've been a lot closer, but not nearly as effective for a horoscope]. [And no French jokes! It was a business trip for her.] I had to ask, see, in every thing I've seen on TV, it's possible to see the Eiffel Tower from any window. Doesn't

matter where you are, there's the lovely Eiffel Tower, in every scene. I suppose it's a lot like pickup trucks in Texas, or cattle, or horses. When I was overseas, everyone assumed, I guess it was the cowboy hat, that I drove a truck [which I do], that I had a ranch [which I don't] and that I rode horses every day [again, another thing, which I don't do]. I'm also sure, like that picture of the Eiffel Tower in every window, my six-shooter [nope], some of this is just made up from odd bits of lore, popular culture, and some of it is strictly mythology.

The Paris tourist bureau might have something to do with it, too. Although, maybe in France, they have a rule about TV cameras, if you're filming, you have to make sure that the Eiffel Tower is in the background. Who knows? As my typical Scorpio, Ma Wetzel was unwilling to confirm or deny that the Eiffel tower was present in every window. She didn't care to comment about such things. Or she didn't want to commit to a definite answer. While that's not a typical Scorpio response, think about. As the questions start to pile up, you might wish to take a firm path, right down the middle. I'm not so sure that this is a good time to commit to anything definite. A well-placed "maybe" is equally useful.

Sagittarius: Ostentatious displays of wealth vary. Where I'm from, a fancy European sports car or similar luxury vehicle doesn't get much attention. "Benz? So?" To my friends, a really cool vehicle is something more like an F-350 Diesel. Now that's a ride. It takes up two city blocks. If you can afford the fuel for one of those, you can also afford an extra 40 acres on which to park such a vehicle. That's what's impressive. That qualifies as a status symbol.

It's also a rather overt display of wealth, bordering on the bounds of good tastes and excess. However, to at least one of my buddies, it's not excessive. He needs that power to pull stumps from the back forty, and he's got a 22-footer bass boat, that big truck pulls that boat and tandem trailer with ease. What good would a puny and expensive little sports car be, especially on of those Italian jobbies? Can you pull a boat or stump? Can you even carry hay in the back? So while our overt displays of conspicuous consumption might be deemed excessive by some standards, it works around here. Your mileage may vary, but your considering a similar "big-ticket" item. Make sure you can get your money's worth out whatever it is you're about to buy.

Capricorn: "I'm running and gunning, and a little bit hazy. Got a tattoo on the day they paid me, I don't know why, I must be a little crazy...." The lyrics are from a bootleg Hank Williams III album. What does a Sagittarius Punk Country singer have to do with you? You're just like him, or like the lyrics suggest, you're running and gunning, and maybe just a little bit crazy. I'm less sure of the hazy part, but yes, that could be you, too.

As the song suggests, you might be a little unsure about what motivates you, but that doesn't matter, not with Mars frying his way through your sign. Before you start gunning your Capricorn motor, though, think about what it looks like. I usually have a sardonic, wry comment to make when someone burns rubber, "Wish I could be that cool." Dry delivery, a look in my eyes. Before you start running and gunning, maybe you should think about it a little. Mars motivates, but Mars doesn't always provide a rational motivation. All I'm suggesting, before you peel out of the parking lot of life, stop and assess your situation.

Aquarius: I spent a portion of my misspent youth, running around the American Southwest. I was looking for roots, as it were. New Mexico, Arizona, Southern Colorado, even Southern California. What I discovered was I never need to look any further than my own backyard. I know I've heard that kind of wisdom elsewhere, too. Let my meanderings and travels help you, though.

It's sort of tough time. Not too tough, mind you, but "over there"? The grass only appears to be greener. The real secret is that they use special fertilizer that makes their grass look greener. It's a trick of the light, a little bit of subtle misdirection. Don't automatically assume that over there is better than right where you're at. Change is good, but change, just for the sake of change, isn't always the best idea. Maybe a little exploration is order before you just pack up and move.

Pisces: A couple of months ago, when there was a rare winter's day when it wasn't too cold out, so maybe that's not so rare in Central Texas, we went fishing. Great idea. The sun was out, the air was crisp, when the boat gets up on the plane, blasting across the lake, there's a feeling of contentment and well-being that surrounds me.

Problem being, that was the best part of the day. Caught zero [0] fish. Crankbait, lures, plastic worms, little wiggly plastic jigs, even a modified Carolina-rig didn't work. Old Faithful, a rattle trap, even

that didn't yield any interest from the fish. Water was too cold, I guess. The fish weren't feeding. Whatever. The Game Warden was, though, but I guess that's another story.

Was the day a total loss? Hardly. We go out, we went fishing, we got to observe nature, and like I alluded to before, there's a special feeling when the boat gets up on the plane, around 50 knots, even the moderate chop from the lake smoothes out. And while it's hard to use the metaphor of "blasting" across the lake, that sort of explosive energy cuts a good metaphor. Get out. Go fishing. Go do something. Your efforts might result in no fish, but that's not the true measure of success, now is it?

For the Week of: 4/17-23/2003

"Vengeance rot you all!"

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* [V.i.58]

There's a movie version of "Titus," and it's one of the better versions of an early, sometimes problematic Shakespeare play. Highly recommended. Vengeance is a theme brought on by the way Mr. Mars is just fixin' to change signs.

Last week's question was about the term Maverick and from whence it originated, this week, another San Antonio native, blood kin to the original, correct* answer, coined another word that is still in common usage today. Word and sources? In 25 words or less? For a free "el-cheapo" report of some flavor? [contest ends 4/22/03]

Upcoming: South Austin's own special brunch & reading. Goes well with turning off your TV.

Aries: This last round of Aries birthdays hasn't been the greatest. I know that feeling rather well, it's happened to me, too. I remember the pain, the anguish, the "low-level" depression caused by the ongoing Mars scenario.

Cardinals are red birds with pointed little heads. Sort of a curious, colorful kind of a feathered friend. The male cardinals are brilliant red, rather colorful, and little precocious, at least, as far as birds go. In the bird world, as I understand, the female cardinal does all the hard work, she builds the nests, lays the eggs, fetches up the food for the young ones, and so forth. Not that this is unlike the real world where us non-feathered types seem to live, either.

The deal is, the female isn't that bright red color, the girls are more of a dusky, sandy color. There are a few red highlights, but the color is much less pronounced. I think the way this works is that the male spends a lot of time attracting the attention of predators while the girls can get some work done. Think about that: you may not be getting all the attention you feel like you deserve, but you are being allowed a chance to get more work done. Besides, I tend to find the dusky dun colored females a lot more attractive.

Taurus: The weekend is good, but it's a time when it's best to keep a low profile, in Taurus land. Why? It's not your birthday yet. Then, as next week starts, as the best sign begins to get ready for the birthday celebrations, I just need to sail one idea across your

Taurus bow: take it easy. It's usually hard for the typical sun sign to take it easy during the birthday times, but Taurus is not typical.

Ain't nothing normal about you guys, and the problem is, the birthday month starts out with a little "bang." This can be a metaphor, or this can be the real thing. I saw this other day, as I was cutting through an intersection [I was on foot], there were two [company name deleted] trucks at the stoplight, one in front of the other. The guy in the back was a little on the young side, a little on the exuberant side, and maybe a little infected with that "spring is here, let's party!" attitude. He gunned the motor on his truck and then gently bumped his buddy's truck in front of him. This was nothing more than bumpers "kissing" each other. But the look on the front driver's face sort of told it all—it was that, "If he does that again, I'm going to get out and teach him something about playing tag in traffic...."

I can see that you can be either one of these fellows, the exuberant one in back, bumping bumpers or the one in front, getting exasperated with youthful indiscretion. While you might find the game of bumper tag on a busy street as an amusing form of sport, I'm not sure everyone will agree with your Taurus self. That's why I suggested you take it easier than you planned.

Gemini: One of the problems I have with Gemini's is their need for grand gestures. Subtleties are usually lost on the Gemini portion of the sky. But it's these selfsame subtleties that are so important during the next few days. Imagine, if you will, for just a second, that you're in the front of my bass boat. Imagine that we're fishing on local lake. Pretend that it's been sort of a slow morning, not a lot of fish action.

Now, pay close attention: watch as you're reeling in your bait, probably a plastic thing with a big, sharp hook stuck through it. The lake water is clear enough that you can see, chasing after your bait, a nice-sized fish. That fish, he's really interested in what's on the end of your line. But reeling it in too fast? That's the problem. Slow down. Let the guy take the bait. It's subtle thing, this fishing stuff. The deal is, luck's with you, you just have to slow it down so the target can rise and take your Gemini bait.

Cancer: The "R" word: relationship(s). It strikes terror in the heart of any single male. As other authors have humorously pointed out, there's this persistent idea that somewhere, somehow, a single guy

is busy having a lot more fun than anyone in a serious, committed relationship. From that single guy's perspective, it's just not true.

But don't let that stop your imagination from imaging all the wild experiences that supposedly occur in my trailer park every night. Go with what works for your own imagination. Now, the real reason we're discussing the "R" word is that it becomes a central focus for Cancer in the coming weeks. Big time stuff here.

Do something with it, too. Frequently, though, I'm forced to disabuse folks of the notion that the term "relationship" or the plural, "relationships" means something of a definite romantic [psycho-sexual] type. Doesn't always have to be that way. This could be your relationship with your boss, the clients you have, or even, in my case, the cat. Give some attention and thoughtful considerations to your "R" word. All of them, too, not just the romantic variety.

Leo: There's a Mark Twain quote I'm fond of, I used to have it printed up big, and tacked up on the wall here, "Tell the truth or trump – but get the trick." [it's from Pud'nhead Wilson's Calendar] Sage advice, from a Sagittarius [Mark Twain's the Sagittarius, not me, as I'm not usually full of sage advice. Might be full of something else, even though I am Sagittarius.]

My most excellent Leo friends would do well to take heed, even before the approaching weekend gets here, and follow that one writer's advice. Play this weekend like it was a game of cards, and you're fully aware of what's at stake here. All's fair. Go for it. Then, next week, if you've played your cards right [having looked at your horoscope, you know what to do, right? Right.] Play them suckers the way you know how to do it, and you're sure to benefit. Might have to use a poker face, kind of hard for a Leo, but I have faith in you.

Virgo: Nothing bad is going to happen in Virgo, not for the next couple of days. No sooner do I posit that prognostication, when, with lightening fast acuity, I get a blazing response from elsewhere.

Problems? There really shouldn't be any, nothing more than the usual, ho-hum, humdrum usual tedium at the office. The little shift in the planets' relative positions doesn't hold much that's ill for the Virgo slice of the sky.

There are some problems, but nothing you can't surmount with relative ease and grace. Try being a little nicer, a little less quick

with the rapier-like wit. Leave such comebacks and rejoinders for other signs. Lose some of that Scorpio-esque sarcasm for the next few days. Sometimes, that's a very effective shield, and other times, like this next little swing through the lunar phase, it's not nearly as important.

Libra: As soon as the weekend is over, as soon as next Monday gets here, maybe even a little before, perhaps before the weekend is ever done with, life gets good for my Libra friends. Might already have happened, never can tell. The tail end of the Aries Sun snaps at your Libra heels one last time, but just as soon as that's over with, life is grand.

Here's a suggestion from the lazy bones here at Fishing Guide to the Stars World Headquarters [and live bait]: push a little. One project, one idea, one thing: push on that one button, see if you can't make something happen for yourself.

I'm on your side, that's important you understand. But there's one task that's been left unfinished, one job you can attend to. I'm suggesting you exert some effort in that direction. Around here, this kind of advice means it's time to look at the "tourist" fishing reels. The ones we loan out; something like that needs some attention. It might only be a single drop of oil, or winding some new fishing line onto a backup unit, but still, it requires a little effort from the Libra slice of the zodiac pie.

Scorpio: There's a "Chinese all-you-can-eat" buffet place close by. What's unusual, if you know anything about Eastern cuisine, is the food is not limited to Chinese, but the buffet includes Thai, Vietnamese, and Japanese cuisine. Matter of fact, at this one place, they even have Steak Fingers and Cream Gravy.

Steak Fingers, last time I checked, seemed to be a unique Western American treat. "Steak Fingers" are more like mystery meat, battered and deep-fried, and cream gravy? Don't even start me on that stuff.

See: Scorpio life is laid out like that "all-you-can-eat" buffet, several different styles and flavors are all represented. Better yet, there's even something from the traditional white-boy comfort food group. I know that it's not food you'd expect to find there, but in the buffet tables of life, there's always something that you can enjoy. My best Scorpio advice, though, even as Mars is moving to heat up your life a little? Take small samples of everything to find out what suits

your Scorpio palate for the next couple of days. Personally, I prefer the spring rolls, sort of like a pre-packaged salad.

Sagittarius: There's this one, little shift. It's not that big of deal, except that the planet I'm looking at in your chart has a way of disrupting normal lines of communication. This is like an electronic mail gateway that's been blocked. In order to combat spam, I had to put some mail blocks up on the server I use. Inadvertently, I blocked everything from MSN's "hotmail.com". Not a good move on my part. What it allowed, the way I set it up, I could send to them, but the folks couldn't reply back. I wondered if I was living in a void for a little while until some enterprising individual forwarded me a copy of the bounced message from a regular e-mail account.

That leaves a few choices, for this communication stuff: you can struggle under the burden of spam, struggle with choices us Sagittarius types have made, or we can go in and correct our mail blocks. Once corrected, we can sit there and blame ourselves, get all worked up, or we can settle ourselves down, and deal with the communication problems. Remember: it might not be your e-mail, but something is going to freak out, and you don't need to heap panic on top of the situation. Let your cooler mind prevail.

Capricorn: There's always one last Aries birthday I manage to forget. Once I get through that, though, then things are starting to work well for you. Mars is finally getting his sorry butt out of your sign, and that means everything is supposed to calm down for a spell. It's a good thing, at least, I hope so. [Mars = Aries].

The Mars Movement plus the Sun's new position, moving into Taurus, all hold good stuff for the Capricorn slice of the sky. This is the beginning of the good times. I'm looking forward to this, and you should be, too. It's the springtime in Texas, idling up towards the summer [looks like it'll be a hot one]. I get a chance to quit guessing at whether I should have the AC on or the heater on. The nights aren't quite as cool as they were, and the days are downright warm. It's a time when not a lot gets accomplished.

Take a hint from me, lower what your copious expectations are. Lower your standards, your goals, lower everything but your attempts at fun.

Aquarius: I like taking long walks around the hike and bike trail. It clears my mind from the leftover stuff, that mental detritus accumulated from looking at astrology charts. It gets me out of the

trailer. It's supposedly good exercise, but I wouldn't know anything about that. In March, I find myself being buffeted along by the spring winds. When the wind is at my back, I feel like I'm being blown forward, like a sailboat, and I tend to let myself drift along. With the wind at my back, I'm always reminded of a quote from a modern poet, something about "at my back..." and I don't recall the rest of the poem.

Know what verse I'm talking about? If so, send it along in an e-mail, and if you get it right, you're in the running for a free [e-mail delivery only] "FGS Planet Profile". Now, when the wind is not at my back, but I'm facing into it, I feel like a turbocharged engine. My stride picks up the pace, I start moving at a little better speed. Mars is entering your sign, and it's like that wind shifting direction, from being blown around to feeling like you're turbocharged.

Pisces: I will not be fishing with any Pisces this weekend. Look at the chart: you guys will talk too much, all weekend long. That's a problem, if your audience doesn't want to listen. Then, next week? After the talk-talk-talk weekend? You realize that you've been running off at the mouth for a while, and it's time to listen.

When I make prognostications like this, I'm looking at several influences, but it seems like there's a lot of stuff happening in your "talk, now shut up" department. Make a decision, maybe talk it out with some friends over the weekend to make sure you're making the correct decision—then silently abide by your decision, whatever it is that you arrive at. Here's a hint: whatever that decision is? I'm sure you will choose correctly, after you've talked it out. Just don't plan on talking with me while we're fishing.

*Answer:

- > Samuel Augustus Maverick, an owner of unbranded cattle—lived 1803-1870, the
- > term drifting down the language trail to mean unbranded cattle and eventually
- > describe to a person like myself who refuses to conform to the norm and acts
- > independently, i.e. a person with his head out of his ass finding himself
- > surrounded by mental patients that lock themselves up at night. Good old
- > Webster's dictionary 1987 version.

For the Week of: 4/24-30/2003

"How long a time lies in little word."

Shakespeare's *Richard II* [II.iii.212]

Answer: gobbledygook. Spelling may vary, but it was a San Antonio native who originally coined the expression. Politician, no less. Goes well with turning off your TV. And get a free graphic novel.

Upcoming: South Austin's own special brunch & reading.

Taurus: Happy birthday. You are in for a long, weird year. Consider the source of this information, the term "weird" is oft considered a term of endearment, a positive expression, where I'm from. Increasingly, it's hard to be weird where I live.

So this doesn't mean that the next year for Taurus is bad, just different. Instead of shaking up the steady and implacable Taurus ways, what you're going to see, coming up, and starting around this weekend, what's coming up is from your own, Taurus, historical past. "What's he mean?" I mean, buried stuff, forgotten stuff, items long left behind are probably going to resurface. Is this bad? Not at all.

There's a rock band, and for me, the memories of actually seeing them in concert are rather faded. I was considerably younger, perhaps influenced by the actions and reactions of the times, and it there's not much left over from the memories. However, when I listen to the CD, I get a sense that I'm back in that time when nothing was bad or dangerous. It's a little weird because the music is dated, technologically incompetent by today's standards, but to me, it's still soothing. That's what I mean by weird. It's weird to listen to something like that, and see the reaction on my friends' faces. But for me, and you, this is something to enjoy.

Gemini: When I'm living out of my suitcase, like I do frequently, I've got a system. Depends on the season, I mean, high summer is nothing but shorts, but any other time? Black. Why? Think about it. Black slacks, black jeans, black long-sleeve T-shirt, black wife beater shirt, black boots, black hat, black overcoat, it all looks color coordinated. An outfit like that, I don't have to worry if the shirt matches the pants, or if I've got the right accessories to make it all work right. Stick with what works. Besides, there's the added advantage of wearing all black, you can pretend to move stealthily in the night. Is stealth important to Gemini these days? Yes.

Cancer: I watched as one friend, a poetess, went to her first poetry reading. It was one of those dreaded "open mic" affairs, in a dusty warehouse of a coffee place. It was like, on a Tuesday night or something, not exactly a big night. One of the folks reading his poetry apparently had a good following, and my friend was up next. She was nervous at first, opening up a leather-bound journal with her precious poetry ensconced inside.

I normally avoid such affairs, but I was there for moral support. A cool spring night, twilight descending on us, a picture-perfect experience. She was timid, almost frightened at first, but once the words got started, before she was through her first stanza, she'd hit stride and was rolling along. Strong words. Love, loss, rebirth and regeneration, the usual stock and trade of angst ridden poetry readings. From a frightened start to a strong finish, she was warmly received by the apparently world-weary poetry people. I faded into the background as my support was no longer needed. Same thing's going to happen to you. I'll be there for moral support, but I suspect, by the time you get to the end of the poem, presentation, lecture or even just a sales pitch, you'll be doing just fine.

Leo: One thing I've found, as an employer, one of the secret strengths I look for in an employee, is a lazy streak. While this might fly right into the face of conventional wisdom, I've never claimed to be conventional. Or normal. Look for that lazy streak in your Leo self.

See: as an employer, I like the lazy computer techs. They never get anything done on time, but when they get stuff done, there's a kind of elegance to it all. It's a quick and dirty answer to a troubling problem. One that defies normal logic, but it works just fine, maybe even better. The lazy streak, when properly exploited, can save a lot of work.

Still trying to figure that one out? The lazy streak suggests that you automate a certain process. You don't want to work any harder so you find a way to let the machine, the group, the process, some way to get them to do the job for you. Might take a little figuring, but properly applied, you can get the rest of us to do your hard, repetitive work. See what I mean about the lazy streak? Exploit these next couple of days.

Virgo: Imagine this: I'm sitting here, on the couch, and pat my lap, look at you, and say, "Come here my sweet Virgo, sit on Kramer's lap." Yes, well, there's going to be some trouble with that image. I don't think the preponderance of my male Virgo friends are going to like that image one little bit. "I don't think so," one of them is saying, even as I write this stuff out.

Pretty heavy emphasis on the words, as well. He's not exactly humored by the thought. However, let's switch this around a little. It's not gender specific, it's sign specific. You're the Virgo. You do the inviting. You've got the lap. In fact, you've got the lap we all would like to sit on. Or have you sit on our lap. This isn't some sort convoluted sexual message, either. It's rather direct, upfront, in-your-face stuff. Make an invitation with a nod towards emotional intimacy. Do some inviting. Do something. Realize that you're going to have to modify my original scenario for what works best for you.

Libra: I've never considered Libra to be a stubborn sign. However, in my travels and research, over the years, I've encountered more than one person who claims those "Libra's can be so bull-headed, stupidly stubborn at times." That's the opinion of others, not my personal or professional point of view. Got it? Good. Let's move on.

Those folks with their opinions about your apparent non-Libra behaviors, that's fine, let them think what they want to think. It's their brains, they can do what they want. Remember, these are views held by folks other than myself. It's important to consider that. You're going to encounter, or have recently just encountered a situation, an event, or even just a person, that is, or who is, being stupidly stubborn about something.

The more resistance you put up, the more enmeshed in this situation you become. It's a matter of looking at it from a different point of view. Look: you're Libra, you're probably right. But in the face of such strong opposition, maybe even ill-considered opposition, you might want to rethink your own position before you let this stubborn struggle turn into a war.

Scorpio: Long before there was surround sound, there was just "stereo." That meant the music was piped from different sources into different speakers. Studio musicians going way back learned how to vary the source so that the noise comes from different speakers. With symphonic music, you can hear the strings off to the left, and the horns on the right. The kettle drums were usually

a little to the left, as well, if I recall correctly. Unless it's the 1812 Overture, then the explosions are just all over the place.

With rock music, some musicians mix it up so a single guitar noise varies from the left to the right. That's the effect that'll help you over the next few days. The last time I set up my home audio system, I accidentally reversed the left and right channels. Not such a big deal, not to someone as tone deaf as I am. One of my audio-savvy buddies was listening to a particular dance track, and he noted that I had the channels reversed.

Switch two wires, and everything's perfect. But I kind of liked having it all backwards, made for some interesting effects. Look: you're face to face with some difficulties, which can be traced back to Mars, the Sun, and so forth. Try reversing the way you look at these problems. Might make everything sound better. Might also offer a solution, too, just changing two little Scorpio speaker wires.

Sagittarius: "Queso" is a traditional local appetizer. It's basically a yellow [or orange, and occasionally, white] cheese product of some kind, melted, and then there's a variety of condiments that can be added. Some places around here have this soupy, thin, yellow-orange stuff. Other places offer a more refined version, including steak-fajita slices, ground beef, avocado slices, bacon, black beans, pico, or any other of a number delicious combinations.

One of my favorite places considers their signature queso dish to be "heart attack in a bowl." As one of my bubba friends is fond of pointing out, "You order that stuff, and you can hear Star Flight [local helicopter ambulance] warming up."

I have a different theory, tested over the years, about the purported artery-hardening effect of queso. See, the stuff stays liquid as long as it's warm. Our bodies are warm. As long as it's flowing through my arteries, the stuff will stay liquid. This removes any worry about its "heart attack in a bowl" qualities. Typical Texas cuisine is important. Health considerations are important. But most of all, delineating the details of both is important. Try it.

Capricorn: "Man, I've got it all figured out: 4 - 3 - 2 - 1." I looked at my buddy quizzically, "Huh?" "It's easy, on a night like tonight, 4 shots of whiskey, 3 puffs on the pipe, 2 hours of internet porn, 1 good night's sleep." [verbatim quote] That's trailer life. In as much as I'm merely reporting the facts, not condoning a certain lifestyle, there is something rather positive to be said for the simple

approach to life's little problems. In particular, as they apply in the Capricorn world.

I was thinking about these simple steps, and I was trying to come up with some of my own, but I was sadly lacking. I've made every effort to simplify many aspects of my life, but no, I haven't gotten it down to just four steps as a pathway to happiness. Now, taken in strictest context, I'm not so sure that those four steps equate to happiness in my book, but then, I'm not my Capricorn buddy living in a trailer. Using a broader definition, something a little less than the strictest of contextual settings, though, I'm sure there's something here. "4 steps to happiness" are certainly well within your grasp. Might not be the exact same as my friend, but you know, there's something to say for getting a good night's rest, however you do it.

Aquarius: My Aquarius neighbor wanted to build a little patio for the Aquarius's trailer's front door. Sort of a statement for a temporary housing situation. Like most home-repair projects, whether in a trailer park or in a real house, this started with a trip to the big "do-it-yourself, indoor lumber yard" place. Then, before any plans were seriously laid, the Aquarius was out there, banging away, cutting lumber, sawing up a storm, and getting ready to build the killer deck for a portable home unit.

There are two serious problems with this arrangement. Number One: time. After getting up before the sun, and fishing my little heart out for few hours, I'm in the mood for nap. All that construction noise couldn't have come at a more inconvenient time. Then there's the idea that this was a Saturday afternoon project, and the Aquarius was forced to take off from the "real job" in order to get the project to some state where it could be easily suspended. Number two: skill set. Not to be confused with a skill saw, which is used for slicing through lumber. Turns out that poor Aquarius really wasn't all that handy with tools, and on that fateful Monday, had to bring in a little expert help.

The good news? It's finally done. A little over budget, both in expense and time, but looks fine. Moral: budget extra time-and money-for anything you start out with Mr. Mars and his energy.

Pisces: I thought my cat was unique. I thought my cat was different. However, there seems to be a quality that most, if not all cats share, that wondrous ability to stand at the doorway, and

then, the animal in question freezes in a position, as if racked with indecision. The way my trailer is set up, I have my desk next to the backdoor, and I let that swing open for a little breeze. But when I'm up early on an April morning, sometimes, it's still just a little cool outside. Wearing shorts and being barefoot, I would prefer to keep the door closed until it warms up outside.

The office manager [the cat] is not quite as accommodating. She'll hang by the door, even scratch on it, so I will be forced to do her bidding, then, once the door is open, she'll stop, unsure if she really wants to go outside or not. While she's deciding to move or not, there's a cool breeze blowing across my feet and shins, and I start to get cold again. As I'm starting to shiver in the cool morning breeze, the cat hunkers down, in the doorway, effectively blocking my chance to shut the door. One can lose patience with a cat, but it's really rather futile. Okay: Mars, in Aquarius, you're like the cat. Someone else is getting annoyed while you try to render a decision. She's waiting until the sunlight hits that one patch where she likes to take it easy. I'd suggest you follow the cat's lead for the next couple of days. Don't move until you're sure.

Aries: You need a break. You get to take one. The first thought I was an Aries at rest. Right, that'll last for about 20 minutes, max. "An Aries at rest quickly finds something to do," is one of my old astrology theories. However, let's take a long look at what's been going on, and see if you can't use a little time with your feet up. I'm sure you could.

There are a couple of bookstores around here, and while there's one or two I favor, I'm sure there's one in your area that will do just fine. Nice, clean, well-lit place. The employees don't disturb you. You're allowed to settle down into a couch or big, comfy chair, and sip a beverage, and peruse a few novels. Maybe a magazine or two. I tend to regard some places like this as libraries rather than bookstores because I have no intention of actually making a purchase. I have enough favorite authors, though, so if there's something new, I snag it. But think about the quiet, library-like atmosphere, the muted voices of the sales help, "Yes, that's on aisle 34, at the end, it's really a good book..."

If you're not getting any rest at home, a couple of hours in bookstore isn't bad. You can always say you were looking for something, even if it was just some peace and quiet [with your feet up].

For the Week of: 5/1-7/2003

"You are more intemperate in your blood/Than Venus."

Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* [IV.i.59]

The New Moon in May, it is said, in the South of England, to have something to do with curing scrofulous complaints. I should show that Moon my inbox some time.

Taurus: Not long ago, I was looking for an inexpensive solution to my cigar habit. I didn't want a box of fancy cigars, just a nice source of cheap, hand-rolled, imported cigars. Something suitable to have with my coffee in the morning, while answering mail, something tasty yet well short of the premium price for most of the brands I like.

One place around here, they had this deal going, it was a bundle of hand-rolled, individually banded, Dominican Robustos [Cuban-seeded, long-leaf filler, & etc.] The best part? The price, per cigar, was only about \$1.32. The catch? The real brand on the cigars, under the "handmade" part of the label? It's common cigar company, generally frowned upon by us aficionados.

The deal? It was a good deal. I bought a bundle. It was worth it, too. Tasted just fine with my morning coffee. Or even with soda water in the evening, after some Tex-Mex. Good solution to my quest for a decent, inexpensive cigar. The problem with my cigars, though? Doesn't matter that they are basically a good smoke. Doesn't matter that they stink the way a good cigar is supposed to. Doesn't matter that they are actually hand-rolled, and imported tobacco. The brand itself bothers the snobs. In our own homes, when no one is watching, it's okay to indulge ourselves with cheap stuff, we're not trying to impress anyone, this is about guilty pleasures. Take what deals come along and enjoy.

Gemini: When I was much, much younger, I was very interested in fly-fishing. Quite the sport. It's both old-fashioned and yet, modern, too. The problem is, for me, fly-fishing takes lots of work for little fish. Now, it's true, on spring-like summer day, in the Rocky Mountains, with a full stringer of small fish, the task feels rewarding. But I would have to spend many long nights tying flies, getting gear together, making travel arrangements, doing all kinds of hard work, just to get a few days alongside a mountain stream.

Then there's fishing itself, fighting mosquitoes, battling branches along the mountain stream, sure seems like a lot of hard work for

just a few paltry fish. Not having that ability [although some folks think I do] of being able to feed hordes of people with just a few fish, the effort doesn't match up with the rewards. Not when I can stop by a sporting good store and buy a handful of lures or some plastic worms, jump in a bass boat and be fishing all day for ornery bass [and the occasional perch].

Much less effort, much greater return, in my opinion. I'm sure if I lived close to some mountains, it would be a different story, then bass fishing would be too much work, and fly fishing would make perfect sense. Look at where you're at. Should you be spending all your time trying to do something that doesn't work in your environment that well? Or is this a similar way to occupy your time that has a much greater reward?

Cancer: Yes, Mercury is doing his backward thing, and yes, that makes for uncomfortable times. But it's not all bad. I went fishing with a buddy, appropriately named Bubba, and we were wrangling over who gets to sit where in the boat. I let him win. He chose the front seat, which also meant, he had to work the trolling motor. Think about this, trying to steer, fish, look at the depth gauge, watch for snags, and keep one foot on the pedal for that little trolling motor. It's a lot of work.

Did I mention fishing? Right, that's the whole point to the exercise, in the first place. With Mercury where he is, think about losing an argument over where you sit in the boat. You might wind up having more fun as a loser, as hard as that is to imagine.

Leo: I've used this analogy before, but let me explain, there's a serious, astrological, reason for what I'm suggesting. Remember "Year 2000," and how all the computers in the world were going to quit working? The sky was going to fall? The end of the world, twilight of the human race and so on? Then nothing happened? I was at a party, and I flickered the light switch, just to get a few peoples' nerves.

I was thinking about this because I was dining sumptuously on a can of my Y2K stash—not that I was worried, just prepared—in case. I still have a few cartons of food around. Mercury is like that, especially in its current position, bringing up something from Y2K, and maybe, if you're like me, you can turn this into an acceptable snack. Just don't check the "use by" date printed on the can. That still worries me.

Virgo: Got one little problem, you feel like having a party, but the stars are stacked against you. I don't mean that you shouldn't feel this way, it's just the odds of being able to gather up all the people that you want for your party might not all show up. Too many other signs are not as social as you are.

Plus, there's the added and onerous problem with Mr. Mercury. I doubt, though, that you're going to let him get you down. Just be prepared for little situations that don't seem to go according to your perfect plan. They will, eventually. I used to do a lot of software development at times like this, fully aware that I would have to rewrite most, if not all, of everything I was working on. Didn't matter, as it was a great way to get accustomed to the learning curve. Do some development at this point, just understand, that yes, Mercury is backwards, and yes, he's going to have trick or two, and yes, you'll have to cover some of this ground again.

Libra: I'd be careful about making aesthetic decisions over the next few days. Remember: Mercury is retrograde. This doesn't mean it's all bad, but I once flirted heavily with an idea, a purchase I wanted to make for the trailer's walls. Looked great at the flea market. Seemed like a piece of art that would fit my own, personal space and tasteful, yet artfully, make a statement about me.

Being a good student of astrology, and realizing that the littlest planet was, indeed, going backwards at that moment, I put the decision off. Which, as it turned out, was a good idea. A "Virgen de Guadalupe," done up as a tapestry, might be a wonderful idea, but there's something about a having The Virgin on the walls of my basically pagan abode. Might upset some sort of cosmic system of checks and balances.

After looking into the matter of the purchase more closely, I also figured that the tapestry I was looking at? It wouldn't fit, unless I folded over some of either the top or bottom. Sort of ruins the effect of having such a killer piece of art on the wall, you know? So maybe make sure you've got a place to put it, before you buy.

Scorpio: Not only is Mercury doing his little "backward-mambo-mayhem" thing, he's doing his dance in the sign directly opposite from you. That takes this sort of troubling occurrence, and it highlights some of the errors caused by Mercury's actions. This is not always good.

I know that you rarely, if ever, make mistakes. But sometimes, the key I hit on the keyboard, and the message sent from the keyboard to the computer get a little confused. I don't have many typographical mistakes, so the problem obviously falls into the category of "bad computer" or "bad keyboard," or, if nothing else is around to blame, it must be the software.

Over the next few days, even a week or more, you're going to encounter more than one situation. It's the keyboard, the computer, the software. I know it's not you, and you know it's not you, but that doesn't stop these mistakes from occurring. Do like I do, and you can quote me, "It's something in the software, I'm sure."

Sagittarius: Thematically, some folks will think that this scope and the one after it are on the same kick. They're not. Sagittarius and Capricorn are as different as night and day. And in Capricorn, I had to explain about cleaning out a car, whereas in Sagittarius, I have to explain about cleaning out a trailer. Imagine, you get this idea that you want to clean house. Great idea. Springtime, the weather is still almost cool, Raise the windows, pull open the shutters, and then you can do like I've done exactly once: I took all my personal belongings out of the trailer, and stacked it all up in the "front yard," such as it is. I got busy scrubbing and cleaning, then, as the middle of day rolled around, a few clouds started to gather on the horizon. We get these low, scudding gray clouds that are just full of moisture, blowing up from the coast. But I still had about three-quarters of a trailer left to clean. However, I kept up with my self-assigned task of clearing away some of the accumulated cat hair, mud left over from last fall, salt from last February's ice, and assorted other duties.

Bubba stops by, unannounced, as it were, "You moving? I thought you'd just take the trailer with you." Then it started to sprinkle, those clouds threatening to unleash a veritable torrent. It turned out to be nothing more than light drops of water, stirring up dust, so I kept scrubbing, working my way into the tiny bathroom with a brush and bleach. My Bubba friend talked for a while, but I kept after what I was doing, instead of paying him much attention.

Think: mission, a man with a plan and goal. It's a great idea, a little housecleaning. The problem? It didn't show up until much later, some of my bed linens got a little damp, and I put them back in the closet a little moist, and when I went to get them out a few months later, there was a faint, aromatic hint of mold. Housecleaning is

good, especially this week, but make sure you don't forget one little detail that'll bite your backside later.

Capricorn: True story—I was leaving on a trip with a Cap friend, and days before we were to depart, she lost her wallet, assumed stolen. So quick, she had to replace her credit cards and driver's license. A year later, she was out of town, and she'd asked me to look after her cat and car, and "Oh yeah, the brakes work if you pump them, could you put some more brake fluid in the reservoir?"

Dutiful friend that I am, I did both. [Hint: don't mess with red heads.] While digging through the accumulated trash in her car, to find that brake fluid, I found a wallet. Hers. Credit cards, Driver's License, and so forth. I left messages everywhere, wondered how she got on plane without identification, and let her know I could overnight her wallet to her. Days went by.

When she finally calls from her idyllic vacation spot, me? I'm sick to death with worry that she's had to do something drastic, not having ID or plastic to pay for anything, "That's that wallet I thought was stolen! You found it, cool." I got all worked up into a Capricorn sweat over nothing. Couple of lessons here, having to do with a New Moon in Taurus and Mercury being backwards, too. Look twice before you assume anything. If you dig deep enough, there are some buried things that might pay off. As a final suggestion? Check your brake fluid level, it's usually a little plastic deal with a cap and a "minimum" and "maximum" lines on it. Never overfill the brake fluid.

I still don't know what those cylindrical paper and cotton items were, either, I found them under the seat of her car.

Aquarius: After years and years of dealing with the unsettled lifestyle of Uranus in Aquarius, no sooner does he move along, then Mars comes frying in. One my friends returned from Spring Break, and he was fried from sitting in the sun too long. Another spring breaker buddy was fried, too, but it had to do with excessive consumption of uncontrolled substances.

The parties are all long over, and it's a long haul from here, on into the middle of the summer [Northern Hemisphere, adjust as necessary for local conditions]. Sure, it's an old joke in these parts, but between the influence of life supposedly being good, and Mr. Mars leaning on you to try something new, the one thing I'm afraid of in the Aquarius chart? "Hey, ya'll watch me do this!" With proper

planning and foresight, it's amusing. Without proper planning, and not thinking your actions through, that's one of the most frightening expressions I ever hear.

Pisces: Some people are just too stubborn for their own good, aren't they? Ever wonder about that? Why do they hold onto outdated ideals, pursue goals that are in no way attainable, or even chase after ill-thought out dreams? What are those people thinking? Or are they even thinking? Good question. Notice I keep referring to other people, other signs, not gentle and sweet Pisces. I had to take the cat to see the vet. I outweigh said cat by a factor of at least ten, maybe more, depending on the time of year, and how much we're both willing to lie about our weight.

As soon as the cat carrier comes out the storage shed, there's a problem. I've tried numerous ways of getting around this hassle. One time, I tried putting cat food in the carrier. Didn't fool her for a minute. Another time, I tried leaving the carrier out with its door open for a week. Still didn't fool her. This last time, I pulled the carrier out, and picked up the cat, and dropped her in it before she had a chance to put up a fight. "Look, girlfriend," I said to the Mistress of the Trailer, "some things just got to be. We're going for a little ride." Sometimes, you run into things [pet owners] that outweigh you by a considerable amount. You can be the cat or me, but struggling only results in useless bloodshed-what one cartoonist calls a "band-aid moment".

Aries: It's an old, inside joke, the bit about "FGS World Headquarters and Used Tires." More than one person has remarked, given the office location, about the preponderance of makeshift retail establishments that sell used tires. Some folks turn their collective noses up at the thought of used tires, but at a fraction of the cost of new set, and when you're putting skins on an older vehicle, sometimes used tires make sense.

Or, in the case of one of my neighbors, he works construction, and his old truck gets around to a lot of construction sites. Almost daily. Sites that are full of pointed, metal objects that have a tendency to let the pressurized air escape from tires. [Nails.] In terms of time, money, and the way these things wear out so frequently, I'd like to suggest you look into using "used tires" for yourself. Last time I did that, it was a pinhole puncture in the side of the tire on my truck. The spare was good, so I just bought a spare spare, and it only cost me \$20. You've got a similar problem.

Run the numbers, do the math, figure out however you want. My solution may not be the best looking, but it might save you some money-especially in the long haul.

For the Week of: 5/8-14/2003

"It was always yet the trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing, to make it too common."

Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2* [I.ii.243]

Mr. Mercury has been making some big news lately. Doesn't make his wayward action – or inaction – any more pleasant. Want to understand what it all means? Coming up soon: Austin.

Taurus: Taurus is certainly the most important sign I know. Taurus is certainly the best sign I know. Taurus is a wonderful sign with many alluring qualities. Happy birthday. Previously, I'd predicted this Taurus birthday season sets things off in the weirdest way possible. That theme continues, and it only gets a little stranger as this is a couple of days when things are weird to the max.

You're both energized and lazy at the same time. Feeling this way would be fine except for certain problems with other people. You're ready to play, and everyone else complains about having to work. You're ready to work extra hard, and everyone else has gone fishing. Mercury is merely having fun at your expense. Realize that, and the rest of the pieces will–eventually–fall into place. So go ahead and figure that you're going to feel out-of-step for a little while. Your cyclic rhythms aren't going to be the same as anyone else. Just the way it goes. That doesn't mean any of the time is bad, it just suggests that you're a little different.

Gemini: The statistics I've collected suggest that 82% of the Gemini population doesn't like Mercury being backwards. This is compounded by the fact that it's backwards in the sign that comes before you, also known as your Gemini solar 12th house. This is not a good thing. It's like picking up every last one of your insecurities and working it over with that typically overactive Gemini brain.

See, it's just Mercury and its just doing its little retrograde thing. It's not the end of the world, although, at times, like these times, in Gemini land, it can feel like it's the end of the world. Last time this happened to me, I was at the lake at, at the dock, boat in the water, ready to fish at 4:00 AM. My fishing party didn't show up until around six, that's an extra two hours. To be honest, at 4 in the morning, I'm not fully functional. I must've spent a good 45 minutes not realizing that I was a little early, but the last hour or so? If I'd let my mind wander, I'd been in trouble.

Instead, I fished a little. Cast a few times from the dock there, muttered vague obscenities under my breath, and most important, I didn't worry about it. When the party showed up, two hours later, they had a printed out copy of my e-mail, it said 6 AM. I was sure I'd written 4. Mercury problems. What do you do with an extra hour in the pre-dawn dark?

Cancer: It's the best season in the year to be fishing. Not that there's really a bad time to fish, except in the dead of winter when it's just too cold for my sentiments. The problem is, after April, my astrology reading schedule always heats up. This is a big deal. It's where most of the money is. I have to schedule readings on days when I'd rather be doing research, i.e., fishing.

What's worse, I'll have someone schedule a reading then come up cash short at the last minute. "Uh, all my [credit] cards are tapped out, you take a check?" I'm a nice guy, but the expression, "The check's in the mail" doesn't fly with me. Previous business experience dictates that I wait until payment has been received and said payment has actually cleared the bank before I proceed. Take a lesson from my experiences, for one, don't hesitate to schedule that work thing, and for two, make sure you get the cash up front.

Leo: We were fishing one day, way up a creek channel. The branches were clawing at us, the water was pretty shallow, in the clear spots, we could definitely see big bass, lurking. Just after mating season, the guy bass hang around and guard the eggs. It's good hunting, if you ask me. Them old boys have some fight. The problem, see, it was really shallow water.

The little trolling prop got buried in the silt on the bottom, and it stirred up this great, murky cloud in the water. Makes it difficult for us to see the fish, makes it hard for the fish to see the bait, and I've always suspected that it spooks the fish.

That's a problem, and see? Mars is over yonder in Aquarius, doing exactly like that trolling motor. What's worse, Mercury is like that silt on the bottom, all stirred up and confusing. Between the two, you can't see much. Doesn't mean you should get all worked up, just give all of this stuff a little chance to settle. Getting mad at the creek channel or the trolling motor doesn't do any good—it's bound to happen.

Virgo: Motivation is sometimes a big problem around here. When Mercury starts back-spinning like he is, it's doubly worse for my

most excellent Virgo friends. They really don't like times like this. Now, I have a solution, it's something that works well for me. I'm not sure it'll work for you, but there's always hope.

With Mercury's present disposition, and our motivation sorely lacking, what seems to start out the day best is a cigar and a cup of strong, black coffee. Look: this might not work for you, but it works rather well for me. That cigar clears my mind [usually by clearing the room], and the cup of coffee is the perfect accompaniment for that cheap cigar.

Can't do one without the other, either, not first thing in the morning. The aromatic [smelly to some] tobacco smoke has a soothing, and claming effect, better than any incense. The coffee perks up what the nicotine placates. I'm not sure every [or even any] Virgo will like my idea, but it works for me. I'm pretty sure, if it's not coffee and cigar, though, I'm still pretty sure you've got a similar form of ritual that works well in getting your motivation back up to a point where it works like it's supposed to be. We both have a lot of work to contend with, and now's the time to get motivated, however we can.

Libra: I've been "road warrior-ing" all around Texas for more than a decade. It's the life I've carefully chosen, and I enjoy the work, the places, and most of all, the people. These days, I check into a hotel, and I usually find a desk with a phone jack marked "computer," if not a high-speed net connection, offered as part of the service.

But it wasn't so long ago, I mean, I can still point out the cheap motel where I stayed when this happened, I had to move the mattress away from the wall to get to the phone jack, to log into the service to get a net connection. It's an old story, but I still recall the hassles of being an early road warrior, out on the dusty trail, back when most people didn't travel with notebook computers and such ilk.

Back when it was actually a chore to wrangle up some kind of net connection. Felt like I was out on the wild frontier. Sometime, coming up, courtesy of a combined Mars and Mercury thing, you're going to get to pull a "Kramer;" that is, you're going to have to pull the mattress back from the wall in order to find a phone jack so you can make a net connection. This can be backbreaking physical turmoil, or it can be a minor inconvenience, sort of depends on how

you look at the problem. My solution involved just bumping the mattress askew by a few inches.

Scorpio: Morning coffee is an important ritual to me. I've got to be careful, too, as I don't want to over consume, as that leads to a weird, wired disposition. I make my first pot of coffee – it's actually just a two-cup pot, and then I set the teakettle on to heat up again, at a very low heat. Takes maybe 15 minutes, maybe half an hour.

That little teakettle starts to burble, then whistle slowly. Now, if I'm really wrapped up in something, like a stupendous e-mail note, or a reading something online, I miss the fact that the kettle is boiling again. Its whistle goes from a muted whistle to an angry scream. Insistent, angry whistle. Scares me out of my reverie.

So you're making your way through the Scorpio weekend, and then on into next week, and you've set something up, like my teakettle, and all of a sudden, it erupts. Screaming in pain, pent up steam angrily escaping, all those sort of noises. Point is it shocks me. Doesn't much matter how we position Scorpio during times like this, you wind up sounding like that teakettle of mine. The problem? Whatever causes you to sound off? That wasn't something you started. I just hope you get answered before you get to the high-pitched screaming part.

Sagittarius: I use a template when I start out with horoscopes. I don't feel like it should be necessary to type each sign, over and over, 52 times in one year, when I can let a computer template do all the hard work for me. There was a typographical mistake in the template one year, as I outlined the scopes for the next year. Small thing, really, just one, itty-bitty, omitted word.

A small proposition, really. Not misplaced, just forgotten, in my haste to get the work done. I was about a third of the way through with the year's scopes before some nice editor was kind enough to point this out to me. Good thing, too. Except that it really pissed me off. Wasn't the editor's fault, wasn't the cat's fault. It was all me.

Let's be 100% truthful here, that little, missed word? It's our own fault. Can't blame anyone else. But getting mad, getting worked up, watching the old blood pressure soar, getting red in the face, tense, irritable, or generally unpleasant doesn't work. The only one you can really blame is our Sagittarius selves. It's a trick of Mercury, highlighted by Mr. Mars. Just fix it. Might be a little extra work, having to go back and fix our own mistakes, but you know, we

should be glad that this error didn't carry on through the rest of the year, right?

Capricorn: My love for Capricorn's, and all things Capricorn, knows no bounds. Regrettably, I am but a single astrologer, and many people don't share this great feeling I carry in my heart for your lot in life. In fact, few, if any, people will carry this sort of torch for you. The closest you're going to get to have someone carry a torch for you looks a lot more like a scene from an old horror movie, and the torches are in the hands of an angry mob of peasants. You know, they want to burn down "Casa de Capricorn" because they think that you're either an evil doctor, or some sort of blood-sucking freak who only comes out at night.

Genius? Yes. Evil genius? Hardly. Blood-sucking freak? I don't think so. Although, I do know this one girl Capricorn, and she could qualify for that Vampire thing, but that's a single exception, and it's not germane to our discussion about having the angry horde at the gate. It's that angry horde at the gate that's got me worried, see, I'm the only one on your side right now, and that mob of peasants is clamoring for something.

You and me are stuck up in the castle together, and there's not a lot we can do. As I looked over this scenario, and the chart associated with it, I figured I'd built up this situation, and there had to be a way out of it. I can't see one. I think "Casa de Capricorn" will weather this storm just fine. But never underestimate what a bunch of stupid peasants can do.

Aquarius: I've only seen Norman Cook perform once, and it was a few years ago. Fat Boy Slim is the stage name. I liked some of the computer generated animations he ran as visuals, though, and I kept thinking about on particular image: a caricature of his face, his jaw opening and closing in manic laugh, and little happy faces for eyes. Perfectsymbolism for your weekend, running on into next week.

It's the idea that no one is sure whether you're doing a maniacal laugh, or just a laugh, or is that jaw moving in roar instead of a laugh? Screaming, maybe? Not sure about what noise it is? And then, those spinning, whirlpools that are supposed to be the limpid windows to your soul? Imagine little happy faces there. Or, if that image doesn't work, how about the spirals that seem to spin out of control?

As long as Mars is frying his way through your sign, that one cartoon, caricature image seems to fit with the way you feel. Or the way you think you feel. Or, it might just be us, but we're not sure how our Aquarian friends are doing, is that a laugh? Is it a roar? Eyes that are happy faces? Or is it something else? As long as we're confused, you don't have to worry about trying to explain anything, you can be as confused as we are. Blame Mercury—that works here at my office.

Pisces: You're going to be the port in the storm for either one, a few or whole lot of your friends. Next couple of days has some unsettling events, not major events, just little problems, and it's your cue to be our solace. We're going to turn to the staid, dependable, solid, friendly and helpful Pisces to help us through our difficult times. It's just a little Mercury thing. You normally like helping us, too, but after a couple of days of everyone turning to you for help, what comes up after that? Who helps the person who helps all the rest of us? Feeling all-alone again? It's not a big deal, but you're going to wonder if you're the only port on this planet. You're not, but for a little while, you're going to have to be our rock.

Aries: In the evenings, with my trailer's door open, the bug light on, I get this feeling. Rather than break into song, I'll just try to describe what it's like. The air is soft and gentle, the bird feeder is half-full, a few bats are starting to dart around, looking for a meal. There's a rosy glow in the western sky, and Mars appears out of the evening's void, a little past the point straight up, overhead.

It's the quality of the air, and I'm pretty sure it's just my imagination, but the atmosphere, right on the front steps of my own trailer, it feels soft. Easy. Peaceful, if only for a little while. The cares and concerns from the last day gradually slip away, and that gentle atmosphere pervades everything. There's no "artificial air" running, although, at least one of my neighbors is already running his AC unit. The insect buzz is frenzied, and yet, it's also eerily quiet. Stop and look for a little while, just up, overhead, there's Mars, as he blinks into existence. Take a moment or two, whenever you can, wherever you are, to stop and enjoy some of this peace and calm. Mercury has everyone turned upside down. The trick is to enjoy what's going in your own mind, in your own surroundings before you do something too wild.

For the Week of: 5/15-21/2003

"The inaudible and noiseless foot of Time."

Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* [V.iii.41]

Mercury GRADUALLY corrects its errant path during the next couple of days. However, as Bubba notes, "We ain't out of the woods yet, white boy."

Taurus: My Taurus friend here? She planned a party, last week. Invited everyone to join her for an evening of entertainment at a local club on 6th Street [that street is supposedly like other famous entertainment districts, in case you miss the allusion, you know, the French Quarter, Deep Ellum, Boys Town, et al.]

The problem with the local "entertainment business" is that nightclubs have a typically short shelf-life, going in and out of business faster than most folks change shoes. Unbeknownst to my delicate Taurus flower of a friend, the club she opted to have everyone meet at, closed. Like about three days before hand. Worse, it wasn't announced. So folks start showing up, and there's a crowd gathering, and there's no place to go. Of course, there is someplace to go, like the spot next door, but still, it upsets that delicate Taurus nature to have to rearrange the party, and at the last minute.

I don't think this is an adequate solution, and it's not something that I can openly condone, but let me just suggest, those of us who did finally make the party into a party? We made sure that the Taurus was in no condition to drive herself home, and we all helped by pitching in together to pay for her cab ride. It was a good party, even if it didn't go according to the Taurus plan.

Gemini: Gratuitous cat story. Several years back, I received a bird feeder. Hung it up outside the back door of the trailer. Called it "cat TV" as that seemed to be what it was. My cat is a mighty hunter, at least in her dreams and what she reveals to me. Her actions are like your Gemini actions these days. She will position herself on the couch, in place where she can see out the door, and she'll be poised to strike at the birds. I don't think she's really going to leap 8 or 10 feet in the air, but I know not to ever underestimate a woman. Then, the cat, in her deadly attack position, will fall asleep.

The question is, is this a problem? Not in the least. I like the fact that the cat is a "cheap purr," and that she listens to me read Shakespeare stuff aloud. Rodents and birds are not her strong

point, and I didn't hire her for that job. The fact that these days she falls asleep while hunting doesn't perturb me in the least. Stick with the strong points, that ability to listen, the way I can just look at her, and she'll purr, yes, go with what works. If a nap on the job is required, then go for it. Mercury is leaving your Gemini self a little tired out. Works for the cat, should work for you, too.

Cancer: I depend on Texas wisdom as a source for answers to life's questions. One of the notes I've got, came from a Cancer friend when he was dealing with particularly normal "Mercury Retrograde in Taurus" problem. His solution? "Tequila: the other white meat."

Sort of sums up the way it's going in Cancer land these days. There's not a lot we can do about much of anything. One frustrating little event just leads to another frustrating little event, which, in turn, just leads to another set of problems. You no sooner get one problem licked, than two more crop up to demand your good Cancer attention.

What are you going to do? There's a not a lot you can do, near as I can see. Not from my vantage point. Looking over your chart, all I could note was that it was a good thing this happened to someone else. The best I can offer? Like the man said, "Tequila: the other white meat."

Leo: It's been chronicled, by me, a number of times. I'll leave with a friend of mine to run afternoon errands, or to take in a meal, and we stop off so she can do a little shopping. Being the nice guy that I am, I usually offer to carry whatever packages are acquired along the route. Sooner or later, we pass a store that sells "ladies' supporting undergarments."

The bra shop. The dreaded bra shop. Man, there is nothing in there that I'm interested in. I mean, no product I'm interested in. Prurient interests and tittering aside, I've resigned myself to waiting patiently by the front door. The better shops of this type usually provide seating for males just like myself. I think the funniest exchange, to date, happened overseas, "There's just no way to look manly while waiting outside the dressing room, is there?" I asked the guy sitting next to me, surrounded by packages, like myself, "and what's worse, she's not even my girlfriend." The guy, with a bemused grin, just looked at me, agreed to my first point, but then, as to the fact that the female I was waiting not being my girlfriend? "Oh, sure," he said, with one of those tones that implied

he didn't believe me. [But it wasn't my "girlfriend"—just a friend who is definitely female, and definitely a friend, but definitely NOT my girlfriend. Ask her, she'll say I'm definitely not her boyfriend.]

You're going to get stuck, in all probability, outside the dressing room of life, and no matter what you say or do, it's just plain impossible to be your glorious self. Worse: no one believes you, even though you're telling the absolute truth.

Virgo: I got e-mail the other day, and its contents pointed out one of the problems we're all having these days, especially in the Virgo world. The substance of that note? "No one here at the office has an internet connection this morning, so I was just checking, your server is up, right?"

Let's look at this in detail. No one at the office has web access, therefore, the problem must be on my end? You're like me, you fail to see the logic in that, don't you? Logic, as it's normally assumed to be, it just doesn't seem to be working these days. The fault is in the stars. More specifically, it's in Mercury. You can either send—or receive—messages like the one I got. What you do with it, that's what's important. Try to be polite and nice even though the person on the other end is obviously lacking enough common sense to see the error of his or her ways.

Libra: I quit doing "Mercury Chronicles" because I was getting inundated with stories of woe, missed communications, and plans gone awry, some of which, would tear at your heartstrings. Not always amusing stuff. However, in most, if not all the examples that got sent to me, the problem was a simple matter of communication.

The message that got sent, and the way that message was received varied. Instead of me spinning up yet another cautionary tale about missed opportunities, let me suggest that you carefully examine your Libra communication processes over the next couple of days. You're going to be tempted to fire off a letter, note, fax, or even e-mail. Look at it before you commit that note to the airwaves, wires, or even carrier pigeon. Never hurts to take a second look before you toss it out there. Might save some trouble a little later.

Scorpio: There's a [Scorpio, imagine that] cantankerous old man who lives in Shady Acres. He's a few trailers down from my spot. I was listening to some music, and it was one of those thoroughly modern pieces of music. All sounds, synthesizers, nothing that came from a real instrument, just bells and whistles [or drum and

bass, if you will, again, all synthetic.] The deal is, with that one particular recording, the music gradually increases in volume, throughout the duration of the CD. Means it gets progressively louder. I thought it was kind of cool, but then, Mr. Cantankerous Scorpio was a little upset in that my music's volume violated his understanding of the noise rules.

Now, if it had been Country Music, or if there had at least been a real steel guitar, I'm sure it wouldn't have mattered. For that matter, the way the music was mixed, it kept getting louder, so when I started out, it was at an acceptable volume. Circumstances beyond my control, I guess, would have to be my excuse. You're either the irate older gentleman, incessantly complaining to the management about me, or you're just like me, dealing with an innocent problem, not really of your own making. Okay, let's tell the truth, my fine Scorpio friend, you knew that music was going to get louder and louder, didn't you? Do like I do, get up and turn down the stereo. It's lot easier than fighting with the neighbors over some silly issue like musical tastes.

Sagittarius: Other than the usual errant Mercury stuff, and even that's not too bad, the last few days, the next few days, all of it should be relatively smooth. Relative is the key phrase, though. Make sure you're willing to put the problems, even some of the big troubles, into a proper light. Some of the things that are getting stirred up, mostly at work, aren't that big of a deal. I'll get a frantic e-mail from somebody, about how his or her Sagittarius life is dangling by a thin, gossamer of a thread. I'm not sure than any astrological insight can really make that much difference.

Doesn't stop folks from asking, though. So I get these irritating e-mail requests for help [for free, no less]. It's not the end of the world. In fact, what've I've discovered, if I just park that request-or demand-for assistance for a few minutes, I can come up with a less flippant answer. Sometimes, too, the sending party has figured out a solution to the problem. In other words, don't jump every time the machine says, "you've a got a new message." Mercury is a still toying with our communication skills, and being a little more patient with the system might save us some troubles.

Capricorn: SWT [University] is located about 30 miles or 30 minutes, south of Austin, in a town called San Marcos. There's a typical Texas town square, courthouse in the middle, various shops and retail establishments are arrayed in a ring around the square.

It's, in my mind, pretty much a college town. Every modern college town sports a good coffee shop, some place where the espresso machine is the center of attention. I was in San Marcos, couple of weeks ago, and we stopped at the coffee shop, to grab some fuel for the rest of the evening.

I noticed, in this throw-back cultural icon coffee shop, there, sitting on the coffee table, underneath flyers for "Vegans for Democracy" and notices for open mic poetry readings, as well as a call for entries to the Easter parade, there was a copy of a magazine journal, "Guns of 2003." So what's weird about that? It's a small town in Texas, yes, guns are common. It's just that the ambiance of the place suggested one of those more "Austin" styles, the tree hugging, sandal wearing, crystal crunching, private part piercing, patchouli sniffing crowd. You're going to run into a similar incongruity. Don't freak out. Don't make a scene. A calm, rational comment like, "Oh, cool," goes a lot further and ruffles fewer feathers.

Aquarius: It was around 11:00 PM, a couple nights ago. I ran into a neighbor in the laundry room, "What's up?" I avoided the obvious answer, "doing laundry," and let him make a comment, as he had all the machines full of dirty clothes. "Yeah, I knew it was time to do laundry when the girls at work started saying things about how nice I was dressed." I paused. "You see, I was out of jeans and T-shirts, so I was wearing the 'hang up' clothes, nice slacks, pressed shirt...." He trailed on, giving me a tired shrug.

Mr. Mars, currently in full swing through your sign, is kind of like that. You're out of casual attire, and you start wearing the nice clothes. This isn't so bad, as you'll find that some folks seem to think that you - like me - clean up real nice. This of course, begs the question, why was I doing laundry at the same time as a tired Aquarius? I keep weird hours, didn't faze me a bit. I was hoping to get in when there wasn't a crowd. It's not like they really have enough coin-operated washer and dryers at this trailer park. Such is life. So as Mars presses you for time? Either consider doing laundry at midnight, or, like my neighbor, try wearing the "hang up" clothes.

Pisces: Gratuitous cat story. Yes, I know it's almost like pandering to the masses, and I realize some people don't have cats, or, for that matter, even like the little fur balls. Or, in the case of my cat, a large fur ball. She's started shedding, and it's a mess. However, late

at night, most nights when I'm home, I stretch out on the couch to read. She eventually parks herself on my chest, her front paws stretched out, and the gentle purr motor going full steam.

At one point, I'm pretty sure she goes to sleep in that position. I know, buried on the web site someplace, there's a picture of me and the cat in that position. It's wonderfully calming. In fact, I feel like evenings like that pretty much justify the terror I endure when she discovers her food bowl is close to being empty. Maybe you don't have a cat who thinks "first light" in the morning is the proper time to serenade an owner. But somehow, you do have either a cat or a dog, maybe a boyfriend or girlfriend, who thinks that stretching out with you on the couch is a perfectly acceptable activity. It's sort of a strange time, planets being where they are, and I'd think about that image of the cat on my chest, lightly snoring, or purring, as I can never tell the difference.

Aries: I've got a garden variety of males friends, all of them go by the sobriquet of "Bubba." So I'm not sure who this is attributed, other than scribbled by the note, it says, "bubba." "If I wanted raw fish, I'd have some M-80s, and I'd go fishing with them." I do believe that was a comment directed to my suggestion of sushi as a culinary option one night.

Sounds about right. Maybe it doesn't quite work out-of-context, but it makes a lot of sense. Any of my friends named "Bubba" could easily say something just like that. "Sushi? Raw fish? Like bait? No way." Sushi should be a perfect food for Aries, it involves long filet knives, and it involves food that's served really fast. Soak enough of that green hot sauce stuff they serve with it, and it's got a spice to match the Aries sentiment: hot. I can't correct the problems with Mercury, Venus or any other planet, but I can warn you to go a little easy on the stuff you do with filet knives. Real-or imagined-filet knives.

For the Week of: 5/22-28/2003

"A good man's fortune may grow out at heels."

Shakespeare's *King Lear* [II.ii.160]

Mercury may not be "retrograde" but that doesn't suggest he's actually out of his own shadow. Give matters a few days for the dust to settle.

Gemini: So a friend of mine wandered into a local place of business. According to my buddy, his accountant told him to, "Go spend some money," as his business was doing pretty well. My buddy, ordered to spend, went looking to redecorate his offices. The sales clerk at the office store didn't take him seriously and brushed him off. I mean, he was looking to spend some serious money. He was also dressed in what we call "formal wear" around here, shorts, sandals, grubby band T-shirt.

You get the picture? Now, on his way out of the store, he runs into a business associate, a local, high-powered, marginally famous lawyer. They exchange pleasantries, promise to have "your people call my people," and after my bud had left, the lawyer gets stuck explaining who the bum was. Not a bum, but successful local personality.

That clerk, misjudging a Gemini, missed redecorating two offices, plus the home office, so everything would match. You know you're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but this applies over the next few days, are you like that clerk? Or are you like my buddy? Just because Mercury is no longer backwards doesn't mean there isn't room for some misunderstandings.

Cancer: Lycanthropy. Know the term? It's a lot more palatable than it's more common phrasing, "werewolf." In the mythology of Lycanthropy, a person turns into a wolf or wolf-like critter, during the Full Moon. Play some eerie music now. Listen for a howl. I tend to write for a week at time, but as I was looking forward to what you've got coming up, it's a lot like that werewolf thing.

Not now, not this weekend, not next week, but at the next full moon [around Friday the 13th?]-you're going to go through a radical transformation. Seeing as how I'm a cat person, I don't find anything attractive about dogs, pure bred, mutts, poodles, or wolves. I do feel a certain kinship for coyotes, but those guys are usually pretty small. Your upcoming transformation can either be good or bad, depends on what you do to prepare. However, there's

no time better than now to start getting ready for the lycanthropy transformation. It's a lunar thing, and you do understand that.

Leo: I've been from one tip of Texas to the other. From the northern extreme to southern extreme, Amarillo to Harlingen. Not long ago, I did the East-West shuffle, too. From Deep East Texas [Louisiana] to El Paso, I've traveled by rail, by old truck, by plane. Personally, I prefer planes. That kind of distance? Planes only make good sense. "It's five hours in truck, or it's 45 minutes on a commercial jet." So my choice is obvious. With the way airports are these days, I've found that it helps to have something to occupy my time, while I'm waiting in the lines.

Watch people. Watch how they travel. There's always one business suit person, trying to fit a week's worth of clothing, a full briefcase, a computer carry-all, a newspaper, and a cup of high-powered airport coffee, all into a single carry-on package. Doesn't work. Truly seasoned pros, like myself, we've got it down to the simplest, most direct way to travel. But I'm always watching, shopping for ideas. If there's an easier way to do this, I want to know. I'm suggesting that you take time to pause, stop what you're doing, and look around. Observe. What I've discovered so far, I always carry a toothbrush with me. Don't need much else, but having that item is helpful. That and the computer. The real trick is to see how little you can get by with. Take time out to observe your fellow travelers and see what you can pare away. No need to add extra stuff to your baggage.

Virgo: I'm tempted to dig up an old "Holy Grail" allusion now. It would be so perfect. I'm not talking about British comedy, either, but the original tales about the Grail, and the knights who went gallivanting all over the place trying to find said grail. And then, there's the epic poetry, descended from the medieval French stuff, which was written about the knights all traipsing across the countryside, in search of that grail. Good stuff, but a bit too steeped in romantic notions for our purpose.

Yes, you're looking for a Virgo Grail, and yes, you might just find it in the next week or two. One of the myths about the Grail talks about a virtuous knight who did find the grail, and he failed to ask the right question at the right time. Don't let that happen to you. You might think your own questions are annoying, but you could blow a good chance to learn, and help, someone else—as long as you

ask the right questions. The Virgo Quest is on. Go and get yourself a holy grail of some kind. At least, go looking.

Libra: I'd predict, balls-out, wide open, good stuff for you guys, but there's a catch. The catch is only the phase of the moon, and she's not being kind. But other than the slightly emotional tone to the times, other than creeping sentimentality, there's a goodly amount of wonderful stuff happening all over the place. Structure is an important part of this equation. There are certain rules that are in place for a reason. There's a reason why certain conventions must be followed.

I thought about this as a decent Libra sent me a note, letting me know what was going on, and that Libra had a correction for me. Following a tried and true Libra convention, the note was polite, funny, witty, and grammatically correct. I was called to task for errors, but it was so well put, that I didn't mind it all.

When events and people conspire to ruin a perfectly good period of Libra time, follow the tried and true convention about Libra, and how you guys are always supposed to be so nice all the time. See if that doesn't get you what you want--a whole lot faster than hollering, yelling screaming and getting upset.

Scorpio: There's a local restaurant, a place where the mythology and marketing hype far outstrip the quality of the food or the strength of the margaritas. One of their self-effacing slogans, emblazoned on the wait staff's shirt, "Where quality is only a slogan." It's a tricky marketing point of view, because, frankly, I've always judged the whisky to be a little watered down, the food, while it's okay, their grub has never lived up my expectations. It's not that fiery, nor, for that matter plentiful. Just okay.

I didn't say it was bad, and some of the marketing stuff they do is pretty unusual. But still. The place doesn't live up to its legendary status. You've got to be careful, when making marketing statements, you want to make sure you can live up to your legendary Scorpio status. I have nothing but absolute faith in your Scorpio self. But my absolute faith doesn't always translate into something that works for you. I'd be extra careful about making fantastic claims these days. You don't want to live up to a line like their shirts, "Where quality is only a slogan."

Sagittarius: I've got a black, formal cowboy hat. Don't wear it often, but when I do put it on, I tend to pull it down low over my eyes. It

gives me a spooky, Scorpio look. At least, I'd like to think that it gives me a spooky, Scorpio look. After the spring arrives in Texas, though, I tend to leave the heavy felt hat on the shelf.

Unless you're male, living in certain non-metropolitan areas of Texas, and this type of headgear really fits your style, then I doubt you'll be donning this sort of attire. But imagine, if you will, that you've got a big, black felt hat on, and imagine that you're pulling it down low over your eyes, and imagine that you're trying for that scary, Scorpio look. You've got a secret, I've got a secret, and we both have a mysterious power, almost within our grasp. Play the poker face these days. Play it slow and easy. Play like you're not about to show what you've got hidden.

Capricorn: My long-time feline companion, the cat, has provided me with an endless source of material. She's a little different from a usual cat, in that, after years in a small trailer with me, she's gotten quite close. At least, at times, she's gotten quite close. As such, she's had a behavior pattern that doesn't quite fit a normal cat pattern. To me, she's a little less aloof. She communicates, with her own cat language, more frequently. It's usually just a plaintive mewling, as she wonders why the food dish is empty, or, since she's at that point where I have to get "old lady" cat food for her, she's been known to express displeasure about the taste.

Can't say I blame her, either, the stuff looks lot like sawdust pellets. "But honey," I tell her, "it's good for your urinary tract; says so on the package." Then she does become very cat-like, and she spends some time ignoring me. Pointedly ignoring me even though, I really do have her best interests in my heart. Look: ignoring people sometimes works really well. You might want to try the cat's approach.

Aquarius: I'll promise one thing, you get a little break. I'd gone to listen to some "old timer" rock show, you know, aging rock stars, guys who were obviously over the hill, and still touring, hoping to sell a few more CD's? Halfway through the show, they all took a break. There were bottles of water, not beer bottles, not whiskey bottles, like in the days of yore, and the lead signer, for this break, he starts to walk off stage. He comes back to the microphone, and says, "If there was something you meant to do before the show, now's the time to do it." Then he grinned.

Okay, so I was also one of the youngest people in the audience, I was there for the historical value of the performance, and there's a good chance these guys will never tour again. But you never can tell. So you get break, like that band, halfway through some problem, you get a break like that. If there's something you meant to do earlier? During that break you get? That's the time to care of the business.

Pisces: You're inclined to have this slightly cranky disposition, especially this weekend. It's not really you, it's just that you get the feeling that you're working in vacuum, and no one seems to be paying attention to you. The way they should be paying attention to your fine, Pisces self. My oh my, but you're looking well these days. [Always have to pander to the masses that way.]

Regrettably, I'm about the only one who's going to notice that your Pisces self is looking well. Hey, there's a weird trigger point coming up, it's rapidly approaching, and the rest of us? [Read; Non-Pisces.] We're just digging out from the last Mercury thing, and we're not all happy yet. Maybe, just maybe, this is a good time to be ignored. If you're not transparent these days, you might wind up wishing you were.

Aries: It was a weekend, a few weeks, back, here in Austin, and I had nothing to do. Not going fishing. No readings booked, nothing. I started to look for something, like maybe some music one night or something, and there really wasn't much playing, at least. Nothing sparked any interest.

I wandered down to a local watering hole, I had high hopes of making time with the bar keep, a comely lass of epic proportions, and she wasn't working. However, much to my dismay, at first, there was a three-piece band warming up. Stand up bass, fiddle, electric guitar, with a banjo, sitting off to one side. Sort of an interesting combination. No drums, just a couple of "good ole boys" except, they were all rather "youngish," with that "white boy inner city ghetto" look to them.

Personally, I think that style is more an affectation than anything else, but that could just be me. They went by some strange name, "Drive-by Bluegrass," or something like that. Pretty cool, actually, when them kids got cranked up and running, it was an amazing, pure, sound. So as the weekend comes running up on you, don't discount a couple of good ole boys just because they look a little odd. Wait, listen to the music. You might be, like me, uplifted by the

sounds. In part, I suspect, some of the music was so good because there was an earnestness. It's always important to be earnest.

Taurus: Tough stuff. You're one, tough sign, if there ever was one. That's for sure. I was trying to find a way to suggest this, without appearing overbearing, or over-generalizing, but you know, there's just no easy way for me to explain this. At some point, in the coming days, it's just going to feel like the whole world is against you.

I know, you just got done with a birthday and Mercury and everything, but where a lot of important planets are, their relative position to the Taurus portion of the heavens, it all leaves with a sense that everything is stacked up against you. This is like a cloud on one of those brilliant, sunlit spring days, a single cloud that obscures the light, and the view, for only a moment. And like that cloud, this sense that the whole world is against your Taurus self? That's going to blow away. It's drift on to bother other folks.

But: when you're sitting under that cloud? When you're face to face with seemingly endless opposition? Don't panic. Don't freak out. Slow, calm, steady, easy pacing will keep seeing you through.

For the Week of: 5/29-6/4/2003

"There lives within the very flame of love/A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it."

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* [IV.vii.114]

Sun's in Gemini, the Moon is doing a little dance, and the days are balmy in Austin. Coming up soon: a quick trip to El Paso.

Gemini: Birthdays are supposed to be loads of fun. After the last couple of weeks, you could sure use some good news, and I'm here to tell you that life is getting a whole lot easier in Gemini Land. No, really, I promise.

There's one caution, one little thing you've got to look out for, and it's not really a big deal. Don't let your highly excitable emotional state over run your good sense. It's like this: I picked up some really nice looking "Tiger Lilly" lures. There are, to my eyes, really attractive, yellow, lime green, black spots, maybe a splash of orange, something not unlike some of my favorite shirts. That's the good news. Tiger Lilly lures don't work on the local lakes.

I know this. Didn't stop me from buying and trying the lures. I mean, the lures worked, in a sense, as they lured me into buying them. The problems? No matter what I think about those lures, no matter what kind of feelings of great lust and desire those things inspire in me, those Tiger Lillies don't do a thing for the local fish. Careful with inspired actions that really don't yield results.

Cancer: You're going to get a taste of Saturn. It's not a real influence, except for a hint of flavor. Owing to Austin's heritage as a counter-culture Mecca during certain eras, there's a prevailing sentiment wherein just about every restaurant has at least one or two "vegetarian friendly" dishes on the menu. Most places offer at least one tasty item that's completely vegan, too.

It's an important distinction in places like Austin, have to make sure we can serve just about anyone. At one local sandwich place, I discovered that the vegetarian entrée was a wonderful blend of Hummus and other spices, light, delicate, not too filling, and lacking just one thing. That's the sort of flavor I'm talking about here. Saturn's influence is light and delicate, in that you know it tastes okay, and it's good for you, but there's something lacking. I get a couple of strips of bacon on that sandwich. Upsets the vegan crowd, but really adds that little dose of flavor needed to accentuate the

Hummus. Chick Peas are okay, but do what you need to do to make Saturn more palatable. Bacon usually works for me.

Leo: I was listening to a local singer/songwriter, one of those lonely souls who gets on stage with just himself and guitar, his song was about greed. Poignant, funny, wry and witty, of course, what do you expect from a local performer? The problem in this town? You can't swing a dead cat with hitting one or more of these guys. My buddies in East Austin, several luminary stars live in their 'hood. Down here in south Austin, I was chatting up one of my neighborhood friends, "Yeah, Jimmy lives next door, and across the street is Michael..."

It's no big deal, around here, to have these crushingly funny, droll individuals around. The biggest problem is sorting them all out from the rest of the crowd. That's your problem, too. You're funny, cute, wonderful. You're Leo; you're the very best.

I'll promise there is no better "Fixed Fire Sign" than Leo. But it's like listening to that one singer singing his song about greed, while you may be very, very good, there's a lot of folks around here that are equally good. Makes for a little bit of a problem. These days, you don't stand out like you should. Don't let it escape your attention, that I noticed, though. You stand out to me. I'm appreciating what you do, even if no one else seems to be paying attention to you and your songs. [Or art work, or whatever it is that you're doing that deserves singular recognition.]

Virgo: When I wear boots, judging by the way the soles' wear, I'm a "toe dragger." However, when I wear sandals, it's the heels that wear out first. I would, in my ignorance, assume that this has something to do with the fact that the boots have pointy toes, whereas the sandals tend to conform to my barefoot imprint.

The less there is to a sandal, the happier I am. The deal with the way I wear sandals, though, brought up an interesting case study as it's a real scenario for me. On the local hike and bike trail, my second home, I tend to get little pebbles stuck under my heel, between the sandal's sole and my not so tender foot. It's a minor, annoying characteristic of sandals. Or, at least the models I prefer, those sport sandals. I have to stop, periodically, and pull the sole away from my foot so I can let those pebbles fall out. It doesn't much matter if you're heel dragger or a toe dragger, you're going to be just like me, and get a few pebbles stuck under your heel. Being

Virgo, you're more delicate than I am; therefore, stop long enough to let the minor irritant fall free. It's all mostly good. Minor stuff problem, like those pebbles, need not impede your basic, good, forward motion.

Libra: I'm sure I've used it before in my copious disclaimers, but I just noticed this one, the other night at the Broken Spoke: No smoking food drinks on dance floor. An image came to mind, a "smoking food drink." Which, if you think about it, isn't such a far-fetched idea, not in Texas, as a smoked food could be like barbecue, then blend it up in nutritious drink of some kind? Think about a smoked brisket malt? Or a smoked sausage smoothie? Maybe not. I should think these things through a little bit better. Lest we forget, there's more than one place in Texas where there's "batter-dipped" French fries [with cream gravy.] So some of my personal culinary ideas aren't so hot.

Still, kick around some combinations that seem improbable. Kick around a few ideas, look at the ingredients, and think to your Libra self, "What items here don't go together? One of these doesn't belong here...." Then give it a spin. It's time to think about improbable combinations, and explore some weird options. It's the influence of the Gemini stuff in your chart that's making you think about improbable pairs. Give it a try.

Scorpio: My fine Scorpio friends sometimes lack my own, Sagittarius ability to see the much heralded, sometimes grandiose "big picture." This is important, though. You see, there's a bunch of minor stuff still kicking around, little problems from various corners of the sky [more precisely, leftovers in Taurus], or it could be that pesky Mars thing going on, at one time or another.

Still, these irritations, put in perspective, are relatively minor. One of my Scorpio buddies, named Bubba oddly enough, called me to vent for 45 minutes about a flat tire on his truck. After he got done telling me what a huge inconvenience this was, it took him, at the very most, 15 minutes, to change the tire. So that's an hour, total time, 45 minutes to complain, 15 minutes to fix.

Trucks, for all their troubles, are easy to work on. He hates it that I noted the time on the phone call, but when he gets his cell bill, he'll see that I'm close, if not a little under, on the time on that one call. What's worse, he's going to hate to see this story retold, at his expense, in a public forum like this. But that's the point: careful

with the complaints. The ratio of complaining to the problem itself tends get a little out of balance. Some of this stuff can be fixed quite easily; although, that does reduce the need for artful Scorpio oration.

Sagittarius: I sometimes wonder if I spend all my life doing laundry. The deal is, I mean, where I live, it's not a large space. Not a lot of room for anything. Storage isn't much. Folks kept giving me coffee mugs until I was reduced to using the special gift mugs for skeet practice. The rest of them are stored in the oven. Like I suggested, there's not a lot of storage space. I suppose that's why I do laundry so frequently, as the little hamper just fills up in a hurry. I'm not sure I like the trot over to the laundry room, but on warm summer evenings, with tons of little gnat like critters, plus the odd bat or two, it has a some kind of perfect symmetry to it all.

Simplicity has its own merits. Think about trying to simplify some aspect of your life. At one point, I was over run with "special, anniversary, limited edition" coffee mugs. Once one of my friends discovered that I was willing to donate the bulk of the collection to target practice, the world became a simpler, easier place to live. I just wish I could store my dirty laundry in the oven, too, but I think there's a risk associated with that.

Capricorn: I was listening to some sweet, gentle strains of some sort of classical music, when the next CD cycled up. It was older, one might call it vintage, rock and roll. Pretty nasty stuff for the time, although, by more modern standards, it's relatively tame. The lyrics aren't that explicit, the music is really the basic guitar driven, bass and drums, I think most of that era's music was really based on a 4-4 beat. Nothing that exciting.

However, the way it followed the sweet and gentle strains of some classic music, it was a like a rude shock to the system, something a little raw, almost invigorating, the long guitar solo searing through the speakers. Oh yeah, that's why this stuff was hot at one time. You're hitting this, in the next ferw days, a time when you're moving from a sedate pace, that sweet and gentle strains of classical music, to some hard-hitting backbeat. I like the idea that "classical music" is done with a symphony whereas "classic" is anything more than 5 or 6 years old. Or, in the case of the stuff I was listening to, more than 20 years old. Get ready to shift gears. Something new, something old, is about to cycle up in the Capricorn CD player.

Aquarius: It's not secret, that, from to time, I've dated women with daughters old enough for me to date. I discovered that I preferred the older, more mature and sensible females [the moms] as they, as a group, are far more inclined to be amused by my antics. As an added bonus, their kids are usually a good source for whatever currents are flowing in the juvenile streams of life.

This, on occasion, leads to a funny situation, as [this was some time back], I looked at the date's two daughters, and I asked, "So, what time do I have to have your mother home?" The oldest, still grounded for life, took one look at me, and deadpanned, "Better not be any later than midnight, or there will be hell to pay for." She then flipped her golden locks at me, and turned her head. Bright kid, she played along.

So with all the Gemini stuff, the Taurus stuff, and Mars, plus Saturn moving along, you've got situation that you're going to find humorous. I thought it was funny. I giggled. Just be aware that not everyone shares our twisted sense of humor. That kid looked back at me, daggers in her eyes, "I'm not joking, bucko."

Pisces: Austin is a couple of hundred miles inland from the Gulf [of Mexico]. Still, sitting on the Eastern Shoulder of the Hill Country, we've got rolling coastal prairie stretching to the east, and the legendary Hill Country to the West. The damp winds pick up moisture, billowing over the coast and then reaches us, eventually. We get dead days at the beginning of June, times when the air feels like it's a kind of heavy cream, still warm, moist, and probably not all that good, not if believe what the medical journals say about that sort of thing.

Rare evenings, it cools off enough to enjoy this thick, damp air. It's almost really pleasant. Okay, to me, it's very pleasant, but not everyone enjoys air that's so thick. Some would say I'm thick, too, but never mind that now. The point is to enjoy what's right there, all around you. The days are getting warm. Looks like it might be a hot summer, yet. In the meantime, before the July Heat starts to soak us through, enjoy what's floating around. It's not so bad, not if stop long enough to see what's going on, stop and feel that damp air. Really, it's kind of pleasant, I mean, it's not like being in a desert environment where it feels like the dry atmosphere leaches the moisture from your skin. Quite the opposite. See what I means about enjoying where you are?

Aries: We get these breezes here, something like a warm, wet wind blowing up from the south. I always feel like I can detect the faintest hint of salt air on the breeze, although, such a presumption is patently false. It's a trick of the senses. When I'm on the trail, or even standing in the parking lot of the grocery store, I still almost feel like the ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, is just right over there.

There's some moisture in the breeze. There's some moisture, as we're fond of pointing out around here, "Yes, it's hot, but it's a wet heat." The gulf coast is a good 200 miles south of here, more or less. The very idea that I can detect is any sense of "ocean air" on the breeze is purely a construct of my imagination. Could be hopes and desires, too.

Doesn't much matter, though, hope and a trick of the Aries imagination can be inspiring. I seriously doubt that you're going to wander to grocery store to pick up something to barbecue this weekend, like I just did, and I seriously doubt that you're going to be standing there in the parking lot, sensing the salt air on breezes. But your imagination and senses, while they may trick you a little, they do offer something very important these days: hope. Stop long enough to be hopeful, dare to dream a little.

Taurus: For the longest time, I had a set route around the lake, a measured distance I would aim for as my daily form of exercise. There will always be little detours, when the weather's really warm, and I work up a good sweat, a cool beverage is appropriate. Or, if I need to stop by the bank, or stop off and pick up a loaf of bread, these are normal detours, worked into my usual route.

I pulled some changes though, and these changes were, ostensibly, just for the sake of change. I went the other way, one day, counter to the direction I normally go. Then, at one point, when I usually duck under the bridge, I opted to climb the stairs, instead. Little changes to the routine way of doing things brings new ways of looking at things.

Now see here, I didn't change drastically, I means I still worked in my average distance, and the time was right, and the various errands along the way were all there, it just did me some good to shift the whole process. Break out of the rut. I wasn't in a rut, but still. A little change to the Taurus routine, a shift in the way you do things, something to break up the tedium, this is what you need. You can do it yourself, or you can let it happen against your wishes.

From what I know about Taurus, it's a lot better if you make the changes yourself. Doesn't have to be big, just a little different.

For the Week of: 6/5-11/2003

"Things past redress are now with me past care."

Shakespeare's *Richard II* [II.iii.170]

Coming up soon: a quick trip to El Paso, always a favorite desination, although, it's going to b a bit odd this time. It's that "tail-end of the eclipse" energy. It's a strange, free-range energy that's present, not sure just which way's up. But it is getting better.

Gemini: One of my buddies is particular about his cell phone etiquette. He won't take his phone into a restaurant, not even the sleazy dives we prefer, because, in his words, "It's just not right." He might not be right either, given the compnaioшип he keeps. As much as I hate the little things, I like my "boat phone." It's come in handy on more than one occasion.

So, I was sitting in the truck, outside a friend's apartment, one of those "gated communities," and I needed the code to get in the gate. There are simple instructions on the speaker box itself, "dial the apartment number you want to reach," and they will buzz you in. But with a cell phone, it's just a lot easier to call the person and ask for the code.

This is both a problem, and a solution. Let's look at this in terms of the Gemini chart. Read the instructions. Dial the apartment number; let them buzz you in. Or, you can complicate this arrangement, and use your Gemini cell phone. You make the call, but one requires three steps, and the other just requires you to punch in an apartment number.

Cancer: I was watching a friend work her horse. Nice mare, pretty markings, a little psychotic because there was some Arabian blood in that mare, but basically a well-behaved horse, as horse behavior goes. The biggest problem? Me. I know next to nothing about how to handle a skittish mare. I know even less about handling a skittish female of the human variety; however, I'm sure there's some familiar ground here.

To be of assistance, what I did, while she worked that horse in the pen? I sat on the rail of the fence. I should've had a cowboy hat on, look the part even better, but I was wearing a baseball hat. Sandals hooked under the rail, but I lacked either a straw or some chew to perfectly achieve the role of being a cowboy. That horse didn't seem to be learning very much, as she kept making the same mistakes

over and over. Kind of like her owner, a little obstinate about some things.

Kind of like some of the stuff going on with dear Cancer's these days, a little reluctant to perform the prescribed routine? Feel like someone's leading you around on a rope, got a bit tucked into your mouth? A little metal to chew on, a lead rope forcing you to do something you don't want to do? While I'm amused, sitting on that top rail, watching the events, you can fight with this, kick and buck, refuse to follow the lead set by Saturn, or you can let your handler, your own personal Horse Whisperer, show you what to do.

Leo: "Don't insult her dog." Me and a friend (any bets on his name? Bubba? You think?) were talking about this on a lazy summer afternoon, beating the heat on the patio on of a local dive. My friend, she's got a dog. Her dog is dumb as a stump. My friend knows this. Still, in my efforts to be politically correct, my reaction is always, "Yes, but that dog could hunt." The canine companion was sitting the shade with us, tongue hanging out, a sloppy, makeshift water dish dribbling foam everywhere, the dog was just about as happy as could be.

The occasional passerby would stop and comment on how good-looking the dog was. Might have been a purebred, if someone hadn't lost the paperwork. Whatever you do, especially around here, don't insult her dog. Never mind both the dog and the owner are fully aware of the obvious fact that the dog is stupid, even as dogs go. It is not in the interest of good communications to offend that canine companion. As the weekend gets here, as next week starts, think about this simple advice, consider it from my point of view, "Don't insult her dog." Besides, just how stupid is that dog? Getting table scraps, got a water dish, getting love and attention? Maybe that dog isn't so stupid.

Virgo: Much to my dismay, I just discovered that one of the new residents here in Shady Acres is a Virgo. In true Virgo fashion, she cleans houses for a living. I thought about hiring her to do my place, but then, I'd have to come up with some extra cash to pay her. That's a problem.

See: some of the best ideas, some of the most wonderful concepts become quite clear in the next couple of days. Or, like me, you discover that you have a perfect Virgo neighbor. That's always good news. The problem, then? The "paying" part. Coming up with the

cash. That's sort of difficult. And you know, it's not a good idea to contract a Virgo to work for you unless you are willing to properly recompense said Virgo.

Flip this around to what your chart looks like these days. It's not a good idea to whip out the old plastic charge card unless you're absolutely sure that you can pay for what it is that you're ordering. Fortunately, you're Virgo self will discover that I do offer certain inexpensive options on the web site. But not everyone is as willing as I am to accommodate your Virgo self these days. Go easy on the spending spree – make sure you've got it before you spend it.

Libra: The early June nights in Austin are perfect for sitting on the veranda. I prefer the patio at a nice restaurant where a cool libation is served, the open-air filled with bugs and bats darting in the night's sky, and listening to the ongoing discussion.

One Libra lad was making a point about relationships, and I found it rather interesting, "Hey, maybe he was doing her a favor, you know, maybe he didn't love her, and maybe this all for the best." Who knows? From the comment, it's easy to surmise that the discussion centered around a relationship, a broken heart, love gone awry, and the relative abuse being heaped on an unnamed and not preset person. Like the good Libra that he was, the guy was just trying to offer a slightly different way of looking at the issue.

Okay, see, look: you can offer a unique perspective. The point is, though, you might want to be a little more careful about offering up your different way of seeing an issue. I know you're right; matter of fact, I was behind that Libra guy all the way. What's going on, astrologically speaking, though, you've got to be careful that you don't alienate a lot of your audience in the way you make your very valid point.

Scorpio: One of my buddies, goes by the unlikely surname of "Bubba," oddly enough, was recounting a tale about an after work drink. Bubba works construction, although, not much lately.

"So [name removed for propriety's sake] has a new baby. Ever see his wife? No? Anyway, last Friday, we all went to the bar after work. He used my phone, called home, and said he'd be home with his paycheck – by 7:30, this was about 4 in the afternoon. Been really hot lately; that sun's a burner. So anyway, around 9, the door to the bar swings open. Silhouetted against the door's frame, a dark figure. It's his wife. I'll swear I heard that lonesome song from the

Clint Eastwood early westerns, you know that tune? She's got the baby on one hip. [No name] looks up, says one word. She marches over to him, punches him right in the forehead. I'm not kidding. He's out like a light. She then dragged her man off, threw him on the back of the truck, and took him home."

1] If you think the men in Texas are tough, you should the girls around here. 2] Don't ever mess with a new mom. 3] Scorpio: if you say you're going to do something, then let me reiterate the point of the story: do what you say. 4] If he doesn't come home on time, I'll bet you know exactly where that bar is.

Sagittarius: Lucky Sagittarius. Or maybe, these days, unlucky Sagittarius. Numerous folks will be telling you just how good things are. I'm not one to disagree with mainstream astrological influences, or what the so-styled "masters" suggest, but you know, I have to take a little exception here.

Could be because I'm little more bitter. Could be because last week wasn't exactly that great. Could be a lot of things. The way you handle problems is what's the important thing. I was working the Fishing Guide to the Stars "Help Desk & Friendly Customer Service" phone line. After a couple the usual complaints, diatribes, and long lists of what I'm doing wrong, I tend to get a little bitter. Or, as one Bubba says, "Bit her, bit him, too."

The deal is, maybe you and me, our Sagittarius selves shouldn't be in the front line of communication with "customer service" over the next couple of days. We all have this feeling: "I want attention - just not yours." Maybe it's a good time to lose the cell phone for a couple of days, take a break from doing all the hard work of trying to communicate with people who don't really want to listen.

Capricorn: I love my red-headed Capricorn friends. Or, I love most of them, anyway. Matter of fact, I'm inordinately fond of Capricorn's in general. I got an e-mail the other day, a slightly angry tone, "Just exactly what do have against Capricorn?" I wonder where this stuff comes from, on occasion. Something against lovely Caps? [Ruggedly handsome - whatever.] Hardly.

The deal is, your Cap self is going to be inclined to read something, watch something, eat something, and you're liable to find it disagreeable. Before you fire up the e-mail hate machine, before you send of a torrid note about how the world is cruel to you, and how this one [event, person, place, dining experience] didn't work out,

and therefore, the world is a bad place, with everyone out to get decent Caps like yourself. That's not the case.

Here's a fishing tip: "chum." Wait, see: I lost a lure the other day, you know, that lure cost \$6.95 [plus tax]. Would've eventually made a good earring, too. "No man, you didn't 'lose a lure,' it's like chum, you know, leaving a little extra for the fish to feed on." You're not losing a situation, you're not really experiencing a setback, it's matter of how you view the disagreeable event. It's like a token to the gods of fishing or something.

Aquarius: It's an old slogan, T-shirt, bumper sticker expression from my days of racing fast motorcycles, and it's a term I've always been endeared to, "If you haven't seen God, you're not going fast enough." Let's spin that expression around and use, in context, for the Aquarius chart these days. Mars is frying through your sign, and if you haven't felt it, then you're not going fast enough.

Either Mars is going to speed you up, or Mars is going to speed up stuff around you. Which will it be? I suppose, that's sort of the question I'm posing to you, the Aquarius contingent. As things start happening faster and faster, spiraling out of control, think about that motor sport racetrack lore. Either you're going to have to move a little faster, or we're going to have to move a little faster to keep up with you, but either way, the options include going faster as a part the solution.

Pisces: At one time, I spent a lot of time on the "Hike & Bike" trail. As a walker, not as runner or biker, I get a chance to observe people. One of the most common types on the trail is the "bicycle nazi." Terrible appellation, and worse yet, a terrible hog of good trail space. The "bicycle nazi" blazes along, not paying too much attention to the surroundings, legs furiously pumping away. I've always been tempted to throw an elbow out, but I'm afraid I'd lose an arm that way.

What's even funnier, though, is to see one of the bicycle enthusiasts furiously pumping away, and to see a companion, usually of the opposite gender, trying vainly to keep up. Sweat drenched brow, not altogether appropriate attire, fleshy body part flailing away, trying to keep pace with the demon maniac in front. Uranus turns retrograde soon enough, Mars is still kicking in your solar 12th House, so which one are you? The one setting the pace? Or the one trying to keep up? Knowing my Pisces charts, and knowing Mr.

Mars, it really looks like you're in that second place slot right now. Persevere, dear Pisces, you'll catch up with the target soon enough.

Aries: Ever get that feeling that stuff just keeps piling up everywhere you look? The ubiquitous "in" box is stuffed to overflowing? That's when I borrow a page from Pa Wetzel's book about dealing with superfluous incoming material: stacks.

I start with one stack, usually inbound paper mail, on the coffee table. Seeing as how this is a small trailer, that inbound stack is also resting on the dining room table. Then I can put a stack on the short, freestanding bookshelf. Then there's the floor, but that's a hazardous place to leave stacks of stuff that might, or might not be, important. So far, I'm up to three places to put piles of stuff that require my attention. I'm sure you're with me, so far.

Now, during this weekend, instead of getting worked up over all this work look through just one of those stacks. Junk to toss, a few items that you can place on "needs my attention right now" stack, then one item that piques your curiosity, and see? Suddenly you've dealt with a lot of the problem effectively reducing your own load by one-third. Take one, small step for Aries, it will be giant step towards achieving the goals you've got set.

Taurus: Use it while you've got it, that's my best suggestion. I was at an outdoor event, just another typical Austin, "party on the lawn" (park, avenue, wherever) event. It was a warm summer's day. Technically, it was a spring day, and sure enough, one of the attendees showed up sans shirt. In other words, the female in question didn't have a shirt, a blouse, or anything for that matter, adorning her chest other than paint. She did have a couple of strings of beads, but I guess that's to be expected.

The body paint was strategic, though, one was light red (or pinkish) in hue, and the other was greenish. The body paint was artful enough so that it didn't look like the festival attendee was actually topless. Not that topless would've been a problem, consider the surrounding environs, and most folks will note that it's not a problem at all. If you've "got it" then paint it up and use it. I asked one older, slightly more mature lady what she thought, and I admitted that I stared. "Dude, that's, like, what she wants you do. You're not being rude."

For the Week of: 6/12-18/2003

"Hast thou never an eye in thy head?"

Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* [II.i.26]

Wink, TX - Roy Orbison Festival is this weekend.

Gemini: An ardent admirer once sent me a cute postcard, "Fishing: the way to a man's heart is through his fly!" I'm sure I could tie this to the opening quote, as well, but I think that's stretching it a bit. Deal is, Venus is warming things up in Gemini land. Maybe not heating them up, but given the recent weather here, it's certainly going to be headed in that direction soon enough.

Got that? You can either argue with Miss Venus, or you can enjoy the fruits of her attentions. In other words, you're lazy, feeling good, and inclined to be a nice person, although, you might not be as productive as you want. Problems? There really aren't too many, not during the next couple of days. The only kind of a problem I can envision for Gemini would be that silly notion that one Gemini bubba had: he tried to date more than one woman at a time.

That fact showed up in my scopes, and he got in trouble. He felt as if I violated some code of ethics by revealing what was going on his life in print.

Hint: Venus was not in Gemini at the time, and the repercussions were bad. I'm not suggesting that Gemini land is all wonderful; if you create a bad situation, you might find it hard to deal with the consequence of your actions, i.e., dating more than one female at a time. However, given the way things are, I'm sure you could smooth some of this over. I just wish that bubba wasn't still angry; I need the promised computer upgrade.

Cancer: man, I've tracked this stuff for a long, long time. You're depressed. You don't like me, my horoscopes, the fact that you're a moody Cancer, or any of this stuff. Yeah, I know how it goes. Happens to me in the early fall, same thing. Looking at it astrologically, it's a form of "low-level" depression, sort of like a gloomy, sunless summer morning. The gray clouds obscure the light, there's a heavy, damp mist, but it's not cool enough to be called pleasant. This is your own, personal Cancer weather.

It's not really that bad, but right before the birthday season starts, you get this feeling that nothing is going right, you'd rather be someplace other than here, or, with that one instance of Cancer on

a vacation, she'd rather be at work. I can't imagine that one, not myself. Look here: this is a temporary, passing thing. It's getting better, I promise, very soon. Those clouds, on the morning I was working on this? They burned off before 9 in the morning. Likewise, your cloudy demeanor improves as the sun inches closer to your sign. Soon, very soon, I'll see that happy, Cancer face again.

Leo: I used an image manipulation piece of software to change up the picture of me with a fish. Now, I can honestly say, I did NOT enlarge the size of the fish. But follow closely, what I did was make a second copy of the picture of me with the fish, shrunk me and the fish down to smaller size, then pasted the original picture of the fish - 100% unmodified - on top of the new, smaller version of me. "Yeah buddy, that's some fish alright!" That bass looked like he was three feet long. The stuff on the web site, the stuff that I publish from time to time, that's what you can expect. Read the fine print, pay attention to the details.

No, I didn't enlarge the fish at all, but in keeping with the spirit of times I did downsize myself. I just couldn't resist. It was one of those things that needed to be done. Like I implied with my digital chicanery, there's something that needs to be done. Go for it. It can be fun. Better yet, you can do like I do, and in the exact letter of the law, or in my interpretation thereof, I didn't make that fish any bigger - I just scaled everything else smaller. I thought it was a cute trick. You can pull an equally cute trick, and answer honestly, "No, I did not enlarge the fish."

Virgo: Driving an old truck, which doesn't have AC, well, actually, it does have AC, I just don't have any "environmentally damaging" Freon in it, in Texas, on a summer day like it's been lately, there's no other choice besides to get my driving chores done early in the morning. It's still marginally cool at that time.

This "no AC" thing, though, it pays off. Look at it this way, "Take my truck or yours? Mine doesn't have AC...." Think about the gas I'm saving. Makes life much more bearable. Reduces wear and tear. It's an old truck, too. So in the summer time, at times like this, I get great mileage. I think my record, if I recall correctly, and I'd have to check my mileage log to be sure, but the all-time record was about 6 weeks. That means I got by without driving my truck for more than six weeks.

You're working on a similar record, in one way or another. Problem is, and that's why I'm here to warn you, you're going to get an unexpected call before too long. Like early next week. You might want to make sure the battery in the Virgo truck is charged up and ready to roll. It's one of those events that requires immediate Virgo attention, and there's no time like the present to make sure that you can still answer this call as need be.

Libra: We're doing it again. I mean, I've observed this with my Libra's a time or two. See, you guys tend to put off the important tasks until the last minute. It's not like you're procrastinating or anything, I with you on this, you have every intention of doing this in a timely fashion. But the window for this to be called "a timely fashion" has shut; therefore, you should get that one last task, duty, or responsibility out of the way this very weekend.

One of my fishing partners is married. What he does, if we're planning on fishing one the weekend? He gets out and does something in the "good points" category, like the mow the lawn, before the weekend arrives. He's long since learned that it's a lot easier to do this stuff ahead of time, build up those "bonus husband points" or whatever karmic system exists in their relationship dynamic.

When I described this, more than one female has suggested that this one fishing buddy "acts rightly." Follow his lead. Let's get something done, something you've been meaning to do, let's get it done soon. Now is the time. Don't be putting this stuff until my favorite time, "later." Later works for me, I'm not a Libra. Won't work for you, so let's get this done as soon as you can. You can thank me later.

Scorpio: I like to fish, "catch and release" style. Means, I catch a fish, I get a picture, and I throw him [her] back into the lake, so we can fish another day. I tend to believe it's "recycling" fish. Works just fine, gets around the problem of the nastier side of fishing, the cleaning and cooking thing. I was fishing the other weekend, and I grabbed that big boy up to get his picture taken, then I tossed him back in the lake. The easiest way to hold up a big bass is to hook your thumb into his lower lip.

One of these days, one of my fishing buddies will be in a hospital, looking at a baby, and grab the newborn by its lower lip, and say, "Hey, it's about 8 pounds, huh?" I don't think that would go over

well with most of the parental units I know, but a few fishermen will nod approvingly, "Sure, that'll work." So after doing the pose and the picture the other day, I tossed that big bad boy bass back in the lake. He seemed stunned at first, as if his jaw wouldn't work, maybe he realized the lake water wasn't that warm, or maybe he was worn out from being hung up by his lower lip, upset that I didn't check with his agent before we snapped a picture. Mars in Aquarius, that's like the "bass photo session." Next week, when Mars eases on into the next sign [Pisces], that's like getting tossed back in the lake. Work your jaw a little, check the water's temp, grab a gill full of water, waggle your tail fin, and swim away to freedom.

Sagittarius: "Look," I was telling another Sagittarius, "in the grand scheme of things, this issue isn't all that important, now is it?" The problem was, yes, the issue was that important—at that time—to that one Sagittarius. Some things seem really big at the time whereas some things aren't that big of a deal.

If you get some outside input, seek an outsider's point of view, or just try looking at the single, all-consuming problem, it is that big of a deal. But if you make an effort to put it in some kind of [Sagittarius] perspective, it's not such a huge problem. Or, maybe it is a big problem. But if you break that big problem down into component parts, it's not such a huge deal. Instead of looking at a big problem, I just hope I remember this myself, consider it a series of small problems who are struggling to get out of that big problem. Small problems? Unflappable Sagittarius types? We can deal with small issues, one at a time, no problem.

Capricorn: I've used the line before in a reading with a client, and I'll use it again, I'm sure. "Don't confuse love with lust," is my expression. That's a light-hearted way to look at the way things in Capricorn these days. There's another way too look at them, too, as Mr. Saturn, voted the most popular planet with Capricorn, has moved into a position where examining your inner, personal relationship is of paramount importance.

What makes this so interesting to me, judging from a lot of the mail I've gotten, is that this sort of examination is not all bad. In traditional astrology, Saturn sucks. In my way of looking at, and given the fact that I'm inordinately fond of Capricorn, I'd suggest that there is something good going on. You just don't know it. Stop for a little while, take a quiet moment and perform whatever "rites

of Capricorn" that you perform, and use that quiet time to take a good look at some "self" issues. Look at them, ponder them, then consider getting an outside opinion. One of my Cap buddies requires my help on matters of the existential variety because she can only see the glass as being damn near empty when I see a glass that's almost full.

Aquarius: I can't explain this type of energy without using a hopelessly colloquial story. Seems a buddy of mine made this observation, as it applied to girls raised in Texas, "So when you pour that third drink, or get the Texas girl her fourth cocktail, her accent starts to emerge. She might be 'accent-free' at first, but sometime between #3 & #4, she starts to twang." This was a problem because my buddy was, at the time, pursuing a woman from California, and his expected results—that shift in accent—didn't occur. This created a problem for him. The auditory clue wasn't present.

The target did not respond in a fashion he was accustomed to. "When you hear that Texas Twang come through, you know that you're good to go, and she'll do anything." Problem being, with a target audience from California, not from Texas, nor even a portion of the Deep South, no amount of whisky would affect her accent. My buddy, an Aquarius, wound up with a pleasantly intoxicated, happy drunk girlfriend who was partially comatose, snoring lightly in his arms. He missed his shot, after about the fifth or sixth drink. "Her accent never changed. I thought this one could really hold her liquor well."

One out of ten Aquarius will be just like my buddy's date, snoozing away in a happy place, safely looked after by a Texas gentleman. But the other 9/10ths of ya'll? Just because an expected clue doesn't materialize, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be a little more careful with some of your actions. Personally, I suggest you stop at #3, but that's just my experience.

Pisces: Inline skates, roller blades, or whatever those infernal things are called, are not as popular as they once were. I watched the other day as a pair of young females tried them out on a portion of the trail, not far from Shady Acres. The two young women struggled, giggled, and hobbled over the grassy lawn until they hit the paved section of trail. From a stumbling start, they went whizzing, at a dizzy pace, off into the summer's days. There was much laughter, self-conscious and self-effacing comments, and the

staggering, halting beginning had a long rush of speed for a finish – or maybe, they were both careening out of control – I couldn't bear to watch.

This weekend, Mars is still in Aquarius, you're like those kids on the grass with the skates, nothing seems to move very fast. Sometime after the weekend, Mars moves into Pisces, and you're like those kids on skates, stepping onto the pavement. From a halting, slow, potentially dangerous position, maybe careening out of control, or maybe gliding forward at a dizzying pace. Either way, the halting, jerky start takes off with good speed, once Mars shifts.

Aries: There's one fishing guide on a lake just outside of Austin, and this one guide—quite successfully—uses nothing but "water dogs" on a "Carolina Rig." I prefer pink plastic worms on a Texas rig, myself, I seem to have a little better luck with those. I suppose, it's a matter of taste. And figuring out what works, that is, figuring out what works for your Aries self.

Water Dogs are priced as high as two bucks apiece depending on arcane variables in the spot market. My plastic lizards run pennies apiece, are reusable, and tend to last longer. There's this influence, too, like the spot price of water dogs, that seems to vary with location, day of the week, supply, and demand. I'd be a little careful. Buy those puppies on a Tuesday, and they're about a buck each. Saturday morning? The price doubles.

Look at what you've got coming up, plan accordingly, and get your supplies when the prices are lowest. Even if you're not fishing with water dogs on that one lake, it's worth the effort to shop around before you buy. Matter of fact, it's really worth the effort to shop around before you do much of anything. "Look twice," would be a good catch-all phrase for the next few days.

Taurus: With record heat waves being reported to me in some sectors, and a rather cool spring being reported elsewhere [hey, for them folks on the underneath side of the globe, that's the seasons in the Northern Hemisphere], I'd suggest that you've got one of those summer's starting out with a little bit of confusion. Doesn't all make a lot of sense, but then, I live in Texas, and our weird weather is normal.

I once crossed from a desert to mountains, and I could see where I went from "no rain for 40 days" to a place where I, literally, got hailed on in a single, summer night. There was enough frozen

precipitation to make it look like snow, if only briefly. You're going to be subjected to these varieties of extremes over the next couple of days.

Some folks tend to take a literal way of reading these scopes, and that implies great fluctuation in the weather, but the weather I'm talking about is "astrological weather" and the implied changes are in your personal, Taurus weather system. Blows hot and cold, all in a single day. Get used to it. Some of these fluctuations are really for the best, you know, and besides, it keeps it all interesting.

For the Week of: 6/19-25/2003

"Your horse would trot as well were some of your brags dismounted."

Shakespeare's Henry V [III.vii.79]

Life should be getting back normal, as much as anything is ever going to be normal again. The last few weeks have had a terrible astrological hangover feeling, a lingering question I kept fielding was, "is Mercury still Retrograde?" No, but the Eclipse cycle and then some other influences have hammered away at our astrological psyche. Is it better? What's your sign say? Trivia question time: for free "planet profile" or similar chart report, what is the biggest Santa Fe rail station west of Chicago? [contest ends 6/25/03]

Gemini: I've got a friend with the coolest belt and belt buckle thing, an accessory she wears with her jeans. It's a GM [branded on the buckle] seatbelt that's been turned into a fashion accessory. I never thought I'd go to the junkyard for fashion accessories, but it works well on her. One problem, as she's noted, with this accessory, guys, especially of the obnoxious, intoxicated variety, they like to come up and see if the push-button release really works. I don't know, she's not enough of a friend that I can push her button and see if the release really works. She did use the toilet in my trailer once, so I'll assume it works, but I have no first-hand knowledge of this myself. [For what it's worth, yes, she is a Gemini.]

Fashion choices like this, though, particularly during an influence like these days, have a tendency to attract a lot of the wrong attention. You get the drunken, staggering, urban youths who want to "see if it works" because that would be funny. I'm not one for defending a young lady's honor, but if push came to fist, I think I would have to defend her. Problem being, for Gemini, there's a lot of you, and only one of me. I can't defend every Gemini's honor. You might think about not wearing something that provokes such a response, though. That would help.

Cancer: There's a particular brand of vehicle that I used to work on, not professionally, just as a tool-pusher for my buddy Bubba. One of the most common problems with this type of vehicle was shaking its motor mounts loose. Imagine that motor, loosely connected to the rest of the vehicle. The motor torques some at the start, you feel the vehicle lurch a little to one side, but the forward motion

doesn't occur quite as rapidly as one would expect. Imagine that motor, just sort of rattling around under the hood, held in place by the slimmest threads of metal, not too tightly anchored in place.

See: the next couple of days, your brain is going to come unstuck in your skull. It's not going to come off the motor mounts completely, it's just going to rattle a little bit loose. You can do something about this, or you can enjoy the fact that your brain is wandering around under your mental hood. Tightening up those motor mounts, or worse yet, having to replace one or more of them, is a nasty job as it involves getting under the motor, and doing a lot a dirty work. In a trailer park parking lot, it's not a glamorous job, not between the grime of the motor, the earthen workplace, and the task of getting enough space between the frame and the motor itself, just to make it all work better. Now, you can dig in, get dirty, and fix the problem, or you can do like I do, just put it off for a while. Enjoy the slightly disconnected feeling. Just don't plan on any fast escapes.

Leo: "Now" is a relative term. I tend to use what I consider the Gemini definition for this term, where "now" really means "before I knew that I wanted it." Grasp this expression. Consider it. Roll it around in your wonderful Leo brain. That "now" thing is going on, even as you're reading this. The problem? The problem certainly isn't you. Then, the problem would have to be elsewhere. So if the problem isn't you, and you want something "right now," then the problem must be the other people.

The way I look at your chart, I'm inclined to agree with you about that. It's not you, but the rest of us don't seem to understand your sense of urgency, the true [Gemini] meaning of "now." "Yesterday?" Yes, that one would work, as well, but what keeps coming out of your Leo mouth is the word "now." Look: slow it down. Not everyone is ramped up on this definition of "now" and not everyone can presuppose what your fine Leo desires are. Slow it down.

It's not going to happen fast enough to please you. Just not going to happen that way. Wish I could change that, but I can't alter the way the planets move in their prescribed courses. However, before I get around to doing another horoscope, before the next information tailored just for Leo hits my site, gets into print, you're going to find that suddenly, everything, and I mean everything, is getting better. Those folks who didn't understand "now"? They all start jumping, like they should, when you snap your Leo fingers.

Virgo: I was walking along in my neighborhood, just up the hill from the trailer park, and I came across a guy who was doing some detail work on an old car. The car itself caught my attention, as I stopped to chat with the owner, "It's what? About '63?" I asked, looking at the taillights. "Yep, bought it from a pair of little old ladies up in Georgetown so I'm the third owner, 63,000 original miles. They really did just use it to go to the grocery store or something. Probably never went outside Williamson County."

It was in pristine shape, a make and model that I would openly lust after, in a mechanical wanton way, a white Ford Falcon. Think about it, that car and its purported 63,000 miles is more than a 40 years old. Then I got to talking to the owner, and I'm guessing, I didn't ask, but I was estimating that his car was older than he was. Cars and detail work on said cars are important. No one can detail out a vehicle as well as a Virgo, that's for sure. Then there's the other question, too, the one about the funny stuff. No, not that funny stuff, the other stuff: the apparent weird thing that a car is probably older than its current owner. I didn't make that conclusion until I was a good half block away, and I didn't feel like turning back to ask. Don't turn back. Keep putting one foot in front of the other. Or keep detailing the car.

Libra: Sunday mornings, when I'm not working, and even though the fish aren't exactly biting during the middle of the summer, heading out to the lake to pretend to fish is a good idea. The deal is, I haven't worn long pants in about three months, and I wasn't about to pull on long pants just to go fish. But up at 4 in the morning, and on the lake before 6 AM, getting the boat up on the plane [plain], and jetting across the predawn water, it's chilly out there. As a matter of principle, I refuse to wear long pants in the middle of the summer. However, I was busy wishing I'd brought that pair of pants I usually throw on over my shorts, but I was resisting the idea, again, this is a principle thing.

You're like me, with goose bumps on your legs, early in the morning, thinking to your Libra self, "What was I thinking?" You can stand by your principles, and in the overall picture, you're 100% right. There's going to be one or two uncomfortable moments as a result of your principles, but I'm with you, and I suggest you stand your ground. Or, in my case, I was sitting. But stick by what you believe in.

Scorpio: One of the more gut-wrenching, heartbreaking aspects to my business is listening to a lover torn between two loves. The funny side of this? "she left and took the dog, and I'll sure miss that canine companion." Sure, I actually heard a variation of that story once, from a friend who gets called "Bubba" a lot. However, seeing as you're a Scorpio, you're serious, and there's a serious moment or two in the next few days. I don't know if you're going to be torn between two lovers, trying to decide which one is better, but you are faced with a binary situation.

I went to the Gulf Coast not long ago. I was there for work, as in, doing astrology readings work. But the bay fishing looked good. The idea of a coastal charter was equally appealing. Either/or. Maybe both. But first, I had business to tend to. Odd as it sounds, yes, I do love my work, as an astrologer. And as a fisher guy, too. Back to the binary decision, you're faced with, which one is better? I can't answer that for you, but the practical, albeit not quite as much fun, solution was to work. Go with what's most practical for your Scorpio self in the binary decision. Don't let outside factors sway your process.

Sagittarius: One of my so-called "friends" gave me a button the other day. "Here, this is for you, seems to fit you perfectly." The button was in jittery print, "Drink more coffee, do more stupid things faster with greater energy!!!" Yeah, well, gee, thanks. It's not always my solution, but it works rather well, at least, for this Sagittarius, it works pretty good. Drink more coffee. Get more things done, get them done faster. Sometimes, I'll slam down a high-powered afternoon cup of coffee, and then drift right off to sleep, just a quick little catnap. Works great. In about 20 minutes, all that caffeine hits my system, I'm wide awake, and ready to go.

That 20 minute power-nap is one of the most useful ways I've found to deal with exhaustion, and while slamming down a tall caffeinated beverage before hand doesn't always work quite right [timing is everything], if you can just hit it perfectly, it's wonderful. There's none of the drowsy, "I just woke up feeling," rather, I'm bolt upright and ready to tackle any perceived emergency. Any number of exigencies can be calling me. Emergency astrology reading, the cat wants more food, I was going to tweak a web graphic, or I was merely going to sharpen the hooks on one of my lures for weekend after next. Rest up when you can, something's going to jolt you wide

awake, and it helps to be ready. Be prepared for something you can't be prepared for.

Capricorn: I got stuck on a series of truck driving songs, and nothing evokes the open road quite as well as a good song about a "Knuckle clutching, gear jammin', super truckin', loose nut behind the wheel" that some old truck driving singer sings. And that brings us right up to our topic for the week, in Capricorn: travel. I doubt many of you are actually truck driving heroes, the last cowboys of the open road. But that shouldn't stop you from romancing the open road.

In Texas, travel involves lots of wide-open spaces, except for the few of us who live in cities. Even then, pick the time of day right, and it's okay to travel. The deal is this: if you're traveling in cities, try and avoid those peak hours. Around Austin, Dallas, and Houston, the Friday rush hour starts about 2 in the afternoon on Thursday. Work around this. My easiest suggestion is to take the weekend off from the moment this scope gets posted, until sometime in the beginning of next week. There's this weird event that occurs early next week, and that's going to throw some extra work in your lap. Beat the rush, get out of town and enjoy a few days of peace and quiet, out on that open road, if only for a little while.

Aquarius: A toothbrush really is an innocuous topic of conversation. But given the right time, the right place, even a simple topic like "toothbrush" can kick out some rather hilarious comments. One Aquarius was bemoaning the current price of said items in the stores. "I don't want you to think, I'm like, you know, a Virgo, or anything, but I watch for coupons and stuff. \$2 for a toothbrush, that's too much!" A Scorpio quipped back, "I get them for free."

"Dude, what, you steal them?"

"Well, yeah. Sure. But they're a big company, they can afford it." Maybe they can, maybe they can't [afford the toothbrush pilferage]. On the cosmic scale, such a theft might actually appeal to your Aquarius sense of justice. I'll agree with you about that. The theft of a single toothbrush might help topple the evil empire, through a chain of events. However, our local laws consider that shoplifting, and as far as I know, that's still illegal around here. You want to make a statement. I'm with you on that. Stealing a toothbrush? I'm

not sure that's the best way to go about making a statement. Leave such acts of civil disobedience to other signs.

Pisces: I'm a guy. As a guy, I can't tell the difference between purple, peach, puce, plum, and fuchsia. The webdesigner shows up with presentation graphics, storyboards and what-all, I just look, and nod appreciatively.

"Or we can go with a lighter shade for the background on the sidebar, and then use this color for the highlighted text...." Sure. Whatever. My sense of aesthetic is pretty limited. If the shirt doesn't comfortably clash with the shorts, then I'm out of my league. Just the way it is. I never claimed to have great tastes. I like my food hot, spicy. If it's not hot enough to hurt, then add some more peppers. Coffee should be black, strong enough to dissolve a plastic fork. Not have that fork stand up in the coffee, I mean, strong enough to melt is away completely. So my aesthetic senses can be questioned.

I tend to think of Pisces as sweet, gentle, delicate creatures with sensitive emotional states. I tend to try and coddle my Pisces friends and clients as they need a touch more compassion and understanding than most folks. However, you don't need to be coddled, handled with kid gloves, or baby-sat in any way, shape or form right now. Follow my lead: broad, bold brush strokes. Find the shirts that clash, clash well, clash loudly. Then, drink your coffee double strength. One coffee shop near makes a "depth charge" drink. It's black coffee, usually a French Roast, and then a one or two shots of espresso are poured in, just to add some kick. You got the kick, be bold.

Aries: Got a couple of points to make so follow closely. Unlike some of my acquaintances, I don't have any fantasies about "Catholic School girls," although, I'm sure there's an astrological prognostication I can make about the genre, c.f., Frank Zappa et al. I was listening to one of my friend meander through various childhood events, and I was only partially paying attention, until she got to Catholic School stories.

"Sure, what you did was put vodka in a Scope bottle, add a couple of drops of green food coloring, and you're good to go." The upshot of the story though, was the time her illegal bottle got stolen. Not confiscated, but stolen. "How do you tell the nuns that someone took your liquor?" Frankly, I don't know how. Can't help with that

one. Might've been rum, too, I didn't take notes about the conversation.

We're all inclined to hide a few things, and this illustrates what's going on with Mars, how he puts you in ticklish position due to his influence in Aquarius. No, I seriously doubt either you or me will be dealing with any drunken Catholic School girls, but we might both be faced with similar problem, trying to determine what is right, and what's really right, in a given situation with murky ethics.

Taurus: Planets move in prescribed paths, easily determined by precise mathematical functions. Makes it easy to see where what planet will be when. Sometime after midnight, Mars creeps upwards from the horizon, hitting a highpoint right before sun-up, at least locally. Conversely, Venus is pretty hard to see by the beginning of next week, hanging really close to the Sun himself, right before sun-up.

These two planets mean you want attention. They don't guarantee that you get the attention that you want, or deserve, but they do aid and abet each other in strange ways. The problem is that the dynamic between the two planets is a little strange for your Taurus self. One is leaning one way, the other is leaning another way. Use your good Taurus demeanor, reflect on who is paying attention to you, then, if need be, you can always use a certain expression that I've found very handy, "Yes, I want attention. Just not yours."

For the Week of: 6/26-7/2/2003

"Truth is truth/To the end of reckoning."

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* [V.i.45]

Moon Rise data here.

Cancer: Ever feel like you've been weighted down with some kind of tremendous burden? It's almost as if someone seems to expect something out of you? One fishing guide I know advertises, "If you don't catch a thing, then you don't owe us for the trip." That's a sweet deal, if you ask me. During the summer's onset, like for the latter part of June, I wouldn't expect that one guide to be making a lot of money. This has to do with expectations versus real results. I suppose, I don't know, I've never done anything more than nod at the guy on the lake, but I would surmise that even the smallest, most paltry of fish would count as a catch and therefore, his clients would be obligated to pay. I can just see it now, the mental image of a small perch on the end of line, maybe a fish that got hooked instead of actually taking the bait, but by the terms advertised, I would suppose that the client would have to pay. "You did catch a fish," the guide is suggesting.

This concept of expectations not being quite what you want, but still being delivered? That's due to the way Cancer starts out this season. There's a strange feeling that combines hope and hopelessness at the same time. Look: fishing isn't exactly the greatest right now, and one of my buddy's has the most obnoxious picture he snapped of me, we were fishing for bass, and I somehow snagged a tiny perch. So it wasn't so tiny by perch standards, but it wasn't much of a fish. I wish he'd never taken the picture, but you know, it's okay. I do have a fish on the end of the line. Maybe not a record-setting fish; maybe not even something I would be proud of, but it is a fish. Celebrate the little deals. Tone down some of that overtly Virgo stuff, and be surprised at what happens - in a good way.

Leo: The problem is, my dear Leo friend, the problem is simple. The Sun, old Sol, that closest star to our planet, the bringer of light, that atomic furnace in the sky, the heavenly object most often attached to the sign of the magnificent Lion [Leo], is in the sign that comes before you.

Never mind the positive influence of Venus and Mercury in Gemini, never mind that the lucky planet, Jupiter, is in your sign right now,

never mind any of this. Mr. Sun is cooking along in Cancer, and that creates a little bit of extra tension for your wonderful Leo self.

I've watched this stuff over the years, and sooner or later, and most likely in the next few days, you're going to have a cloud blow over your usually sunny Leo face. From where I am, this cloud looks like it could drop some rain, maybe some enjoyable weather as it would be a change from the hot summer days [Northern Hemisphere, that one Leo in Australia needs to adjust the metaphor a little]. When the little clouds dart across your wonderful visage, just remember that I do, care more about Leo than any other sign, and remember that at least one of us astrology writers is listening. It's temporary cloud, and it could bring some much desired relief. Don't let something minor affect your whole week. Consider it a change-up for the better.

Virgo: Just the most darling Virgo used to live at Shady Acres. Sweet lass, a little older than me, flaming red hair, and no, I don't know if it was dyed or not. I have a hard and fast rule about not becoming romantically, emotionally, or even casually involved with any of my neighbors. Just makes life a lot easier. I would go so far, given my Sagittarius nature, to suggest that one should never date within one's own city limits. Makes the relationship scene a lot smoother.

I did have an opportunity to throw a few customers towards that one Virgo; however, the way she demonstrated her appreciation left me wondering a bit. No money changed hands, no deep and abiding protestations of love, nothing more than a few comments about how the customers I threw her were "cheap [illegitimate male offspring]." But business is business, and any income is better than no income. This is a point that's worth considering. Any kind of money coming in is a good thing. Don't blame the astrologer, or your neighbor, for trying to lend a hand. You'd be surprised, too, as some of those cheapskates can wind up, in the long run, bringing in considerable cash for your Virgo self.

Libra: I was trying to make a point to an astrology client, a dear Libra, about a relationship issue. The point also involved a heavy dose of Mars energy, so I was hinting around rather than coming right out and berating her with the situation. She looked at me, then asked, "Oh, you mean, like the Karmic Sutra? The Suma Katra?" I turned the tape recorder off and laughed. "It's called the Kama Sutra, and yes, that's what I was talking about."

Although the idea of stitching one's 'karma' back together isn't such a bad idea. Might not be today, might not be right now, but before too long, you're going to get to stitch back together a situation. In one realm, this is heavy with the implied "karma." I tend to believe that using the term "karma" and "astrology" in the same sentence implies that there's a certain lack of real world application. So instead of making muddy water even less clear, let's look at it this way: you get a chance to right a previous perceived wrong action on your Libra part.

Note the careful choice of words, "previously perceived." In other words, you get a chance to set your Libra record straight; correct a false assumption someone's made about you. Do it nicely, too. That'll go a lot further in seeing that this doesn't happen again. Who knows? Maybe you'll mispronounce something, and that'll be good for a laugh, adding some [much needed these days] Libra lightheartedness to the question.

Scorpio: I was sitting in a dark tent, with a sign out front that said, "Information." I was sitting next to a darling lass at the time, and in my usual form, I asked her birthday. "Oh I'm a Scorpio, through and through," she said. Then, she proceeded to tell me the awful things she'd done to her boyfriend when the poor sot wouldn't leave her alone. Just as she was about to drone on a little more, her lilting, melodic Scorpio voice lulling me into a sense of drowsy familiarity, she let out a bloodcurdling scream. She jumped up, thrashed her arms around in the air.

I was seriously shocked. Freaked. "What? WHAT?" The cop standing beside the tent turned, and started over towards us, "What's wrong?" he asked, his hand resting on the butt of his firearm. "It's a bug!" screamed our Scorpio. "I hate bugs!" I chuckled. The cop thanked her for making his evening a little more interesting, and he went back to guarding his piece of fence. The beautiful Scorpio, once a lovely tan color, was blanched white; her eyes were wide with terror. "I hate bugs."

I couldn't help but tell her the story about the flying roach my cat once caught and brought to my bed, either as a crunchy appetizer or as an offering, I'm not sure which. But my recounting of the story was only fair; that one little Scorpio had shaken up everyone. The deal is there's no need to wake us all up with such a demonstration of panic. It was a just a cricket. I mean, that's what the bug was. At least my cat comes up with scary bugs.

Sagittarius: I read my horoscope in the newspaper the other day. It mentioned travel, a relative, and money. Adventure, the family, and cash: sort of a big three in the field of prognostication. Me, on the other hand, I'm not going to mention all three. I'm not even going to suggest one of those. I see a slightly different, more pervasive yet subtle influence working its way into our Sagittarius lives. To be honest, I don't put much stock in the stuff in the papers, and my reasons for that are listed elsewhere.

Besides, it really missed a topic that's near and dear to every Sagittarius heart: romance. As long as Venus is opposite us in Gemini, there's a hint that the romantic side of life is a little more challenging than usual. As I've often quoted, "Sagittarius has a great way of saying the best possible thing at the worst possible time." It's a special talent we all have. But that Venus influence, it could rear its ugly little head these days, and make us pull a stupid stunt. While we were being honest, completely honest, there's always a chance that we weren't using the greatest amount of tact and diplomacy. Brush up on the charm expression. Drag out the romantic poetry a little, see if we can't make our message a little nicer.

Capricorn: One of my red-headed Capricorn friends popped by the other day [there were, at least count, an even half dozen females who fit this description, each different, yet uncannily similar in certain traits, i.e., passionate]. While following the time-honored tradition of "bitching" as opposed to "venting," she was a little worked up about a certain issue in her life [modesty doesn't allow me to mention the guy's name, or, for that matter, the true nature of the complaint.]

See: the difference between the two forms of verbal self-expression is the "need" factor. Folks need to vent whereas a good bitching is more about self-entertainment. Or entertainment for your astrology fishing guide. So this one Capricorn let off with wild tirade about this and that, complete with visuals, much arm waving, and few added sound effects. It was quite entertaining.

Before the whole show was through, or presentation, because that's what it felt like, I was exhausted, both physically and emotionally, just from trying to keep up with what was going on where, when, and how. And I know I missed a few salient points, much to my surprise. "Well, that's that. Ready to go eat?" she asked. I was ready for a nap, myself, almost comatose from the various vagaries

of her experience. Use a little caution when you launch into just such a tirade. Remind us that this is for entertainment purposes only, not for mental health. Some of the rest of us get confused about such issues.

Aquarius: Work is so weird. Most of the Aquarius folks I know don't hold down what could be traditionally called "a real job." Could be the circles I run in, or it could be my normally unusual acquaintances. Or it could be that dear little Aquarius types just don't want to be slammed down into a "straight" job. That doesn't stop you from being a good worker, though.

With the series of strange influences kicking around, there's a chance, an opportunity to tap into this weird energy, and yes, unfortunately, this involves where – or how – you work. How you do what you do to earn income, or where you do what you do to earn income, or, more importantly, the process that you follow to earn income, these are important considerations. It's the beginning of the summer [Northern Hemisphere], and it's hot. Hot as can be.

I'm not one to go around and light extra firecrackers at a time like this as it makes some people jump a little too much. I've got at least one friend who might have heart attack at the sound of an unexpected and unsuspected report like that. But think in Aquarius terms, consider this a chance to shake something up, and it's like that loud report. Although, I'm not sure that I would actually employ a firecracker to do this.

Pisces: I was just strolling along the other day, I think I was downtown when I saw this: a stern looking Hispanic woman with a T-shirt that said, "I'm the boss." There was a cartoon character, too, one that I didn't recognize. But you get the picture? She had a "hermana" in tow, and a couple of small "ninos" tagging along, as well. I took one look at the shirt, glanced up at her face as we passed, and quizzed her, "Verdad?" Said with a smile and good accent, I hope.

I believe she just rolled her eyes at me, as if to suggest, "What you want white-boy? Why not put your shirt on? You too skinny. You need some tortillas to fatten you up. Sheesh, some guys." All of that from one roll of the eyes. Pay attention here, you can express the same type of sentiments, a world-weary, wise beyond your Pisces years, disgust, amusement, cynical disdain, all with one roll of the

eyes. There's another expression, too, but that doesn't bear repeating here.

Me? I was trying to be casually merry and friendly. A couple of points here: yes, you are the boss. Yes, you are smarter, brighter, and probably a little more in charge than we let on. Yes, someone's going to act friendly; deal with his skinny white self as you deem appropriate.

Aries: My cat's an old lady these days, and yet, she still remembers what it's like to be a good hunter. One night, she was perched by the edge of the trailer's back door, watching the bats chase after the insects. Austin is home to one of the largest urban colonies of migrant Mexican Free Tail bats—little rodents on wings.

About three-quarters of a million of these guys fly in during the spring, nest under the Congress Avenue Bridge, a little east of here, and give birth to their pups. They're like rats on hang gliders, or, as the cat would think, meals on the wing. When these bats are out feeding, in the night sky, they dart around with their little sonar thing working, and it looks like erratic flight—just the sort of activity to interest the cat. I'm unsure of what she's thinking exactly, but it could be, "If I could only use the dove gun, I could wing a few of these suckers," or it could be, "If that one would only come in a little closer, I'd have me a fine meal."

Look: your Aries self is just like my cat, dreaming about catching a delicious snack. The odds are, it won't ever happen, right? Never, ever underestimate the power of dreaming, though, as your Aries tail twitches. She's actually caught one before, and it could happen again.

Taurus: One of my friends is a particularly bitter female. Not really a bitter girl, it's just she's had the misfortune of falling for a musician, and like most folks who make their homes on the road, that rock star boyfriend left my Taurus friend, well, a little bitter.

I got to listen to her the other night, and she was trying to prove that she was "over him," more along the lines of, "I am so over him." To this end, she was busy demonstrating how easy it is for anyone to be a musician. She picked up a guitar, strummed a chord, and launched into a song she wrote. Her lyrical, lilting Taurus voice, a hint of a raspy cigarette quality buried in there, it was quite moving. The song lasted about two minutes, and the primary refrain was, "I'm over you now." She then pointed out how easy it

to be a musician, swinging into her next composition, "Bop, bop, [guitar goes twang-twang], I'm a better person now...." "See?" she asked, "I can be a musician, too." She went through about six songs, never more than a two minutes per song, and the message in each song was pretty much the same, an embittered female, jilted love, everything in her life was better now that he was gone.

12 minutes of music, two chords, I don't know if it will have commercial appeal, but she did prove one thing: you can, indeed, do anything you want. She did prove that it was easy [for her] to play music just like that rock star. Personally, I think her music was a little better, if more bitter. But that could be me. You can do anything you want, you just have to try.

Gemini: Texas weather is a fickle thing. We'll get these summer days wherein it feels like we will never, ever see the temperature drop down into a comfort zone, not outside. There's an enjoyable side to this, though, as it separates the true Texans from the poseurs who want to claim Texas as a home rather than really being from around here. Yes, our searing heat is good for that. Softens them up, drives them off.

What's even more amusing, to suit my humor, I've found that the males tend to complain more than the females. Never did quite understand that one, as us guys should be able to stand the heat a little bit better. Maybe we're not used to having to work in a hot kitchen or something. Maybe I'd better let the sexist comments go, too.

Venus & Mercury are in your sign. This is good. It's summer time, and looks to be a hot one soon enough, that's tough. Like my own subjective observations about which gender deals with the heat more effectively, I'd suggest you come up with some of your own, very-Gemini-like observations. Develop a hypothesis. Test it, ask a few questions, make a few notes. You're in the enviable position of having a little more charm than usual, try using it to get what you want.

For the Week of: 7/3-9/2003

"[I am] subject to the breath of every fool!"

Shakespeare's *Henry V* [IV.i.240]

July 4th, a national holiday, and extra-special around here....

Cancer: There's a trailer park, right next door to Shady Acres. They have a new "security" guy. He's not really much more than an underpaid maintenance guy, groundskeeper, and gofer fellow. He gets to drive the old truck, and he hauls stuff, moves things around, and when someone moves out of the rentals, he gets a little extra cash cleaning and making a trailer ready for the next resident. That little extra cash is useful, I suppose. Until I get to know the guy, though, like the first time he saw me cutting through the back gate to "his" property, I got chased off.

Consider this: in the middle of the summer, I rarely wear much more than shorts. Maybe some sunglasses, too. I was hassling with something on the phone, and I cut through their back gate, walking up the dusty back road behind the trailers. He backed down in his truck, waving me off. "No trespassing" sign is there, yes, and strictly speaking I was breaking the rule.

I was face to face with a decision, seeing as how this was a new guy. I could argue with him, or, I could just do his bidding. I could stridently point out that I was a close neighbor, and I wasn't really trespassing, or I could just take the long way around. The long way is not always the most attractive, but it did give me a chance to finish up that phone call. And I made a mental note to find out what kind of beer the guy likes so the next time, I can take the shortcut. I'm sure me and that guy will get along just fine. But like Cancer, a little social lubricant will go a long way in making the next encounter a lot more friendly. You can argue, but arguing doesn't always work best, especially with Saturn in your sign.

Leo: So I was in Las Vegas on a business trip. Yes, it really was business, I promise. I got in a little early, so I might be able to play some. As I was riding the elevator up to the hotel room, after I checked in, an attractive female looked at the floor number I'd punched [29], then suggested that a room like mine must have a good view. I looked at her, being an honest Sagittarius that I am, and answered, "I don't know. Haven't seen it yet." She got off on the 6th floor with a slightly disgusted look on her face. I went up to the room, located the phone jack for net access, and opened up the

curtains, looking out over the Las Vegas strip. Then it dawned on me – that girl in the elevator was trying to pick me up. Worse: I missed it completely.

So the Sun's in Cancer, and Jupiter is in Leo. There's a good chance that you get a little bit of luck like what happened to me. All I can suggest to better Leo friends? Don't do what I did; don't miss your opportunity. But as long as that Sun shines in Cancer instead of Leo? There's a good chance that you will. Hey, enjoy the view from the room, the lights aren't too bad, even you're like me, and all alone....

Virgo: This is so strange. I was fishing the other day, and I had just opened up a new lure, a fresh one, ready to catch some big, bad-boy fish. These days, a lure usually comes with an enclosed bit of marketing material, usually a folded up flyer with pictures of other lures, fishing tips, or, in this one case, an exploded diagram on how to tie a knot that would work with this lure tied onto monofilament line.

So much for the instructions, unless this is some kind of plan I'm not aware of. I gave their pictured-knot a spin, tied the lure on, sailed it behind the boat as we worked our way up a creek, and I did get a hit. Some kind of a really big-boy bad bass grabbed a mouthful of that lure and took off running. The line snapped, right at that knot, almost immediately. There's a five dollar lure, either at the bottom of the lake, or stuck in some fish's mouth now.

The point is simple, too, sometimes an expert will give you some good advice that goes against what your Virgo senses tell you will work. You might want to think through that expert advice. My way of attaching a lure to the fishing line might not be as pretty, nor, it might not be an approved knot, but it works. The line doesn't break, and I get to reel the fish in for the subsequent photo-op. If I'd followed my instincts instead of the instructions, I'd be a happy person. Of course, when a fish is so big it breaks the line, that leaves me open for all kinds of good stories, but coming from a seasoned fishing professional, you know some of those tales might not all be true. Use your own knots. Or whatever it is that your Virgo self uses to tie stuff together.

Libra: Little things in your life are good. Big things in your life might be more problematic. Me? I'd concentrate on the little things. It's like this: I was fishing with a friend, not a professional fishing

trip, just having some summer fun. He was getting upset because I kept catching all these little fishes. Not big, bad bass, just little guys. I even lucked out and caught a small perch. Look: none, and I mean, none of those fish had any kind of bragging rights. They were small. Almost tiny by my standards.

We were using much different bait, too, as my buddy was using his big "pig" lure [real bacon flavor]. I was using a small jig, just having a grand time. I caught upwards of a dozen or more fish, plus that one perch. He caught two, well, one actually. He had one pretty big feller throw the hook just before he got the fish landed, and I'll tell you – honestly – it was a big fish. More than five pounds, I'm sure, as I saw her thrashing away in the water before she got away.

The other fish? His single fish that he got a picture of? Yes, it was bigger than any two of the fish that I caught. Here's the deal: I had a lot more fun, and I caught a lot more fish, although, none of my little fellers were worth a picture, much less any kind of a note. Big problems versus little problems, what'll it be, Libra?

Scorpio: More Scorpio hate mail. I don't get it. Well, I mean, I get the mail, but I don't get why I'm the target of the Scorpio derision. What did I do? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I just happen to have earned a spot on the "Scorpio target list" and that gets me a lot of fan mail. As in "fan the flames" mail, not the other kind. The way I spun the planets around and looked at the Scorpio chart, though, I saw Mars in Pisces, Sun, Saturn in Cancer, you know, all water signs, all good for Scorpio.

It's like my Scorpio contingent [from the mail bag, I'd be loathe to call them "friends" at this moment] has let loose with a barrage of baggage. Or a litany of all my previous wrongs, just to let me know what's up. Or how wrong I am.

But look: it's all supposed to be good. True, there's some grunt work involved. One doesn't just show up for a fishing trip without some thoughtful preparation. Take the time to do a little homework. Take the time to use that vaunted Scorpio research skill to dig up some dirt. Then you can unload on me. But do a little digging first. Do some preparation. After I get in from fishing, there's a soothing action, a task I like to perform alone, maybe something like that would help you. I spend a little time oiling up the fishing reels – in preparation for the next trip. Usually happens on Saturday or

Sunday afternoon, under the shade tree in front of the trailer. Makes it a lot easier – next time.

Sagittarius: I am not one with a usually short fuse. I don't let my temper get in the way, mostly. However, like most of my Sagittarius brethren [and sisteren, too], someone is bound and determined to really irritate us in the next couple of days. Just the way it goes. Instead of letting this get to our nice, easy-going Sagittarius selves, though, a little tact and diplomacy goes a long way. Regrettably, we're not usually known for that tact and diplomacy. At least, we're not known for our tact. Who is better at saying the most perfect word, the most perfect expression at exactly the wrong time? That would be us. Who else can insert the right word in the wrong ear better than us? No one.

What's the point of this? Try and tame it down some. Maybe curtail some of the comments for the duration. Maybe keep it to ourselves. Maybe just talk to other Sagittarius folks instead of worrying about the other signs. Since those other signs seem determined to get under our Sagittarius skin, and cause multiple problems, maybe the best thing to do is beat a hasty retreat. If you're not conversing with another Sagittarius, sharing our woes as we are sorely misunderstood over the coming week, then you might want to think about not saying anything at all. Saves on wear and tear.

Capricorn: I ran into one of my friends who's a local radio personality. She's recently switched stations – again – and the new station had an "oldies" format. She expounded upon theory that the current "oldies" format is best when it's music that's 20 years old. The 30+ year old stuff, that's now called "classic." I wonder if that makes me a classic?

The next thing to come along in your world, a theme for the next couple of years deals with this nebulous area between "oldies" and "classics," although, I tend to regard a lot of your challenges as really starting about 14 years ago. The astute observer will note that 14 years corresponds to one-half of a Saturn cycle. Saturn is an important influence in the Life of Capricorn. Old Mr. Saturn gets a lot attention during the next couple of days because of an odd angle between him and some other stuff.

It sort of triggered this kind of Saturn reaction from you. Something from the past is back, and it would do you well to render a decision. Think about the problem, first, the situation, whatever

the deal is. Give it some thoughtful consideration before you answer a definite "yes" or "no." Sometimes, just a good "maybe" is a better answer.

Aquarius: I was reading some computer magazine the other day, and there was a cute way of solving problems, it had to do with a theory that, simply put, stated every problem could be divided into discrete 24 - 12 ounce solutions. So you take your big problem, and start putting it into smaller, easily consumed containers. Sounds like a case of Lone Star, or a case of Diet Dr. Pepper.

I scoffed at the idea, at first, as I couldn't imagine sitting there, working on a problem, and consuming that much of any one beverage in a single sitting. Just couldn't see that happening. But as an idea, it works pretty well. One problem, no easy or apparent solution, and what to do? Grab the first bottled beverage you have at hand, and tackle one, minor portion of the problem. As you work you're way through the next couple of days, maybe having to work some this weekend, you'll find that it all breaks down into smaller, easy-to-consume solutions.

Pisces: I was listening to some Country Music - I realize that comes as a surprise to some. "I'm a lover of the other side of the hill" was the song's tag line. I looked at your chart, and that song just fit. See, it's a story about toting a horse trailer, and the downhill side of the mountain is a lot easier than the uphill portion. Only makes good sense, right?

Okay, let's look at your chart, see: Mars. You can argue with him, or you can slide down the other side of the hill. You can make this hard, like a cowboy pulling a horse trailer up one side of a mountain, or you can make this easy for your Pisces self, coasting, careening, and bouncing along at a good rate, down the other side of that hill. You're the Pisces, these hills are only as big as you want them to be. You have some control over what's going on, and you have a chance to make it all easy, if you want to coast with Mr. Mars.

Aries: Duck. It's that simple. I've used it before, and I'll use it again, a nice line from a Grateful Dead song, "Ain't no luck, I learned to duck." [U.S. Blues] I can't promise anything with good luck, other than wish you some. But I can help if you'll try doing something rather uncharacteristic of your Aries self. It's simple, just duck.

Avoid uncertain unpleasantness by just getting out of the way. Your normal, wonderful – I might add – Aries straightforward way of dealing with some situation that's cropping up around you? That doesn't work as well as you would like to. In other words, just sort of skip over the problem. Or go the other way. Austin has been home to this big musical festival in the springtime.

Used to coincide with Spring Break. Let's look at this: the Gulf coast isn't a good destination, Austin's full of out-of-town visitors, and us locals, we don't have a chance. Best thing to do? I started this trick a few years ago. When the festival and conference people arrive? I leave. Like that one song, like my best Aries survival advice, "Ain't no luck, I learned to duck." Consider ducking out for a little while.

Taurus: The term "smoke and mirrors" refers back to time when it was easy to fool a lot of people with some sleight of hand. Tricks that, like most magic, involved smoke and mirrors to redirect the eyes of the audience. With computer-modified graphics, though, the terms has gotten to be more metaphorical than real.

There's the "new cynicism" I keep bumping into, as well. I had an actual picture of me with a rather large [7 real pounds, not modified or exaggerated] bass – but everyone was just sure that I did this with a graphic program. Not that fishermen are known for their ability to absolutely tell the truth every time. Stick to your story. Stick to telling your version of the truth. Stick to the tale you want to tell. Maintain your innocence and make sure it's the whole truth. Jupiter is leaning on you a little, and then there's the way the Moon slides all over as the weekend passes by. No need to tell any fish tales when the absolute truth is actually a little stranger than any fiction.

Gemini: Loquacious charm is a hard critter to explain. You've got it by the boatload, though. The deal is, how-so-ever, that deal? How do you use this loquacious charm? Be a minimalist. Try doing this in a simple manner. Pare away at the words until you get to the essence of the situation.

If you're going to try to communicate with me during the next couple of days, especially in an e-mail, about the only response I'll accept from a Gemini must come in the form of Haiku. English language Haiku. This is important. Even if you're not planning on sending me a note, but let's say, you've got to pitch a project, deal, sale a plan to someone? Map out your presentation in haiku. I know

this is weird. Most folks don't get it. But you're not most folks, you're a Gemini. Haiku is great because its inherent form is so limited, just so many syllables per line, that really limits some of your self-expression. That's the idea. That's the goal. My suggestion? Use haiku, or a similar form, for the next couple of days. It's worth a try. Such limits to your language might help tame and tone that loquacious charm you've got.

For the Week Starting: 7/10-16/2003

"[Your] face is not worth sunburning."

Shakespeare's *Henry V* [V.ii.150]

"Kramer, can you realign the stars and make everyone quit being so cranky?" It was a call that came in the other afternoon. Had to do with the relative position of the Sun, the Moon, and of course, the recent weather patterns. If I could, I would move the planets on around. Unfortunately, all I can do is report on the present dispositions...

Cancer: Patterns are important. I was reading a post on public board someplace on the web, and I found the most engaging signature file, "Putting holes in things with my AK-47 or quilting." What a perfect way to capture the moment in Cancer land, huh? To be perfectly honest, I don't really recommend either activity, as quilting strikes me as boring, and the AK-47 thing, that's fun, but probably not legal in some areas. Then there's always the chance that the firearm is not legal, too. Rules vary from county to county and state to state.

However, one part of the pattern that I'm sure about is a sense of gnawing, growing frustration. The other part of the pattern is how you deal with said frustration. Between birthday celebrations, and Saturn, life isn't all that it can be, or, at least that's what the reports filtering their way back to me would suggest. Venus is making nice for a short time in your sign, you can do something with her energy, you just have to be aware that Mr. Saturn is liable to over-ride her good wishes. Enjoy the fun little things, but I hardly recommend things that "go bang" as a pass time these days. Believe me, I feel your frustration.

Leo: Sitting in a boat on early on Saturday morning, pretending to fish, and trying to escape the heat, I heard the strangest tale about deer hunting.

"See, I was in this one blind, up a tree, and I kept seeing a deer appear. I was pretty drunk, it'd been a long weekend, so I popped that first deer. Damn thing didn't die. I know it was a good shot, so I shot again when it crossed into the clear line of sight. Damn thing didn't drop. It appeared again, so I shot it again. I may have been a little drunk, but I wasn't that toasted, I mean, it happened four times. My hunting buddy came running up, after hearing all the rifle fire, and started yelling at me 'Stop! Stop already!' See: it was a

crossing, and I'd shot four deer. There was a heap of dead deer. Since it was way over limit, everyone got to take one home. Man, I quit taking so much beer with me to hunt, after that."

I cannot ascertain the veracity of this tale; consider the source, the place where I heard the tale, so it might not be true. Or it might be stretched a little bit. But it has a good point or two, especially for Leo's, and particularly in the middle of July, careful when you make a point. No need to turn a harmless sport into an outright slaughter. Make your point once. Punctuate as necessary, but no need to keep plugging away at something when you feel like you're not getting through. Game wardens tend to look a little askance at such thing, and you really don't want to irritate authority figures in the next 7 to 10 working days.

Virgo: Beating the heat in the summertime usually involves a dip in a pool, or a dip in the creek, or, on good days, both. I was running around with a Virgo buddy, and we compared notes as we headed out the door for some dinner, "I finally took a shower, you know, after the pool, the Springs, the pool, I think it was almost 48 hours between showers for me," she was explaining, "I knew it was time, my head itched."

This doesn't sound like normal Virgo confession, now does it? However, the summertime heat, as well as the astrological heat engendered by Mars and his relative position, that does mean that it's time to do something different. Break out of the Virgo mold, a little. Be daring and resourceful at the same time. If you're the "clean-freak" kind of Virgo, then be messy for a little while. Never hurts. And if you're the messy kind of Virgo, then be neat and tidy. Either one works, just try something that's a little out of the ordinary for yourself. You'll be amazed out how good that feels, especially in times like this, when nothing seems to be going quite right. Like swimming in that cold creek water.

Libra: I got on a kick, and like many of my strange compulsions, I didn't let up. I would ask various people I encountered in strange places, what was the weirdest question they'd ever heard. My best answer was from a hostess at a 24-hour coffee shop, deep in America's heartland, "Strangest question? Look, the sign [certain words omitted for the sake of propriety] says we're '24-hour' right? So you'd be amazed at the number of people who come in and ask, 'Are you open?' It's astounding."

The vehemence that accompanied the answer from the hostess? I'm not sure it's called for, I was just asking an innocent question. I like to be true to my nature, but I was unable to come back with, "So, are you open?" As funny as I thought it would be, I'm not sure it would've been well-received, but I guess you had to be there to understand the dynamics.

Look: the concentration of planets are making some things really obvious to you. You can be like that hostess in the 24-hour coffee shop, and you can be exceedingly frustrated with the idea that people are stupid enough to ask if you're open, or you can be like me, and you can bite back the snappy comment, "So, are you open?" Your Libra self gets to make the call, but a number of things are leaning on you, and those sarcastic comments might evoke an angry response. Go easy on them.

Scorpio: At the park, the other afternoon, I watched a dog guy playing fetch with a Golden Retriever. One of those touching, warm feeling sights, at first. But watching that dog, it was fun, for me. Must be a Scorpio dog, near as I can tell. The dog quickly tired of fetch. It would chase after the ball, catch it, trot towards the owner, then stop, plop down on the ground and start chewing on that ball. "Sandy! Sandy! Bring it here! Bring me the BALL, DOG!" Yes sir, that was a smart dog.

In the summer afternoon, it was hot out, and that dog was probably pretty tired of chase and fetch, so he just sat there and let the master come to him. Makes you wonder just who was really in control, the dog or the owner? Reminded me of the way things are going in Scorpio, too. Just who is in charge here? Ostensibly, it's somebody else, not Scorpio. But just like that dog, your own agenda, your own ways and means can easily be served if you're willing to take a small risk. You might arouse the ire of someone who thinks he is in control. Just because that person hold a leash in his hand, that doesn't imply that he's really in control of the Scorpio.

So when you decide that it's time to plop down and chew on something, I'm all for that. You have a supervisor, boss, client, or even a master who might not be so thrilled with your break from the routine, or the way you're apparently skipping out on something you're supposed to be doing. That's their problem, not yours. Sometimes, in the Scorpio way of seeing things, tennis balls make ideal chew toys.

Sagittarius: Ever feel like the world is out to get you? I was out during the festive holiday, what with all the fireworks and so forth, and noisemaker cracked just off to my left, a little behind me. I about jumped through my skin. Imagine that, fireworks scaring me?

Deal is, all of us Sagittarius types are little jumpy. It's either jumpy or teary, and I prefer to be a little jumpy than that emotional stuff. Ride this one out, as there's easy and effective cure. There will be days, in the next week, when it's like too much coffee, only, you didn't drink too much coffee. It's that nervy, sort of on edge feeling. It's like you know something is up, and you're not sure what. And when those stray firecrackers go off, be prepared to jump a little bit. Not much we can do about that.

One friend once suggested that cutting down on the caffeine really didn't make me any less strange. Likewise, cutting back on your caffeine isn't going to make you any less strange, or less jumpy, or less emotional, not during this period of time. My only suggestion, what I'm going to do with my fine Sagittarius carcass? I'm going to saddle up to serious comfort food, something to help my jangled nerve ends: Tex-Mex. Might want to join me.

Capricorn: Scenes from trailer park life – by the dumpster, one of the resident's little dog was dragging and chowing on a piece of pizza crust. Actually, it was less crust and more half-consumed pizza slices that littered the ground. Now, what I really couldn't figure out was how that little dog got up and into the dumpster in the first place, to dig out those remnant pizza slices. The dog is smaller than most house cats and not nearly as agile. Maybe somebody was tossing old pizza and missed?

The deal was, there was nothing but pizza slices, by the trash. That little dog was having himself a fine time. Might be a Sagittarius influence in the dog's chart, the way it was enjoying the cold pizza. You've got a confrontation headed your Capricorn way soon. Like me looking at the dog. You can scold the dog, and pick up the trash, and then try to find out who's to blame for this mess, or you follow my lead, and watch with a detached interest, maybe make note of the toppings that the dog likes so you can get back to the owner about the pizza preferences for said critter. Make a scene, raise a stink? Or maybe, just sort of watch and say, "That's interesting, I never knew another dog that liked hot peppers so much...."

Aquarius: it was after work, one weekend, and we were cruising around, looking for something to eat in some strange town out in West Texas. To be sure, just about every town in West Texas has some quirks and oddities, that's for sure. I tend to regard it as local color, the eccentricities of Texas are fine by me. So we're driving around in some little town, and we happen upon a strip center, sort of an open-air mall, and there's a chain restaurant there, it advertises "Country Style Italian food." I had to ask what "country style Italian" was, "Like, they serve cream gravy, chicken-fried, and cornbread?"

Apparently that's not the correct answer. I don't know what it really is, and frankly, I'm not too concerned as I much prefer local establishments to over-sanitized chains where everything is the same across the country. Give me some deep-fried pickles any day. You're going to make a comment, a droll observation, and then a choice based upon some kind of innocent Aquarius observation, and the outcome of that decision is going to affect the people around you. Local color is always better, even if the sanitation is somewhat suspect.

Pisces: I looked at your chart, and thought about one image I have, it's one of my friends, he has a three-year old daughter. The child is actually a Leo, and as such, that kid demands a lot of attention. It's that very child's behavior that reminds me of the way Pisces are probably feeling, particularly over the next few days. "I'm not tired," the kid doth protest, "I'm not sleepy; I don't want to go to bed, Uncle Kramer is here, he's funny looking."

What makes this special is the way that the kid's eyes are at half-mast, and sinking rapidly. It's a losing battle, kid. Sure, I may be amusing, but growing children [and Pisces] need their rest. So there is your Pisces self, looking at this news, and thinking, I'm not tired, just because I've been running on less than six hours of sleep every day for the last month, no, I'm not tired. You're starting to sound like that whining brat of a child, "But I'm not sleepy," standing there, almost passed out from relative exhaustion. Rearrange your schedule some, you've been pushing yourself too far, too fast, too hard. Mars is going to be around for a while: trust me, there will be plenty of time to get everything done. I promise, if you go to bed now, you're not going to be missing a thing.

Aries: "Never leave fish to find fish." [Conventional fishing wisdom, I would hope.] But what does that mean? It's really simple: If you're

in one spot on the lake, and the fish are nibbling there, then stay put. I've had this happen to me, I'd be at one end of the boat, and at the other end of the boat, my fishing buddy would be reeling them in. Just tearing them up. Catching a lot of fish. In fit of pique, I'd suggest it was time to move the boat to better spot.

However, as long as someone [not me, not Aries] was catching fish, conventional wisdom suggests that the most correct course of action is to stay put. Don't go anywhere. The planets, and mostly Mars, suggest that wandering around isn't in your best interest. Just because you're not having any luck, right where you're at, that doesn't mean that it's not good. Look at your buddy. See? He [she] is doing well. I'd suggest that you will - eventually - catch up and surpass your fishing buddy. But as the weekend starts out, remember that axiom, "Never leave fish to find fish."

Taurus: I kept referring to a type of lure as a "Tiger Lilly" when, in fact, it was really called a "Fire Tiger". Right idea, right color, looks like a shirt I've worn fishing a time or two, but it was the wrong name. Bass fisherman get picky about certain details, and that's one, calling a lure by anything other than its proper title upsets those guys to no end. I still haven't heard the last of this, and my buddies still chuckle about my creative naming process.

I was figuring that a "Tiger Lilly" was the same thing, as it described the lure pretty well. Bright green with orange stripes that looked like a tiger, it all worked in my mind. But that's also where you have to be careful, what works in your mind, and what works in the real world doesn't always add up. Works for me, works for Taurus, but with the way the last couple of weeks have been going, just because it works for the both of us, that doesn't mean it will work for everyone. We're [Taurus and I] not really a random sample of the population, not by strict statistical methodology. So when it comes to naming things, you might want to look up what the real name is instead of going off what you think it should called. "Tiger Lilly" will work for you and me, but the rest of the guys? They need to know what the real name is, not some sort of shorthand we've got worked out.

Gemini: It's not as bad as you think it is. I ran into an old girlfriend the other evening. She was sporting a huge, diamond encrusted, platinum ring on her finger. Huge. I mean, the ring was huge. Baguettes surrounded a setting filled with enough sparkling stuff to just dazzle the eyes. I had to ask, "Engaged? Married again?" "No,

no, no!" she replied, "my last boyfriend? I got him to get me this, I told him it was a lot cheaper than a divorce."

Seeing as how she was no longer seeing the boyfriend in question, I guess that ring was a lot cheaper than a wedding, honeymoon, and divorce. Given that particular woman's short attention span, it might have been a wise decision for everyone involved. This might be about relationships, and this might be about other types of endeavors, but a "cheaper than a divorce ring" is a lot better than making a lasting, long-term commitment.

Think about it. Is there some gesture, some overt display, something you can do that will be better than actually making that long-term commitment? Some guy, some place, is thanking his lucky stars he didn't marry that woman. He got out cheap. Gemini can get out cheap this week, too, if you stop long enough to think about it.

For the Week Starting: 7/17-23/2003

"The summer's flower is to the summer sweet"

Shakespeare's Sonnet 94 [9]

Latin translation service – "ibam ibi, feci id."

Cancer: There's a grudging form of respect that is owed to all Cancer folks. The sign of the Crab is getting stuck with a sordid mess. Life is not good, and the daily toil seems like such an uphill battle. It feels like the odds are against you. But astrologically, the odds really aren't so bad.

You'll find that if you get over the heavy sense of burden, toil and despair, you'll see that good things can happen to you. If you let go of the some of the overbearing sense of burden, life isn't so bad. I'm pretty much a "catch and release" fisherman. I do it like that for a reason. It's easier, better, less work at the end of the day. Toss the fishing rods back into the boat and think about spot of oil for the reels, maybe some night this week. Done deal.

But Cancer's are not so inclined. It begins with getting ready, then tossing and turning the night before you fish, then worrying that the fish you catch won't be as good as they could be, plus you're dreading the very thought of having to sit in the backyard and scale all of those fish you just caught. All of this, before you ever leave the house, all of this stuff passes through your mind. So when I say "let it go," what do I mean? Instead of pushing for something too hard, instead of "pre-worrying" a situation to no end and creating a difficult spot for yourself, think about taking a picture, and tossing that big bass back in the lake. Makes for a much better fishing trip.

Leo: Good stuff, right up ahead. However, I must beg of your Leo eminence to be patient with me, for just a little longer. "What do you mean be patient?" Look here, most excellent sign, there's a lot of stuff piled up, both in your sign and coming up soon. But it's not quite here for the duration of this week's scope. It's so very close, you can taste it, feel it, almost even see it, but not quite. So close, and yet, seven days? It feels so very far away. Plus, there's that recurrent theme about Mr. Jupiter, the gaseous giant of planet, making merry in your sign – already.

What do you want to do about that? Me? I know you want to plant your Leo foot firmly on my backside and push me off the dock and on into the water. But before you shove me, or anything else, off

the dock and out of your Leo way, think about it. Maybe that isn't exactly the most correct course of action. Why not try and be the regal personage that you really are? "Huh?" you ask. Look, you can kick us out of your way, but you might want our assistance later. So what you might want to try? Point out that yes, I do deserve a good, swift kick, but you're not going to do it, not in the next few days. You can always save it for later, if you really must.

Virgo: Growing sense of frustration? Avoid confrontations. I was recently reading, for pleasure, some American history material, mostly just vague background scholarship about the colonization of the eastern seaboard then the expansion westward. It was 18th century stuff, the pioneers and so forth. America certainly is full of its little quirks, that's for sure. One part that interested me was the way the Kentucky [don't correct me if I'm wrong, I'm doing this from memory] woodsmen developed into fighters. Part of the influence was culture, part was the nature of the forests they were "taming," but part of the influence was also the nature of how to survive a conflict. Instead of using the British Army method of marching forward as a uniformed rank and file, the Kentucky woodsmen were good at "guerilla warfare." Hiding in the dirt, the leaves, behind trees and picking off the opposition, one at time with frighteningly accurate rifles.

Open confrontation is not the best method of going about solving the problems in Virgo land. Take a hint from those early pioneers, find a method of picking off the troubles, one at a time, and keep an eye on staying alive. You'll be surprised how effective this is at getting through the next couple of days. Mars is almost a dead stop in Pisces, opposite you. Open battlefields are to be avoided.

Libra: I'm in Texas. It's summertime. The popular pastime is perspiring. This is not something you want to hear as your delicate Libra balance is being upset by the overwhelming heat. "No man, I like hot weather, no, really, I do." Sure, so do I. Feels like I'm purging toxins from my system. Or that I'm sweating like a piece of brisket that's been sizzling over the coals for the last six hours, and I'm not sure which one is more accurate. Balance is ever important to the Libra portion of the sky. For the time being, and for the rest of this week, though, everything is going to be out of whack. That's a highly technical, astrological term I use.

"Out of whack" means that it feels like something just ain't right. For a while, the term, "whacked" was popular in the vernacular,

sort of shorthand way of addressing the issue of being off-balance. More than likely, not limited to, but most probable, it's your relationships that seem to be so off-center. You can always make a valiant attempt to address and redress the problems, but from my way of looking at things, I'd suggest you just let some of this slide. I watched one particular Libra, Pa Wetzel, as he dealt with just such a problem. He gave a resigned shrug, a look that nothing was going to work right, and then the long face. But moments later, I could detect that mischievous glint in his eyes, and a wry grin. Might want to try his way of dealing with this imbalance.

Scorpio: It's been noted before, and I'm sticking to my story, I have poor fashion sense and obviously, no rhythm. This isn't a problem, as a Caucasian male, I understand my place in the world. I was at a concert, not long ago, and the music itself begged folks to dance. Unfortunately, I was standing behind several white women who, being of an age, really shouldn't be "shaking their booty." It's just not a pretty sight. I enjoy looking at women's parts. I enjoy a decent dance. But some of us have to understand our place in the world, and this is a fine example of how not to move.

It's important to understand that I'm not one who can be a fair judge of this, but frankly, that motion tends to be a little frightening to some non-Scorpio people. Your Scorpio self gets a chance to shake your most excellent Scorpio backside. Here's the caution: make sure your physical activity is in place where it won't scare -- or harm -- the rest of us. Might save you some disappointment, too. No need to scare the rest of us with your enthusiasm.

Sagittarius: Someplace in the middle of Sagittarius is a happy place. I like overhearing snippets of conversations, and some of the stuff is really amusing when taken out-of-context. I was either in a bus terminal, boarding an airplane, or listening to the folks behind me in a restaurant while I was having some chicken-fried lunch. Don't ask which one it really was, as my notes are not that complete. What I heard, though, I did jot down, "I think every businessman needs a chaplain these days."

I was thinking about that comment, and I came back to it, because the problem with the rest of the Sagittarius types, other than those happy few in the middle, the problem seems to be a moral compass that is leading us astray. Our little indicator of what is right, what is wrong, what is wrong but a lot of fun, all of that gets confusing.

Oh yes, there's also the category of, "It's wrong, and it's not a lot of fun, not if we caught." That's what us Sagittarius folks need to look out for.

Temptation is fine, and some temptation can be resisted for a long period of time. Others are not so easy to resist. We have a unique ability to say the best possible thing at the worst time, and we have unique ability to lead ourselves astray, and usually with an excellent outcome. Over the next few day, though, that moral compass, that guiding principle in our Sagittarius lives, that very bastion and bedrock of our foundations is going to get a little suspect. I'm hardly the one to be suggesting this, but right now? It's a good time to stick to doing the right thing, as opposed to do the wrong thing and expecting a lot of fun.

Capricorn: As one of my red-headed Capricorn friends once observed, "I'm always worried when things gosmoothly." Yes, but exactly which red head was that? And are things going smoothly? The problem with generic horoscopes that are allegedly supposed to cover 1/12th of the population is that I can't hit all of you at the same time with the exact same thing. A few of you are upset. Upset with me, upset with a significant other, or upset with your lack of a significant other. The rest are doing just fine. To be sure, there's a battle or two that you want to wage, but that doesn't mean you have to fight.

Honor and glory are okay, but some fights are best left for other people. If you're of that smallest percentage of Capricorn's, face-to-face with certain situations right now, then yes, I'm going to suggest that you instigate a change. That's up to you, though. Through my long years on this planet, I've discovered that some battles aren't worth the effort. Sometimes, it's better to cut my losses and get out of situation by removing myself. "Turn tail and run? No way!" the few, the proud Capricorn's exclaim. But before you engage that situation, before you sally off to do battle with the perceived problems, think it through. I'd like to recommend that running away is sometimes a far more effective solution.

Aquarius: I accompanied a friend to the doctor's office as she needed some moral support or something. As I didn't have much else planned for the day, and it was a friendly gesture, I went along for the ride. I don't much mind sitting in a waiting room, not in a situation like that. It wasn't life-threatening, no emergency, no problems, no dire news. I watched a mother with her brood of

children, and the mother was a little harassed by three kids, but she'd thoughtfully furnished toys for her offspring. I'm guessing the ages to be between 3 and 7, but I'm not too strong in that area.

One of the kids had a toy dinosaur, and I was fascinated by the way the kid played with is toy. It would fly through the air and make noises. The only part of that I found somewhat disturbing was the sound effects the kid made for the plastic model. I didn't know this, but apparently dinosaurs were equipped with automatic weapon fire. Maybe not even real automatic weapons, but something like the sound effects on TV. I'm not sure what this says for that crop of children. We can launch into a detailed astrological analysis about Jupiter and Mercury in the sign opposite you, or we can look at children and toys. Or maybe, both. Just because I'm saddled with a scientific belief that Tyrannosaurus Rex didn't fly, or didn't make noises like an automatic weapon doesn't mean that in the Aquarius imagination, this couldn't happen. Some of the rest of the signs don't get what's going on in your head. That's not your problem. Play, in whatever form, and Aquarius minds, in whatever form, are important.

Pisces: We're off to an auspicious start to a series of frustrations. Wasn't it Hamlet who said, "There's nothing good nor bad, but thinking makes it so"? I'm too tired these days, a little too put out by the antics of the Mars influence to be bothered with trying to look up a quote. In a sense, though, you share my frustration. However, you're not a Sagittarius astrology guy, so what I suggest is that you be bothered and you look up the quote yourself.

Might not be that exact quote from Shakespeare that you're searching for, might be something else, completely different. Doesn't matter; whatever arcane piece of information, that data you need, instead of popping something off the top of your head and suggesting that, "It's in there, some place, I think," instead of pulling it out of your Mars beleaguered Pisces brain, go ahead find the exact source for information. This is important. Get the facts right, and then double-check, just once to make sure that all the figures from column A line up with the figures, like they're supposed to, in column B. Fact checking, research, making sure you're sure about what the source for some great quote you're laying on us, all of this is what's an important focus. Make sure you get the data right. Then make sure you can go to the source for this

information. With Mars doing his thing, you're going to need to be able to provide proof of your claims.

Aries: Sure it's odd, but then, I've been accused of being odd many times. I was watching a cartoon, not long ago, and I noticed familiar theme. The cartoon character paints a tunnel, the arch-enemy, rival or bad guy goes through the tunnel, then the original character tries it and finds out it's a just picture. Seen the gag in several animated versions, too.

Look: we're in for a long spell like this, so get used to it. Mars is in Pisces, will be for a while. In the next few days, maybe a few weeks, possibly a month or more, but my bet is the next few days, you're going to try a visual gag just like that painted tunnel. You paint a doorway on a brick wall, your opponent [boss, employer, client, arch-rival or significant other] walks right through that doorway you just painted. You scratch your head, then try to go through the same doorway – the very one you just saw them walk through – and you bonk your Aries head on the bricks. It's very funny to watch, but when this is happening to you? It's not nearly as amusing.

Taurus: There are layers and levels of interpretations. In some cases, these various levels are valid. In other cases, an object or point is just what it appears to be. No myth. No metaphor. Nothing deep and hidden. One word doesn't stand for something else.

This isn't, like, poetry or some other high falutin' language arts thing where one meaning can represent a whole bunch of ideas. In plain language, explain your points. In simple terms, express what is going on. Skip the gaudy words, those three-dollar words that choke the spell-checker. Skip the stuff that's really pretty, but doesn't get your point across. Be direct. Be blunt, if necessary. Don't hide, like some of us, behind those long words that no one understands. It's a simple message. I'd blame Mars, as much as anything, for making other people, the non-Taurus folks, so uncooperative these days. Not much can be done about their collective attitude. But when it comes to what you can do, be plainspoken. Eschew inelegant and excessive verbosity.

Gemini: Mercury and the sun play a game of tag in the next few days. Basic astronomy is useful for understanding the mechanics, but that's not the point. What this means is you're going to be poking along one day, and you download some sort updated driver or something for computer. Then, after you install that piece of

software, you discover another problem, with the directory it's associated with. Which then leads to yet another problem, and you no sooner fix that when you're back to having to install an update so the other update so that the first update works right. Get it?

It's complicated. Looks like a crossword puzzle, each answer is interlocked to another answer, and you keep thinking you've got the key, and still, nothing is quite right. Now, it might not be your computer that gives the trouble, but you're bound to have your Gemini attention drawn into a labyrinth-type maze as you attempt to find a solution to what should be an easy problem for you to fix. My bet, though, is it's like an update I just did, and nothing worked the way it was supposed. I mean, everything did work right, it just took all morning, and a portion of the afternoon to finish something that shouldn't have taken more than a few minutes. Watch your time. And if this happens to you, do like I do, blame Mercury and
t h e S u n .

For the Week Starting: 7/24-30/2003

"Methought I was enamour'd of an ass."

Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* [IV.i.76]

Hello Leo! Hello Mars Retrograde! What's a Mars RX like? I was heading south on First Street, just crossing Ceasar Chavez to hop onto the pedestraian portion of the bridge, returning homeward from the downtown post office. A "cute as could be" jogger was approaching from the other direction. She was going one way, and I was going the other. Mars is heading into apparent retrograde motion. She fainted left, I fainted right. "Sorry!" we both mumbled. She dodged right, and I dodged left. Looked like we were dancing by this point. Never saw her again. Mars? He's like that.

Leo: Good news: Leo time. Better news: Venus is fast approaching your sign. Bad news? Not a lot, not really. So maybe there's one bad thing going on, and I'd tie that to Mr. Mars. One of the lads I hang around with, affectionately known as "Bubba," gets these great ideas from time to time. Usually, the ideas are tequila fueled, and usually these are "get rich quick schemes," or, "I've got the greatest idea for an ad for you," or whatever the concept is, whatever these idea are, and wherever they come from, it's all a little suspect.

I've taken to carrying a pencil and paper when I get together with this one lad, as he'll want to sketch out an idea. "Look, dude, see you can do it like this!" Looks good on paper, doesn't work in the real world. Enjoy, embrace, cultivate some of these ideas as your minions surround you for your birthday, and enjoy the coming attention from Venus. Of course, at the end of the evening, at the end of the week, you might want to pull out these scrapes of paper and look them over. Might be a good idea or two. Might be some birthday well-wishers. Might be a certain amount of drunken ramblings, you never can tell. Enjoy the good stuff – let someone else worry about the details.

Virgo: Since Mars is heading into apparent retrograde motion in the sign that is opposite Virgo, I'm going to rerun a metaphor. The message must not have gotten through to the Virgo slice of the sky, not the first time, so I have to recycle a tale. Out on the lake, predawn, motor churning along and it suddenly died. There we were, in the middle of the lake, no place to go, no big Mercury [outboard motor, not the planet] to push us around at 60 knots.

Against my wishes, we started fishing and had a very successful day. The trolling motor gradually powered us back to the truck and boat trailer – although it took four hours to get back to the launch pad. Along the way, I hooked a dozen fish or more. I managed to reel in half of that, and a couple of them were big boys, too. I also got one small perch. I wondered what that perch was doing, going after a bass lure, but you never can tell with nature. The lesson here is about motivation and what is the correct course of action when something goes awry. Me? I wanted to take the motor apart, right then and there. My buddy? He just said, "Shut and fish." His boat, his rules, worked out fine. Try it, "Shut up and fish."

Libra: Dallas has two commercial airports. There's the big one that most folks know about, called "DFW," and there's a smaller, regional terminal called Dallas Love Field. Love Field is old, really old, and it's in the middle of town, making it one of those "business commuter" places. Plus it hosts Southwest Airlines. Incidentally, it's the airport I'm in most often.

Doesn't matter much where you're going, air travel in Texas usually take you through one of those two airports. I was waiting on a connecting flight out Love Field, not long ago, and I was sitting at the end of one arm of the terminal building, watching the weather. Texas weather. Summertime Texas weather. It was raining on one side of the terminal and it was sunny on the other side. The older terminals are like that, small enough to see both sides. Normally that sort of weather would be deemed as "unusual," especially in parts of the country not familiar with typical Texas weather. But around here? Normal.

Look out one Libra window, and it's raining cats and dogs. Look out the other side of the Libra window, and it's sunny. Which window are going to face, now that you know that you have decision – and options? You can sit there and watch the rain coming down, or you can cast your gaze upon the sunny skies. Your call, Libra.

Scorpio: "You can have my girl, but don't touch my hat." [Lyle Lovett] I've never actually had a chance to ask him myself, but I suspect that Lyle is a Scorpio, an October one, if I recall. I'm not debating it, just never got a chance to get the facts right. To be brutally honest, I don't much care what his sign is, he's a fabulous entertainer with the driest wit. Scorpio suggestions follow that one song from Lyle, and carried in that song, as with a number of his performances, is the dry wit.

Instead of Scorpio sarcasm, something like Lovett's style, his presentation, his wonderfully, soulfully, evocative nature would be the way to go. Here's a caution, too, as not everyone is going to be able to understand your delivery. Doesn't mean you should get up in arms about it, though. Doesn't mean that there's a battle you have to wage, no none of that is implied. Like Lovett's music, something that occasionally gets missed by mainstream music outlets, your Scorpio wit is going to get missed by mainstream signs. It's a temporary condition, and if you stick to the dry, understated delivery, you'll find that your Scorpio message gets remembered.

Sagittarius: I embarrassed a date one time by wearing a perfectly normal [for Austin] T-Shirt. The front of the shirt has familiar deer logo, and that logo is smack dab in the middle of crosshairs, like a deer rifle's scope. It's a funny shirt with a bunch of rude and vulgar letters on the back. I was wandering around town with my escort, and she was just shocked that I would wear such a horrible piece of attire.

At first, of course, it was really funny. But her dismay was real, not feigned. However, it is in the Sagittarius nature to figure out what's about one word over the line of good taste and exploit that weakness. Deal is, we've all got to be a little more careful with our Sagittarius-brand of excess. Not everyone will see how a shirt like that, with its crude message on the back, is really that funny. Careful while trying to figure out what's profound and what's just profane – not everyone shares our twisted slapstick these days.

Capricorn: I was listening to one of my little Capricorn friends complain about the current state of her dating adventures. She was hating life. She had about a half-dozen gentlemen callers [okay, guys, not really gentlemen], but none of those guys really sparked an interest. She liked them okay, but she wasn't exceedingly turned on by any of them.

One had a boat, took her sailing. One had a motorcycle, took her riding. One offered a trip to some far-flung destination, but again, this didn't really interest her because it would involve an overnight stay. There were a couple of other guys in the mix, too, but I glazed over at one point and quit keeping track as I wasn't particularly interested in the daily diatribe.

None of the guys had that special spark that it take to ignite the flame of passion. So you're kind of stuck between brilliant passions these days. Just the way it is. Sure as can be, I'll get least one note with someone asking me for the phone numbers for those guys, since my one Capricorn friend isn't interested, there would be plenty of other takers. But I'm not running a dating service - sorry.

What turns on a Capricorn is a delicate balance of exciting adventure and more pedantic stuff, a little less of the adventure. Capricorn's are dealing with a weird situation, both good and bad, and it's matter of accepting a few elemental truths. Look: that one example? She really didn't have a lot of room to complain, I mean, she was getting the attention she wanted. Just because it didn't work for her doesn't mean it's all bad.

Aquarius: I was in a little town in West Texas, stopped as we were driving through. I like the little towns as each one has a certain flair, a certain charm, a distinct feeling. Plus, listening to the local dialect is entertaining as well as illustrative. I'd asked about the local economic base, in one place, and the reply? "We make a lot more off hunters than ranching."

To judge by the amount of ranch hardware displayed, the number of big 4 X 4 trucks splattered with mud, I'd have thought it was just the opposite. Dove and Dear & Beer Seasons are big business in that one community. There's a problem with depending on something as ephemeral as the tourist trade, though, as some seasons are just a lot better than others. Aquarius: listen up. It's either feast or famine, boom or bust, big losses or bigger wins. It's either really going well, in which case, it might crash down around your Aquarius ears, or it's already crashed, and you're "just fixin' to" rise up like a Phoenix from the ashes. No matter how look at it, it won't be a boring old week.

Pisces: I know this one Pisces girl, and she claims she's a triple Pisces [Sun Sign, Rising Sign and Moon Sign]. I had one comment for her, "Teflon." She agreed wholeheartedly. Sure enough, as she meanders through life, bad things just seem to not stick to her. At least, not usually. But these are unusual times.

In the prairies of Texas, maybe in other parts of the country, but certainly here, I've had an occasion to get a sand burr stuck to my foot. Nasty little guys, too. They have a series of points tipped with Nature's Finest little barbs on the very end. I get one of those on

barefoot, and as soon as I try to extract it with a hand, I manage to get the little sand burr stuck to fingertip.

Means I can continue walking, but now I've got this little barb embedded in my hand. If only I had more Pisces in my chart... but I don't. Not enough Teflon-like ability to escape harm. There's a theme kicking up out of your Pisces chart, and there's a small problem, just like one of those sticker burrs. Some problem from work, career, or what you do to earn an income is back, and like me trying to flick that thing off my foot, then off one hand, and onto the next, it just sticks. Something's penetrated that Teflon coating, and it will require some serious attention on your part in order to get this resolved. Can't just flick it away like you usually do.

Aries: One of the biggest problems in the computer world is the noise that the internal fan makes. These little processors have to run pretty hot, getting hotter with each new version, and that fan makes a difference. I can remember a now-antique computer I had, the fan on it sounded like a small jet turbine, just about to take off. The computer's box itself, it had one of those industrial-strength packaging arrangements, so this fan did sound like a monster.

The racket echoed around under my desk, then set a tone to the rest of the day, like a small, persistent buzz in my ear. As opposed, I would guess, to a small, persistent buzz in my brain. While that buzz might be preferable, the noise is what's annoying. But that bothersome whine of the fan? It's important as it keeps everything cool. Keeps the computer running the way it's supposed to run. Mars is like that fan, a small, persistent whine, but you're going to have to endure that sound so everything can keep its cool.

Taurus: I've only done this once or twice, but I've arranged to meet a client for an appointment then I forgot to check the date book to see what was up for the day. Off I go, merrily wandering along to go swimming some place, or off to fish, or something equally entertaining, and I completely forget that I had an important client to meet. Doesn't go over well, and makes me look like a complete flake. Which I might be, but that's not the question.

The trick, the point, is to remember to check the date book, the appointment calendar, that little place where you keep track of everything that you do. It's relative to the motion of Mars, and for a large percentage of the folks I know, the fine Taurus people,

there's going to be a forgetful moment or two. Or a tactical blunder, or just a time when you forget something important.

Between your Taurus self and me, I'll tell you that it's okay, but I'm a flaky Sagittarius guy to begin with, and getting stood up for one thing or another really doesn't bother me too much. I've also found that if an appointment doesn't get entered into the schedule, I won't make it. Even then, if I forget to check that schedule, on occasion, I do blow it. That's what comes from living the relaxed lifestyle I've got. I know you want a relaxed lifestyle, too. Consider this fair warning that things are going to get hectic and you might want to double check your plans to make sure you get everywhere you're supposed to be.

Gemini: You can never have too much duck tape. Okay, I know, the correct term is "duct tape;" in my circles, we call it "race tape," and the nomenclature doesn't matter that much. So you can never have too much duck tape. This stuff is great for holding bits and pieces of your Gemini life together.

The silver tape can stick like a booger to stuff, and that's important. Matter of fact, I got this tip the other day: use old credit cards as a place to store a little extra duck tape. What you do is wrap a few inches or a few feet of silver tape around the card then you can carry some extra tape in your pocket. Why do you need to have some extra race tape on hand?

"Thing fall apart; the center cannot hold;" [William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming" line 3.] Just about the time you managed to pull everything together again, you're going to feel like a few bits and pieces are starting to fall off, or spring a leak, or otherwise come unglued. Race tape doesn't permanently fix anything. However, I have at least one kitchen appliance in my trailer that is perfectly operational, has been for years, thanks to duck tape. Mostly Mr. Mars is to blame for the stuff coming unglued – carry a little bit of tape for a hasty fix.

Cancer: I built a few web pages for friends. Not exactly work that I enjoy, but it's not bad. The problem with web work though, some the technical stuff can be a headache. Some servers are case sensitive while others aren't. It's the bothersome details like that, which get in the way. Some servers are very picky about what goes where, or how something is spelled.

Mistype one little letter, or capitalize something, or add a comma instead of period, and then nothing works. It's this attention to detail that's all-important. Concept in web design is cool stuff, "Imagine: it'll look like this, and then there will be a picture of you, and we can rotate the text around like this," and so on.

Execution, though, means some fairly intensive mouse & keyboard routines. While I could, at one time, knock this stuff out pretty fast, and do all the coding by hand, it's not that easy anymore. As the complexity increases, so does the room for error. You're facing a tough task ahead. I'm not sure that you'll actually be coding a web page by hand, but I wouldn't be surprised to find it's a task that's very similar. And one little typographical mistake on your part will render the whole thing useless – until you track down the problem. Fortunately, over the next two weeks, your ability for hard, patient work increases. Take your time – that focus will help you.

For the Week of: 7/31-8/6/2003

"on my knee/I give heaven thanks I was not like thee."

Shakespeare's *King John* [I.i.82-3]

Show your support for the Fishing Guide to the Stars: Austin, weekend of Aug. 16 & 17 – El Paso, weekend of Aug. 23 & 24.

Leo: Work with me here, okay? "Stability" is a wonderful concept. But it's like, way overrated as a lifestyle. Sure, it's nice to have things be steady and even for a while, but since that's not going to happen, why not try throwing a little caution to the wind? Why not live a little on the ragged edge? I know the answer to the rhetorical question, but I had to ask it anyway.

Some things I can't resist, and the temptation of kidding with you about stability is part of the problem. Come on, it was joke. Maybe. There's some stuff that feels like it is going to threaten your stability. Not that I have any first hand experience with this, but backing a Leo into a corner is not a good thing—it's not a wise course of action. The deal, it's how your Leo self deals with this threat. Overreacting isn't good. That usual Leo flair for the dramatic understatement, over-statement, and general stretching of the truth isn't a good idea. Calm Leo brains, calm Leo action—especially in the face of what you've got going on—those calm actions will go a lot further in getting you where you really want to be. And a calm Leo brain, followed by calm Leo action, reasoned, articulate and well-thought-out action, not a knee-jerk, that gets you back to where everything feels stable again.

Virgo: It wasn't an elegant solution. I was snaking a fish out from under a canopy of trees, up a small creek, off the lake. Big fish, too. We'd pushed the boat pretty far up a creek, a small arm of the reservoir lake we were fishing on, the further up that creek channel we worked, the more dense the oppressive overgrown brush got. Tall tendrils of grass were almost in our faces. It was bad enough that I was swatting bugs out of my hair, swishing my ponytail around like a real horse's ass, trying to keep the willow leaves out of my way.

The cast was a weird one, as I was in the back of the boat, but I tossed the lure, a big, "bubba-gum" [pink] worm up just passed the bow, landed that lure in about 18 inches of water, drug it passed the big fish, and he was angry. I think he struck out of spite, not because he was hungry. All that work for one fish? You bet. It was

worth it. I don't think that fish weighed more than about three or four pounds, but it was worth the effort. Besides, in the middle of summer, any fish is a good fish. The stultifying effect of the summer's heat, the way Mars is going backwards, it all adds up. Swat the mosquitoes, try that inelegant cast, and see if you can't win something. Just try not fall in. Not that I have any experience with that, either.

Libra: It happens, weeks like this. It just happens. The beauty of using a computer to do most of the hard work in life, the computer doesn't seem to get bored batch processing stuff. Me, on the other hand, or a Libra, we do get a little bored with batch processing stuff. Wears us out. However, like me, your Libra self is face to face with doing some "batch processing" at work. Might not be at work, could be something as simple as sitting down to look over the budget, and making sure you have adequate resources to pay all them bills you've been meaning to pay.

Either way you slice it up, though, there's some kind of a group of items that all need to the same attention. The worst thing that can happen when Mars is moving backwards is "repetitive stress injury," but I'm not really worried that you wind up with Carpal Tunnel, or anything quite like that. It's more along the lines of a "mental repetitive stress injury" as you feel like your brain is starting to atrophy from the mind-numbing work. I'll promise, though, if you set yourself down and start working on the batch to process, it will get done faster. I won't promise that you'll see an immediate reward for this effort, but if you look on down the road, about the time your birthday gets here, you'll be thinking, "That Fishing Guide was right...."

Scorpio: Summer nights can be fun. Some summer nights are amazing, with a vast variety of entertainment options available, from free film series, to open mic, to just standing outside a venue and listening to a garage band warm up and then play something. I was out with Bubba the other evening, and he snuck us into a show, something about knowing the security guard, but I'm not sure exactly how that all happened—I just know I got in for free—it was an excellent performance, and I wished I'd brought some earplugs.

On the way back to the trailer park, at the end of the night, like, around two in the morning, Bubba was still all fired up. His energy and your Scorpio energy are similar in that no one else is interested in trying to keep up with you. He was going on and on

about doing this, or that, maybe getting a bite to eat, and wasn't there an after-hours place down the street? "Ah, c'mon man, let's do something!" I was thinking, "I'm getting too old for this sort of behavior." Look around, my fine Scorpio friend, everyone else isn't interested. We're worn out. We're tired. We can't keep up. That doesn't mean you can't have some fun, but if your companions seems a little dazed, you might try and find another Scorpio to play with. Seems like you're the only ones having any fun.

Sagittarius: I was noticing—the other evening—that the nights seem to be getting a little shorter. Not so much that you could really tell that much of a difference, but still enough to feel a slightly perceptible change. Problem being, summer time [Northern Hemisphere], it's still the dog days of summer. Long, hot, usually pretty dust-choked days filled with perspiration and an occasional cool dip in the pool or creek. Other than that, there's not a lot going on, and these days, Sagittarius just feels a little more dogged out than usual.

You can blame a number of things, and the hemisphere really doesn't matter because there's an astrological heat coming in from Mars that makes all this feel a little less, a little less than, so words fail me. Not long ago, we had this strange weather pattern. It was summertime hot, and the Gulf Coast sent a load of moisture this way, with the threat of rain, but neither the rain, nor the cool ever really materialized. It was a little more humid than usual, and it was a little more sultry. That's the way things feel in Sagittarius about now. Not much to do, but grab a big old glass of ice tea, sit in the shade, and watch the tea glass sweat. I knew it was a hot one when I finally moved an oscillating fan out on the porch, just so I could pretend to cool off. Might try a similar trick for yourself.

Capricorn: I've got one Capricorn friend who's a "fiend for caffeine," as he puts it. The lovely elixir can come in a couple of different forms, be it a sloppy Styrofoam cup from the corner convenience store, a high-powered cup of espresso topped with frothy milk from a snooty coffee shop, that special "turbo" blend of iced coffee one place makes [iced coffee with a shot of espresso], or even one of those [brand name] bottles of iced coffee with milk and byproducts floating in it. Could be any of these, or, my fear, a great combination of them all.

Deal is, you've got a little too much energy floating around as it is. You might want to watch out for that caffeine overdrive situation.

There is such a thing as getting over-amped on the coffee stuff. While I figure your stomach would give out before you had too much of that alkaloid, I suspect that there's another influence at work in here.

See: Mars is winding you up a quite a bit, and as long as you listen to him, and drink too much coffee, then there's a problem with no sleep, poor work habits, and a mind that's always running itself in destructive circles. You get yourself caught in a loop, and then spiral downwards. The trick, in my book, is to drink less coffee. Let the planets energize you naturally. Try it, just for a few days, see what happens. I reserve the right to be all wrong, but just cutting back for a day or two might help matters calm down in Capricorn land.

Aquarius: For a long time, I have lived in place called "Shady Acres." It is called an "R.V. Park" on its sign. Makes for a comfortable, if somewhat cramped living arrangement, and the price is certainly right. Plus the location. Along the shores of the Colorado River, in South Austin, I had a view of downtown, and yet, the actual place itself reflects a more naturalistic environment with big shade trees, some plots are less manicured than others, and the place always feels a little like it is going to seed.

The advantage of such a location, close to the creek for a dip on a hot summer's day, close to downtown's entertainment district, close to just about everything but my now defunct office. Even then, that wasn't too much of a hike. A bucolic lifestyle, right in the heart of a metropolitan area. The neon on the sign burned out a while back, and the owner, if there ever really was one, neglected to fix it. Not problem, or so I thought. I had a date looking to pick me up one evening, and I got a frantic call from her cell phone, "I've been all up and down Barton Springs, and I can't find 'Shady Acres'! Where are you?" The sign, these days, just says "Acres." The Shady part is burned out. In the daylight, this is readily apparent, but at night, the pink neon glow is missing. We got that corrected, the location, not the sign, and we hooked up for an evening.

With the Sun swinging opposite Neptune, you might find yourself confused about an obvious missed direction. Don't freak out on me, just pick up your cell phone and find out where you're supposed to be. Better late than not at all.

Pisces: "Reality" is such an ugly word to the gentle, peaceful, kind, enduring, and much over-worked Pisces quadrant of the heavens. Yet, there's something to be said for the real world. Last time I was in California, I narrowly missed the annual Garlic Festival in Gilroy. It's a big deal there, seeing as how Gilroy is one of the leading areas for growing and distributing garlic.

Garlic is an especially useful spice, it has many side benefits, too, like being medicinal, curative, and excellent at repelling vampires. In fact, a good dose of garlic can repel just about anything. Or anybody. A good herb specialist can explain the why and wherefore of the chemical compounds that make the medicinal and curative elements work, but common sense can explain why the odor of garlic is both repugnant and yet the right spice in certain dishes.

At that Gilroy Festival, I heard about something that, frankly, scares me. Garlic Ice Cream. Some things in life are just not meant to be. I suspect it was a novelty flavor, and I don't see that catching on much. But garlic ice cream, between Mars, Neptune and the Sun, isn't such a bad idea. Smooth, sweet, hot and spicy. Like the good Pisces you are, try to combine a few things and see if the magic works. I can't promise that garlic ice cream will cure everything wrong in your world, mostly attributed to Mr. Mars, but I can promise some kind of strange relief from some kind of novelty product just like that stuff. Next week? Banana Sea Slug Ice Cream?

Aries: You've got to get a grip on the nightmare thing. Your Aries subconscious is playing tricks on you. Or, it's going to be playing more tricks. Now, more than one horror writer has turned strange, mental nightmare material into a viable source of income. You could do that. But I doubt it. However, I don't doubt you. Never, ever underestimate an Aries, that's what I always say.

Don't underestimate yourself, either. But watch out for the creeping, suspicious, nightmare quality to some of the upcoming events. You're going to see things that frankly, just between you and me, aren't really there. It never hurts to be a little paranoid, but with the relative position of Mars in his place these days, it's all going to be a little freaky. Personally, I find "a little freaky" kind of a decent switch from the way things have been. But not everyone likes my strange sense, style, and tastes about the way things are. When something strange occurs, like it's going to in the next few days, the best course of Aries action is to not get all weird. Don't

freak out. Pretend like that thing is just the way it's supposed to be. "Alien abductions? Sure, happened to my neighbor last week. Turned his hair green."

Taurus: I enjoy a cigar from time to time. It's not a regular habit, and the best expression I have for a good cigar is the way it clears my head - usually by clearing everyone out of my way for ten foot radius [or more]. The smoke drives away the persistent summer pests, the cat even moves to the other end of the couch to avoid me and the cigar.

Cigars were in vogue for a while, then fell out of favor as fate and fashions changed. Which, to me, makes a cigar an even more perfect way to "mark my space" as it clears everyone out for a respectable distance. Given where Mars is going to be, I'm sure you're going to be feeling like you're smoking a big, fat stogie, just like me. Problem is, in your Taurus heart of hearts, you're not really interested in clearing out the area. Still, I'm pretty sure you're going to find yourself with a larger than usual radius wherein everyone seems to be avoiding you.

You can get all up in arms about this extra space, you can worry that your personal hygiene isn't what it's supposed to be, or you can sit back, survey all that is around you, and enjoy a little peace and quiet. Might not be all that peaceable, and it might not be all that quiet, but as long as folks are avoiding you, enjoy the solitude. Even if you don't have a blue cloud of tobacco smoke around you, that doesn't mean that it's not a good time.

Gemini: I was looking for a software patch, what should be a quick download and install procedure, on the web. Just the other day. Some task that is supposed to quick and easy. One company's website sent me to another vendor's website, which then bounced me to a third site, linked to a fourth site, then I found a news item linked from the fifth or sixth place I looked for help. In fact, I never did find that patch. That's just poor design and implementation, if you ask me. Not that folks haven't complained about those sorts of problems with my own sites - that's not the question.

The problem was I lost track of what my original objective was, and then I wandered around for an hour or more, reading gossip, chasing vague innuendo, tracking useless "inside rumors," which then led no where. I lost track of my original goal, that software patch I was looking to download. No big deal, I got it another day.

Computer is working okay again. But I'll never get back that two hours, that whole morning I spent clicking from one site to another, splashy pages. Pay attention to the details right now. Okay, forget the details, pay attention the important project, goal, direction, that "thing" that you have in mind. It's really easy for you to get sidetracked looking for one item, and then, just like me, you wind up being "site-tracked" instead of getting where you want to get.

Cancer: Cajun cuisine is some of the finest food I've every eaten. Hot, spicy, using a variety of resources, it combines a lot of everything. A good "Cajun Boil" includes crabs & shrimp [saltwater], Crayfish [freshwater], and sausage [farm animals]. It's a little from all corners of the world, all from what's now a pretty small state. The original Louisiana Purchase, though, that encompassed a lot of terrain, look it up on historical map some time. The Louisiana influence is pretty far-flung, too.

At that Cajun Boil, though, I have a problem, see, it's the crab legs. I've found that, to my mind anyway, the crab legs take far too much energy to be worth the effort to get to the succulent portions of meat. Way too much hard work is involved in getting to the good stuff. Crack the legs open, peel shell away, watch out for those splintered sections of shell, get around the tough tendons and stuff, just to get the goods. Tasty, that's for sure, but I'll go for the crawdads [bite the tail, suck the head] and "peel and eat" shrimp over those crab legs, especially when I'm hungry.

As flat-out good as Cajun cuisine is, the effort to get to the good stuff sometimes doesn't justify the return. You might not be actually picking through a tabletop full of boiled victuals with a side of red beans and rice, but you're going to want to weigh some of decision in the next few days, as in, "Is it worth the effort for what you're getting?" It's like those crab legs, you know.

For the Week of: 8/7-13/2003

"Be not lost so poorly in your thoughts"

Shakespeare's [Scottish Play] [II.ii.70-1]

Show your support for the Fishing Guide to the Stars: Austin, weekend of Aug. 16 & 17 – El Paso, weekend of Aug. 23 & 24.

Mercury, Mars, just about everything is headed into disarray, or is already there. Before that last hurricane blew through town, I was watching as the offshoots of the weather came creeping up the waterline. On the lake's surface, it appeared that the stiff breeze was from the South-Southeast. On the bridge far overhead, just south of downtown, it sure felt like the hard wind was from the Northwestern direction. Confusing? Either way, it spells trouble, unless you're a seasoned sailor.

Leo: You're surely looking at this scope and wondering, "Are we having fun yet?" That's the way it goes, the part about being unsure whether or not this is fun yet. It should be, or, at best, it could be a little more fun than it feels. The key point is to understand some of the dynamics at work, between Mars making your Life of Leo a little uncomfortable and Venus trying to make you happy. Then there's Jupiter, and I'll get cussed by one Leo because it's as if I personally conspired to make all this happen like this, Jupiter marching forward and Mr. Mars marching backwards.

Not me. I didn't do it. I didn't plan it. We were stringing a cable connection from one trailer to another the other day. I wouldn't want you to think that we were doing anything illegal, it was just one resident helping the other out with a little extra wiring. So the Leo from the Leo trailer looks up, face covered with grime from poking into the nooks and crannies of a particular trailer, trying to make the fat cable wire look innocuous. "Are we having fun yet?" he asked. You know this will take a little bit of work, but the payoff, hundreds of entertainment channels, that's worth the effort – as long as you don't get caught.

Virgo: One of life's little pleasures on hot summer days in Texas, one of the greatest of joys, is a simple dip in the water. Whether it's a pool or creek, or even one of the area lakes' recreational areas [Hippie Hollow comes to mind]. I was slipping over the fence around an apartment's pool the other day. Just easier, you know? Sometimes, I can snake a pocketknife's blade into the gate's lock, and slip my way in. Seeing as how I'd forgotten a knife that day, I

just figured it was easier to hop over the fence itself. It was one of those largely decorative iron barricades, the type with the pointy ends at the top.

Getting over was no trouble, as I had my shirt in hand. But going out was a little more difficult as I was cooled off, and I'd temporarily put my shirt back on. Then along comes the manager, "Hey! You don't live here..." I jumped for it, and that stupid wrought iron caught the back of my shirt, tearing a nice slice out of it. Better the shirt than my hide. I did a quick verbal two-step with the indignant manager, claiming I was supposed to meet some resident who lived on the third floor. I got off with a stern warning and tear in the back of a shirt. Not really a big deal. So you go out to partake of a little pleasure that is slightly dubious in terms of legality. Nothing wrong with that. But when it comes time for a hasty exit? Better make sure you're not hooked on those long, metal spikes before you jump.

Libra: I remember when it happened the last time, when Mars was like this. I was reconciling my checking account, and I noticed that the bank had failed to credit me for a deposit I'd made. Better yet, it was deposit that I walked into the bank to make. I could even recall which teller I made the deposit with [a Leo, as a matter of fact]. See? It pays to ascertain the sign of someone with whom you do business. The bank lost my money. Which was okay because I had plenty of money at the time, and I wasn't worried about a paltry little sum like that, but I was worried that the bank actually misplaced my funds. I went around and around with the "customer service" personnel, and I finally got my amount credited to the proper account, my account, and I promptly closed that account.

I moved everything to a different bank. I'm not sure that the company misses me, a nearly destitute astrologer with a past record of occasionally floating a check or two, no I'm not sure that they miss my business. However, the walk-in tellers probably do miss me. Except that one Leo. I'm afraid I might have caused some trouble because I'm compulsive receipt saver. It was numbered, stamped, and all that, showing that I was right. When I was dealing with the customer service folks, I made effort to be polite, trying to match their unctuous attitude with smiles and an occasional joke. I knew that Mr. Mars was doing his best to confound everyone, and I'd like to suggest that you follow my example. Someone is going to mess up on some paperwork. I won't promise that it's a bank, but

someplace, as long as you have the slip of paper proving that your Libra self is right, you can win. But you're going to have to be nice about it. Facts, not fiction, are your allies. Remember, if Mars is backwards for you, it's backwards for them, too.

Scorpio: I've tried this sort of direction with you Scorpio's in the past, and I'm stuck with doing it again. Look: I know you're right. You know you're right. The rest of the folks you're dealing with? That's the problem. The way you express yourself, that's what's so important. A little restraint goes a long way in making you a happier Scorpio. What I'm warning you about, instead of looking back, and thinking, "If only my Scorpio mouth hadn't said that...."

Your fine Scorpio self is not so terribly disposed towards restraint and self-discipline at the first of this month. I'm not saying that you don't usually have a lot of restraint and self-discipline, after all, you are my favorite Fixed Water Sign. You are normally quite reserved and quiet about such matters that require a modicum of discretion. What's going on is that your ability to keep your mouth shut about some of this stuff isn't working so well. Or it's working too well. In either case, a little restraint is in order. Makes you a much happier person. Now please, no angry e-mail, or flames, or anything like that. As I've said before, I know you're right, but how you express your correctness is what needs a little dose of quiet.

Sagittarius: My trailer sits on the edge of the Colorado River. Actually, it's really the flood-controlled waterfront, it's an area, a portion of the river with a dam at both ends, and it's called Town Lake. When we get summer rains, one of my friends has a nasty habit of calling me up to check and see if I'm floating away yet, or if the water has risen to the point that it's dangerous, or something like that.

He's really just jealous because I live next to water and he doesn't. "Glad you up on blocks, ain't ya?" he queries. "Good thing your trailer's airtight, huh?" Yeah, whatever. It was cute the first time. It was amusing the second time. After a couple of years, though, this sort of taunting ceases to be really funny. It stops being amusing and starts to be a little annoying. Unfortunately, there's no real way to stem the tide of the Mars-related chiding. While your friends may intend this as good-natured ribbing, your poor Sagittarius feathers are apt to be ruffled along the way. Since I've never come up with a good way to avoid this sort of chatter, I can't

offer some sort of advice about how to deal with the teasing of others. Just figure that they're jealous of your location.

Capricorn: Everybody makes jokes about trailer life. Yet something like 10% or 12% of America lives in mobile homes, or, as some folks refer to them, "fashionable pre-manufactured mobile dwelling unit." Another observed phenomena -- really an old wives tale and urban myth -- is that certain forms of aberrant weather is attracted to mobile home parks. It's just not true. We don't attract tornados, but it sure seems that way. There was freak tornado in England, some years ago. Guess where it landed? Guess what it tore up? That's right, an RV park of some sort. Just weird how that happens.

I couldn't ever get the useless piece of trivia out of my mind, so it's here. Does this mean that your going to be hit a tornado? I seriously doubt that. But this does imply that your home is going to get a little shaken up. I was got off thinking about the tornados and mobile homes because the weather's been a little weird lately, and nothing is impossible, although, strictly speaking we should be done with our twister weather here in Texas. I figure there's something coming along, and it's going to shake the foundations of your Capricorn trailer. I don't figure that this is going to actually shake your home, but I would suggest that you get prepared for a little, almost inevitable shaking of your foundations. Doesn't have to be a big one, just a gentle rocking that suggests maybe shouldn't have placed all those knickknacks on the shelves.

Aquarius: It was a hot summer's day, like this unusual in Texas? I rolled into a local Tex-Mex place, noted for its especially sumptuous, if not exactly healthy, cuisine. Hot, spicy, tasty, plentiful. They have a special dish, it's three ground beef enchiladas, smothered in cheese, "con carne chili sauce," and topped with two fried eggs. I was hungry. I had my quart-sized "bucket of ice tea," I was halfway through the chips and particularly piquant hot sauce, when my Straight Plate [as it's named] arrived. I tucked into that plate like there was no tomorrow, eventually ordering up an extra handmade tortilla or two to help sop up the remaining grease. Between the chips, the hot sauce, the extra tortillas and everything, I was stuffed.

Happy, satiated. Close to comatose, too. Not a big deal, really. One of my buddies jokes about this sort of meal, "Yeah, you can hear them warming up star flight now [local helicopter coronary care ambulance]." As comfort food goes, that Strait Plate can't be beat.

Nothing works quite as well as three beef enchiladas smothered in fresh chopped onions, greasy melted cheese and rich meat chili sauce. Topped with a couple of fried eggs? Who are we kidding here? Is this comfort food? Or is this kind of food more along the lines of a death wish? What works as comfort might not be in your best interest. However, I'm still suggesting that a meal just like that will help ease you over the rough patches. In my case, though, I was thinking, after a meal like that, I need a good nap. Whatever works, right? Anything to ameliorate the effect of Mr. Mars.

Pisces: San Jose, California. Home to, shoot, I know next to nothing about San Jose. San Jose Sharks, maybe? They used to have a great motorcycle shop there, but that was some time ago. Airport maybe? I'm not sure. Been there a time or two. Anyway, one of my sources suggested that she'd actually seen—and get this: tasted—San Jose Banana Sea Slug Ice Cream. [And your Pisces self thought I was joking last week?]

I can imagine how a delicate Pisces would recoil in horror at the thought of "Banana Slug Ice Cream," but think about it. Mr. Mars, doing his backward tumble in your sign, apparently, and some sort of weird California ice cream, named after a slug, no less. But the ice cream itself, it tasted pretty good, according to my source. And Mr. Mars, he's making life appear to be uncomfortable, but once you get passed the idea that things look bad, it's really not so terrible. Sort of tasty. Like banana sea slug ice cream. No, really, give it chance. It doesn't have to be all that bad – although, for my money, I'm not sure I'd really be interested in tasting that stuff. But as always, I'm willing to be wrong.

Aries: Good stuff, bad stuff, medium stuff. You never can tell quite what it's going to be. Might be a little of it all. Might also be a lot of trouble. It all depends on where you are with the "Mars is backwards" thing right now. Put that in a good place, and you're set to enjoy some mighty fine times over the next few days. But if there's any problem there, if there's any question about where—and what—Mr. Mars is up to, then there will be trouble.

This would tend to be something from the past, a previous problem that you failed to properly attend to, and that particular situation will be back. Back with a vengeance. Back like nobody's business. I'm not picking on you, but the planets are conspiring to make sure that you've got your tasks in order. As long as you're working with what's there, and as long as you're doing exactly what you're

supposed to be doing, this little task, or set of tasks, should be pretty easy to accomplish in the next few days. But if you've strayed from the chosen path, if you've meandered from the marked trail, if you've taken one of my shortcuts, you're going to find that Mr. Mars opens up a can of you-know-what.

Taurus: One of my friends from Dallas was down in Austin, and I always enjoy the Northern perspective, "Austin's great, I don't have to wear a bra!" That comment, in and of itself, isn't too bad. Could be interesting. It's just that it reminded me, the last time I heard it, about something my own mother said, after I'd given her a T-Shirt, "Oh good, it's black, I don't have to wear a bra with it!" That's frightening, to me, as her middle-aged son. Not something I want to know, hear about – or see.

Of course, I want my dear sweet, long-suffering Scorpio mother to be comfortable. But there are some aspects of her life that should remain, well, a little less public. A little discretion on your Taurus part would help a lot. While certain comments are almost always welcome, maybe this isn't something that you need to broadcast to the world. Even if you claim that you have nothing to hide, no secrets that you're worried about anyone finding out, no problems whatsoever, I still would suggest that a little perspicacious discretion is an operative word for the next few days. Think about, you can never tell what will wind up in print on some web site, and all I'm trying to do is save you the embarrassment.

Gemini: Life's little luxuries take on different flavors. For me, a hot cup of espresso with some frothy milk on top of it, either as a floater or mixed in, that's one of life's little, guilty pleasures. I may have my facts wrong, but a single shot of espresso isn't supposed to be that high in its caffeine content, as I recall. Some of the morning coffee I brew is stronger. More potent, even more wicked, by some standards.

I can use the jolt in the morning, to get me cranked up and at work. In the afternoon, that mild espresso drink is a pleasure, not a serious cup of "get up and go." The deal, sometimes there are guilty pleasures that help move events along in your life. Considering that every other sign seems to be dawdling, meandering, or just taking life super easy, and seeing as how you're still cranked up and rarin' to go, I suggest you take a break.

Consider setting aside a little time for that guilty please, whatever form it takes. Better yet, try a guilty pleasure that has added value, like a little extra shot of something in the afternoon to make your own, Gemini mind work better. Best yet, take along one of those folks who doesn't seem to be moving quite as rapid as you are, see if that doesn't help them get up to speed with your Gemini self.

Cancer: I sat down with one Cancer girl, about two years ago, and I mapped out where planets were going to be in her chart, over the next few years. I placed a lot of emphasis on Mr. Saturn and how he brings work. Plus there's a minor amount of depression. You get a weird [strange, bizarre, unaccounted for] sense that there's some kind of assistance you will receive at a time like this, though.

The next couple of days see that you can see there's a way out. A pathway becomes more clear. "There's a light at the end of the tunnel." Sure, you might not quite see it that way, but there's a feeling you get, a sense that you can intuitively grasp that there is that light at the end of the tunnel. I doubt you'll be able to actually see the way through this mess just yet, but there's a way to deal with it all. Troubles? Sure, you've got a few. I told you to squirrel away some extra cash a while back. If you did, then you're fine. If you didn't, then there's trouble. I hardly see this as big trouble, more like you've got to cut a few expenses these days, a few luxuries that you can do without.

For the Week of: 8/14-20/2003

"[They are] hard-handed men which never labour'd in their mind till now!"

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [V.i.72-3]

Leo: From my east facing front step, looking through the trees and out over the lake, just after sundown, there's the prettiest reflection of the moonlight on the ripples of the river's surface. It is seriously romantic, the way moonlight glitters and glistens across the water's surface, the gentle summer zephyrs stirring the surface, the sound of cicadasdyeing in the gentle background buzz of the night. Then there're the bats, too, the huge colony of Mexican Free Tail bats who live under the bridge downtown, just a few blocks west of here.

They all take to flight in the summer's eve's dusk, usually heading east, but a few stray and wind up circling the porch lights here. They have to eat their own weight in bugs, every night, in order to maintain themselves. At least, that's what I've been told. It's one reason we don't always have a lot of flying vermin, unless you consider the rodents with wings a nuisance. I wouldn't, it's all a part of that idyllic scene, which goes back to the moonlight on the water. Take a minute, right after sundown, cast your gaze to the east, and give it a chance to drift off to an idyll, a moment of reflection. It hasn't been so very bad at all. In fact, there's been a lot of good. You're slowing down though, and yes, I know there are still some Leo Birthdays up ahead, but the frantic rush is slowing down, so it's time to slow yourself down, too.

Virgo: Yes, you like having Mr. Mercury in your sign. That's a good thing. The problem is, however, that Mercury is just about the only planet in your sign. There's a pile of planets in Leo, planets not yet in your sign, and then there's this pesky Mars affair, over in Pisces. The deal is, good things are about to happen, but they're not happening yet. Nothing is worse than being at the front door, and you can't get in. It's a lot like window-shopping. No, I don't mean you're shopping for a window, I mean you're looking in that big plate glass window, and you see something that you want.

But now's not the right time to actually go and plunk down some hard-earned cash, or whip out the credit card, and buy that thing you want. Stop. Do a little comparison shopping. Consider looking around at possible alternatives. Instead of making a firm decision

on the next few days, why not let some of these ideas simmer in your brain? Give them a chance to fully develop before you pop for that big purchase? Two events will transpire to help you. One, you'll be able to more thoroughly assess the worth and need for whatever it is that you're shopping for, and two, you'll be able to find a better, even luckier deal if you'll just put some of this off. I didn't say don't look, but I would suggest waiting before taking action. Give yourself a little cooling off period, first.

Libra: I was using an artificial grub on the end of some "titanium" fishing line, with a medium length pole that's really a little stiff for light fishing. I was looking for a big Bass. That combination usually gets me just what I like. It's the right action, the fish can't usually snap that [expensive] line, and the grub? That stupid little piece of plastic catches more fish than anything. Usually good-sized fish, too. I got a strike, yanked back to set the hook, and reeled in a fish. It wasn't a Bass, it was a tiny little perch. Or brim. Nothing spectacular.

In fact, I was afraid my fishing buddy was going to snap a picture of me with something on the end of my line that looked a lot more like bait than fish. You know, it's embarrassing to be seen with such a small item on the end of the line. Now, at the end of the fishing adventure with Kramer, if you counted that fish, I landed 12. An even dozen. If you didn't count that fish, it was only 11. At the end of the day, I was noble. I'd encourage your Libra self to be as noble, too. I didn't count that one little non-Bass fishy. To a more competitive mind, that's just not right. Other signs would have to include it. Let's be a little more realistic. Doing the right thing won't always win you big prizes at the moment, but in the long run, it's a better way to play. Or work. And it can save you from having your fishing buddies e-mail you photos that are clearly altered to make you look bad.

Scorpio: I know that there's nothing so refreshing to a decent Scorpio as a good "pissing match." Let's just see who can arc that stream out the furthest, the longest, and do it better than anyone else, right? Or the term could also apply to a verbal exchange of pleasantries that have a mean hook in them. Such stuff is fun, or it can be. It's amusing to wind someone up with a snide little Scorpio comment, and watch them get all bent out of shape. To some of my better Scorpio accomplices, it's more than fun, it's sport, maybe even an art form.

Look out, though, as some of that sarcastic banter might backfire. It's a good time to shut up and keep a little more to yourself. Those cute little comments? I'm always amused. Not everyone else is equally amused. Nor will they understand that this is humor, sport, and good fun. Just because one of your friends, enemies [or something in between] gives you a target that you can barely resist, I know, I know, how could you not take a cheap shot? I'm suggesting that this might not be the most opportune time for you to do just that. If you can keep from making that [frankly, between you and me, I think it's a well-deserved comment] remark, you can save yourself a lot of headache and heartache, a little further down the road. Who was it who suggested, "I can resist anything but temptation itself"?

Sagittarius: Life is either really good, or it's not. Sort of depends. Of course, if it's not good, then you have in your Sagittarius grasp, right there in front of you, a way to make life better. I developed a special technique for turning around the bad days. Middle of the morning, after one disheartening client phone call after another, throw in a few mean-spirited e-mails as well, and some serious grumbling from various corners of the world, and I find that my Sagittarius mood has been altered from my normal, jovial and happy outlook to one of dyspeptic depression.

What to do? If it's good, do nothing. If it's not good, then get a fresh start on the day. I take a nap. Anywhere from a mere 20 minutes to two hours of solid rest, and I'm feeling better. I wake up, dig through my wallet, look at the driver's license, figure out who I am, figure out what I'm supposed to be doing, and life is grand again. If it's good, then let it ride. If it's not as good as you want – surely it's the other signs' faults – then do something, either real or symbolic, to get a fresh start. It's a lot like rebooting a computer, you can reboot your week.

Capricorn: This really happened. I'd wandered down to the pond [actually Barton's Spring's Pool] to go for a dip on a hot summer day. I stripped everything out of my pockets, and since my walking shorts have mesh pockets, and I wasn't wearing any underwear, I just plunged right in. Cold water, quite a shock to the system. But I've been doing this for years now, and it's not a big deal. It was a good, shallow dive, except that the rules, right there on the painted sidewalk, pretty clearly say, "No running. No diving." I surfaced about halfway across the pool, and when my head came up, I got

whistled out of the pool by one of the lifeguards. "It says, 'no diving,' and you did that right in front of me," she was saying. Think about how long it's been since I was whistled out of the pool, what, many long years? I was about 5 or 10 years old, last time I got told to "get out of the pool." It can be embarrassing, ungainly, or it can be a point of pride.

Or it can make an unusual metaphor for the way your week is headed because you're bound to run into a similar obstacle with a similar authority figure. Instead of the usual problems with a guy with a gun on his hip, though, my authority figure was a slim, teenage-20-something girl in a red bathing suit, dark glasses, and white "lifeguard" hat. Dark skin from hanging out poolside all summer. Bad attitude from having to deal with the stupid, general public doing things that only the stupid, general public does. Like diving where the sign pretty explicitly says, "no diving." I apologized and promised never to do it, ever again, at least, not as long as she worked there. I'd suggest the same course of action for you, just do as you're told even if the authority figure is young enough too be your daughter.

Aquarius: One of my girlfriends showed up with her new boyfriend, knocking on the trailer's door the other morning. The guy she had in tow, based on what he'd seen of me on the web and some of my previous musical references, he was sure that I would be listening to Classic Rock, and pounding away on a typewriter. He was awed by the hardware, and then, the next CD cycled up on the player. It was some rather fashionable techno-DJ mixed stuff. Current. Happening. Cool. Additionally, it was some of his favorite bands. Groups, really.

I made a very good first impression. I popped out the astrology charts, did my usual astrological song and dance, and they departed. I have eclectic tastes. I was just glad, my friends departed before the next CD cycled into rotation. It was a band, okay, if you have to know, it was Deep Purple's "Machine Head," and that record was released before the new boyfriend was born. It was the exact music that the new boyfriend was afraid I was listening to. That was some mighty fortuitous timing for myself and my CD player.

You can be just as lucky as I was, leave a really nice first impression, and make everyone around think you're really cool, if you just don't linger. To be honest, I'd completely forgotten about the next CD. The deal is, don't let anything take longer than it

needs to take. Like a quick astrology tune-up? Lasts about the length of one CD, no more. Or anything Aquarius this coming week. Your timing is good, as long as you don't belabor the point and drag things out longer than they need to be. Keep them short.

Pisces: Went fishing the other weekend. My favorite way to take a trip like this is to leave long before the sun comes up, hit the lake right before sunrise, in that early morning light the fish are little suspect, use a bright lure, and see what happens. Gets the day off to a good start, that's for sure. Gets everything rolling along just fine, as that early morning time is the best time, in my experience, to catch a few winners. The only problem comes when I don't get to bed early enough, or when I don't get an adequate amount of coffee, or when I don't get enough sleep. Nothing is worse than managing to get to bed early, then toss and turn, thinking, "I've got to get sleep. Now, relax. RELAX! NOW!"

Doesn't quite work that way. So the last time I was fishing, we got the boat in the water, I grabbed my poles, and hopped in, intent on stowing everything correctly, and in that pre-dawn darkness, I banged my ankle. Badly. Hurt bad. "No man, let's go, get out there," I was stoically saying, limping back to the driver's seat. "Doesn't hurt." Right. Machismo is so over-rated. Good thing that boat doesn't have a gas pedal, just a throttle. With my throbbing ankle, I was stuck sitting in the back of the boat, not really able to stand up, as I didn't trust it. Worse yet, it didn't break the skin. Just painful bump, and later, a big bruise. Just me being clumsy from not having enough sleep, even though I had the best of intentions.

So what I'm telling you right now is to watch out for the same errors. Might not be getting in a boat to go fishing, but if you're not careful, Mr. Mars will bump you just like that. A bruise like that is by no means a deal killer, but it does interfere with having a good time. Take some of this energy while you're sitting down. Makes it a lot easier. Either you slow down, or circumstances will slow you down.

Aries: There's a TV program, or was, anyway, and this one TV Fishing Guide made a habit out of falling into the water. Made for great video footage. Having been dumped into the lake a time or two, I know that it's not nearly as exciting, entertaining or amusing as it sounds. The lakes I like, they are all rather warm in the summertime, being nothing more than cooling ponds for power generating stations. Falling in is one of those ideas that sounds

really good. It looks good on TV. In real life, it's just not that much fun.

It's not like a cool dip in the creek, something you set out to do. Falling off the tail end of the boat is bad form. Looks bad. Lake water gets into everything. Although, having some experience with this, I do tend to make sure I'm "waterproof" before I go fishing. I would suggest the same for you. In the next few days, you're going to find yourself engaged in some activity where you are close to the edge. Like fishing in the middle of some lake. And while you're close to that edge, you're buddy will step on the trolling motor, long enough for you lose your balance, and guess where you wind up? In the drink. Or soup, as the case may be.

Deal is this: you've got to laugh about some of this, instead of getting all upset. That upset stuff? Doesn't do you one bit of good. Laughing about the little foibles that are bound to conspire to toss you in the water? That's funny. And you'll feel better about the whole series of events, too.

Taurus: There's this one British comedy author, and his first dozen or so novels were just bloody brilliant. From running gags, to the way the English countryside is described, to the effective methods of drawing character studies, sitting down and laughing through one his books used to be most excellent good fun. The problem being, he went from a marginal, little known author with acerbic wit, style and panache to a big-ticket kind of a guy. Along the way, his more recent novels tended to be a lot less funny. The running gags were still there, but instead of being funny, they all seemed a little tired.

Yes, we've laughed at this one before. Yes, that was funny, three books back, but it's no longer as funny. Taurusdear Taurus, you've got a choice to make. You can keep recycling the old gags, the old jokes, and trying the same old lines—that stuff used to work well—but it's all getting a little boring. Or you can try some new gags, jokes and give that material a decent freshening up. I strongly urge you to start working on some new stuff. The old ways, the old stuff, that just doesn't work much anymore. Go with some new ideas. Sure, you might be more comfortable with the old stuff, the running gags that have served you well for the last dozen years, but you know, as a faithful Taurus reader, I'd love to see something new from you. You can do it.

Gemini: Fishing is a fine avocation or occupation. But fishing requires a certain amount of patience. This isn't a time when you do real well with this kind of activity. The problem is, with fishing, there's not enough activity for your overactive Gemini lifestyle. Especially these days. It's due to Mars in part, maybe also the phase of the moon as she creeps towards you, and possibly, due to some other stuff. Like the "outer planets" [as we like to refer to them in astrology]. But you do have a lot of stuff that's making you just as restless as can be.

If a Gemini shows up and wants to sit in the boat with me for the next few hours, I'm inclined to decline. I hate to be guided by strict astrology, but I know enough about human interaction that six or eight hours with a Gemini in a small, enclosed space isn't a good idea. First there's the chatter. Then there's the fidgeting. Then there's the constant barrage of well-intentioned, but rather useless advice.

Suggestions from my Gemini friend that the "fishing is probably better over there," and it doesn't matter where you are, the fish aren't biting enough where you're at, and over there, is—to a Gemini—the obvious place to be. I wouldn't be in a boat if I didn't have the patience to drift in one spot for hours on end because I feel like the fish are there. Or, better yet, I can see the wily adolescent bass in the water. Patience may be a virtue, but since it's in short supply for the Gemini folks, maybe pick an activity that requires activity, not just sitting there.

Cancer: I've often proposed a long-term study of the effects of certain planets and their relative positions. In fact, that's what I do with my work, study relative motions and make observations, based on the way a group of individuals respond to certain astrological influences. I was commenting on this sort of research the other day. The girl I was talking to responded to my suggestions with, "Yeah, hit them upside the head with a two-by-four."

That kind of action-reaction gave a moment to pause and think. Always trying to be quick on my feet, verbally, anyway, I suggested that the point being made was obvious, and a two-by-four might really hurt whereas a good, stout dowel might make the point just as effectively. Less possible damage with a stick as opposed to a board, you know.

So you're lecturing someone, in the next few days, belaboring your very valid Cancer point of view, and it seems like your wondrous words are falling on deaf ears. You want to use a heavy club to get the attention of the person you're addressing. Okay, here's the point I'm making: I'm with you in spirit. I'm also suggesting that you consider something that's not quite as heavy-or damaging-as a big stick. Just a little piece of wood to hit them upside the head might work, just as well. Think about it. Big stick? Little stick?

For the Week of: 8/21-27/2003

"I think the devil will not have [you] damned, lest the oil that's in [you] should set hell on fire."

Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* [V.v.35-6]

Virgo: Starting next week, we have two big events. We have Virgo birthday parties, and Jupiter slamming headfirst into Virgo. That's a big deal. Sooner or later, you will feel Mr. Jupiter's benevolence. That's good. The problem is that this isn't an easy time, not yet. There are several unsettling events occurring, and they all seem to be timed to put you off your feed, as we say around here. Jupiter opposes Uranus for a little while, and that's very unsettling.

I've watched this sort of event unfold before, and rather than make dire predictions, though, I'll just explain that it is unsettling, but not bad. Just different. What's that curse? "May you live in interesting times"? Yes, well there you have it. It's going to be interesting. With Jupiter, and I'm sure I'll get into this over the next year, but with that old gas giant of a planet, it's important to remember that you have to let the funds clear the bank before you start spending whatever it is that he's bringing along. At least one Virgo will get lucky, starting this weekend. You know the drill, if you do win the big lottery, all I'm asking for, after the check clears is 1%. Mars is still stirring interpersonal relationship problems, so don't sweat it if that luck doesn't involve romance just yet.

Libra: Somebody honked at me the other day. I know, you're thinking, "That's no big deal." Except see, it was a hot afternoon, I was wearing shorts that double as swimming trunks, and I was not wearing a shirt. Texas, August, it's rather warm. Some of us are used to the heat. Makes us sweat. Except the "ladies," as anyone should know, a female of Southern Extraction doesn't sweat, she "glows." Not being a female, I was sweating, wiping self-generated moisture off my brow with my shirt. And then there's this honking. I look up, and I see car go by, somebody, I think it was a she, and I think the car was four-door, and I think it was dark colored.

It's the best description I can give, and I might have it all wrong. "Like two ships, passing in the night...." Skip the poetry, it was someone who shall forever remain anonymous now, gone. Saw her [him?] briefly as I was wiping sweat from my overly large brow. Like my chance encounter, though, you have a similar experience. Someone passing, your Libra self is recognized, and that other

person honks, waves, and you don't have clue as to who it is. What are you going to do? Me? I'm not going to do anything. I was sweating like someone who's just hiked about seven miles in searing sunlight. I'd grin, but that took too much effort.

Likewise, you want to conserve that precious Libra energy, and you want to concentrate on what seems to be most important. While my perspiration was heat-induced, I'd suspect that yours is more along the lines of "work" induced. Hard work shouldn't frighten you, either. As long as Mars is backwards, you can expect a little bit heavier workload, too. You might be mopping that Libra brow, but for a slightly different reason. And those chance encounters? Try to at least wave. Least you can do, even if you don't recognize the person. Never hurts to be friendly.

Scorpio: For the last couple of summers, I spent a lot of time on the Town Lake Hike and Bike trail. Convenient exercise, panoramic vistas, and in August, it's hot. Or, as one British friend observed, "It's bloody hot." One fixture on the trail, one image I got really used to seeing was a "RunTex" truck, parked close to the SRV statue. Your ever-observant Scorpio mind will realize that this was very clever marketing on the part of the store, less than a block away.

On the backboard of the truck, every day, there were big water coolers full of water, sports beverages, and a ton of paper cups. Various bicyclists, runners, marathon trainers, triathlon aspirants, joggers, or in my case, walkers, along with the odd tourist, would gather and partake of the cool beverages. It got to be, on my way back to Barton Springs and home, I would just expect that truck to be there with cold water. Sometimes, late in the afternoon, the water would be a little more tepid, but it was wet and clean, that's all that mattered, right?

Problem was, one afternoon, for whatever reason, 1] I was really counting on a drink of water and 2] the truck wasn't there. No water. Sure, there's the dammed up portion of the Colorado River, but most of downtown drains into that, and I'm not sure the water is safe to drink. No truck. No water. Thirsty boy. Not a good combination. Deal is, over the next few days, you're going to run into a similar situation. No truck. No water. Something you're used to counting on won't be there. Freak out? If you want. But you know, that truck? It was back the next day. Besides, this was

service provided for free, it's not like I had a right to complain about the free service not being there.

Sagittarius: I was looking at the Sagittarius astrology chart, and I got to thinking about this and that, and then I got to thinking about the cute little girl who works at the corner convenience store, a regular stopping place for me. Then I got to thinking about the big, tall, over-sized cup of ice and a carbonated beverage therein, and finally, after perusing our charts, I figured it wouldn't be bad time to purchase a lottery ticket. A couple of days later, I got around to checking those lucky lottery numbers. No luck. The interesting point, though, was how close those numbers were. I was so close to a winning combination, with five of the six numbers off by one digit, or in one case, the numbers were reversed, I had a "13" on my ticket but the winning combo included "31".

Two ways to see this sort of combinations of digits, and two ways to see this sort of combination of planets: either you're loser-like me—or you're very, very close. Again, just like me. You can look at the next few days just like that. This weekend, especially, as there's a lot of very interesting planetary alignments going on, but our Sagittarius selves are not in the middle of it. We're right next to it. It's like that lottery ticket. It's ever so close, but it's not quite right – not yet. But it's close. One digit off, either way, maybe a few numbers are transposed. What are you going to call it? Wad the week up and throw it away, and bemoan how the Fates have dealt you a sore hand? Or call it close, and do like I do, hop on down to the store, and buy another ticket?

Capricorn: "That's some crazy stuff, huh? You know what? You ain't even begun to see the weird stuff yet." It's not an actual dialogue, but it could've been one. Or I might be tripping in time, and a few days later than it really is. Maybe that's a conversation I'm about to have with one of my Capricorn friends.

For the longest time, on Monday, I would go walking with my one Capricorn buddy. She liked it, I pushed her to get a little more exercise than she would otherwise get, and it was a lot more entertaining to hit the trail with me. I take detours, shortcuts, we've wandered far a-field from the beaten track, and it's usually pretty entertaining. I don't guess that it's a good sign that I know a few of the homeless folks along the trail, too.

So next week, might be too hot for a hike, at least for her, but I can still imagine us having that conversation. It could be caused by a scene from wildlife, as in some kind of bird life doing something, or it could be like the time we stumbled onto the "Stonehenge of Austin," which was nothing more than a few piles of rock, in a creek bed. And you know what? You haven't even begun to see the weirdest of this kind of activity in your Capricorn life. Just wait, it's going to get to be even more interesting. Bad? I seriously doubt that. Weird? Sure, no problem.

Aquarius: I was listening to a friend of mine do the usual litany of complaints about men, she was a bit bitter at the moment--she's not always like that--but a recent experience had left her a little more cynical than usual. "Worry about men finding me? They can't even locate their keys when the keychain is sitting right there on the coffee table. What's up with that?" Yes, indeed, what is up with that? Know the feeling? One bit of wisdom I've often pondered is how the best place to hide an object is to leave it out in full view of everyone.

Works like a charm. The problem, you're facing in your Aquarius chart, over the next few days, is that there is something that is plainly obvious to your Aquarius self. It's right there on the table, directly in front of you. You can see it. No one else can fathom how you can actually see something so clearly though. Just because there's a very clear solution to a problem, and even though you can discern this abundantly obvious solution, right there, in front of everyone, right there, on the table in front of you, just because you can see this doesn't mean everyone else can see it, too.

There's another theory that says a big stick works well when you're trying to get someone's attention. Okay, the blindingly obvious solution? The answer you can see and no one else is able to even begin to understand? Don't bludgeon us with your answer. Be patient. Make note of the solution, then bide your time while the rest of us catch up with you.

Pisces: Folks are going to throw three tons of living crud at me for the next few months. I can feel it already. I know what's happening, and it's not my fault. But if I don't write something nice, then all the sweet little Pisces folks get upset. And when I do write something nice, they all get upset when it doesn't come through. As long as Mars does his backslide in your sign, it augurs no good. Doesn't mean that it all has to be bad, but conventional wisdom, or

something else that seems to be in short supply these days, common sense, hey, try a little of that stuff.

Let's say, you're involved in a situation that is "iffy" at best. In other words, you're doing something that if you were one of your friends, you'd be telling that friend not to do. "But that's advice that I would hand out, not advice I have to take for myself," your Pisces self complains [usually to me]. If you want to complain to me, that's okay, my standard rates apply, and I'll listen. But I have a better idea, why not try and use some of your own advice on yourself? Look at that situation objectively. See, ask yourself what you would tell you to do, if you were another person. Being a little more objective at time like this would really help. Especially in Pisces land.

Aries: The movement of Mr. Mars—more like the relative movement of Mars to our location here on Planet Earth—has a lot to do with the way you're going to see things these days. It's really less of Mars moving backwards, and more of his close proximity to another planet, that would be Uranus. Weird stuff. No two ways about it. One of my fishing buddies jokes with me about me fishing in the river that runs in front of Shady Acres. It's really nothing more than a drainage ditch with a dam at either end, more like a holding pond for downtown runoff, than a river.

However, look at it on a map, and it's called the Colorado River, or Town Lake, and either name is appropriate. He jokes about the kind of fish that might come out of the river. Between pesticide, herbicide, weed killer, automobile emissions, and everything else that drains into the river, including Barton Creek, there's no telling what kind of permutation and aberration of nature might pop up on the end of a fishing line.

Like me, you're going to be fishing one day, just minding your own business, and then you catch some sort of scaly, half-human monster on the end. Not sure what to do with it? I'm a "catch and release" guy, take a picture and let it go. That might be the best idea when something weird winds up in your lap, especially in the next few days. No need to hold onto it, just have a look and then toss it back. Might save a lot explaining, and maybe a little ribbing from your other fishing buddies.

Taurus: Tip: pretend you're a shy and demure person. Pretend that you blush at the slightest off-color suggestion. There's no need to

let the other folks around you know that the proposition you've just received, that it's something that you've already done a time or two, and in fact, you've found a way to improve the interaction of the proposition.

In other words, not only have you done that, but you know a way to do this and that, which makes the whole event even more fun and pleasurable. Act like the proverbial "blushing bride" [is there such a thing as a "blushing groom"? I hope so.] Act like your delicate sensitivities are piqued, but almost offended at the very suggestion of whatever it is that's being suggested. The more reclusive, introverted and shy you act, the better the way this weekend turns out. Same applies to next week, as well, as time unfolds and Mars marches backwards. It's not about making your point with loud, declarative statements, it's about how you get your point across by not making a scene.

Gemini: One of my Gemini friends called me up the other day, she claimed she wanted to go the lake, you know, late summer time, cool off by taking her, the dog and going out to the river someplace? Sounds like an ideal plan. But doing this Gemini style is a little different. "First thing in the morning" became noon. "The Blanco River, the Guadalupe, the Frio," all of those options narrowed down to just hopping in the truck [remember, the dog] and cruising over to the creek.

Still, it was all good until she unveiled what she was wearing, a "Stars and Bars" bikini. For the illiterate, the term "stars and bars" refers to the Confederate Flag. For the more prurient-minded, the bikini was a standard issue, not a thong, not a string, simply enough to cover the issue at hand. With a Confederate Flag, no less. On any other sign, this might be an issue, but on my peace-loving, neo-hippie Gemini, it was a little odd. Okay, very odd.

Don't judge a book by its cover, and don't judge a Gemini by the bikini. The "stars and bars" crossed in just the right places, and it served as a good graphic. However, in the peace-minded, liberal oasis of Austin, and especially at that one watering hole, such a form of attire could be construed as a political statement of some sort, and one that could incite a, possibly strong, reaction. Fortunately, as a cute female form can often do, she was able to prevent any sort of reaction, other than the intended desires. You, my dear Gemini friend, might not be so lucky this week. Be careful. You might not want to flaunt the "stars and bars" when you're

circulating around certain folks who fail to understand the intended meaning.

Cancer: Somebody, someplace, whoever lined the planets up this way, sure has a sick sense of humor. I find it a very amusing alignment. You probably don't. There's a problem happening in your chart, and it only has to be as bad as you let it be. In other words, it's neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so [with apologies to Mr. Hamlet.] It's only going to be as awful as you let your Cancer mouth make it out to be.

See: you're going to be motivated to address a particular issue. I was sitting in the boat one morning, not long ago, and my fishing buddy was patiently listening to me carry on about a similar issue. After a quarter of an hour or more of my diatribe, my buddy looks over at me, remember, he's been patiently listening to me harangue, complain, vilify, and otherwise raise a stink about a particular issue.

Looking over his sunglasses, he gave me a very droll, two word response, "Shut up." My complaint was quite valid, but-according to Bubba-I was belaboring the point. "Man, you sounded just like my wife," he said. The deal is, you've got to get a little perspective on what's irritating you before you fire up the Cancer mouth its long list of problems with that situation. Blame Mars, blame Jupiter, blame me. Doesn't much matter, but try to cool it a little before you start the rap. I tend to think it's not really nearly as bad as you make it out to be.

Leo: Pressure is going to be relieved by the time weekend rolls on through here. Or, maybe you feel like the weekend is rolling over you. There's a common bit of Texas wisdom, bantered about on joke lists and such. But like many bits of humor, it also has a ring of truth to it.

At a four-way stop, the truck with the biggest tires and the largest firearms [in the gun rack] has the right-of-way. Look: you're feeling like you should try and argue with that other truck at the four-way stop. Ain't a good idea. His vehicle is larger than you, he has a date next to him, and it's his manly duty to [it's a testosterone thing] to be first. You can get in the way, but that causes nothing but trouble. It creates scene that you don't need to be a part of.

You're going to lose all of about two seconds. Granted, that's two seconds out of your Leo life that you might never have back again,

and granted, you really are a lot more important than my neighbor with the monster truck and small arsenal. If necessary, be a little condescending. But let the other guy go first. It's just easier, and after all, the Leo life should be easy these days.

For the Week of: 8/28-9/3/2003

"You are all in all spleen,/And nothing of a man."

Shakespeare's *Othello* [IV.i.88-9]

[It's been said about certain astrology writers, I'm sure, but we're not naming names at the moment.] Mercury is headed into retrograde by now.

Virgo: I have this dream, might be a little unrealistic, but one day, just one day, sometime in the near future, just once, I'd like a Virgo to be nice to me. Not unctuous, false sincerity, just, you know, be nice. Polite. No harsh words. Along the lines of not biting-my-head off nice. Is that too much to ask?

See, Mr. Jupiter is getting good and comfortable in your sign. That's good. Mars is backwards, opposite Mr. Jupiter, "So that's BAD, isn't it, Mr. Smart-aleck-fishing-astrology guy? Uh-huh? See? You hate Virgo's. I just knew it!" My dream of a decent Virgo being nice to me won't be fulfilled this week. But I'll be fair, I'll warn you that I will publish your note along with your address, if I feel like it, then you have no one to blame but your bad Virgo self.

Why the war wits between me [born-again lover of all things Virgo] and your Virgo self? Some one has to be the target, and it looks like no matter what I write, it's going to be taken wrong. Mars is inclined to make you impetuous. Jupiter makes you hit the "send" button faster than usual. None of this is particularly good. Rash decisions, or worse, hateful notes to the astrologer? Especially when the Sun is beaming his way through your sign? That's uncalled for. Go forth, party down. Enjoy some good times. Watch out for Mars-induced actions, though, i.e., don't put anything "out there" that you don't want to be held accountable for in the near future -- like the next two weeks.

Libra: Mercury is a funny little planet. He's acting like an evening star right now, but just barely, and frankly, from where I live, you can't see him at all. In a few weeks, he'll start being a morning star, and the world's pace will get back to normal. I was listening to one of my friends complain about the caliber of people she was running into in a particular town in Texas [no names], "Just once, I mean, just once, I'd like to run into females with less than 5 pounds of makeup, maybe with an IQ that--at least--matched the height of their stiletto heels. Just once."

I listened to her complaints about suitable females, suitable friends, and how the place was just so pretentious. I didn't bother to point out that the problem, the common theme, involved her Libra self. It was more about where she was going, and the kind of people she was attracting into her life at the time. Sometimes, it's not my place to point this out, but for Libra? And for the next couple of weeks, and especially this weekend plus the beginning of next week? Before you start complaining about people you have no control over, look at yourself a little more closely. Or be more like me, in that situation, you can listen, but remember, Mr. Mercury is heading into a retrograde pattern, and that would suggest it's not a good time to offer up "helpful, Libra-like" suggestions for others.

Scorpio: I ran an errand with a friend of mine's teenage daughter. Being a single guy at the time, I was hoping that folks would look at us, and think something like, "Wow, how'd that old fart score with the young babe? He must be rich. Or something." I always liked the "or something" part, with its implicit and implied-but not stated-imaginative possibilities. So we were walking around the mall, and I'm gloating to myself, one of those self-satisfied smiles, "Who is the man?"

But listen to teenagers some, I mean, actually listen to them, and there's a wealth of knowledge that they have access to. Their worldview, opinions, down to what music is currently popular, all of that is very important. Then there's the mannerisms. Dialogue. Listen to the speech patterns. Sadly, some of this hasn't changed much since I was a teenager. Angst seems to be a part of the world these days.

Just like my friend's teenage daughter, though, there's a certain amount of posture that includes a world-weary cynicism. Careful with that stuff. In her tender teen years, I doubt that she really understands what's she's posturing to be so cynical about. Same applies to most Scorpio charts I've looked at recently. But flip that coin one more time, and you know, some of them pesky, meddling kids? They're pretty smart-if you listen.

Sagittarius: Attention versus tension. See: there's a tremendous amount of tension building in our collective Sagittarius astrology charts. That's not always good. But then, the way I see it? What's a little tension among friends, right? Problem is, none of this seems to be resolving in a way that you like it. Or, for that matter, that I like. It's supposed to be good. It's supposed to be all right. Still,

there's that little voice of reason, the adult Sagittarius [if there really is such a mythical creature], and that voice keeps suggesting caution, aversion, and maybe, a little more attention to details that you've long since overlooked.

Get the idea? No? Okay, let's try this one, then, you're a little tense about some situation. You have no control over that situation. Let it alone. Worrying it, playing with it, tuning those thoughts over in your mind just serves to eat up valuable time that could be spent in more Sagittarius pursuits like, I don't know, a trip to the bookstore? Maybe hop on down to the pool for a dip? Maybe do something a little more useful than just sitting around on your hands, worrying about this stuff? That's the idea. Try a little action.

My bet is that no matter what direction you set out to pursue, it winds up being a dead end. But you know, every Sagittarius I've ever met can make a dead end destination into an adventure. Go have some fun, in spite of yourself. Just don't plan the outcome of the events. It's like fishing: you put the worm on the end of the hook, drop the hook in the water then sit back to enjoy the afternoon on the side of the creek. Don't worry about actually catching fish. When that happens, it's a bonus.

Capricorn: I try to live and work with planetary rhythms—in other words—I try to move in a synchronized fashion that takes in account the way the planets describe their arcs through the signs. I've been living like this, more or less successfully for the past few years. So we've got one or two planets going backwards, depending on the way you actually want to time this stuff, but in any case, I'd take this all in account.

That means there's a Comedy of Errors about to unfold in your Life of Capricorn. I've got one close, personal Capricorn friend, and she's going to be on my trailer's doorstep, weeping, before too long. But before the afternoon is up, she'll be vindictive then laughing about the silliness of the whole situation. All in good fun. Of course, when she first shows up, in tears with a long and sad tale of love gone astray and askew, it's not funny at all.

Now think about this, in the span of a few short minutes, you can have the same kind of manic behavior. No need to panic. Part of what's so important is proper perspective. Run it past a good friend, a trusted confidante, or just the friendly ear of a fishing guide. A

little outside feedback might help you see the comedy in this situation. Your Capricorn self is too close to the problem to see it in the right light.

Aquarius: I was scanning the tech news the other day. Web browsers have long since replaced any form of daily paper, although, to be honest, I have yet to figure out how to sit down to a plate of migas [Tex-Mex standard breakfast fare, second only to a breakfast taco], and read a laptop or palmtop screen while munching in a little dive restaurant [or even a decent coffee shop]. I figure the high-tech look is a little out of place. I don't make a habit of lugging a laptop around with me, and phone is just too small to really get into a news story.

The way your next few Aquarius days stack up though, you're going to find yourself someplace where you wish you had your computer with you. Or, you'll be at your computer, and wish you had a real newspaper, so you could clip out the article. Doesn't much matter, either way, you're not quite where you want to be. Or you are where you want to be, but you don't have the correct piece of equipment in hand at the moment. In this high-tech age, and with a the highest tech signs of all, Aquarius, this leaves you with a bit of conundrum.

My suggestion? Pen and a paper napkin. You'd be surprised how well that works. The only problem with this idea, though, and I'm speaking from personal experience here, is the note I made about a meeting for next week, on paper napkin, the date and time is now covered in BBQ sauce [or salsa]. I know I'm supposed to be meet someone next week. I know it's on a weekday. But the name, date and time is obscured by a big swipe of delicious sauce. So there might be a problem with idea, but it looks good on paper.

Pisces: Holidays, like the weekend coming up, are usually frustrating for me because no one wants to order up my services during a three-day weekend. Just when I could use the money the most, no one wants to have anything to do with me whatsoever. When the going gets tough, the tough go fishing. Perfect story for Pisces, especially with all the planets arrayed where they are.

See: it wasn't much fun at the lake, not many fish were biting. I was letting my buddy steer with the trolling motor, and I was just sort of dangling a lure in the water, having it follow along behind us. I got a strike. It wasn't a little bite, it was a fish of mythic

proportions. The fish was so big, he clean snapped the lure right off that light line I was using at the time. Small lake usually means smaller fish. Must've been a monster to snap the line just like that. Second time that's happened, too.

Same thing, real or imagined, is going to happen this weekend. Your Pisces self is just sitting there, not paying attention, and you get a sudden hit, a sudden strike, the tip of the Pisces pole bends under the weight of a huge fish [or whatever you're fishing for], and then it's all over. Pay attention to the details, like when someone is nibbling at your lure, so you don't lose it all in the blink of an eye. I know you can do better than me.

Aries: There's a quote, up on the wall of gallery, not far from my Austin abode, and the writing on the wall is attributed to Western crooner, Wayne Hancock, "Semper Fi brother, now get out of my way!" I'm sure your Aries self understands the feelings. That sentiment is all over your chart, what with Mr. Mars doing his thing with the backwards boogie.

"Mr. Mars, wait, isn't he associated with Aries?" Yes, yes indeed my fine Aries friend. And that's why--although I love that quote--it's not a good idea to be injudicious about using that sort of sentiment. You might go running right over one of your friends. Or you might make a friend into an enemy with too much Aries energy. Or you might take a simple situation and needlessly complicate the matter by trying too hard. Like I've suggested, it's a great quote. Save it. Use it later--when Mars is in better shape--or when you're in better condition to use his energy.

Taurus: I was in Ft. Worth. Friday night, I went to Billy Bob's, yes I was in that legendary honky-tonk of epic proportions, and I was watching a Texas singer sing his songs with his band that had a steel guitar player from Austin. No big deal. About a third of the males in attendance wore cowboy hats. No big deal, it's "the look," cowboy hat, tight jeans, belt buckles the size of a license plate, shirts with yokes and faux-pearl snaps. Yee-haw.

Don't like Western music? That's okay, don't show up at a place that has live bull riding every weekend. That was Friday night. Saturday morning, I was at the Kimball Art Museum to see a display of ancient Egypt/Grecian/abstract/impressionists/some old dead masters something-or-other. Pretty dangd impressive artwork. A little expensive, must've run \$20 for me and a friend,

but you know, it's all a part of culture. These are two separate, distinct and non-aligned events that occurred in one 24-hour period.

The only connection is geographic, i.e., both in the same town, not more than a few miles apart. Expand your Taurus horizons. With Mars doing his thing, you might find yourself in a similar situation, maybe not in Ft. Worth, but wherever you are, don't let the incongruity of the series of events rattle your feathers, or ruffle your cage. [And don't mix Martian metaphors, either.]

Gemini: It's been a warm August, around here. The trailer's "back door," such as it is, is the cat's main point of ingress and egress. Therefore, I am the doorman. With the AC unit pumping cool air into the place, and me worrying about the electricity bill when I'm home, I really don't like having to be concerned with keeping the door shut or opening just for a reluctant critter.

Like many clairvoyant pets, though, she's got this behavior that drives me nuts. She'll scratch at the door, I open it, then she'll realize that it's really hot outside, and maybe she doesn't want to go out and relieve herself in the heat of the day. I know, she's equipped with a fur coat, and that explains why she likes to stay under the bed during the hottest of the summer's days. It's not really the heat that gets to her—it's the humidity. She's originally an Arizona cat, so she can take the warmth, just not the water content in the air.

Your Gemini self is just like my cat, though, you're standing at the doorway to something big, and suddenly, you're stricken with indecision, stay or go? It's that Mars [and Moon and Uranus and Pisces thing]. The only problem with this lack of action on your part, if I were a Gemini, I'd sit there at the doorway myself, weighing the options, but the problem is, you're really irritating someone else by your lack of a decision. Stick with the Gemini approach though, even if you irritate us. You can never be too sure. In or out? Tough call. Merits further Gemini consideration—before you decide. In or out? You're working on it.

Cancer: Coastal fishing is not like the lakes I frequent. The lakes I like are predictable. There's usually a plethora of sporting and agreeable bass, some with several pierced jaws. Been caught before, and I set them free to get caught again. No need to keep them. Bass,

perch, brim, that sort of fish is easy to identify, I can tell what I've got. Looks like a fish.

But down on the coast? It's a game as you're never sure what you'll hook. Given that the Texas Gulf also hosts some pretty hefty refining facilities, not to mention offshore oil and gas leaseholds, it makes for an interesting sport. I still remember the first time I caught one of those "flat fish," when I was a mere child. I thought, for sure, I'd reeled in a filet, some sort of aberration of nature. Both eyes on one side of the fish head, the bottom side all flat and skeletal-looking. Weird thing for a kid to catch. Good eating, but it left me a little confused until Pa Wetzel explained it to me. So when you're fishing on the coast, there's always a chance of catching "Picasso fish," you know, something that looks like an abstract rendering of what a fish might look like with no [normal] sense of perspective.

Leo: One of my friends was over the other day, and we were talking about gardening, looking out onto the trailer's little patio. My friend, she's a red-head you know, she was going on and on about this and that, nattering and holding forth about how I should be doing this and that with what I grow outside. I listened for while. Some her advice made really good sense. Some of it sounded like she'd done her homework. Some of it I was a little suspicious about, but that just could be my nature.

She included advice on perennials, African Violets, wildflowers, ferns, and then, she changed the topic to other matters. I was about to take some of her advice when I remembered what I'd seen at her apartment, not long ago. She's a gorgeous woman, fit, full of life, active lifestyle, and she has a peculiar claim to make, "I can kill plastic houseplants." She can't have anything green in her house. She manages to kill off any living plant within a week. It's a skill, I suppose. So when it comes to taking advice, consider the source. Not all experts are experts. Before you try something that sounds really good, maybe double check before you do it. Not every person offering advice and assistance is really that helpful. Consider the source—maybe look at the background.

For the Week of: 9/4-10/2003

"Put in every honest hand a whip,/To lash the rascal naked through the world!"

Shakespeare's *Othello* [IV.ii.144]

Ever listen to the Allman Brother's "Whipping Post"? It's part of the great tradition of Southern Rock. And live? It just went on forever and ever – like a Grateful Dead show, or Phish, one of those long jams that never seemed to end. Mercury Retrograde can be like that, either tied to the whipping pole or going on forever and ever....

Virgo: If you just work harder, if you just try a little bit more, if you just put out more effort, you would think, in your Virgo brain, that you would get ahead. Great idea. Doesn't work. If you just put out more effort, the only results seem to be a more frantic Virgo. I know that you know that feeling. I' desperately attempting to avoid cliché's at this point in the exercise.

You don't need any high-handed, low-dealing, puffed-up verbiage to confuse you. Slow down.

You're trying to do too much, too fast, and the faster you try to get everything done, the more mistakes you keep making, and the worse this all gets. Slow it down. Tone it down. Ease up on me. Especially that last part, as I obviously didn't plan this to happen this way. Venus, Mercury, special Virgo birthdays, and, best of all, Jupiter—it's just that some of the early degree Virgo folks I know are very rapidly spinning their wheels, and like a truck stuck in the mud, the more the wheels spin, the deeper the rut gets. The more the wheels spin, the harder it is to get that [Virgo] truck unstuck.

Stop spinning your wheels. Look around. First thing I'd try to find is a big stick or board to jam under the wheels, that usually helps. A winch would be even better, and if you will just be a little more patient, a couple of good-ole-boys will be along shortly, and for the price of one six-pack of Lone Star, they'll be overjoyed to help you out.

Libra: My little Libra friend is going to pull me aside, act like she's about to whisper sweet nothings in my ear, and then she's going to ask, in very blunt, almost crude language, just what is going on. I can see this happening, probably this weekend, but maybe next week, too. Might be more than one Libra friend doing this to me, although, I only had that one girl in mind. The beauty of astrology

that it's basically a genderless game, so even the nice Libra guys should be feeling this way.

What is going on? It's simple, really, four [4] planets are in Virgo. It's the sign that precedes your wonderful sign. And all that Virgo mess? It's adding a little extra tension to your normally well-balanced and easy-going Libra attitude. Add to this conflagration that Mercury is backwards in Virgo, a sign Mr. Mercury is nominally associated with, and it all goes from bad to worse.

What can you do about it? Laugh. Laugh at the little mistakes. Laugh at my mistakes. Laugh at some of the improbable events that occur. Laughter is about all you've got combat this sort of ineptitude that you're going to discover in the next few days. Plus, laughter will help smooth over some situations. Besides, in at least one or two cases, laughing about the problem is about all you really can do.

Scorpio: Let's weigh out the equation for the next few days in Scorpio Land. ("Scorpio Land" is usually a place with many characteristics of a fun-filled amusement park.) The way this one adds up is much like my schedule. I had one opportunity to do a web site, which paid a lot less than doing an astrology reading, times being what they are, or I could sit around and wait on a reading to show up. While Plan A, tweaking up a web site, wasn't nearly as lucrative, or entertaining, as a reading, the site did have some parts on it that wiggled, and that's always interesting to me, strictly from the programming point of view.

The reading wasn't a sure thing. In fact, as Plan B's usually go, it was pretty much dead in the water. So there was a wager, right in front of me, right in front of Scorpio, too, for that matter, Plan A, which doesn't pay nearly as much as Plan B, but Plan A is a sure deal. Plan B, which is infinitely more entertaining, but a lot less likely, is a better ideal. But ideals aren't always real events. Go with Plan A for now. Doesn't pay as well, but it does pay. And no paycheck, as opposed to a paycheck that might-or might not-show up, is not very good for the Scorpio bank balance. Even though the less lucrative offer is just that, less lucrative, some money is better than no money.

Sagittarius: Yesterday? Day before? I think it was just earlier this week. I shook out the last of the coffee beans and put them in the grinder. I didn't have the top to the grinder on quite right, and

ground coffee—the last I had on hand—spewed all over the kitchen counter. It was a decidedly inauspicious start to the day. I scraped up that coffee grounds and brewed up a weak cup of coffee, nearly dropping the boiling water down on my bare legs. I jumped back, just in time. The cat took one look at me, and scurried back under the bed.

Her daddy had many words that morning, none particularly nice. The problem? My clumsy, pre-dawn, pre-coffee nature. The deal is, that one day never got better. I should have stopped, gone back to bed and called it day. While the idea is great, sleeping through the whole day in the safe confines of a trailer's bedroom, I don't know that I could really get away with that kind of action – or, to be more precise, inaction. Don't know that you can get away with it either, my fine Sagittarius brethren, but I would suggest that when the coffee doesn't make right, and the boiling water almost goes all over your bare legs, that it's a good time to back up and slow down. Maybe we would all do best to ease into the coming few days instead of running headlong into them. Don't get in all fired-up hurry.

Capricorn: I picked up a CD the other day, out of the used bin at a local store. Didn't cost much, looked kind of interesting as it's a local singer/songwriter type, you know, one guy, a guitar, lonesome vocals, heartbreak by the bucketful, teardrops, beer joints and juke boxes. Standard stuff. I was trying to write a review about it, and what I couldn't come up with was way to express the concepts. See: the music wasn't that good. Wasn't bad, just wasn't anything spectacular.

Okay on the instrumentals, passable voice, but what got me were the lyrics. First off, I could understand the songs, and secondly, the songs spoke about events, places, locations that I know. I feel strongly about those places. I feel strongly about what was being sung about. I was moved by the standard fare of the music.

The problem is, I know that this is just a localized phenomena—that music won't translate well to listeners outside of the great state of Texas. Maybe a few people will get it, but it's just one of those albums that will never be a commercial success because no one else will "get it." See: Mercury Retrograde, plus a plethora of similar influences are creating an envelope around the Capricorn stars. It might not be a local singer/songwriter who moves your soul, but something will. As much as you'd like to tell us about it, though,

stop and consider that not everyone will appreciate the depth of passion that you're feeling. It's that pesky point of reference, and not everyone understands the Capricorn reference these days. Blame Mercury.

Aquarius: Not all my family lives in Texas. One rogue uncle escaped the confines of Texas and his family – my cousins—all share a typically distorted view of Texas. Of course, I do what I can to add to the myth. Never let it be said I wouldn't take a situation and employ a little Texas hyperbole to make the facts a little more impressive. Or more interesting.

It's a family tradition, if nothing else. There's a problem, see, one of the cousins was going to come to visit. My palatial estate suddenly became a small trailer in South Austin. My luxurious over-sized truck with a double cab and dual rear wheels and a monster V-8 suddenly became a simple, older model pickup [F-350 became an F-100.] My prowess as a fishing god suddenly became a more realistic fact that I know two or three good lakes, and only a couple of spots there. See how this goes? Careful about what you brag about. Mercury and his mayhem have a way of having someone calling your bluff.

Pisces: The sign that's opposite Pisces has all the action. Lots of planets are stacked up over yonder. One of them is pretty important to Pisces. I'm not one for hanging all the problems of the world on the fact that Mercury appears to moving in a direction that is opposite the way everything else appears to be moving. But when Mercury is retrograde opposite your sign, I'll promise you'll run into one-or more-of those comical Mercury Retrograde stories.

Let me see if I can help my Pisces friends. I keep a couple of excuses, all spooled up and ready to deploy at a moment's notice, just in case I run into certain problems. Here are three of the finest, culled from archives, and you can sprinkle these bon mots in as needed, in the next few days. 1] The cat caught something last night, and I woke up with it on my bed, sorry I'm late. 2] No, I didn't get your e-mail message, want to go over that again? 3] The alternator went out in the truck, so I was busy fixing it, or I would've been here sooner. My personal favorite? 4] I was out of town so I wasn't here. (Use as needed.)

Aries: Firearm safety is a skill usually learned at a very young age around here. I'm not even going to debate the issues of whether we

should be armed or not. Don't waste any time trying to convince either pro or con on that one. That's not the point. What is the point is learning not to shoot yourself in the foot. When I thought about it, I couldn't help but develop an image of a bumbling gunfighter, probably a comic character, who's busy pulling the trigger of six-shooter before his gun has left the holster.

That's how you shoot yourself in the foot. Problem being, most Aries are prone to do something just like that during these next couple of day. Blame Mars, blame Mercury, but most important, watch yourself. Nothing is worse than seeing a normally adroit Aries, reach for the holster, pull the trigger before the gun's ever left the leather, and then plant a slug in that Aries foot.

Bad news, all the way around. I don't have an effective way to deal with this myself, given my Aries line-up in my own chart. It's not a question of whether or not I'll be chewing on my feet, it's more a question of which foot goes in my mouth first. Couple of hints, if you decide to try something different. Feet taste better with ketchup. A starter pistol fires blanks, and therefore, is a much better tool to practice with. Less likelihood of serious damage to those feet if you use blanks.

Taurus: Texas is situated between New Mexico and Louisiana. New Mexico has some of the hottest "Northern Mexico" style spiced food. Louisiana, after all, is the original home to Tabasco, and they have their own variation on the hot theme. It's no wonder, stuck between the two extremes, the high desert to the west and the low bayou lands to the east, that our local cuisine takes on its own, special flavor.

Hot. For good or for ill? Depends on where you're at with this Mercury cycle, I guess. Normally, I have an iron-clad stomach. Normally, so do you. But these aren't normal times. You might be trying some of the delicacies from the deep Southern confines of the Bayou lands, or you might be getting hooked up with some Hatch [NM] Chili Peppers. Either one, by itself, is a rare treat that shouldn't be avoided.

The thing to watch out for though is the combined effect of both kinds of food, and maybe toss a little bit of real Texas BBQ on top of that, and you're starting to see a week that might just make even the most cast iron lined stomach get a little bit upset. It's just Mercury, and it's really not that bad. Combining different culinary

elements doesn't bother someone like me, but I don't have a delicate Taurus composition this week. Your iron lining might be getting a little a rusty, and some restraint might be in order for dealing with Mercury. Or, at the very least, some got antacid.

Gemini: This one just hits you right here, doesn't it? Since you can't see me at this point, you can just guess, I'm making gesture towards my solar plexus, and you have to admit, this little Mercury induced period of relatively unstable time, especially for my fine Gemini friends, it gets you right there, doesn't it. There's a very serious issue at hand these days, and it's something you want, no – you need, to address. Problem being, given what Mercury is doing, you're wound up and talking a mile minute. "A mile a minute? That slow?"

Just about every Gemini that I know can certainly carry on much faster than just one mile for every minute of verbiage generated. Here's the problem: the rest of us would really like to get a word in, too. We share you thoughts and feelings about this issue that's so important to your Gemini self. We want to comment as well. Not letting us a get a word in edgewise is not very polite. Personally, I like listening to the ongoing barrage of Gemini words because I do find it highly entertaining. But it's not me that I'm worried about – it's you, your Gemini self, and the folks who gather around you. Let them have their say, too. Let us get a word in edgewise, just over the next few days. You'll be surprised at how that can help – if you'll just let us work in a word or two.

Cancer: A furrowed brow is called for. Not every Cancer individual will have a set of wrinkles across the forehead, but you know, it's not a bad idea to concentrate some. Even as this scope is going "live," there's an idea, a concept, a single, rather important thought process that's requiring you to focus. Hence the furrowed brow idea. My little Cancer buddy here, she's had some of those shots in her forehead that make it impossible for her to actually furrow her brow. Don't ask me about it; that's just not my realm, I understand next to nothing about cosmetic surgery. But I d understand worry.

I share in your concern. Deal is this: the harder you concentrate on that one idea, the harder you pursue that one concept, the more attention you give to the most important issue of the moment, the better it gets. I've found that trying to focus completely and utterly on just one goal is a waste of my time. But I'm not a Cancer, and I don't have Saturn doing things to me and my sign. However, some

of my more Cancer-like sentiments do understand. I feel the fervor of that furrowed brow. Now, one trick I've discovered, while I was patiently working towards one goal, was that I inadvertently found a solution to another problem. The harder you work on that one problem? I'll suggest you find another answer to a similar, although it might not be directly connected, problem that's been troublesome.

Leo: A very married friend of mine was looking for a way to cut costs. What he did was go into his wife's purse [big mistake if you ask me, but he didn't] and cut up her credit cards. No more outings to the mall, no more retail therapy. What ensued was not pleasant. What happened was like war. "Hell hath no fury like a wife deprived of her plastic." I think that's how the quote goes, but I'm not too sure.

A more moderate approach would surely have been more effective. Or would it? I'm not sure that a more even-keeled attempt to contain costs would have made the same kind of impact as shredded plastic. What eventually happened was my buddy had to get most of those cards re-issued.

But the point is, the point was made. However, as a confidante, I was privy to the fact my buddy was, indeed, "sleeping on the couch" for a few days. Did the plan work? I think so. Budgets were discussed, funds were allocated, deals were cut, and--eventually--harmony was restored. That's one heck of a way to get point across, though, and I'm not sure the discord was worth the effort. Before you shred the plastic to contain spiraling costs, run the idea over in your Leo mind. Think about it. Maybe don't go there. Consider some other options. Big statements like shredding all the plastic might result in some very unpleasant retribution. Of course, as a mighty Leo, sometimes you just have to make dramatic gestures. I'm just suggesting that you think about it, first.

For the Week of: 9/11-17/2003

"Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice/Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war;/That this foul deed shall smell above the earth/With carrion men, groaning for burial."

Shakespeare's Antony in *Julius Caesar* [Act III, scene i]

Yes, I'm afraid of the dogs of war, and yes, I'm afraid of what we have--and have not--learned from our past mistakes. Mercury, Jupiter, and the Pisces contingent of planets, though, it serves well to bring back our memories, just to make sure.

Virgo: I had dinner and drinks with a Virgo friend, a couple of days ago, just in time for her birthday. She was in the mood to get "lit up," and seeing as how she's originally from Louisiana, she can partake with the best of them. It hadn't been a spectacular week, in fact, it hadn't been a good week at all. It wasn't so much that there were big problems as there were a whole host of minor troubles.

More or less, it was the usual Mercury stuff, communications that didn't get interpreted correctly, a missed phone call, one boss who was just being a [words synonymous with difficult person], that sort of week. As she ordered up another alcoholic concoction for herself, she looked at me, and seeing as how the last one was strong enough to singe my nose hairs--and I wasn't even drinking it--she took one long, tired look at me, and suggested, "If it's not strong enough to start my car, then I'm not interested in drinking it."

Libra: I had the boys in the backroom program up a slick little piece of code that would update the webpage automatically at midnight, every Wednesday night. It only took about six or seven years to get around to doing it right, finally. A few months later, a serious little bug occurred, and the data wasn't ready for publication on the schedule. The problem with computers is that they can only work from existing data structures.

If there's no information, then nothing happens. The results are a blank page.

You're operating like that, right now, like that cool piece of code I had done, it can only make something that's scheduled to occur appear. It can't shoot something out that's not available. I've oftentimes been accused of making something out of nothing, but then, my poetic license is up-to-date. I would suggest that you need to be careful about trying to fabricate "something out of nothing" as

it's not always your style. Plus, there's the problem of not having all the facts in hand. Before you start making up stories, consider the source of your information. You might want to check a few facts before you jump into something.

Scorpio: I was listening to one of my good friends do a bit of holding forth. He was trying to humorously make a point about what's stupid and what's not, "There are certain levels of 'stupid' I won't cross—that's one of them—however, other levels of stupid, I'll just jetski right on through." Given the time, the date and the tone of the world, yes, there are certain levels of stupid my fine Scorpio friends need to be aware of. That being suggested, I'd also like to call your attention to the second half of the quote, and it's supposed to be delivered with a degree of humorous lilt in your voice, about how there are some events that just look like too much fun, or like a target you can't resist taking a potshot at.

In a situation like that, yes, it's okay to jetski right on in there and blast away, making an annoyance of yourself. Two guidelines, though, make sure you're on a fast craft, so that you can escape the clutches of the stupid gang. Also, be aware that you doing something that might not be in your Scorpio-enlightened best interest, but you know it's just too much fun not to do. "So I know it wasn't very bright, but it sure was fun at the time."

Sagittarius: Some of us aren't having a whole lot of fun. There's the onerous and overbearing weight of what has gone before, and this sort of memory has been etched in our collective subconscious for the last couple of years. Lest you think I'm addressing a specific event triggered by the date, consider that Mars is basically on a two-year cycle, and he's reminding us to look at a few things.

I'd also suggest that that goes a little deeper, and perhaps a little further back than just "two years ago" today. Look back, as a matter of fact, all the way back to the spring of 2001. That's probably the source of the problem. That's also a little farther back than you really want to dig, too.

Now, let's jump up to the present. Mars, Mercury, and several other planets are arrayed in such a fashion as to make your life a series of unrequited reminders of your previous mistakes. What's important, though, is to sort through this and figure out what you can do about one issue. If you're like me, and you arrive at a conclusion that this particular issue can't be attended to at this

point, then skip it and move on. It's one thing to remember our past indiscretions. It's something else -- altogether not healthy for Sagittarius -- to dwell in the past and let those thoughts rule our mind.

Capricorn: There's an odd kind of strength you have. One of the observations I've encountered from time to time, about Capricorn, is that they are noted for their physical stamina. It's an ability to persevere when no one else has the physical -- or emotional -- fortitude to keep moving in a forward direction. I'm calling on all my good Capricorn readers to do just that, right here, right now.

You're faced with a situation, probably at your place of employment, and that requires you to overcome an obstacle. You can shoulder your way through this, if you're just willing to show a little grit and determination. I didn't say it was going to be pretty, and I didn't want to suggest that it would be easy. But a little patience goes a long way in making most of this start to work better for you. Persistent patience pays. Use some of that stamina to get to what you're trying to get to. You'll be surprised -- even amused.

Aquarius: There are whole volumes written about the implications of retrograde planets. After doing this gig for so long, though, I've found that there's other information, not always available, and some of this is from my own observations. I still recall one [now ex] girlfriend getting really irritated with me because I wouldn't engage in a spirited argument during a time like this.

I made it through a three-week cycle of similar nature without ever taking her bait. I didn't want to debate a point because, no matter how right I was, the message would hopelessly get garbled. I wasn't interested in taking my situation with her from bad to worse. Didn't matter that I was, in fact, right. Didn't matter that I did have a better command of the facts. Didn't matter that there was a huge hole in her logic. The very idea that I wouldn't debate the point just irritated her. I was some sort of supercilious smart-aleck astrologer boyfriend who was hiding behind his planets instead of jumping into the fray. I'm reminded about a timeless piece of wisdom, handed to me via a thin book from Ma Wetzel, "There are two theories about arguing with a woman. Neither one works."

Pisces: I was fishing with one of my buddies, and he was getting a little upset because we were in a good spot, we could see the fish, and they weren't even giving us the time of day. He got upset,

moved to the back of the boat and sat down to have himself a sandwich. No problem, so far. I was running the trolling motor, almost, but not quite, drifting aimlessly all over the lake. I veered away from the creek's entrance, and I was pointed towards a tall stand of rushes along the water's edge. I did a wild cast that landed just about in the middle of nowhere, and I was reeling it back in pretty fast, not expecting anything from mistake.

Wham! I got a strike. Better yet, it was fighter. Took me several minutes to reel that one in. I had fun playing the line back and forth, my buddy, sitting in the back of the boat, grouching about the way I'd caught that one on a wild cast. "So Mr. Fishing Guide does know what he's doing. Ha." To be honest, I didn't expect that fish. To be honest, I didn't think I was heading in the right direction.

When you least expect it, events like this occur. You can any one of the three elements in this fishing tale. The guy sitting in the back of the boat, complaining. The guy aimlessly running the trolling motor, with a degree of unplanned luck. The poor fish who put up a good fight -- I don't think she was expecting a fishing lure where she was. Now, if you could pick which one you wanted to be, what would it be?

Aries: I was in El Paso not too long ago. It's place that I like even though it doesn't always return the same favor and degree of affection. I was brushing up on my pidgin Spanish, such as it is, and I was exhausted from working. I let slip a comment that my hostess seized at the moment, and just wouldn't let go of. The waiter had asked if everything was okay with our meals. I answered, a little worn out from too much work, "Toro Bien."

I'll never hear the end of that one slip of my tongue. "The bull is good!" In fact, that comment will probably haunt me the rest of my born days, and I was just trying to be nice, and I was trying to be accommodating, making a valiant-if somewhat vain-attempt to answer in the language of the place.

Sometimes, you try really hard to be nice, and sometimes, no matter how hard you try, folks just spend an inordinate amount of time making fun of you. From looking at the charts for the next couple of days, you appreciate what I'm talking about here, one little slip--an honest mistake--and they never seem to let go of it. Doesn't mean that your Aries self has to hold onto it--whatever "it" is--as well.

Taurus: I kept running into a Taurus archetype, and I couldn't shake it. Some of this data goes back 20 years or thereabouts. Chinese Food. What's Chinese food got to do with your outlook for the next week? Maybe nothing. Maybe a lot. There's that familiar joke about being hungry half an hour later, but that's not what I was looking at, not directly, anyway. Seems like there's more there. Something else. Perhaps it's a deeper, more involved metaphor than a cursory glance reveals.

There's something exotic, something rather appealing about some cuisine that has its roots in another part of the world. It's hard to understand that a whole culture can be wrapped up in a single bowl of noodles, but it's worth a try. The unusual side of life is calling. In fact, this is like persistent message that you've been, in all Taurus integrity, avoiding for the last (however long) it's been. What? Two-three weeks? Yes, there's a yearning that's been bugging you and I suggest you scratch that itch. It might not be a desire for Chinese Noodles, but it could be something. Similar. Some familiar foodstuffs, or maybe, it's a particular person you want to get in contact with again. Go ahead, give it a try. See what happens.

Gemini: Under my bed in the trailer, there's a cardboard box full of old computer diskettes. It's really just dead media because some of those things are 400K 3.5 inch "floppies" which was a misnomer because they did have a solid plastic exterior, giving those diskettes the illusion of permanency. I had to dig out an old laptop to find a disk drive that would read those diskettes. I'm not sure what I was looking for, I just figured there was something in there because I've saved those things for well over a decade now.

The beauty of digital media is that it just doesn't go away that fast, and it's all easy to store. The problem with digital anything is the rate at which we upgrade, it's sometimes not worth the effort. One set of the disks contains a rudimentary graphics program that was quite advanced for its time. I held onto those disks for purely sentimental reasons. It's not like a pair of diskettes take up that much room. Why delve into sentimental old digital memories, archives and such?

Is this a worthwhile use of good Gemini time? Yes. There's something in your own digital archives, maybe it's in paper notes, more likely though, it's in the electronic form, and buried deep in there is something you need to go back over. Mercury, Mars, even

Uranus triggers this trip down memory lane. See what you can discover. It's not all bad.

Cancer: I've been getting a little weird lately as I haven't had enough time to go fishing. I'm not talking about any kind of a metaphorical fishing, I mean, I haven't had a chance to get my poles out and toss a few plastic worms in the water. I miss that activity. It's remarkably rejuvenating for me. There's something about the action, and all its concomitant details, the going to bed at an unreasonably early hour, the waking up in the predawn splendor, the "Oh-dark-thirty" call to get in the boat, the way the sun breaks across the lake, the smell of the lagoon around the dock with its fishy aroma, and the camaraderie, plus, the gentle chiding I always get.

Can't do a thing about the planets, but I can do something about fishing. Like, instead of moaning about the way I can't get any time off, I can just call in sick--wait, I'm the boss here--I can just take a little extra time and do what I want to do. You might not be the boss, although I think you should be, and you might not be able to just drop everything and do exactly what you want to do. That doesn't mean you have to put everything on hold, though. Look at rearranging your schedule some to accommodate some of the activities that you enjoy.

Leo: My CD player just shifted gears, or rather, it shifted disks. I went from some fancy European high-tech dance music that had no instruments that I would recognize. Next up was a local "cowboy" singer/songwriter, moaning about that lonesome highway. Doesn't phase me a bit, although, some of the yodeling seems to intrigue the cat.

Such a shift is usually pretty difficult for a gentle Leo to absorb in the short span of time it takes for one of these players to shuffle its disks. The planets are in evil disarray. That's the bad news. It hits other signs worse than you. That's the good news. But you're also going to be running into those shifts like my CD player sometimes dishes up. Get used to it. There are still some rather abrupt shifts coming, and some of it, if you take in good Leo stride, will be acceptable. Mostly, anyway, as the cat might howl some at the shift.

For the Week of: 9/18-24/2003

"These trees shall be my books"

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* [III.ii.5]

Mercury and Mars are slowing their headlong race into obscurity. (Editorial note: check the listing for exact dates and times.)

Virgo: Mercury is no longer backwards. Well, he is, but just a little bit longer. And it's the last of the Virgo birthdays, too. Then everything takes a little vacation of some sort. Don't have a vacation planned? Be ready for animpromptu vacation, then. Might just be a quick jaunt someplace, but that short trip promises to be good. I'd look for it next week, but then, with Mercury and the recent series of events, you never can tell.

One famous astrologer was looking at my chart at a particular time, and that guy was suggesting that I had been traveling a lot. "Foreign travel is indicated," and it's a safe, basic prediction, especially for Sagittarius like me. However, it was also about a time when I was confined to my immediate environment, and the furthest I had traveled was less than a mile. But if every book is a voyage, then I'd been all over the place. Starting next week, my fine Virgo friend, you are going places. Could be real, could be imaginary, but you're going to be traveling. Let the Mercury problems fade away.

Libra: I was idly loitering near a certain corner downtown. I was waiting on a bus, a ride, or a friend. Or I was paused between destinations, I don't recall. In any case, it was heavy [for Austin] morning traffic. I watched as a delivery truck stopped at one building's garage entrance, the passenger hopped out, trotted behind the truck, and held up his hands to stop traffic so that the truck could back up and make a delivery. Commerce was occurring, right before my eyes. Might've been necessary office supplies, or water, or new office furniture, I'm not sure which.

One driver, in a shiny new SUV got upset at the delay, backed up a little, and shot around the edge of the delivery vehicle, almost clipping the guy holding up the traffic. As that one SUV bolted forward, tires squealing, at least one other driver was just shaking her head at the action. Half a block away, that SUV's forward momentum was stopped by a traffic light. The driver pounded on the steering wheel for a moment or two.

If you're going to get in an all fired up Libra hurry, you're going to wind up looking like that one driver. The delivery truck seemed to back up in time with the red light, and at the same moment, the rest of the cars surged forward smoothly, their way not blocked by any obstacle, be it delivery truck or red light. Elapsed time? Two minutes, maybe less. You can pull a stunt like that one driver, but you're only going to get caught down the road. Take it easy, a two-minute delay out of your day won't sink anything.

Scorpio: Hanging around with my assorted friends, cohorts and allies, I get to hear some strange conversations. Plus, I tend to ask questions, whenever I can. We were waiting to go into a show, had VIP passes handed to us by the promoter, because of my buddy, and we were chatting up the security guy. Or one of them, anyway. You know the outfit, the black T-shirt that says, "Security," a radio hooked to the waist, and microphone draped over the left shoulder? Rave crowds are one kind of problem, country singers have their own set of difficulties, and hard rock, well, that one security guy was never working a "heavy" show again.

I asked what was the worst, for security, and he replied, "Willie Nelson." That didn't make any sense, until the security guy went on to explain, "Every third person in line, I mean, One out of three, do the math on that, 33%, insisted that they were friends of Willie's. Close, personal friends. 'Sure,' I would tell them, 'that's why your name isn't on the guest list.' By those standards, I'm a friend of Willie, too. It was the worst."

Mr. (saint) "Peace Love and Country Music" was the biggest headache for security? I kind of liked that. It wasn't what I was expecting. Coming up, after this weekend, you're going to get answer that you're not expecting. As the expression, goes, "deal with it." It's that simple. You can get upset, you can get all bent because someone is taking St. Willie's name in vain, or you can be like me, slightly bemused at the answer—even though it's not what you're expecting.

Sagittarius: "I drove a cab in NYC. Ain't half as a bad as Houston or Dallas. Or Austin. Especially Austin." Austin's local traffic problems are epic in nature. Legendary. As is our native Texan distaste for public transportation. But never mind that part now. Let's look at the astrological traffic in your chart. It's not good. There's a lot of major congestion in the flyover, the traditional downtown routes

are plugged up, and the feeder routes are experiencing some delay, too.

Doesn't matter if your Sagittarius self is in Austin, Houston, Dallas, or even NYC, the astrological scene isn't all that pretty. It's one delay right after another. "But Mercury is going out of Retrograde, right? C'mon, it's just got to be better than that!" It should, but it isn't. I can make up sweet little stories about fishing, and the way the lake looks so calm, at first light, but that's not what you're heading into.

Traffic is bad. There are some unexpected delays. Cope. "Yeah, that's easy for you to say, Mr. Smart Aleck Fishing Guide, cope with this." Imagine the gesture that I get from? Good. It's okay to be upset with me, I can take it, because I'm experiencing the very same delays. I came up with one way to work around the delays caused by the traffic. It's a bumper sticker I'll be selling soon, I hope: "My other car is a pair of boots."

Capricorn: I know your frustration at this very moment. I was posting a terse, angry web log entry, something about clients who don't pay on time, and I hit the "send" button. At that one instant, the planets were aligned in such a way as to really mess with my software. I kept stabbing at the button with my mouse, getting to the point that I wanted to hurl the computer across the room, just so I could hear that satisfying--and ultimately destructive--crash. It's okay to feel that way.

Actually picking up the machine and throwing it into the trailer's wall? That action has no redeeming value. Besides, a little tin can like this? It'd leave an unsightly dent on the outside, and prying minds in the adjoining trailers would want to know what happened. Then, if I didn't tell them anything, the tongues would really wag, and there's even more trouble. Nature abhors a vacuum and there's no vacuum like unaccounted dent. Imagine, this whole line of thought got started when a stupid web log entry wouldn't post because I was frustrated by a simple software glitch that was inspired by a planetary influence that caused an undue amount of stress to build resulting in this long and almost senseless entry.

But is it so senseless? Maybe not. You can see that I can certainly feel your level of frustration. You can also see that I was smart enough not to take that first course of action. No matter how

satisfying it might have been, think before you start hurling objects.

Aquarius: Charity musical events are a big deal around here. Seems like there's another one, each week, with some big name headliner, showing support for some cause. I wonder if anyone was really aware of all the trees that died so the "save the trees" group could get the word out about their particular cause? The irony is lost on some.

Or, like the other night, I was guest at another celebrity concert, and because I really did want to see one of the opening acts, I was treated by one of clients to a free ticket. I think the price was a \$100, and after everyone got paid off, I was wondering just how much of that money made it to the benefit cause. Who knows? Anyway, the funniest thing I saw that night wasn't about the charity event itself, outside, before the show, my friend was smoking a cigarette, I was catching the tail end of cigar, and we were fondling our "all access" laminates," idly chatting up the promoter.

A few yards in front of us, a lady was saying, "Tickets? Tickets? Want tickets?" How bad is that? Scalping tickets at a charity event? Offended my sense of justice, and I muttered a comment. I think my accomplice that evening was Aquarius, I don't recall. However, given the way the planets are now, I wouldn't be surprised to see an Aquarius jump right up in that scalper's face, and say something rather untoward about the very idea of scalping tickets at a charity event. The nerve. The audacity. While I agree with the idea, and while I most certainly agree with the morality of the situation, sometimes, it's best to let nature and the Universe take its course. Those tickets didn't sell. And I didn't have to break up a fight, either.

Pisces: Hill's Cafe is just down on Congress Avenue. Sort of a famous place. I was bemused that they try and trace their roots to the Goodnight-Loving ranch empire. Which, as near as I can tell, is a bit of stretch. But that just could be me, and in a Texas dining establishment, especially in South Austin, a few liberties are allowed. Beef, pork and grease are the principle ingredients in almost every one of their justifiably famous platters of food.

Good stuff—for a steak lover like myself. Or even for a connoisseur of barbecue. Either way, it's a safe bet you'll be pleased. What

catches my eye, though, every time, is a certain menu item. Hill's "Diet Plate," which consists of a half rack of smoked chicken ribs, a slice of tomato & glass of water with a lime squeeze. Price? \$39.95. Sort of sets the tone, now doesn't it? Keep that in mind, when you wander yourself into a steak house in South Austin [or San Angelo, or Ft. Worth] and wonder why there's no vegetarian food. Some days, some weeks, you just have to roll your eyes at what's going on. You know, just take it all with a grain of salt. Whether it's the outrageous stories, or it's the menu items that seem a little out of place, you just need to adjust your Pisces thinking to adapt to the tales. Roll your beautiful Pisces eyes at this one. Sometimes, there's just not a lot else that you can do. Or order that Hill's Cafe diet plate.

Aries: When building a good fire in the old barbecue pit, here's something to remember, stack all the charcoal briquettes up in one place, get them going good and strong, and wait. Wait until there's a nice, lovely gray ash covering all those little pieces of charcoal. Wait until the fire pit's warmed up enough to cook the meat. Wait. Then again, when you're starting the fire, unless your name really is Bubba, or some of your friends refer to you as "Bubba the BBQ gawd," then I don't suggest that you use the "half gallon of gasoline" on the briquettes theory for igniting those coals.

It's really quite simple. There's not a lot of a hidden message here, go easy with the flame. Or the flammable substances. Take it easy and don't overdo it. Bubba has long since learned to use a little less than a gallon of lighter fluid ever since that unfortunate incident—he didn't have eyelashes or an eyebrow for several weeks afterwards. Don't let that happen to you, too.

Taurus: I came home the other evening, feeling a little despondent, no doubt, due to the way the planets were affecting the Taurus stuff in my chart. I'd stopped off for some comfort food, and in the process of eating a little supper, I'd managed to drip some ranch dressing on my shirt. Not that you could tell, but it was there. Then, a little later in the meal, I ran out of napkins, and that resulted in a large smudge of BBQ sauce on the same shirt. I was grumbling to myself, worried that I looked like some kind of a slob, but I refused to believe that there's just no silver lining to my messy shirt.

Or the fact that I had just consumed some rather tasty pork ribs that required no sauce at all, but those ribs did leave a telltale hint of "mesquite grilled" essence [under my fingernails] to add to my

already aromatic shirt. I looked like, smelled like, some kind of a portable feast, I guess. However, in the final analysis, what I was doing was wearing my very essence of being a Texas native with pride.

Instead of considering myself a sloppy eater, I started thinking along the lines of me being a true representative of my state, and how I was embodying the all the necessary elements to be a good ambassador of Texas cuisine. Instead of regarding myself as a slob—which might be more true—I started looking at myself as an ambassador of good BBQ with all the trimmings. Lord knows, I was wearing enough of the trimmings for this to work. It's all in how you look at what happens.

Gemini: I stopped by a downtown coffee shop the other afternoon, it was late in the day, and I really needed a quick shot of caffeine to make it through the arduous evening that lay ahead of me. While I was there, I was quietly observing humankind, specifically, a local noted playwright. He's known for his sophistication, his way with words, and his ability to properly sketch out the condition of mankind with a dry wit.

He settled in with a cup a coffee, folded over the newspaper in his hand and I thought I was about to do some serious sociological studies, tracking the wild wordsmith in native environs. The guy started reading the comics. I'm not making this up. He was doing just what I would be doing, if I weren't busy observing local peerage of estimable value. So much for my attempt at anthropological studies. So that's where the great ideas all come from. The funny papers.

Gemini: you need to quit being so serious. Someone might figure out just where you're getting all your ideas from, and that's okay. A little humor helps a lot with the serious tone of the times.

Cancer: You have to stop and think about this stuff from time to time. I'm serious, if only for a minute. The planets, and their inherent representative energies, what do they all mean? What's the big question? In fact, what's the big question in your Life of Cancer? Before you ask me, before you ask that big question, think about what kind of an answer you're expecting. Think about what you're hoping to hear. Then consider that Mercury was-is-retrograde.

And Mr. Mercury is confusing certain issues. Plus Mr. Mars is doing his little backwards dance, too, and that's making folks none too happy. It all has to do with expectations as opposed to what's really there. It's easy to gather up some information and draw a hasty conclusion. It's all about expectations, too. What is it that you really want to hear? If you stop and think about it, though, give that question some reasoned, serious considerations, along a logical path, you'll find that you're not seeing the point, the question, clearly. Mars might continue to confuse the issue, but your thinking about the problem, that one big question, will clear up after the weekend.

Leo: I was picking up a tall cup of coffee the other morning, on my way someplace important. One of the other patrons was a tall lad, tan, muscular arms dangling from his fashionably sleeveless shirt, and on his left arm was a tattoo. Symbolism is important, and that one tat was a strange amalgam of various parts. There was the outline of the State of Texas, with a Texas flag rendered within the outlines. Then, curling around the bottom of the Texas logo, there was a dragon. East meets West.

Two disparate images wrapped into a single image. Judging from his long locks, I'd guess that there was a portion of Leo in his chart. I didn't get a chance to ask about the symbolism, as we were both hurrying off to other appointments. But that image stuck with me, sort of like combining two things that don't normally fit together, and finding that the two images work. I don't know what the real story was, but I'm sure I could easily make up a few tales to go with that ink and art. Be a little more observant of the world around you. You might get a mixed message like I did. Better yet, it might have some deep, symbolic meaning for you. Combining two items that don't normally fit together can yield good results, in the Leo world.

For the Week of: 9/25-10/1/2003

"I be waspish, best beware of my sting."

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* [II.i.210]

I just saw a rather engaging performance of *Taming of the Shrew*, in London's Shakespeare's Globe. What made it it even funnier, despite some of the frankly sexist leanings of the play, was the fact that the entire cast was female—one of those touches that just adds another layer of irony. Mars is headed into a more orderly direction, but it might take a few extra days to let him catch up with the rest of us. Between Mercury and Mars, it's a little like watching an all-female cast doing a play like *Taming of the Shrew*.

Show your support for Fishing Guide to the Stars – live at the Body Mind Soul Expo in Austin, this weekend.

Libra: Fishing lures—especially name brand bass lure—come packaged with an informational flyer. One of my favorite brands has a set of instructions on how to attach the enclosed lure to the end of some monofilament line. New Age, high-tech fishing line requires different knots than the regular stuff. It's not the way I learned to attach a lure. Now, sitting in the prow of bass boat, hands shaking from a little too much coffee, and maybe the morning chill, I've never been able to figure out how that one knot in the pictures works. There's a little set of arrows, pointing this was and that, loop the line over the lure this, and then pull the end through that hoop, and so on.

Looks good on paper, doesn't work, not for me, in the real world. I have a modified version, though, that does work pretty well. I set out to follow the instructions, then something happens. Maybe my hands are shaking, maybe I miss a step, but whatever I wind up with, never the same thing twice, it seems to work pretty well, even if I do say so myself. "Kramer's Knot again?" Right—works for me. It will also work for my Libra friends, during this next couple of days. Make an effort, a sincere effort, to follow the instruction printed in the manual. If you accidentally deviate from the instructions, and even if that accident is a little odd, it might just work as well, if not better. Make an effort, though, to follow those instructions, first.

Scorpio: "Ah, shoot," I muttered to myself when I finally got around to detailed analysis of the week's Scorpio astrology chart. I didn't like what I saw. It's not big stuff—it's just little events, occurrences and problematic problems. That's not it either, not exactly, but

that's a lot closer. It's a series of "life lessons," and frankly, I hate being the one to remind you of this. I was fishing, last weekend? Might have been two or three weeks ago. It's not exactly the best time to fish. But then, it's not the worst, either. Weather's suitable, the fish are less agreeable. By midmorning, it was obvious that we weren't going to catch anything of merit. Not even some of the fish that were close to memorable.

My buddy caught one tiny fish. I reached for the camera, and he was busy unhooking the baby bass, "Don't even think about taking a picture," he was saying, "that's not really a fish, more like bait." So what were we doing out there, the rest of the afternoon? "Practicing casting," was his response. This is more a function of Mars than any other symbolism in your chart, and the idea that there's a life lesson going on is important. In your Scorpio heart, though, you should know that there is some pleasure to be gained from an otherwise futile exercise—consider that you're doing the same thing we were doing that fine fall morning, practicing your casting. Or whatever it is that Mars is serving up.

Sagittarius: I was discussing various merits of Bass Fishing versus going out on boat into the Gulf Mexico, or even just tossing a line off one of the piers, that dot our coast. Which one is better? Why? When I'm hunting bass, it's a known target, a fighting fish with a degree of response, and the knowledgeable bass fisher person knows exactly what to look for. What bait usually works, what lures, that sort of knowledge.

"On no, sea fishing is better. You never know what's going to come up on the end of your line. Much more fun!" Tired analogy time, "if life is like a box chocolates, then...." then the Sagittarius life at this point is like sea fishing. Or a box of chocolates. All depends on what you're looking for, but there's still a little bit of this unusual energy that's just floating around, and making life more and more interesting. It's true, on one lake, I've caught some decent-sized brim and perch on bass lures. But that's unusual, not the norm. Be willing to embrace the different events that are approaching, you never know what will be on the end of that Sagittarius line.

Capricorn: I was dining out with my favorite Capricorn the other evening. She always drags me around to fancy places where shoes and shirts are required, not just optional attire. I ordered up something from the "special" menu, a dish called "gleaming mussels." I don't know exactly what it was supposed to be. Near as

I can tell, it's some of sort of French or European dish that's exotic, tasty and difficult to prepare.

To my untutored eye, though, it looked like freshwater mussels, boiled up and served with a particular "queso" covering. I'm sure there was a hint of delicate and fine spices, but I couldn't stop thinking that I was being treated to shellfish out of the nearby river bottom, covered in Velveeta. Never mind this was allegedly some kind of fancy Italian dish, I couldn't help but giggle at the appearance. Although I doubt you'll be treating a Sagittarius astrologer to dinner one night this week, you are bound, at one point, to be face to face with a similar situation. Your companion, perhaps even dining companion, is going to find something that your Capricorn self perceives as elegant, that other [non-Capricorn person] is going to miss the elegance and find it a little silly. You can be upset, but if you just try and see what it looks like from our eyes, you'll notice that there's some humor to found.

Aquarius: I was out dining on Tex-Mex cuisine with a friend the other evening. With an Aquarius friend, no less, and she was moaning about the way Mars [now retrograde] was treating her and her love life. "Don't you want a kid?" she was asking me. At a table, just inside the patio's doors, there was a pair of couples, my guess is that they were married, and those couples had, in turn, a couple of children with them. One was a baby in a carrier, another was tyke about 2 years old. Which, I might point out, probably coincides with a particular Mars transit.

So there we were, sitting the cool of evening, munching on chips, and listening to the distant echo of the kitchen, making our dinner. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, that little tyke started hammering on the window pane of the patio door with his little fist. Quite interrupted our moment of reverie. Spooked my Aquarius friend a little. Me? I always enjoy a display of Martian energy, especially when it comes from someone who I'm not responsible for. I'll admit, it was a little disconcerting to see the child banging on the glass portion of the window, but a perspicacious mom just reached around and picked the toddler up, seemingly without losing a beat in her conversation. Seasoned pro, that mom. "If I ever say I want a kid again, remind me about that?" the Aquarius asked me, and ordered herself a shot tequila.

Pisces: A little bit of structure is a good thing. A little bit of having some sort of schedule to keep, like showing up for work at a set

time, is a good idea. The Pisces life can use a little structure. You're going to be surprised how easy it is to integrate this into your life. Alarm clocks. Schedules. Appointments. Tasks that must be accomplished by a specified time. All of that.

To the average Pisces, wait, that doesn't work because no Pisces is average, but to the demographic I employ from time to time, that Pisces Sun in the middle of the sign of Pisces, a little structure will lend itself towards building a better future for yourself. It could be a big encounter that leads to rapid job improvement. It could be something as simple as merely showing for work a few minutes earlier than the appointed time. Could be a lot of things. I'm also looking at Mars, standing right at the entrance to Pisces, slowly arcing backwards, and I'm thinking that some folks have some unreasonable expectations of your Pisces self. Surprise them--surprise me. Show up a little early.

Aries: There's this one Aries client, here in town, and I caught a ride with her out someplace. I don't recall, but what happened was just as funny as could be, to me. She was in the fast lane on the interstate, cruising along, doing the "hurry up and get there" thing, when she got off on a rant about some particular topic. She started talking with one hand, gesturing and gesticulating, while keeping one hand firmly on the steering wheel. But as she got off on her rant about whatever, she started to slow down.

The rant was overtaking her mental processes, diverting attention from driving to whatever the rant was about. Probably males, males undeserving of her attention, if I recall rightly. But don't hold me to the topic, as I'm not sure. Her car stayed on its path, straight and true, it's just that she was in the fast lane, and her speed was slowing down. About the time she dropped to 40 MPH in the fast lane, I said something about the speed. Or lack thereof. "I was wondering why those cars were coming up so fast behind me," she observed. She was a sterling example of what to do with the whole Libra - Mars - Mercury - Pisces -Retrograde events occurring. Slow it down. Concentrate on one topic at a time. Don't let errant astrologers divert you from what you're supposed to be doing. "And another thing...."

Taurus: Times are just tough. What I was going to try to do was tease you with a joke, but my obvious lack of humor and good tastes failed. So what you've got in your chart, right now, is a strange angle from the lucky star that would suggest that you could think

of something pointedly different, as a possible solution to a nagging problem. There's an easy way around some problem, but in true Taurus form, you've just been sitting on that problem, instead of exercising your brain. Because backwards Mars and awkward Uranus are so close to each other, even though they are in different signs, the two offer a chance to shed some light on this unusual way of looking at the situation you have on your Taurus hands.

When I'm trying to think of something in a different way, I've tried a number of useful tools. I've sat at the computer with a cowboy hat on, I've tried wearing sunglasses, on occasion, I used to try and balance the cat on my lap. Didn't work, as she didn't take to my bare lap as a suitable perch for her considerable girth. But it was a nice try. While I'm fooling around with these items, or the cat, I get a chance to come up with a different way of looking at a problem. Give it a spin, you'll be surprised how well your Taurus brain can work, even under these difficult astrological conditions.

Gemini: have I told you this one before? I'm not sure. I can't recall. Anyway, when I moved into a trailer in South Austin's Shady Acres Trailer Park [and RV campground], I found that I had too much stuff. Which reminds me of a Delbert McClinton song, but never mind that musical allusion right now. Just like living in a trailer that might, at best, have two or three hundred square feet of usable living space, your Gemini life is looking at tossing a few things out.

Maybe it's not so you can live in a trailer about the size of a kitchen matchbox. But still. You do have a few items that you've been toting around with you, and now's a good time to consider what it is that you want to shed. Extra baggage? Sure, you can get rid of that. Books you've been meaning to read, but will probably never get around to? Let them find a good home. Clothing you have no hope of ever wearing? Better think twice, fashion being what it is, that clothing might come back around and be cool again one day. The trick these days is to let you rule your stuff, don't let your stuff be in charge. If the stuff is in charge, you might miss a chance to live in a fabulous, slightly used trailer in South Austin.

Cancer: I was looking at a pair of influences in your Cancer chart. One influence, perhaps the strongest, is both restricting and rewarding at the same time: Saturn. The other one, more long the lines of Mars and Mercury, is less restricting, but also tends to be less fulfilling in the long term. Let's do a "blue sky," okay? You have this long-term project you've been working on, and it's going to

require some more effort on your part in order to bring this to a successful conclusion. Got that? This is a the part of the project that requires you to work alone, long hours, low pay, not much immediate gratification. "Ah, c'mon, man, it's been like that for weeks now!" you holler at me.

I'll promise success if you're willing to work. That's the good part. Now here's the trouble: distractions. Every conceivable distraction is going to pop up and demand your Cancer attention. Ain't nothing I can do about that. But there is something you can do--keep your head down. Keep working on it. I was just cruising along the web--something you should not be doing--and I found an interesting article about how two old-style farmers were still making molasses the old fashioned way, turning a press, burlap filter, wood-fired boiling pot, and so forth. They used a tractor to turn the press's wheel, these days. "Old horse balked, so we just drive around in a circle with the tractor." Just because your Cancer horse doesn't want to do the job, don't let that distract you from doing what you've got to do. And no, I can't find the source of that story anymore.

Leo: Considering the length of my scopes as compared to others, and considering the amount of anguish my editors are put through, I really should shorten some of this material. Stick more to the point. Get the idea across in fewer words. Not going to happen, as I'm a long-winded, verbally-oriented Sagittarius-astrologer. Besides, when the question of limiting the words in a particular horoscope comes up, the question in particular is, "Just which scope? Not mine!" However, there's always the question of the length. Or word count. Or, in old-fashioned newspaper terms, column inches.

Must be my Leo side that's doing all the talking these days, as I got another one of those terse notes from the editing department, "More matter with less art," [actually, it's from Hamlet, I.ii or II.ii, I can't recall offhand]. But just like Gertrude, the Leo fans are asking for the same thing. More substance, less packaging. More content, but fewer words. I'd shoot for that, if I could.

Virgo: I remember one Virgo, she kept trying to tell me that she didn't worry about details, not like a typical Virgo, or not like the astrological signature would suggest. "I'm not like that all, am I? Of course I don't worry about details all the time, do I?" The questions, as you can imagine, went on from there. It wasn't always a pretty sight, worrying about not worrying about the details. Eventually

the argument reduces to absurdity, "I just don't fit that mold at all, now do I?" Could be anyone of a number of different Virgo folks that I know, worrying about not worrying about the appearance of not being too critical. Get that?

Patience, and a little less worry is a good idea these days. Mars is sitting comfortably in position that's inclined to make you ask very Virgo-like questions. Jupiter, a complete opposite from Mars, is likely to make the Virgo rather an extreme in the pursuit of certain pleasure these days. Looking at the situation, though, a little bit better judgment is called for. I'd consider running your ideas past someone with no Virgo in their charts what-so-ever before taking that big leap. It never hurts to get an unbiased opinion before jumping off on some new, exuberant adventure.

For the Week of: 10/2-8/2003

"A goodly apple at the heart./O what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* [I.iii.98]

Mars has started a long -- forward -- trek, all the way through Pisces. Again.

Show your support for Fishing Guide to the Stars -- live in El Paso, last weekend.

Libra: Happy Birthday, Libra dear. Weird weekend ahead. No other way to explain it. Things may not be absolutely tip-top in your world, but then again, they've been much worse, and this is all starting to get a bit better. Maybe not great, but at least a little bit of improvement. And then, on into next week? Events really start to take a turn for the better. Yes? Yes. Simply put. It's that easy. Look for the shining moment out of the mess.

I'll promise, being your birthday time and all, that there is just such a brilliant moment or two, in the next couple of days. There's an ebullient spirit that might be--or might not be--shared. Use it. Enjoy it. Not everyone is floating along like you are. At least one particular Libra is going to send me a hasty note, within moments of reading this, and assure me I've got it all wrong. Don't be that one Libra. Looking at this as a whole, there's much more good than ill. The good times will more than balance out the hard times.

Scorpio: Big hint: it's about everyone else but you, my fine little Scorpio friend. It's not about what's up with you, it's not about what's going on in your life. It's not about anything that has to do with you. The focus is elsewhere. As in, "any place but here." You can fight, struggle, argue loudly with me, and all those other people, or you can just sit back and relax.

There's a restaurant with a nice patio, not far from Shady Acres, and that patio provides some of the finest entertainment in the world. The last time I visited, though, I was toting a cup of Jo's coffee--substantially better than the restaurant's own brew--and the new staff members didn't recognize me. Or my cup of coffee. Particular to Texas alcoholic legal code, you're not supposed to bring liquor onto the premises of place that serves liquor.

Your Scorpio self knows that I only had non-alcoholic cappuccino in that cup. A particularly good cup of coffee, I might add. But the new

staff was just trying to obey the rules as set forth by the management. So either the coffee had to go, or I couldn't sit and enjoy the lovely evening. I gulped down most of the coffee and tossed the cup into the trash. I could've fought the issue, and I might've won. But sometimes, even when I'm right—or when you're right—it's just easier to acquiesce to their demands. I spent the rest of the evening, like you should spend the next couple of days, watching the variety of street life troll by the patio. Good entertainment, although, it would've been better if I'd been allowed my favorite brand of beverage. Can't have everything.

Capricorn: There's a brilliant window of opportunity, and the problem being, just when does this particular window open? It's going to happen in the next couple of days. Might be a long time, that window might be open for almost a week. Or it could be one of those narrow windows of time, just a few moments before the options are no longer available.

Looking at the Capricorn chart, I kept thinking about a certain lake, one I don't fish at too often, and how there's a special portion of that lake, a cove along the eastern edge of the lake. That spot is full of stumps, aquatic vegetation, all sorts of stuff that pokes up through the surface of the water. Early mornings, with a heavy mist, it looks spooky. There's an eerie calm that pervades the scene when the big motor shuts off.

After a couple of casts, the only noise usually comes from a breakfast in bag, as the paper rustles from the wrapper around the "egg-looking product combined with a ham group thing topped by a cheese product stuffed between two pieces of bread material" my fishing buddy is munching on. Such noise doesn't disturb the quiet calm of the scene. Worst thing that can happen? Get a fish. Nothing ruins a quiet morning's reverie than to have a large-mouth bass take some bait. Now, is that a timely interruption? Or is it a rude interruption? Or, could it be that window of opportunity, just beginning to open?

Sagittarius: I was feeling really good the other afternoon. I mean, really good. Life is rolling along just fine. Computer's working fine now, the mail is getting delivered, everyone is happy, and I was just sure that I was on top of the world, in fact, I was sure I was in top form. One editor shattered that illusion of "everything is okay in my world" rather quickly. I got some work back—my work—that was

"red-lined." Heavily red-lined. Like, it was almost, not quite, but almost to the point that I just needed to start all over.

At least I typed the names of the signs right, and I got those in the correct order. It was a pretty disheartening break. I was sure that was mighty good stuff. "Nice typing paper, good-looking typeface, now if you can just do something about the order and consistency of the wording itself, we'll have this licked." Yeah, "we'll" have what licked? Seems like what I should've been doing was licking [maybe kissing] a portion of that editor's anatomy.

Only, like most Sagittarius types, I'm no good at that. You're rolling along, just sure you're in top form, and along comes some person destined to take your good attitude and shoot you down. Look on the bright side, you can learn to cuss in an artful way. That's what I did. Then I took my shirt off, sat down at the keyboard, and tended to the corrections. Sometimes, those editor types really are smart. I didn't realize it, but there were a few holes in the logic with that material I'd just turned in. Listen to the criticisms. Don't take them to heart, but it never hurts to listen to another point of view.

Aquarius: Big city traffic is always amusing, as there's some kind of hydraulic theory that would actually correctly address just how cars ebb and flow in the lanes of traffic. I was running along, coming into Dallas from Ft. Worth, along the old turnpike [Interstate 30]. The temporary construction sign said, "Right Two Lanes Closed." Which means, as Dallas drivers are wont to do, most vehicles started to merge to the right. I slipped over into the left lane, slowed to a crawl, and courteously let other drivers cut in front of me.

What amazed me, and why I thought about this incident, was that Dallas drivers on the turnpike that morning? They intentionally avoided the obvious signage that suggested the right lanes were closed. They would squeal their tires, merge over, only to discover that the right lanes weren't going anyplace none too quickly, then try and cut back, cussing and banging on their steering wheels.

There will always be a delay with traffic in Dallas. Always. Fact of life. It's a rule, or goes back to an historic Spanish Land Grant or something. Then there's the idea that there is a big sign. Loath as a good Aquarius is to pay attention to just such a sign, maybe you should watch. Merge over to the left. Like the sign says. You'll get

there a lot quicker if you allow for delays and plan on following the rules—unlike those Dallas drivers.

Pisces: The clothing I usually wear to work, a nicely pressed tux shirt, "Big Bass" cufflinks, jeans, boots, and so forth, don't always slide easily through the metal detector at the airport. One October morning, I was up and a little cranky, on my way to work for a weekend, and the pre-dawn mist was ever so inviting—for fishing.

Not much of a morning to be up and off to my other work. Since all my jewelry and so forth doesn't slide through the metal detector too well, I usually try and wait to get dressed until I'm on the far side of the security screening. I would suppose that it makes for an odd sight, some guy with a tux shirt, trying to thread the studs through the holes, attaching big, clunky cufflinks, and sliding a bolo tie up tight, all the while, trying to balance a laptop PowerBook and a big cup of coffee. Doesn't help that I was probably talking to myself, too, muttering and wondering out loud why I wore so much metal.

There are two lessons contained in this story. One is about metal detectors at airports. You know that they are there. You know to remove all metal from your person before going through. Can't say it catches you by surprise. The second is that putting all this stuff back on, and trying to thread those ever-so-cool-looking studs while looking in a reflection in the departure lounge window, wishing to be any place else but here. Enjoy wherever it is that Mars is dumping you off, and when you hit those roadblocks, remember, there was a sign.

Aries: Ever get to the point where you have to make a point? Ever get pushed so far that you just have to make a statement, right or wrong? Ever get some smart aleck astrology writer who keeps asking stupid questions, and you just want to slap him around? Wait, forget that last question, I'm not geared for any Aries abuse, be it physical or verbal, not now. Probably not ever, but that's a different question. Deal is, you're trying to make a point, and the problem is, no one is listening. I'll agree that you're right, at least in the spirit of the question. And I'll agree that you're right, in the concept that you really feel a strong Aries need to make your point, that is, to make your point of view known.

Problem being, no one seems to be listening these days. Then there's the problem of available facts. I know, you can only work with what facts are available, what is right there, in your [lovely]

Aries face. While absence of facts has never bothered me or any of my immediate family, it does create a problem here, especially for your Aries self. You can only work with what's at hand, and doing so, judging from the relative position of Mars in your chart, you might not be working with all the facts. That's the problem. Cool it for a little while. Sure, there's a change in seasons occurring, and sure, there's a change brewing up to make life better for your Aries self, but you might want to make a serious effort to collect ALL the data before you start making your point.

Taurus: I'm not much for "fall" fishing as the mornings are a bit too chilly for my personal tastes. However, I was thinking about just such a trip coming up, and I was getting all excited about it. You know, the buzz that builds in the back of the brains, imagining myself in a boat, up on its plane, sailing across the lake, the wind whipping in behind my sunglasses, bringing a tear to my eyes, the thought of the sun finally crawling up towards its noon position, shedding the layers of clothing to enjoy a little autumn sunlight, and fishes putting up the good fight.

Bent fishing rods are happy sights. It's the anticipation, as much as it's the actual action. That's the clue. There's a great sense of "something wonderful is coming up" in your chart. But it's not here, not quite yet. What are you supposed to do? Biggest problem, as I understand it, is trying to keep the concentration on work while you're at work. I'll promise though, if you keep concentrating on work while at work, then, when the "big deal" finally gets here, you'll have ever so much more fun. Don't think about it.

Gemini: I was listening to my "Bubba Gemini" the other morning, and he was railing on and on, like a Gemini typically does, about this, that and the other, and when he finally got around to making his point, which diverted from the topic of discussion several times, he was belaboring that he wasn't sure about a certain situation, and his conclusion had nothing to do with any available evidence.

In that absence of evidence, in his Gemini mind, he'd concocted a huge and terrible scenario, with calamities, problems, downfalls, "the end of civilization," anarchy, and of course, personal strife in his Gemini land. Funny part of this? To me, anyway? There wasn't one shred of physical evidence to suggest any of it was true. Thankfully, from my point as a listening audience, I was able to determine that he was merely going out on a ranting limb, and

making up "worst case scenarios" when there was not one drop of physical proof to support his claims.

It's not bad, but some desired information isn't coming through fast enough to satisfy your Gemini mind. If you have a fishing buddy who can put up with your ranting, all the better, as you have an appreciative audience. Otherwise? Just because there's no evidence to support your dire predictions? Don't go there. Save us both much time worrying.

Cancer: I was with my Cancer buddy, just the other day. His dog is a scoundrel and a mongrel, and a pretty smart animal, all things considered. After all, the dog has free run of the trailer and the trailer park, gets feed three times a day, gets regular visits to the pet care professional, and, as a bonus, that dog gets to roll around in any kind of stinky, corpse-looking thing it wants to, and there's not a lot of consequences for its actions. Unlike us humans. If I were to roll around in a squashed, dead squirrel, and show up at home smelling like that, I'm sure I'd kick me out.

That dog? He's got the good life. Alas, the Cancer dog-owner? He doesn't as he's stuck cleaning up after his pet. They -- the management -- recently installed those "pick up after your pet" boxes around the park here, you know the kind, dispenses a little plastic bag, and there's a convenient waste disposal can right by it.

Hint, hint? Dogs will be dogs, though. Like my Cancer buddy, you're going to be stuck cleaning up after your pet. Might not be a dog, give me a cat any day, much cleaner, and I know my mistress is not going to be rolling around in any dead critter's corpse. But in the "Life of Cancer," you are going to be stuck cleaning up after your pet. Could be an animal companion, like us, or it could be a pet project you've been working on. The joys of having dependable friends.

Leo: The Leo's trailer, in Shady Acres? It's going to be rocking. I may live four "houses" down from that trailer, but I can imagine, by the time the weekend starts to roll around, I'll be listening to their music instead of my own. It's probably going to be some antiquated music, stuff that's 20 or more years old, but it will be loud, as befits the Leo.

It's party time, pure and simple. I sometimes play the role of a crotchety old man, and in that role, I'm going to complain about how loud your Leo music is. The only proper response, though, is to

tell whomever is complaining, to just get over it. You want to party, you need to play, now's the time to do it. Go and have some fun. Crank up the tunes. Enjoy yourself. And no matter what happens, don't listen to tired old farts like myself when we start complaining about 9 PM being our bedtime, "if it's too loud then you're too old!" Dude.

Virgo: Years ago, I collected data, more out of a personal desire to do some kind serious astrological research than anything else, and all the information I collected was about sun signs paired with their favorite flavors. After the program had been running for a year, though, I started to notice a disturbing trend, folks would just log on, and randomly fill in the spaces, leaving me with incomplete data. It's not like a survey on the wide open expanses of the web is really a truly random and statistically correct model, but I did get some interesting feedback. One recurring event, especially after the survey had been running for a while, was that not everyone was interested in my food groups, being of Southern extraction and all.

Those food groups? Basically, it's fried, sugar, or liquid. To pay homage to my roots here in Texas, I have to include something from the Tex-Mex variety, as I do like it hot. But that fails to cover something that kept getting written in under Virgo: Eggs Benedict. Never exactly made sense to me, I would figure a smart, alert Virgo would opt for a more healthy option instead of eggs sitting on top of a hard biscuit, with a slice of ham and slathered in a yummy Hollandaise sauce. I'm at a loss to explain the Virgo-Eggs Benedict connection. And rarely am I at a loss for words, too. Doesn't mean that it's not a valid connection, either. Some things in life can't be explained within the frame of normal logic, i.e., some relevant research doesn't always fit the hypothesis. When that occurs, especially this weekend, be a little more willing to shift your point of view and wrap some arcane theory around the facts so it all makes perfect sense to your Virgo self. The rest of us might be befuddled, but that's our problem, not yours.

For the Week of: 10/9-15/2003

"Thou hast cast away thyself, being.../A madman so long, now a fool."

Shakespeare's *Timons of Athens* [IV.iii.222-3]

Coming up, along with some planets, there's El Paso last weekend.

Libra: It's another happy Libra birthday week, and there's still a number of good events occurring. Here in town the music scene will be a little off for the next week or so, but that's not a big deal. There's still plenty of entertainment. What I'm going to suggest is that your Libra self take a little bit of time to listen to your "inner voice" and see what he or she has to say. I can hear your inner voice now, "Party time. Birthday, oh yeah baby, let's party." At least, that's what I think I'm hearing from the inner Libra voice.

Problem being, as an astrologer, I have to listen to all 12 inner voices, one for each sign. You're not saddled with such a daunting task. Not everyone is in tune with that inner voice you've got, and that's a problem. Not everyone is all set for a big party. Go a little slow, maybe tone down your expectations with your ideas for a celebration. You're stuck between two big events, the Fall Equinox and Halloween. As such, there's not a really a decent theme to tag onto your "party party party" inner vocal renderings. Don't know what to tell you about that one. Maybe scale back some of your expectations?

Scorpio: it was one of the most touching scenes I'd ever been exposed to. A couple, apparently down on their luck, were in the middle of reconciliation. I eavesdropped because, well, I'm basically a nosey person, but the "true love" was evident with this hard luck couple. "We're going to have enough to get our original wedding rings out of the pawn shop," she was saying.

I just thought that was so touching. And it's not even Christmas time yet. Just tugs at the heartstrings, now doesn't it? Look around your Scorpio life. There's some kind of benefit coming along. I'm not a romantic, nor, for that matter, do I care much about wedding rings and such, but still, there's an element that I saw, something where a pair of folks were overcoming all obstacles and making a dream come true.

It's the symbolism of those rings that's so important. Plus, think about what kind of hard luck they must've fallen on, having to pawn the only thing of value to them? To that couple, getting enough

financial wherewithal to get the rings out of the hook shop meant something. Your Scorpio life has a similar event transpiring, due to Venus, Mars and even the host of planets still in Libra. Maybe you're not getting your wedding set out of pawn, but you can take some symbolic action to help move forward.

Sagittarius: I've got a client who sends me Kona coffee whenever she visits Hawaii. I usually get frantic phone call, "Do you like the whole beans or ground? And which coffee is it? Kona Gold, right?" The best I've found is medium-dark roast Kona Peaberry, very rare, and one of the few types of coffee that's actually grown on American soil. Really, Hawaiian soil, but close enough for administrative tasks.

Now, this going to get complicated, but then, so is the Sagittarius week. My usual container for coffee beans isn't big enough to hold a full pound, so some of the beans, about handful, goes into a spare jar. There are California (Peets) beans in there, some Kona, some cheap coffee, and some politically correct coffee beans, in other words a little of everything in that secondary jar. Never know what will pour out of that "catch-all" container.

I was grinding some beans the other morning, and I caught that delicious aroma of the Kona stuff. Apparently, I had a layer of coffee beans straight from the Big Island, and apparently, it was what I poured into the grinder. It was sort of a surprise as it's been several months since I got my last bag of Hawaiian coffee. It was a little high point to that morning, and it was little reminder that I need to stop off and buy more coffee. Not everyone is particularly happy these days, but if you'll observe the small details, like the way a morning cup of coffee tastes, you'll find that there's a small amount of joy that can't be found in even the most mundane of Sagittarius rituals.

Capricorn: I rolled out the trailer park, on foot, intending on going one direction, heading over towards the creek, maybe even thinking about a dip in the creek despite the cool weather, and all of sudden, when I got the terminus of the park itself, I took a left instead of a right. I don't know why, just seemed like the thing to do at the time. Eventually, that landed me in East Austin, at a place that serves excellent breakfast tacos. Not like this is any surprise, either, my apparent wayward direction was directed by my wanderlust, and general mental disarray.

It's that Capricorn component in my brain, trying a different tactic to get wherever it is that I'm supposed to be. To be honest, it's really too chilly by my standards to be swimming the creek these days. But that wasn't the reason for my last minute change in direction. Honestly, I don't know what came over me, and you're face to face with the same question. And you're face to face with the same astrological influence. If the old ways aren't working, maybe try going in a different direction to be more successful with Capricorn endeavors. Or, at the very least, find a new place for a breakfast taco.

Aquarius: Polls and guessing are this week's topic for Aquarius. I found in some learned journal, an article about a business school practice, wherein a class is instructed to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar. Here's the weird part, there will be a few wild guesses, but--statistically--the average of the all the guesses is usually within 3% of the actual number of beans in that jar, when the jar's contents are counted by hand. That's a pretty tight grouping, and just the oddest coincidence, too.

See, you're going to want and/or need to canvass a large portion of the population for help with a particular problem. It never hurts to ask more than one person, in fact, a little poll of your own invention would be quite handy. You're looking for a middle ground, a common place from which to operate. Instead of just looking at a single statistic, and accepting that as the rule, consider asking more than one qualified--or unqualified--person for some help with the question at hand. Like that example of the jellybean jar in business school statistics, a good sampling of more than one opinion will help you in making your decisions.

Pisces: I was riding on an airplane, going someplace important, and I was probably traveling in Texas. The folks sitting next to me inquired about the beverage service. Most the flights in Texas don't last too long, it's not like you're going to get a full meal service between, say, Houston and Dallas. I think actual airtime is only about 20 minutes.

So the flight attendant replied in a distinctly southern drawl, "No honey, we don't have wine, but we do have lovely wine-flavored beverage." Refreshing honesty. Refreshing point of view. Cheeky attitude, too, but it worked. However, it worked only in that situation. If I'd been in first class, on a much longer flight, I'd expected a better answer about vintage stuff. But for a short hop

inside the confines of Texas? Great answer. Short, sweet, and to the point. Judge your audience before you deliver your answers this week. The right answer, delivered short and Pisces sweet is great. Oh yes, I did inquire, as I'm inclined to do, and that flight attendant was a Pisces. See? Gauge your audience before you deliver your answers.

Aries: Ever ridden in 22 Ft. Ranger Bass Boat, with a 250 horsepower Mercury motor, splashing your way across the choppy lake at 70 knots? No? You should try it some time. If the winds kick up some, and you're out on the open portion of the lake, it's a bumpy ride. The boat pitches and rolls a little, the bow bounces up and down, and it's a harrowing experience for those who don't know that a suitable and experienced captain is at the helm.

Facing directly into the chop isn't too bad, but when we're angling off to one side, the motion can be downright frightening to an amateur. This scope is going for seven days. Looks like you've got a choppy boat ride for three to five of those days, probably on the tail end of it. But at one point, this much is sure, you pull into an isolated cove, the wind abates, and the surface of the lake is smooth. Throttle back, drop the trolling motor in, and enjoy those few days. It's not good the whole time, but there are few times when it will be absolutely perfect. Besides, all the waves keep the amateurs at bay.

Taurus: You're starting to think, in the Taurus brain of yours, "All he ever talks about is work. Work this, Mr. Fishing Guide Astrology Home Buoy!" Yes, my dear Taurus, there's a strange emphasis that includes work, career, and related issues, and yes, dear Taurus, that is supposed to be important these days. It's supposed to be the target of your unrelenting Taurus focus.

"Supposed to be" and "are" ain't the same thing. I would tend to see another, more protracted influence, albeit a slightly weaker astrological angle, coming along in this next week to ten days, and I would bet on it. While you're worrying about this whole "work" thing [which is largely theoretical in my life], there's a strange little input from Planet Venus. She's doing something, bringing something, making something nice. For a change. Look for the beauty, look for the breaks, looks for something good where you least expect to find it. You never can tell where it's coming from, but it's little bright spot on that terribly drab "work" horizon.

Gemini: Big breaks occur before the weekend ever arrives. After that, there's a gradual decline, and in case you don't believe in entropy, then now's a good time to consider looking at it. Never thought about doing a little research in thermodynamics and 19th Century scientific theory? Don't worry about it, I never studied it much myself. In other words, I don't know a lot about it, but the concept is that's there's a gradual decline. I was looking at the phase of the moon, and right after it's full, then everything starts to fall apart.

Maybe it's not entropy but ennui that sets in. But I doubt that, too. In Gemini terms, you've got a great deal of positive energy as the weekend approaches, but next week, like long about Monday, it's back to the grind again, and some events seem to hamper your flow. The world would be a much better place if everyone were just nice to everyone else. Don't see that happening, but you can, in your Gemini world, try being nice to just one person you would normally deal with in a curt fashion. You'll be surprised how that helps offset that ennui you might-or might not be-feeling.

Cancer: Ever had "Transparent pie"? Do you even know what that is? It's-apparently, and according to local myth-only made in Mason County, Kentucky. I inquired about the stuff, and found that it greatly resembled my own recipe for pecan pie, handed down for generations, from family member to family member. After tasting the Transparent Pie, I was sure that its recipe closely resembled my own pecan pie. I sidled up next to an elderly gentleman, famed for his version of the pie, and inquired about the recipe. "Two eggs, stick of butter, cup of sugar." Sure enough, close to most of the ingredients in my legendary pecan pie.

After learning about he recipe, and just thinking about the contents of the pie, either one, I had to loosen my belt a notch. It may be good stuff, but it can't be all that good for you. Therein is the caution, particularly over the next couple of days. It's one thing to be tempted by something like legendary Mason County Transparent Pie, but it's another thing to indulge in this culinary masterpiece. I suspect that there's a key ingredient that's been left out, but not knowing what it is, doesn't make me feel any better. Before you indulge your Cancer self, you might want to read the ingredients. Or ask local expert for some advice. Both work, and both are good recommendations before you jump off into something new.

Leo: Oddest thing, I found out, not long ago, El Paso had the largest smelter in the world until 1920 or so. My source of factual information could be faulty, considering how much time I've spent in El Paso, and how I'm unsure as to whether or not that bit of trivia is really true. But it could be. Sounds true. Feels about right. Good enough for work around here.

I was originally going to run that as a trivia question, but the problem was in the fact-checking department. These days, that's me. Absence of hard data has never bothered me much, I just hate being caught short when some one else comes up with real proof.

You're a Leo; you hate that, too. I know you do. Since I was never 100% sure, I never saw an engraved plaque that said "This was the largest smelter in the world until 1920," I didn't dare run it as an absolutely true historical fact. I'm sure I'll hear from someone who lives in some far-flung locale, and I'm sure that my facts will be corrected. Doesn't bother me, as I was never really sure I was right. But you're not a Sagittarius astrologer; you're a mighty Leo. Might want to double check a fact or two before you run with it as if what some friend of a buddy who used to fish with a guy once told you.

Virgo: Pink Floyd's album, "Dark Side of the Moon," has to be an all-time classic. Certain cuts get overplayed on the radio, like, just way too much. And some of the audio samples from that album are tremendously overused. Plus there's the artwork for the album cover itself, all black with the colors of the rainbow splitting through a prism. It's almost a universal sign. I'm not sure what it's a universal sign of, but it stands for something.

In this day and age, I have to wonder if the sounds of commerce have changed, too. The ring and sound of manual cash register is long gone. But your Virgo cash register should be ringing these days. The problem being, I no sooner make a prediction like that, than some Virgo writes to me and says I have it all wrong as the out-flow of cash is greater than the in-flow. The solution? Stop spending until the influx becomes greater than the outflux. It's a simple proposition, but taking a rest from your recent activities will help slow down some of the imbalance in your spending and income situations. And when you do hit it big? All I'm asking for is 1%. I'm not greedy.

For the Week of: 10/16-22/2003

"I am the [broom] that must sweep the court clean of such filth as thou art."

Shakespeare's *Henry VI, part 2* [IV.vii.28]

I was looking at it, and I was figuring, using my method of looking at the planets and their influences, that Mr. Mars is just now getting back up to speed. This week looks like it's all about getting back up to speed.

Libra: Get prepared, there's a nice send-off to the way this next couple of days works out. Doesn't work out smoothly for everyone, but as a Libra, you're finding that you have a unique way to smooth over troubled situations. Nice touch, smooth delivery, it's almost as if you can sugar-coat any news and make it seem more palatable.

That's certainly a welcome touch to find that your usual charm is back. Now you just have to use that charm correctly. What is it that you really want? Yes, it's the last of the Libra birthdays, and as such, the idea of what you really want as a birthday wish is an important concept. Instead of just sitting there and wishing, why not go for what you want? I'm reminded of a particular bumper sticker I see from time to time, it advertises a certain bait shop, and reads, "Stop wishing, go fishing."

Maybe your Libra self doesn't have the exact same dream I do about getting up before dawn and fishing all morning at a local lake, but whatever your little Libra heart desires, you can make it happen. What steps do have to take to get from here—where you're currently at—to that place you're wishing for? Put that charm to work to for you in order to obtain that goal.

Scorpio: Don't you just love Halloween? I sure do. Or did. Used to be a wonderful time, then, lately, it's gotten to be a time when I take to the streets, the streets of Austin, and enjoy the sights. Only, there's a little problem. See: around here? Sometimes it's pretty difficult to discern what's a costume, and what's just normal, day-to-day occurrences. Pretty hard to judge a book by its cover in these parts. Homeless? Or casually attired politician?

One local luminary has become a cultural icon for "Keep Austin Weird." Leslie. Actually, Leslie is a Cancer—I know—I asked. Times been a little tough for him, but there for a spell, he was living the good life. Last time I saw him, he had on miniskirt and tube top. His hair was still red. So you understand that it's hard to tell the local

populace from the folks who are dressed up for that special-Scorpio Special-time, Halloween. I'm trying to look a little further down the scope than just this week. I wouldn't be talking about what's going to be happening in two weeks if it wasn't important. It is. Make plans. Make plans now.

Sagittarius: Secret barbecue techniques are important. One of the best ways to properly flavor a barbecue grill is to wait until the coals have cooked down to the point that there's a fine layer of ash covering them. Then, borrowing a trick from my mother, you break out the secret flavor ingredient: mesquite or hickory chunks. Now, it as my dear sweet Scorpio mother who taught me this trick: before you ever get started, like maybe 24 hours prior to building the fire, start by soaking those wood flavor chips in water. Just let those little hunks of wood get waterlogged. Good and soaked. Right before you toss the meat on the grill, add those soaked chips to the fire itself. Now, you have the recipe for a perfectly good barbecue.

Notice that all of this takes a little time, and perhaps, not a long suite for Sagittarius, a little pre-planning. It's kind of hard to go back, after you've started the barbecue fire and think, "My, I should've soaked those wood chips yesterday...." Look at the upcoming schedule. Figure out what you can do ahead of time to be ready. You've got a hot time headed your way, do something to be best prepared for that hot time.

Capricorn: I was fishing with Bubba, once last summer, and we weren't sure what kind lure would work best, so I tied a bright orange plastic worm on the end of the line and just went with it. Don't think I caught anything worth writing home about, but it was so nice out on the lake, in the cool of the morning and all, it really didn't matter.

Now the guy I was fishing with, he's a Capricorn, and his version of the story is a little different. He tied one topwater lure on, cast a few times, had no luck, clipped that one lure off, tied on a huge buzzbait, cast it a few times, drug it across the top of the lake a couple of times, no luck again, so he tried a fake water dog, again, no luck after a few tries, so next came one of those lures with a little diving board on it. The diving board makes the lure dive deeper, depending on how fast you reel it back in. Again, after a couple of tries, no luck. Changed to another lure.

I realized that this starting to sound like an inventory of my buddy's tackle box, but that's not the point. Takes me a few minutes to swap a lure on the end of a fishing pole. That's precious time that could be spent fishing, if you want. My buddy? He finally followed my advice, put a bright pink worm on the end, and his luck improved. Did he need to try all those others, first? That, my fine Capricorn friend, is your decision.

Aquarius: I paused while I was on the hike and bike trail last week, long enough to figure out what was making such a strange noise. Turned out to be skinny little squirrel, gnawing away at an acorn. First off, I was wondering why that squirrel was gnawing instead of saving, then I watched for a quiet moment, almost like I was a some kind of nature documentary. Grasped in its little fore paws, the teeth of that feller were just working over that nut pretty good. It was almost a ferocious activity. Tiny bits of husk and nut meat were flying everywhere. The gnawing sound was one I can't begin to describe, but that's what caught my attention the first time.

As I watched, it eyed me, but kept right after its task at hand. Or task at paw, I guess. Now, I've used squirrel activity before as an indicator for weather. Skinny squirrel, eating, not hiding food for later, that would suggest a mild winter coming up. Maybe I missed a calling as a nature weather forecaster. A few years back I noted how the squirrels were all quite plump, by local squirrel standards, and we did indeed have a cold winter. Stop long enough sometime in the next few days, and look at some of the indicators around you. There's an important Aquarius clue, and it could be drawn from simply observing a squirrel in the park.

Pisces: I'm not much of a cook. But I am Texan, and as such, I have certain amount of working knowledge about how to cook on a barbecue grill. Looking at the planets, especially Mr. Jupiter opposite you, and Mars, finally getting hooked up and heading straight, I thought I would impart a little bit of barbecue wisdom to Pisces readers.

When the grill is hot and ready, and you're tossing your slice of meat [or vegetables, this is PC barbecue, you know] onto the grill, don't flip it too often. In fact, the best of the grill masters will tell, just let the flames lick and sear one side, then flip it a single time. Let those delicious juices get caught inside, thereby insuring that the flavor is at its best. In as much as it's fun to stand there, look important, and flip the item being cooked over and over again, doing

so loses some of the flavor. Sear it once to seal in that good flavor. Don't overdo it. Don't spend too much time flipping it back and forth, time and again. Just once. Makes for a far better tasting meal.

So it doesn't matter what you're doing, don't overdo it. Don't keep toying with the object of your attention. Let the fire do what it is supposed to do. Everything will turn out much better if you don't play with it too much. Resist that temptation to flip out. Or just flip once too often.

Aries: There are three or four pocketknives that inhabit my desk. The one with the single long blade and yellow handle is a favorite, usually. But I've also got a really cute little one, with a purple handle, that's quite tiny, quite pretty, and I use it as a dress knife. Then there's the big one with a red handle and a locking blade, and that's a useful work knife. As is the assortment of Leatherman Tool (tm) type of hardware I've got. I've also got a miniature "Cattleman's" pattern, with a serial number and the tag implies it's a handmade knife from West Texas. Reminds me of a trip I took, plus, the pattern, with its three blades, is almost useful.

Which knife, which tool, I slip into my pocket, or clip onto my belt, when I'm heading out the door, depends on where I'm intending to go for the afternoon. Or if I'm traveling someplace like the airport or the courthouse, I can't take any of my friends with me. Before you jump out into the next few days, pause every morning, and consider where you're going to be. Then select the appropriate tool to take with you. Fishing? A quick-opening, sharp knife. Work? Maybe a pocket tool is more important than a cutting edge, so you can handle those loose screws [and the pliers are handy]. Pick and choose with care—and a little forethought.

Taurus: Morning fishing trips are wonderful. It's sheer delight to get out early, get on the lake before any else is out there, and then, rolling homeward around noon, maybe two or three in the afternoon, I feel like I've put in a full day, and there's still some of the evening left over. Now figure I'd been up since "oh-dark-thirty," and after a long morning, stretching into an afternoon at the lake, I'm pretty beat.

I'm longing for a delicious barbecue sandwich, and the next item on my agenda will be a nap. Problem being, with Taurus at this point, you see me, and you're ready to keep going on. The rest of us are

"tarred out," as the expression goes. Ms. Venus is opposite your sign, over yonder in Scorpio, and she's giving you an extra jolt of energy; she wants your Taurus self to keep going, to keep playing. The sun's starting to get a little low in the evening sky, and you're thinking, "Happy Hour!" Me? I'm thinking, "Couch. Cat asleep on my belly." I don't have any easy resolution for this Taurus dilemma, other than once you've worn out the Fishing Guide, find someone else to play with, for the rest of the evening. Let the rest of us rest up so we can keep up with your fanatical Taurus pace.

Gemini: I ran across a humorous cartoon in one of my academic, high-brow journals. It was a picture of boat, with two guys in it, both fishing, both looking a little despondent. The back of the boat had a bumper sticker on it, "I'd rather be hunting." I laughed at that cartoon, and I was going to cut it out, and post it someplace at the office, but I lost the magazine. That's the trouble you're feeling in Gemini land these days.

Doesn't matter where you are, like that boat's sticker, you would rather be some place other than where you are. I feel your pain. We get a few days in October when the weather turns really cool and autumn-like for a little while, and there are many places that I imagine I would rather be. I get idyllic thoughts about the summer gone by, the warmth of a tropical sun, maybe the idea of sand between my toes.

Unlike that cartoon, I would not rather be hunting, that's for sure. However, I do have a number of friends who might actually share the sentiment of the bumper sticker. In your Gemini mind, start to fashion up a catch phrase like that, one that starts out, "I'd rather be..." and finish it with what works best for you. Maybe even make up a sticker like that, and post it at work, or at the house, or by your computer. Then, focus the rest of that now-divided Gemini attention on the more immediate problems. You'll find that a little wishing will help you maintain a much more positive attitude.

Cancer: Halloween is still a week or two away, but it makes for a great way to look at what is about to happen. See, during the Halloween Holiday, folks dress up as some kind of fantasy character. That's quite pleasant, and on more than one occasion, rather surprising, as you never know what you'll see your friend and confidant come up with. One of the most amusing scenarios involved a rather heathen acquaintance of mine dressed as a "man of the cloth." Somber, toting a bible, not exactly sober, but then, he

never did get hit by lightning, so I couldn't exactly call it sacrilege, either.

Given my Cancer buddy's vocal abilities, he might have been secretly helping the cause, never can tell. He can sound quite pious on occasion. But mostly, it was all in good fun. As the moon narrows in her appearance, think about what you can do that will combine elements that don't normally show up in your Cancer worldview, and see about combining some of those elements to affect a solution to one of your sticky problems. The trick with the costume, and the way to think about this is to go for some hidden desire, act out a real fantasy, and see if you can't work that into a solution.

Leo: Money, popular topic. Should be good over the next two, or three weeks. That's excellent news, particularly for one cash-strapped Leo I know. The problem is, while I can promise this stuff right now, I can't see it actually materializing in the next seven days. I can be wrong, but I think it's one of the situations where you're promised money, and you get assured that it's on its way, but you don't actually see the cash just yet.

All right, here's the deal. Go online someplace and fill out an online shopping cart, stocked full of all sorts of stuff that you want. Get yourself hooked with the latest and greatest computer system. Order up a ton of software. Have some fun, give yourself a "blue sky" scenario. Then, when it comes time to conclude the transaction, close your web browser's window. In other words, until the money I'm promising actually shows up, don't really spend any of it. You'll be happier, I'll be secure in knowing that you've gotten some sound advice, and who knows? Maybe that promised cash shows up a little earlier than I'm anticipating.

Virgo: When you're firing up the grill to barbecue, it takes a little time. First things first. What you're going to want to do as this weekend starts out is to build the right fire in the Virgo barbecue pit. Pile those charcoal briquettes up nice and high, then just soak the lower edges with lighter fluid. After you hit it with the ignition, let those coals burn for a good 20 to 40 minutes before you even think about throwing the meat [or vegetables, if that's your style] on the grill.

The trick is to let the charcoal get a nice, gray ash color all over it before you commence the actual grilling process. The good things in

life take time, and grilling is no different from other Virgo activities. Deal is, you're going to feel like you're being pushed and hurried along. Certain processes can't be hurried, and like building the proper fire in the grill, this going to take a little time. There's no big hurry. Don't let some outsider push you too fast when your Virgo self isn't ready to start.

For the Week of: 10/23-29/2003

"[You are] less valiant than the virgin in the night."

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* [I.i.11]

Scorpio comes in with an interesting start... Not right away but around the corner, there's "something up" in Scorpio land. The rest of us would do well to heed that Scorpio warning, apply need be.

Scorpio: Maybe it was last week, I'm not sure, but it was one of those days when the October weather was rather summer-like. I stopped off after a walk around the lake, to fetch up a bottle of water from a convenience store. Small, family-run business, the kind of place I like to frequent as there's often a bit of stray gossip, or a casual and friendly response instead of the blank stare of a corporate drone.

I grabbed a bottle out of new cooler in the back, the bottle came from one of the lower rows, and after I paid [and exchanged a "hello"], stepped out the door into the afternoon sunlight again, as soon as I opened that bottle of water, tiny ice crystals formed on the surface. I took a big, cool, refreshing swig of slush. I thought it was just too cool, you know, the ice floating on the surface of that water, just cold enough to freeze, if only momentarily.

It was one of those unexpected delights on a hot autumn afternoon in Texas. Look: you might live in the frozen north, for all I know, and you might not find frozen water crystals as an endearing treat in the middle of your afternoon. Doesn't much matter, though, you're going to have the same emotional type of response to a set of stimuli over the next few days. Whatever refreshing actions gives you a little tingle, a small chance to see that your own Scorpio world is better place, you get a break like that. In hot climates, those water crystals were just the neatest little break from an arduous afternoon.

Sagittarius: Ah sweet, sincere, bumbling Sagittarius! Ever have one of those days when everything--and I mean everything--you touch just turns bad? I commented on how nice a particular young lady looked in her new outfit, and I was called a "sexist pig." Which, truth be told, is probably true, but at the time I was just trying to be nice.

I offered to help an elderly neighbor here at the trailer park, and I was rudely rebuffed as a "meddling and weird neighbor." Some days are like that, you try to be nice and it just gets thrown back in your

face. You'd figure, on day like that, with two strikes out, I wouldn't bother to try a third a time. Never underestimate the Sagittarius ability to see good where there doesn't seem to be a lot of good.

However, if you're like me, and you strike out twice in one morning, I'm not about to suggest we try a third time, not on that particular day. The odds aren't good. However, don't let this interfere with your own good-time, happy-go-lucky, everything-will-be-alright attitude. There's a promise that all your efforts will be eventually recognized as the do-good person that you are. Problem being, it might not happen this week. Might not happen for a few weeks. That's okay, just because other folks don't understand why we can maintain an almost manic like optimism in the face of adversity, that doesn't mean all is lost. Just realize that some people aren't used to folks being nice to them. Especially us Sagittarius types.

Capricorn: "You on vacation every day." It was the kindly lady at the corner convenience store, independently owned and operated, not some giant chain or anything. She was commenting on my appearance, and the fact that she frequently saw me with wet hair, especially during the summer months, me having just taken a dunk in the creek or trespassed into a neighboring pool. While I might have the appearance of the joyous and easy lifestyle, looking like I live on easy street, it's not nearly like that all. I have stress, problems, balky bill collectors, just like everyone else.

The point is about choices. I can be troubled about this sort of stuff first thing in the morning, or I can scrape together some change-enough to buy a paper and stop in the corner store with a smile on my face, a shirt slung over my shoulder as I make way off to meet a client or go to an important meeting. Or go and sample coffee someplace. All part of the day's work. Halloween is around the corner. Time to play some. Doesn't mean you can shirk your responsibilities, but you can try that style that I use, and you can look like you're on vacation every day.

Aquarius: Ever see one of those sights that just seems to defy logic? I was skirting along the northern border of a local park, and I watched as a little dog was furiously chasing a squirrel. Or maybe the little rat terrier-looking thing was chasing bird, I'm not sure, I came upon the scene about halfway through the chase. Whatever the object of the chase was had secured itself up a tree. Now, that little terrier-appearing mutt would back up and bark up the tree,

then take a running start, and that canine managed to get about halfway up the trunk of the tree.

It never made it all the way to the branches, but it was a death-defying display of athletic abilities, plus it made for a remarkably amusing visual image of a dog trying to scamper up into the tree to catch the prey. Maybe "death-defying" isn't the right description, thinking about it now, it was more like "gravity-defying" because that canine was moving in such a way, I mean, it seemed like that critter would just hang in the air for a moment or two. You and your Aquarius self know that you're chasing a squirrel up a tree and we both know that you really shouldn't be doing this, as it is a futile chase. That's not going to stop you from doing it, nor, just like that dog, is it going to stop you from performing amazing feats that seem to defy logic and law. What law? The law of gravity. I'm pretty sure, though, unlike that dog, you might actually catch what you're chasing. What are going to do then?

Pisces: I was standing outside, taking in the brisk morning air, trying to wake up a little, and I probably had a cup of coffee in my hand, but I'm not sure. The sky was gray and cloudy, a little depressing, in some ways. I glanced upwards, trying to check the weather, and I saw flight of ducks? Some kind of waterfowl migrating in a westerly direction. I can't tell a lot about the birds because it's not an area that I'm strong in, other than there's a Chinese dish that, for all the world, looks like "duck fajitas" to me, and I know that it's really, really good. Tender duck, cooked up, and wrapped in a "pancake." Looks just like a fajita to me.

I guess that's a cultural thing, though. Anyway, enough about my culinary adventures, those ducks flying overhead were in V formation, just like something on a nature documentary. Pretty cool. I watched as the V arched overhead, then I noticed one last duck, wings flapping madly, trying desperately to catch up. Waterfowl are graceful creatures—on the lake. Airborne? Not really, although that V formation was a good trick. That one, lone duck, flapping madly, comically, almost sadly, trying to catch up with the rest of the herd? Know the feeling? That's Pisces. The good news? By the middle of next week? You should be back in that V formation, along with all the rest of the ducks in the row.

Aries: The weekend is going to bring about some renewed relief and focus. Sort of hard to work both those into a weekend and next week, but the way it works, there's both some astrological relief

plus there's going to be an opportunity to get your aim back on track. It's like this, the Sun is moving himself out of Libra, which is opposite you. Along with the sun, Mr. Mercury and Miss Venus are lining up in Scorpio. That's the renewed focus.

The good part is, Scorpio isn't opposing you in any way, shape or form. This is good. You're going to get a little dose of blessed relief. Then there's another trick coming your way, as it's a time to renew some particular project, goal, destination, one of those things that you've been meaning to get back to, you get a chance to pick up where you left off. That's good. Just because your astrological life starts to feel a little easier, that doesn't mean you can just rest on your Aries laurels, though. There's still some work ahead, but this time, it looks like there will be adequate assistance. You're welcome.

Taurus: I was working for a spell, really just helping a friend out because he needed some dependable person to actually show up on time every day and sit in the office, and this presented a problem. See, the office hours were just like, noon to 5:00 PM. No big deal, just a couple of days a week. Just show up after lunch, then leave at 5. Except for one little problem. Or maybe it was a big problem. Just as soon as I got ready to check out at 5, just as soon as I was about to hit the clock at 5:00 PM, there would be a phone call, a person would walk in the office, the boss would call, the bookkeeper would need me, the accountant would call, maintenance would require my presence, or something would happen.

It wasn't like that every day, but any time I scheduled a reading for a little later, I would get caught up short. In other words, all hell would break loose, just as soon as I thought I could skate out the door. To folks used to working a regular job, I'll just have to assume that this is a normal occurrence. Watch out. It's happening in the next couple of days. Just when you think you're out the door at work, even if it's only part-time gig to help out a friend, there's going to be that "one last thing," which turns into a task that will require an extra hour of your time. Me? My Taurus self this week is going to leave my schedule a little more open for just such untimely events.

Gemini: One of my buddies recently got discharged after a brief stint in the Army. Maybe he was in the Marines, I could never tell. Something about weapons and firearms, and he was all gung-ho then washed out. Or sustained an injury that rendered him no longer fit for active duty. Something like that. What I got out of the

deal was his military badge ID holder neck wallet. It's not really much more than a lanyard with a slip of clear plastic for holding an ID card. Now, what do I have in it? I've got a decade old press pass from when I was an active member of the 4th Estate. On the flip side of that aging media pass, I've got my mail-order minister card.

Isn't this ever so Gemini of me? On one side, I'm a person you should be afraid to talk to because I'm the media, and on the other side, sort of depends on how you hang the badges, I'm a minister, capable of legally performing marriages, and so forth. Giving spiritual advice. Right. Press or Priest, all depends on which piece of plastic shows through the window. You're Gemini. You have, in one capacity or another, earned similar credentials to mine. Pay attention, because during the next week, you're going to need both sets of ID. Here's the tricky part, you have to determine when one set of information is a private confession and when another set of information turns out to be a breaking story. The hard part? Determining which is what. Or what's which. Or something like that.

Cancer: I've got a couple of friends on the police force. Not just here in town, but in several towns. One of the questions I ask, whenever I get a chance, is for a good story that I can relate to other folks. In other words, a cop story that is purportedly true, and hopefully has some humor. Besides, I've grown accustomed to being friendly with officers. Sure makes for a nicer interaction.

One of the guys was telling me about a drunk he arrested. The drunk was complaining about how tight the handcuffs were. My buddy looked at the alleged perpetrator, and without cracking a grin, the cop claimed he said, "Oh, those are new cuffs. They'll stretch out some after you wear them for bit." Know the feeling? Which feeling? Are you the one in the handcuffs right now? Are you the cop with a sense of humor? Who will it be? Personally, I tend to regard you as that officer with the sense of humor. However, knowing the way the stars are stacking up these days, I might warn you to think about certain activities that could, either literally or just in a figurative sense, have your Cancer self wind up in a set of bracelets like that. And if the situation feels a little too tight for your Cancer comfort? Don't worry about, that situation will stretch out with time.

Leo: I love the variety of cuisine found in Texas. In Deep East Texas, there's spicy Cajun food, Louisiana-style seafood, and some

of our own native South East Asia cuisine mixed in for good measure. Plus there's that influence directly from the American South, deep-fried. Southern cooking itself is quite good. Mix this with the Tex-Mex in Central Texas, and then consider the various border cuisines, derivative of Central and South America, most notably, Mexican cuisine.

Quite the mix of styles and flavors. And that's just the stuff that's native. No need to mention all the imported brands. I was dining in East Austin, it was a quiet Sunday afternoon, and I'd stumbled into a taqueria of ill repute. Great place. Perhaps my exhaustion let my mind wander, but one of the items on the menu was "Lengua." It's beef tongue, and wrapped in tortilla with a piquant sauce, it's really rather good. I ordered some. It was rather flavorful. I can recommend it for the adventuresome diner. But it's the tongue itself that's a little bit of problem in Leo land. See, while it's a great menu item in certain locations, I'm not sure that you should branch out and try something like this, not now. Plus, there's another problem, see you're Leo tongue might be wagging a little too much these days. Best be careful, I'd hate for you to be offered up as a supper selection.

Virgo: Weird weather patterns. It gets like this in Texas, in the fall. I looked at the weather map. Made an educated guess that I could get away with shorts and a light shirt, and walked out the door, locking the trailer behind me. I traversed about 17 steps of the tree-lined gravel pathway in Shady Acres when I realized that I wasn't wearing enough clothing. I promptly turned around, unlocked the door again, the cat looked at me like I was crazy, and I pulled on some more clothing, wrapping a flannel shirt around my waist, just in case.

Later the evening, it turned out I was correct with my choices. When I hit the door, I'm usually ready to roll. Being willing to backtrack long enough to get what I need is not my style. Some would say I don't have any style, but I guess that's a point best left to other avenues of discussion. Deal is, you've got to be willing to make last minute adjustments. Might be to clothing, might be to something other than just appearance. But there's a willingness to make an adjustment that's necessary. Besides, the weather in October, in Texas? Like the astrological weather in Virgo, it all sort of depends.

Libra: It's great fun for me to "wind up a sign." You know, pick on one attribute, then give them an unrelenting amount of grief because of that one attribute? I was fixing to do that to Libra, this week, but I decided against it, after carefully examining the chart. Yes, your sense of humor is a little frayed, and yes, it's not exactly what you're looking for, not from me. So I'm not going to make any sarcastic, caustic comments about "Libra and balance," or similar jibes.

However, I'm aware of your astrological planet mix, and I know that you're just a little more sensitive than usual. Although my comment was going to be intended in friendly jest, it would probably be taken wrong. Regrettably, not everyone will understand that, and over the next couple of days, someone is going to make a joke, probably with your Libra self as the butt of the joke, and you ain't going to like that at all.

Try to see if from the teller's point of view, though, and it could be funny. Maybe not the funniest thing you've heard, but it's not that bad. Or is it? Go easy, and realize that you're just a little more sensitive than usual. Don't let the insensitive types get you all up in arms about a comment intended as humor. That's the problem with sarcasm, it can--not that I know anything about this myself--overstep the bounds of good taste.

For the Week of: 10/30-11/5/2003

"The world is still deceived with ornament."

Shakespeare's the *Merchant of Venice* [III.ii.74]

Coming up, next week? Austin. Last chance to get out and catch a quick chart reading in Austin.

Scorpio: This is going to be a good Valentine's Day. To be completely honest, we should all be thankful that Valentines Day falls right in the middle of Scorpio. It's a time when, according to the old belief systems, the veil between the two world, the spirit world and the reality that most of us share, that line of demarcation is thinnest. Hence the obsession with ghouls, goblins, and outlandish costumes. In the old world, the spirits would come out at night. The nights are longer, and the encroaching winter crosses several cultures. There's "All Hallow's Eve," "All Saints' Day," and a personal favorite around here, "Dia de las Muerte [Day of the Dead]." Can make for a long weekend, too, if you're not up for it.

But your Scorpio self is up for it, and it's time to play and party some. Starting next week, Miss Venus slips out of your sign and into the next. Plan on getting out and having some kind of fun, and go ahead, indulge a little bit. Go over your limits. Venus, the Sun, Mercury, they are all pushing on you, so you might as well enjoy it. Then, next week, plan on a little extra time at home to recuperate from the excess. It's all in good fun, and one of the holidays is bound to line up with Scorpio calendar pretty well.

Sagittarius: Halloween is some kind of a big deal in Austin. It's also, in deference to my basic pagan orientation, a holy day. In fact, it's one of the few surviving holy holidays that's still being observed. So much for the religious history point. For the past few years, thousands of revelers have adorned themselves in a variety of ways, and these revelers, plus thousands more of spectators, throng the downtown streets, and this becomes an impromptu parade of sorts.

The folks in costumes usually tour the street in a clockwise fashion whereas a number of spectators sit back and enjoy the show while standing, or sitting, on the curb. [Legendary 6th Street is closed off to vehicles for this event.] Sure, it's fun to get out and get into a costume, but the best Sagittarius money is bet on just being an observer. The show is great, and it's one that I've gotten accustomed to. Much more fun to observe than actually participate.

That's our Sagittarius clue for the times. Watch. Look, observe, enjoy, but we are best off being observers at this time, not as actual participants.

Capricorn: One of my good Capricorn friends work in a beauty parlor. As a hairdresser, in fact. She's the only person who was allowed to get near my hair with scissors for the longest time. So this next couple of days are going to be extra busy for her. She's got the usual list of people who want to be made beautiful by her magic touch plus there's the extra load of folks coming in for those special fantasy hair pieces, part of the costume for the weekend. Any way you look at it, this all means more work. Lots more work.

The trick is to keep up with the scheduling changes, the way she keeps having to work in more than one person, at the last minute. Sort of drag because she's going to be too tired to properly enjoy the holiday itself. "Oh, my aching feet," she'll say, as she props her feet up on my coffee table, "now look at my chart and answering about [insert sign here], my latest boyfriend...." She'll still be wearing her black smock from work, probably with a hairpin and hairclip still dangling from the smock's lapel. There will be that ever so faint aroma of chemicals, the stuff used to fry, frizz and color hair.

A few minutes will go by, and there's a good chance she'll nod off on the couch, too tired to worry about boyfriends and other outside interests. Stick to work. May be wearing you out, but it's a lot more important than other extracurricular activities at this point.

Aquarius: Ever have one of those days wherein you're just on top of the Aquarius world, everything is sailing along great, and then, "Wham!" Something hits you that just knock your very feet out from underneath you? This weekend looks to be rather promising. Then, next week, something comes along that just shatters your world. To an outside observer, it would appear that you're about to- or have-entered a manic phase. The good news is that this is temporary situation.

The bad news is that this is probably going to happen. Sailing along great, then all of sudden, some cloud comes along and rains, rains hard, I might add, on your Aquarius parade. Take it all in giant, Aquarius stride. Don't let the little fellers hold you down, at least, don't let them hold you down for long. It's like this, you show up for work on Monday, and the boss tells you that Halloween is over, and

you think, "But these are my street clothes...." Some folks just understand the Aquarius sense of style.

Pisces: There's at least one Pisces I'm close to, and if that particular Pisces uses this costume idea, I'm not sure it will be well-received in her office space. But other than that one, particular Pisces, the rest of you might want to take note. It's the ubiquitous "Face in a milk crate" get-up. The way I saw it best, a guy painted his face green, dyed a sheet black, and cut the front section out of a milk crate plus he made a hole in the bottom of the same crate so he could stick his head through it. Pretty outlandish costume, took some effort, but I think the results were worth it.

On the big night, it looked great, after it got dark. It was just his head, floating along in a milk crate, looking scary. The idea that your banging your Pisces head into a few walls might extend for a longer period than just the costume holiday, too. On into next week, you might be feeling like your head is still stuck in that milk crate, and without the sheet, the sight is comical for some of us. Although, for my dear Pisces friends, it's less comical, especially after Halloween is over. That doesn't mean that you feel any less like you've stuck your head into a contraption and can't seem to get it out.

Aries: It's raining cats and dogs in Aries land. Reminds me a good Halloween costume, "Raining cats and dogs," which was little stuffed animals pinned to an umbrella. That's also what it feels like, and you can use that as a metaphor for the next few days, or you can use it as a costume, or, better yet, you can use it for both. Nothing's better than make the make-believe world of fantasy and the real world of Aries life come together. Raining cats and dogs, indeed.

When some particular person, usually a boss type of person, but it could be a client or co-worker, comes up with "just one more question about procedure here," you can defy the superstition that it's a bad move to open an umbrella indoors, and show that person that, in your Aries world, it is raining cats dogs already. Nothing like having a decent visual prop to explain a situation to those folks who don't seem to understand the gravity of what your Aries world looks like at this point.

Taurus: One of the easiest culinary treats for me to prepare in the confines of my own trailer is my version of a chili pie. Or Frito Pie.

Or whatever you want to call it. I stop on the way home and pick up a small bag of corn chips. I'll have a few of those corn chips then I'll dump the rest into a bowl, open up a can of Y2K chili, and nuke the whole mess. Almost as good as Sonic or some other drive-in. Or almost any similar location. On a cold winter night, I guess around here I have to use a little imagination, but the nights have been a little cooler recently.

While I was dumping that can of chili onto the chips the other night, I made an unexpected discovery. The "best used by" date. I had one case of Y2K chili that was off brand, and I had one case of Wolf brand. The Wolf brand chili didn't have an expiration date on it. The only date I could find was the fact that the Wolf Brand Chili was started in 1895. I hope that can wasn't that old. The other one, the can I used that night, it did have an expiration date, 10/2002. I did nuke that stuff just a little longer to make sure I cooked out anything that wasn't supposed to be in there. Halloween treats are going to be all over the Taurus chart. You might want to check the expiration date before you serve something up for yourself.

Gemini: Most of the Gemini's I hang around love Halloween. It's time when the rest of the world catches up with the Gemini way of thinking. It's time when an excessive amount of energy is expended on making the outward appearance look scary. Or weird. Or just plain different. Fine. Now, the problem is, you're little Gemini self will tempted to dress up in an elaborate costume, and wear that to work. The deal is, the boss is expecting some real-world results, immediate, real-world results, as only a Gemini can deliver, and those "boss expectations" might come at the expense of elaborate costume design.

So Friday, maybe it's not a good idea to go in your "Casual Friday" Halloween costume dress. You might want to save some of the frightening makeup for later. I've got one Gemini friend, and he's spent a lot of time putting together the right parts and plastic pieces to have a meat cleaver buried in his skull, as the costume. While that might be what the rest of the week actually feels like, you know, showing up for work dressed like that isn't such a good idea.

Cancer: In the good old days of travel, air travel specifically, the air sickness bags were works of art. These days? Usually nothing but a blank bag sandwiched between the in-flight magazine and "shopping in the sky" catalog. If you can locate one of the old-fashioned air

sickness bags, though, on one side, it used to say "Seat Occupied," back to the good old days when the skies were a little more friendly and you could just hop off at any stop to stretch your legs. Around my part of the country, in fact, the bag would usually say, "Occupied" on one side, and "Occupado" [or is it "occupadio"?] on the other side.

Find one of those bags, or make up your own version of one. It's a costume idea, and one you can carry on into next week, as well. You're going to want to use this prop as a way to explain that "you're working on it." Someone undesirable wants to sit down beside you? Occupied. Like the bag says. And if that person persists? Suggest that you might have to use the bag for its original, intended purpose. That usually scares them away. After all, isn't that the point of Halloween? Scare them away? Plus, you get a chance to finish that project you've been working on.

Leo: "It's too late to drain the swamp when you're up to your elbows in alligators," is a familiar expression usually bantered about by my Leo friend from Louisiana. I'm passing that comment your way, because it is from a Leo, and I'm also hoping that the source makes the expression a little more palatable. Careful planning is required. You can't stop on the way home, on the big night, and hope to pick up a cool costume.

Really good costumes require some thoughtful planning to be executed properly. Didn't get much of chance to plan this one? Then don't worry about it. Some matters require your attention at this point in the game, and if you didn't properly plan for one occasion, then it's okay to skip it. Stick to what you planned out. Now, before we get too carried away with the successful execution of the plans, let me finish that thought. You lay some careful plans, then, at the last minute decide to change something. This is going to have a ripple effect, all the way to the edge of the Leo pond. Careful with making a change like that, as it might not turn out the way you expect it. Expectations about the outcome is problematic. Stick to the plan.

Virgo: A little tense are we? A little put out by the whole holiday thing? Come on, celebrate, just a little. Let go of that stuffy Virgo attitude, if only for a minute. "But I don't have a stuffy 'Virgo' attitude, do I? And you're not going to wear that out for a costume, are you?" See what I mean about the attitude? It sort of seeps through, comes in from around the edges, doesn't hit the rest of us

straight up, but it's still there, lurking around. Skulking, even. While this is an inherent Virgo characteristic, it can get on someone's nerves. Won't be me, as I am forever enthralled and amused by delicate Virgo sensibilities.

Yet, what I would caution you about is playing the "good cop" too much. On some of us adults, you don't really need to check what's in our "trick or treat" goodies bag. We are adults, and if we want to indulge in too much candy, and suffer the consequences, you can let us do just that. The real caution comes next week, as our jeans are a little too tight, or maybe we have an upset tummy from too much candy. That's when you really don't want to lapse into that familiar rejoinder, even though you are right, don't hit us with that, "I told you so."

Libra: I was having a plate of seared animal flesh, slow-cooked over hot mesquite coals, the other evening with Bubba. The particular place, supposedly a legend among local barbecue joints, offered two kinds of sauce, regular and "extra spicy." Bubba is a connoisseur of such culinary affectations. "This hot sauce, it's got that typical 'white boy' flavor. You know, they just added cayenne until it was hot enough to burn. But no damn flavor," he grumbled.

In his estimation, and I would tend to agree about that barbecue sauce, it was just hot. Not particularly flavorful, just high on the heat index. Didn't add anything of value to the smoked delicacies. Halloween and beyond? Don't be trying that one trick at the legendary barbecue joint, don't be adding hot spices just for the sake of making something hot enough to burn and thereby covering up the good flavor. Masking some aspect of your life might not really fool a perspicacious bubba, you know.

For the Week of: 11/6-12/2003

"There's a stewed phrase indeed!"

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* [III.i.40]

It's Scorpio time, and I do love me some Scorpio's even if they never see fit to return the love. Been an interesting time so far, and I'll just promise that it gets more interesting as we go.

Scorpio: One more round of happy birthday wishes for the Scorpio slices of the sky! Plus, there's even some better news, just waiting, or just fixing to happen, or maybe, it's going on right now. These portends for the immediate future really are quite good. Only caution I would offer up has to do with increased activity. Sometimes, you know, you just can't be bothered. It was gorgeous fall afternoon the other day. Sun was out [in Scorpio, no less], clear blue sky, day warmed up nicely, and all I could think about was getting away from the keyboard and getting outside.

But the longer I worked, the more tired I got, and then the couch seemed like the place to be. Just a momentary respite from an otherwise busy day, just a chance to rest and relax, right? Next thing I know, I'd slept through the best part of the afternoon, the warmest and most inviting part of the day, and it was getting chilly out. Since I'd left the back door open, I was getting cold. Either I wasted a perfectly good afternoon, taking a two-hour nap on the couch, or I let my internal batteries recharge. I could berate myself for wasting good sunlight, or I could just admit maybe I was doing what I needed most. Hey, if you have to take a nap in the middle of the day? You know what my fine Scorpio friend? That's okay. An afternoon spent doing nothing might be a special birthday gift.

Sagittarius: One of my neighbors came by the other afternoon, "Hey, what are you doing? Want to go have some breakfast? What'd you do last night? Why are you so tired looking, was it fun?" Actually, I'd stayed up late reading a good book. But trying to reconcile my reputation in a trailer park with what I was really doing is a bit difficult. "Oh, so that's what you're calling it these days? 'Reading a book'?" My neighbor laughed at me, and went on her merry way. But I really do live like monk. And particularly these days? It's a good way to live, for us Sagittarius types.

A couple of little influences are floating in our sign right now, mostly Venus, so reading a book is good. Staying up late and looking haggard because it was an exciting text? Sure, Venus allows us a

few little pleasures like that. As long as the Sun is in Scorpio, though, it's good time to let other folks talk about us, and perhaps, we can spend our Sagittarius time in more solitary -- monk-like -- pursuits.

Capricorn: I warned you about this, didn't I? I told you this was going to happen, right? Right. Did you listen? Not particularly. Or you thought my metaphor was a little bit off, or you didn't understand the fishing analogy. Or some other excuse, right? Right. Therein is the problem, there's something that your Capricorn self is not willing to admit, and admitting that there is a problem is the first step in finding a solution, right?

Right. Feel like I'm lecturing a roomful of Capricorn's right now. Feels like I'm looking out over an audience, and that audience is restless, grumbling, and worst of all, not paying attention. The more you pay close attention to what's right in front of you, the better off you'll be.

This has a lot to do with Mr. Saturn. He's trying to drive home a point, and you're not listening. In fact, it feels like we're just not communicating. "What we have here is failure to communicate." Where's that line from? I can't remember. No, don't look it up right now, the source is not important. It's not a trivia question, you'll get no prize for finding a source of that quotation. Or the actor's name. But watch the excuses. And try to pay a little more close attention to certain matters that really do require some Capricorn energy and attention. Best bet is to show up for work a little early, and plan on a few less social engagements these days.

Aquarius: It was one of those moments from the nature channel, or maybe it was a just weird observation by me. I was traversing a narrow avenue near the lake, old neighborhood I once lived in, as a matter of fact, and I glanced up at the racket the birds were making in the Live Oaks, right over my head. I was pretty sure, from previous observations, that these were just common grackles and skinny blackbirds, a common enough sight around here. Much to my dismay, the ruffling, chirping, restless noises were Cattle Egrets. Or Common Egrets. Or I don't know, some kind of leggy, white bird.

Someplace else in town, there's a mess of grackles and blackbirds, all upset that they were displaced for a night. When I tried to

describe the scene to a friend, I told her I had no egrets. "Kramer, that joke didn't fly."

Two points to take from the tale, trying to make bad jokes are usually a set-up for someone else to close with the better rejoinder. Just be aware of that. But more importantly, pay attention to some rather quotidian details that you usually overlook. In the Aquarius life, there's a clue, a hint, a suggestion, and it's right in front of your face. Don't look for something that's too deep or too symbolic, look for that obvious clue right in front of you. Like just glancing up and seeing something that's the same, but different, from what you were expecting.

Pisces: One of my Pisces friends is having a bit of trouble with romance. "Am I magnet for freaks, or what?" Of course, that question no sooner comes out when I hear, "don't even think about answering that with some of your astrological mumbo jumbo, it's a rhetorical question, okay?" Fine with me. Mars is in your sign. Frying his way along, as it were. I'm pretty sure you agree about the frying part, too. I listened to her complain, then we moved onto other topics.

A little later, some guy comes over to us and starts making small talk, obviously angling for my Pisces friend. I wouldn't say that this other male was exactly a winner, though. After he slammed into that Pisces Wall my friend had up, he finally got the cue after three negative responses to his entreaties of passion. The guy wanders off. My Pisces friend looks at me, "Mars right? Are you going to tell me that this is the gender who's responsible for fathoming the definition of matter itself? Sub-atomic physics are a specialty, right? And I can't even get a date?" Look, you can be as frustrated as my friend, wound up tight with that sharp wit, or you can be more proactive about what it that your Pisces self wants. It is Mars, and yes, he's just frying right along. Use it. Or, in her case, abuse it. It can be good.

Aries: Texas is nothing if not a land of extremes. And when there aren't limits, we tend to try to push excess little further than need be. I was wandering through downtown Austin, moments before a University of Texas football game [Hook 'Em Horns]. Two fighter jets streaked overhead, right at ground level, doing some kind of an obligatory flyby. I first I thought the demonstration of fly-jet-power was for the state capital, but the jets' direction, level, and apparent

speed suggested they were targeting the stadium, instead. Probably a sell-out crowd, too.

What was funny to me, in the wake of those jets, a couple of car alarms started to go off. I don't think that was a planned side effect. Careful when you start rattling cages, or other forms of confines, or, for that matter, make an overly exuberant show of your Aries excitement. You might, inadvertently set off a few car alarms, leaving a lingering legacy that's not quite as endearing as your original goal. Of course, standing nearby on a corner someplace, there will be a Sagittarius astrologer, grinning at the sound effects.

Taurus: Some events occur too fast. Sometimes you are forced to render a decision without having adequate time to consider all the options, ramifications and subsequent possible outcomes long before the decision itself is required. "I'm thinking!" is the standard Taurus retort for the time. Nothing's worse than being forced to decide, "yes" or "no" long before you've had your own set Taurus time to consider which answer will serve you best.

The cliché expression around here is "fish or cut bait," which, in and of itself, is pretty funny expression because we really don't spend too much time cutting bait. I tend towards little plastic lures that don't appear to be natural. However, most of those lures are a lot better than anything Nature ever came up with. I know that a bright orange worm, or the frequent winner, the bubble gum pink ones, I realize that they don't resemble anything in Nature's arsenal, but those bits of plastic do work pretty well. But which color is best? At times like this, the best thing to do is just attach something, and go with it. Not having much luck? Blame your decision process and the fact that you were hurried. "I knew I should've used a metal-flake lime-green worm this morning."

Gemini: Sometime around the beginning of November, there will be a few days when it's really nice out. Not in the morning, as it's still cold and damp. Nor in the evening, as it's cold and dark. But sometime, right around the middle part of the day, it's great outside. It's a time when the body just begs to be outside. I prefer a short hike, and I suggest shorts, sandals and a Hawaiian shirt. As near as I can tell, this seems to be an Austin-centric type of attire and weather pattern. But it's just gorgeous.

We've already had one threat of a cold snap, and the days are getting shorter. I understand, that in parts of the country, the "Fall Colors" are out. But around here, it's the cold nights and that brief, Indian Summer weather. Deal is, when I head out on one of these warm afternoons, I usually take a flannel shirt with me, just to be sure I've got some kind of cover once the sun sets. I'm suggesting the same for Gemini. Maybe not in a literal fashion, but more along in a metaphorical sense. Even though something seems deceptively pleasant, a little extra preparation wouldn't hurt.

Cancer: "I'm a Cancer; I'm moody," one of my clients told me during an interview. I don't find that the word "moody" really accurately describes the moods, the tones, the emotional milieu that my representative Cancer feels. "Moody" has a connotation of being, I don't know, like depressed or something. Brooding. Dark, foreboding. None of that is particularly good, at least, it doesn't sound too good.

Of course, there's Saturn in your sign, and yes, he does seem to weigh heavy on a few of the dear Cancer types, but the rest of you? There's no reason to succumb to some outdated wording that really doesn't match what you're feeling. There are highs and lows this week, but the highs are pretty good, and there are more positive influences than there are lows. Might be a problem of two, but those can be easily surmounted if you approach the problem correctly. Try one of my favorite lines, "No problem, I'll get to that just as soon as I can." There are at least two favorable points in the next week, and only one negative position. Do what you can with that, but the odds are, it's better than it has been.

Leo: Slow it down. Don't be too hasty. While I'll agree that Leo is the best Fixed Fire Sign, and while I know that your Leo judgment is usually the very best of any of the signs, there's just a little problem. Scorpio. Old Mr. Sun is in a water sign. Fire and water are supposed to make steam. And they frequently do, make steam.

This involves a situation, which can rapidly escalate into a major shouting match, and that gains your dear, sweet Leo self nothing, if you let this happen. So someone's going to bait you. Next couple of days, probably has something to do with the fast approaching weekend, but this could happen as late as next week. When that other sign baits you, look circumspect. Go easy. Hasty, knee-jerk reactions don't move the situation any further along. It's like throwing more lighter fluid on the barbecue, it just results in larger

flame, doesn't hasten the process of making a good grilling opportunity better. Some situation, much like that grill, needs a little time before you react. In fact, reacting, in and of itself, isn't the best route. Maybe a thoughtful, planned, counter-action would be better.

Virgo: We were towing a boat back from Oklahoma, not long ago. Strange place to fish, but it was okay. I was driving and I didn't have my usual Virgo fishing buddy with me. Instead, I was with a different Virgo client, and we'd had a marginally successful weekend of it. I pulled into a gas station to fill up the truck, and the pump attendant was smoking a cigarette. My Virgo buddy went ballistic, under his breath, complaining about the fire hazard, just sure we were all going to blow up and die a fiery death, roasted like last week's barbecue on the concrete apron of some filling station in middle of some nameless town in Southern Oklahoma.

I can't write the statistics, and I didn't write it down but he was going on and on about "parts per million" and how flammable regular gasoline is, and the fumes, and the effects of carcinogens and so forth. Well, I'm here, and he's there, so we didn't roast. Nothing blew up. But gasoline is flammable. And Virgo is getting a little tense about something. Careful you don't blow up.

Libra: I showed up for a reading at a coffee shop the other afternoon. I had, just outside the coffee house, shrugged into a t-shirt, so I was in one of my "extreme casual" modes. I sauntered up the table and started to rummage around in my pockets, eventually coming up with a phone that calculates astrology charts, three different printed charts and brand-name pen for making notes. "I guess those cargo pockets are your briefcase?" [New client, not familiar with the way I work.]

In the Libra eyes, I was a tad too casual. In the eyes of the astrologer, me, I had everything I needed to work. My aggressively casual style belies the seriousness I employ when I'm reading a chart. Bet you encounter just such a problem, soon. You have a gracious, off-hand manner that belies the seriousness of your approach to the problem. Quick Libra wit, a sharp answer, and grace, a term that's fallen out of favor these days, this all points to a diplomatic manner in which you're addressing a serious bit of trouble.

For the Week of: 11/13-19/2003

"[He is] a subtle slippery knave, a finder out of occasions."

Shakespeare's *Othello* [II.i.240]

The Harmonica Conversion is over, but the astral patterns are just starting to pick up – post-eclipse events.

Scorpio: Life is pretty much wonderful for the trailing edge of the Scorpio birthdays. It may not be the grandest it's ever been, but it's not too shabby, either. There will be one or two, especially with birthdays this week, who will complain. I'd advise using caution before complaining too loudly. Here's the problem. Or, here's an example of the problem. A number of local residents were complaining that a particular TV station, a local news affiliate, was parking its "eye in the sky" traffic chopper right over our neighborhood, in the middle of the morning rush hour, thereby disturbing our peace and quiet.

Trailer park residents in South Austin can be a vociferous group, particularly when it comes to disturbing their peace and tranquility. That affiliate station? They used to run ads about their special brand of journalism and news, focusing on local issues. Consumer issues. Standing up for the little guy. So one plucky resident notified the selfsame station that there was this traffic helicopter violating local sound ordinances and air-traffic rules. Bit of conundrum, huh? The way the planets stack up for you, chances are, you're that loud and raucous neighbor of mine, complaining to the station. But you'd better be careful as next week arrives, you might wind up being the TV affiliate.

Sagittarius: Ever watch a tow-truck drama? I got to see one, just, well, less than a week ago. It was in an apartment parking lot, and I paused long enough to see what was going to happen. First, there's the truck itself, backed up to a late model sedan. Then, two guys were working at putting those little wheels under the front wheel, and it was obvious that the two tow truck drivers had worked together for a while. I mean, it's sort of sad to see your ride picked up and hauled away, but then, should've been thinking about making the payments on time, right? Or whatever the infraction. So these two guys slide the bars under the front, slap the little carrier-tow-dolly wheels on, and crank everything up.

Then some guy comes bolting out of the apartments, talking a mile a minute, trying to reason with the drivers. One of the drivers was

a younger guy, pretty stout in size, with a fierce-looking "Fu Manchu" style goatee. As the (soon to be) towed car owner was gesturing, arguing, pleading, the big guy would just shrug his shoulders and suggest it was all out of his hands. The other driver was already in the cab, ready to roll. Problem is, to some folks, that car is an extension of their manhood.

Getting it towed away, and I never did get all the details, but I think it had to do with late payments, is a horrible feeling, no matter what the cause. Imagine what that poor driver had to listen to, as well, all the excuses, some abuse, and a few profanities, not particularly artful vulgarities, if you ask me. Mars, in Pisces, reminds us about something we should've done. If you paid attention, then you're like the tow-truck driver, the object of scorn, yet, in your mind, you know you're just "doing your job." Of course, you might be the one who's getting towed, too. You can always say, "I towed you so."

Capricorn: Ran into a Capricorn friend the other afternoon. She was in rare form. Actually, if you know this person, you'd understand that she was in "normal" mode, but to the rest of the folks at the lunch counter, she was in rare form. She was hammering on and on about all the characters who have recently forced their way into her life. Business partners who are slackers, clients who are slackers, bankers who are slackers, in short, just about everyone she encountered was a slacker. She's obviously a Capricorn - not a slacker.

Hard-working, industrious, fair-minded, and, of course, I have sneak in a sexist comment, easy on the eyes. Rather fetching, if you ask me. But no one did ask me. The other males in the group, that afternoon, would agree. Not unlike her, you've made some decisions lately, and your Capricorn brain stem is starting to question your own judgment. No, in the long run, in the big picture, over all, none of these recent decisions are going to hurt you. In the short run though? I'm sure you're still questioning yourself. Find a lunch counter full of sympathetic folks for the purpose of venting. When you hear your own words, you'll be surprised because you'll also find your own solution to the problems.

Aquarius: One of the longest running TV cartoon ever? Scooby-Doo. One of the points somebody recently explained to me in a reading was that the guilty person - in every episode - was the second character encountered. I don't know, I don't own a TV, and I never

watched that program often enough to see. What I always liked was the sense that there was always something else going on in the back of the Mystery Machine. Plus, the program itself was so 1970's, it was just a classic. All right, I'm sure there are many references from other literary sources, about how certain formulas work. Script conventions, patterns, actions characters take that lead to expressions like "Zoiks!"

And you get to have some cartoon-type of fun in the next couple of days, too, as you madly scamper around trying to gather up clues as to what is going on. But when the dust settles, or when it gets time for the wrap up, and as you unmask that guilty party, you're bound to realize it was, indeed that second character you encountered on your personal odyssey for the last couple of days. Straight up plot device. Nothing unusual here. Maybe that's the problem, it all looks like a script so you're tempted, in your own Aquarian fashion, to not follow the script. Don't miss some obvious clues because you keep trying to deviate from the script conventions.

Pisces: Sage advice, "When in Rome, shoot roman candles." Think about it. I was worried that you would go off on some unsuspecting, poor, innocent person, you know, blow up at some soul, and then I got to thinking about it. Given the normal Pisces temperament, I can't see you just going off on somebody for no reason. But woe be to the person who crosses your Pisces path in an unsuspecting manner, as you're on a tear.

Two causes, part of it is the way Jupiter is and Mars are interacting at the moment, and part of it has to do with the relative position of Miss Moon. Since some of these influences are rather mercurial in nature, why not leave the Mars and Jupiter influence alone? Or, if you get so motivated, then why not shoot off roman candles instead of involving yourself in real-or allegorical-firefight?

There's really no good, hardcore reason to get your self all worked up over a perceived slight. Mars, ah yes, Mr. Mars, we've talked a lot about him, haven't we? He's working you over in a big way, and instead of succumbing to his negative influences, put that energy to good use. Go for the fireworks, not the firefight.

Aries: Mercury and Venus move in coherent harmony to let you find some peace in your Aries world. That's the good news. No

sooner do I suggest that there's good news than you suggest that there's the other side to this problem. I was out by the park, on the trail, making my way home, or maybe I was outbound to meet a client someplace, I don't recall. My direction is not important.

What I noticed was a young lady walking her amazing-looking dog. I think it was a Husky, or Malamute, or one of those weird wolf-looking guys with the piercing blue eyes (for a dog). The pair, the lady and the dog, were jogging along when, all of sudden, the dog tugs at his lead, and stops to sniff something. Dogs do that sort of thing. Then, this incredibly beautiful dog has to stop and roll in the grass. Or whatever it was he was sniffing. As I walked passed, I grinned, and the lady rolled her eyes.

Doesn't matter which one you wind up being, the dog on the lead or the lady leading the dog, sometimes, nature has to be appeased. For some of us, a good roll in something stinky is just ever so refreshing. For other's a good jog is refreshing. Whatever. Or, not to mince words, whatever works best for Aires.

Taurus: The holiday season is fast approaching, and it's time to do something about your sad state of affairs. Scratch that introduction, let's start over. The holiday season is fast approaching and it's high time we got some affairs going for Taurus. Nope, that one didn't work, either. Skip it all. The holidays are not far off, and it's time to do something fun for yourself, for others, and no one but yourself can get anything going.

So it is up to you, up to your fine, sweet, demure Taurus self to get all the little ducks in a row, get everything lined up that you want to have happen, and then make it all work. Pull out the appointment book, or the electronic date organizer, or whatever it is that you use, and look at the blank spots. Got a few of those, and they need to be filled up. No one looks out better for you than yourself. Of course, I look out for Taurus as well, but that's not the question. How do you get something going? How do you find excitement when there's none to be found? There's a tickle of an idea, something working through the back part of your brain, some ideas that you've flirted with, and it's time to put those ideas to work for you. Don't be afraid to go back and mine a few of the strange notions that you've had in the past. You'd be surprised how that pays off.

Gemini: I found a really cute cigar quote from Groucho Marx, and I was going to use it in your scope when I realized that about 90% or

better of the Gemini folks I know fail to appreciate the delicate, subtle and supreme pleasure of just such a comment. And a good cigar. Nope, I was afraid that the quote would upset rather than amuse the Gemini readership.

That's the problem with the way the planets are stacking up, someone comes along and makes what seems to be an indelicate comment. Before you jump all over that poor person, stop and consider the source of the information, and then think about what the intended purpose of the comment is supposed to be. Your Gemini perceptions might be a little frazzled. It's not like you're fried, or that you're being chased, or chastised, or any combination of those, it was supposed to be a funny comment.

Problem being, you're a little more emotional than usual. One of my off-the-cuff comments would catch you a little wrong. Unfortunately, not every one is Gemini-sensitive at this point, so some other person will probably come along with that same Groucho Marx quote, and it might get your Gemini dander in an uproar.

Cancer: This is one of those stories that gets a little convoluted. A friend of friend arranged for some tickets to see a special show, and I wound up sitting next to a woman who would later seek me out for some kind of astrological enlightenment. "I thought you were from the Meat Puppets. You know, you kind of look like that guitar player...." See, the friend of a friend, also bagged tickets for the woman sitting next to me. But no, I'm not a guitar player. Or a musician. Or a promoter. Or anything else like that, I'm just a writer who churns out horoscopes.

So it wasn't fate, and that woman making eyes at me wasn't going to get a dream date with some famous musician. Just the way it goes. No big brush with fame. No close call with someone really famous. Just an ordinary guy with long hair, sorry. It's going to happen to you, this week, as well, same astrological configuration. One of those tricks of Saturn plus the Moon and some other influences. You're probably like that woman sitting next to me in the reserved seats, a little let down that I'm not some famous guitar player. And like me, you're going to be moaning about this. Just once, is that too much to ask for, just once, I want to hear some famous musician get asked, "Hey, aren't you that guy who writes astrofish.net?"

Leo: Aesthetics are usually very important to a delicate and wonderful Leo nature. I fixed a home-made "frito pie" the other evening, which is basically a bag of corn chips and a can of chili poured over those chips, then nuke the whole mess until something smells cooked. In fact, I tired it a little different than usual, setting it all in the nuker, and then letting it go on a low setting for several minutes as I was doing laundry at the time. Because normal seasonings usually aren't hot enough for me, I'd sprinkled a couple of tablespoonfuls of cayenne, more my nod to cooking expertise, I layered the pepper on top of the chips but under the chili.

When I got back from pumping quarters in the laundry machine, the trailer had this wonderful aroma like a drive-in, or like the convenience store around the corner, their version of hot dogs rotating in the glass display, way over-cooked. It was an excellent repast, if I do say so myself. That little trick of cooking slow seemed to work. Besides, it's virtually impossible to burn chili.

Your Leo sense of aesthetics could use a little help these days. It's not what it used to be. Or it's not what it could be. That heaping portion of cayenne pepper was the trick ingredient that made everything wonderful and it's what added to the aromatic sense that there was good food waiting on me when I popped back into the trailer. Be warned, though, you and me? Our sense of taste? It might not fly with everyone else.

Virgo: "Man, I like reading your scopes, and you know, Kramer, you're usually pretty good. But the past few weeks, you've been all wrong about Virgo." It was a typical exchange, I'd run into a Virgo friend while I was out, and he wasn't happy. He went on to enumerate my various foibles and weaknesses, calling into question dubious parental lineage, my family, his family, how much money he was losing as a result of some ill-timed mistake, based on some off-hand comment I'd made about the goodness of Jupiter in Virgo.

I could see his face getting red, then redder, as I was sure his blood pressure was going into the danger zone. He started out friendly enough, but once he got going, and before he was done, I'd been called many bad words. In a situation like this, I've got a relatively thick skin. It wasn't like he was paying me for advice, I'd merely commented that the lucky star was in Virgo. Mars is also opposite that lucky star, and that opposition is going to create a little tension. Before you haul off and get all worked up about yelling at me, sure I can take it, but before you do that, stop and think about

the root source for that frustration. Is it really legitimate to blame the horoscope's author for a situation you've created yourself?

Libra: One of my regular clients called me in panic, worried that I needed to check a few astrology charts, and offered me a princely sum in order to assuage her worries. Seems that this particular person has a child, and the child wanted to have "that talk" with the parental unit. It's about sex. It's about talking frankly and openly about topics that must scare some parents. Or children.

Or it might be a topic that has been swept under the cover of something - like the rug, or hidden under blanket in the corner, or, in the case of my place, it might be like that cat toy languishing under the couch. It's a typical cat toy, only now, it's covered with dust balls and stray clumps of cat fur, all that stuff I don't dare touch. I consider it all organic and just let it be.

Unlike me, though, you're coming up with topic in the next few days that has to be addressed. Might not be "that talk" with offspring about from whence babies come, but I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if it's a chat along similar lines. Plus, there's the added discomfort you feel from having to have "that talk" with that particular person. Jump right on in, you don't really need someone to tell you it's okay to be honest.

For the Week of: 11/20-26/2003

"I profit not by thy talk."

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* [V.i.13]

It's like riding in a boat that has a leak or two, we're bailing here as fast as we can, and we've got almost all the holes stoppered. However, if you encounter any technical difficulties with the website or accessing the current scopes, mail the webmaster from the site index link. And like the website, we're still sweeping up from that last round of lunar actions.

Scorpio: Watch this weekend. Watch out for a big blow-up of some kind, something that really gets under your Scorpio skin, and whatever it is, there's a high probability that this event will just piss you off to no end. Could be something as simple as an editorial in the paper, or an editorial comment by a friend, or, in my case, an editor that doesn't like my choice of words and lack of coherent thought.

Patience, my fine Scorpio friend, patience. This little conflagration will pass. I know it upsets you to the very core of your existence but if you'll wait for a few minutes, a few moments, or even a few days, you're going to find that the truth will emerge, and once again, the world will recognize that you—yes, you the Scorpio—were absolutely correct. This is a lot like deer hunting, as apt a metaphor as any. You have to spend a terrible amount of time in a deer blind, just waiting for that one shot. Patience is important. Patience is in short supply. The good hunter, the good Scorpio, is willing to wait, in order to get the best shot. Or win. Or both.

Sagittarius: Gearing up for T-Day is a big deal. But the week preceding it, the duration of this scope, especially the weekend that's almost here? Take it easy. Until the Sun himself pokes his unruly head into Sagittarius, it's best to go slow, take it easy, make a list of people you want to see when it's your birthday, and make serious Sagittarius effort not to step on anyone's toes.

You'd be inclined to go stomping through some other sign's quadrant, turf, or field of vision, and you'd be inclined to upset what's going on with their world. You and me, our Sagittarius selves, we're not the kind to go and walk daintily when it's just so much easier to go striding and stomping. The problem is, until it's actually Sagittarius time, such actions tend to draw a little extra, unwarranted attention to ourselves. It's a good weekend for some

signs, and it can be a good weekend for us, but it's also a good time to lay low. How much longer? Just a few days. Next week? Sagittarius starts. Stomp, stride and make all the racket and commotion you want. Until then? I'm hanging out inside, out of harm's way. Sitting-instead of stomping.

Capricorn: I was dining with a friend of mine, nicknamed Bubba, the other evening. Until he got his most recent girlfriend, he was loath to carry a cell phone into a restaurant as he considered that an example of rude behavior. Never bothered me, but I'm not up on the latest cell phone etiquette. The phone chirped, he glanced at the incoming number, didn't recognize it, and he answered politely. He listened for moment, then had this great comeback, "Killing him would certainly help you feel better about yourself, plus you'd be doing the rest of us a favor."

The conversation, pretty much one-sided, continued for a few more minutes before he rang off the call. "Man, I didn't recognize the number, I couldn't get a good picture of who it was from the voice, I didn't know who it was. Took me a while to figure it out. That why I said that, trying to get a clue, you know, maybe she'd say a name then I'd know who I was talking to."

Like my friend with the nickname Bubba, you answer a call, or get an anonymous note, or something similar, and you're stuck, trying to figure out from whom it came. You can try on of his less than delicate ploys, but I suggest that a more forward, "Who is this?" works much better. I know, it won't look good, or sound good, at the time, but sometimes, appearances aren't what they seem – ironic, isn't it?

Aquarius: Seems like I've spent an inordinate amount of time watching the cat lately. Means I've been stuck in a little trailer, doing my best to observe nature, such as it is, right in front of me. You're like me, see, we need to spend a portion of this time relaxing within the confines our own domicile, or whatever you care to call your Aquarius domestic situation. The cat likes it. The days are noticeably shorter, and the early evenings just seem to invite staying inside.

I was watching the Mistress of the Trailer while she was either gorging herself on sumptuous brand name, old lady cat food, or, a little later, she was cleaning her self as cats are wont to do. She was in an awkward position, and she glanced up at me, then let

loose with a little mew of distaste. Seems that part of her copious body was out of reach. She would reach and stretch, but given her considerable girth, there were just some places she couldn't quite reach.

She didn't growl, it was more a complaint. It was also an event, a little picture, that I wouldn't get a chance to see if I hadn't been home on a winter's evening (it was cold that night), and if I hadn't been looking at the cat for some way to tickle the muse. You're face to face with a similar problem. I seriously doubt that you're trying to lick portions of your body, or that you're covered with a silky fur, but you never can tell with Aquarius. There's something that's little out of reach. Problem being, there's not much you can do but complain. I'd suggest staying in for a night or two, just to relax some.

Pisces: One of my friends who works the same circuit as I do had snapped some pictures of me. In the picture, one of my fishing buddies had stopped by to ridicule me, and maybe get a reading about his future winter fishing prospects or something. He was wearing a camouflage hunting shirt, and seeing us both in the same picture, me with a Hawaiian shirt, him with a camo shirt, I noticed something kind of spooky: On film, in the picture, the two shirts looked remarkably similar. In fact, at first glance, I just thought he was making fun of me by wearing a similar print shirt to what I usually wear.

Not quite, but it took a little extra time to study the photograph and realize just which shirt he was wearing. Now, in the immediate Pisces future, I can see that you're going to be face-to-face with a similar proposition. You take one glance at a piece of evidence, and immediately assume that someone is holding you up as ridicule, maybe making fun of you. Before you get too hasty about the conclusion, though, look carefully at the evidence. With some fashion trends, with some of us clothes horses, it's hard to tell Hawaiian Print from Camouflage. The question might not be about fashion, either, but before you reach a hasty and negative conclusion, consider looking at the picture again. Mars makes you hasty. No need to get too hasty.

Aries: There's a very slow shift occurring, and as next week gets here, I mean, after the weekend, then you'll agree that you can feel the shift going on. But until the weekend is over, I'd suggest that you just hold it down a bit. It's not as bad as it has been, but you're

not really on a solid foundation quite yet. Great ideas, good stuff, a little low level depression is lingering, but that's more like weather, although, its roots are astrological weather.

In the northern hemisphere, the days are feeling a lot shorter, as the wintertime really sets itself in. Nothing is more enjoyable on these long winter nights than being up under the heat of the reading lamp, the cat asleep on my belly, some good book keeping my attention. Until you can actually feel the shift, the Sun going into Sagittarius, the Moon slipping through Sagittarius, too, until that's done with, it's going to be a little off, but trust me, "It's getting better all the time." (the Beatles) If you don't feel it right away be patient with me. Also be patient with your self, it's going to be getting better.

Taurus: Life is getting easier. Maybe not quite yet, as there's one decision you have to reach before we can all move forward. For me, it was a simple, binary choice. I had to look at the weather and make a guess whether or not I could fish this weekend. "You're in the business of prognostications, what do you think?" My fishing buddy asked me. As far as fishing went, the best I could do was a definite "maybe."

I wanted to wait and see if we really had one of those, high, cool, clear mornings that are bitterly cold by my standards, and then as the sun creeps up in the winter sky, it just all gets really nice. I wasn't sure that I was up for sitting in a boat, freezing and shivering, and then having to peel clothing off as the day got warmer. So when you're faced with a binary decision, there's no room for waffling. It's either a yes or a no, but not some place in between. I opted out of fishing that morning, even though it did turn into a nice weekend. I'm a bit of a pansy when it comes to sitting in boat in subfreezing temperatures. Just not my style. Might not be yours, either. It's okay to forgo some pleasures like fishing because the weather might or might not cooperate. Or some a similar decision.

Gemini: "A woman is an occasional pleasure but a cigar is always a smoke" [attributed to Groucho Marx]. After last week's deluge of questions about which quote I was referring to, I couldn't help but run with it. So that's the quote and the attribution. Whether or not it's really true, whether or not Groucho really said that, I tend to believe that it's a subjective answer. Particularly in the company of certain cigars, I would tend to believe that even a mid-range cigar,

something that used to be referred to as a "cheap cigar," one of those is really pretty good.

Wouldn't know a thing about a cheap women, despite my reputation, it's not a topic I'm familiar with at all. The planets are creating a little disturbance of sorts, not like it's a big deal, but there's a lot of little deals that are trying to get you upset. Sometimes, a good, inexpensive cigar, a few moments of time spent caressing, the circumcision, and igniting is almost as important as the cigar itself. Might be the little rituals that you do, might be actions, or it could be you're just relaxed from going through the steps, but there's something to it all. A good, cheap cigar is my suggestion—or whatever it is that you do—to relax.

Cancer: I had this witty, written repartee going back and forth with a particular Cancer girl, all e-mail. It was cute, it was fun, and it worked for a spell. But there was a problem, see, in an effusive moment, I had gushed something I ought not have gushed. Or written. Man, that's the problem with e-mail, once it's committed to a print medium, some folks save that stuff, like, forever. That one gushy comment came back to haunt me, about a year later, when she reminded me, in a subsequent e-mail, about something I'd written a year before.

"But you promised, remember?" was the comment. In my mind, that was then, this is now, and the two are separated by a wide gulf of time. That's a problem, at least, for me it was. I'd forgotten everything I'd promised. But a quote from that original message was fired back to me, just to remind me. The problem you're facing this next couple of days, especially on the trailing edge of the scope, like the beginning of next week, is that someone is going to fire some bit of text back at you. Or remind you about a snarky comment you made that might—or might not—be funny. Or it could be something that you really don't want to be reminded of at all. "But you promised it would be better, and that you would fix it yourself," was how my note started. Never hurts to be a little prepared for this stuff.

Leo: The week before the big holiday season starts is usually fraught with tensions. Marketing hype, media, it all plays on both on our conscious and subconscious minds. You're going to keep thinking about things you're supposed to do, places you figure you're supposed to be, and certain events that require your attention. "I should have gotten that T-shirt (bauble, trinket,

expensive toy) for my favorite astrologer," is what would typically be running through your mind.

Yes, I've got birthday, the day after T-Day. Don't worry about me, a nice card* will package up those \$entiments just fine. It's the thought that counts. Deal is, your fine Leo mind is racing, and there's no slowing it down. The other part of that "racing mind" syndrome is that the rest of the world isn't up to speed with you. That's a problem. I can help with the frustration you're feeling, but I can only offer a little assistance. "Recognizing that you have a problem is the first step in fixing the problem," is the sad and tired platitude bantered about. Leo: you're faster, better equipped, and brighter than everyone else at this point. Go easy on the rest of us, let us catch up to you.

*Kramer Wetzel

P.O. Box 684516

Austin, TX 78768

Virgo: I had to call up the bank the other day to straighten out one of their errors. My first call got switched into a place where you have to punch in your account number, the code number, an all kinds of useless details like the dog's name. I don't even have a dog, don't ask me what that had to do with anything. I settled down, one hand wrapped around a mug of tea, another idly caressing the phone as I got switched from one perky operator to another, and then that first call eventually hit dial tone.

I was sort of expecting this to happen, you know, after you've dealt with Federal, State and Local officials, plus the odd cop or two, I understand that everything is done a certain way to insure my privacy and protection. Check out my disclaimers some time, which about covers it all. So I took sip of the tea, and started dialing again. Did I mention I was using a headset? It's the only way to deal with such exigencies. Besides, I knew that it was going to take some time. I had to dial about four times, I had to enter account information a half-dozen times, and I finally got some customer service.

The account problem was--eventually--solved. Now, I could have gotten all worked up over this. I could've gotten all bent out of shape, but that wouldn't have turned up the missing \$10 any faster. Besides, no large corporate banking institution ever wants to admit that it was wrong. So when they start asking for the dog's

name, or some other question, take a sip out of the hot cup of tea, feel the tepid brew warm your bones, take a deep breath, and answer patiently.

Libra: You now that Turkey Day is just around the corner? I was hoping you were paying attention to such details. See, there are some events that are fast approaching the Libra section of the sky, but these events are not here yet. You can, however, get prepared. Nothing like doing a little work in advance—in order to be properly prepared for what's ahead. I was thinking about one particular Libra personality, I worked with this individual off and on for years.

Funniest thing happened when that one personality got distressed, he would forget some important comment made moments earlier. I had to remind him about 43 times that I wasn't available on a certain date. But he had it stuck in his head that I was going to be there, and I couldn't get him to shake the thought. "So you'll be there this Saturday?" he would ask. "No, I'll be out of town," I would answer, "I told you three weeks ago." I think he was planning on fishing, only, he forgot that he did check with me, and I was busy. Or something. "So I can count on you for Saturday morning?" he would ask a few minutes later. While I was infinitely amused by this exchange as I could see the comic elements, I'm pretty sure my Libra friend wasn't nearly as amused as I was.

In the next few days, you can't say that I didn't warn you, you're going to be just like my Libra buddy, going back over old ground, covering material you've already covered, and I only hope that you're dealing with someone like me—a person who understands that you're little distracted. My other suggestion is to take notes. You might need to refer back to some point that you absolutely refuse to hear.

For the Week of: 11/27-12/3/2003

"How fooling grows old, and people dislike it."

Shakespeare's *12th Night* (I.v.111)

Of note for the ages...

Sagittarius: It used to be that retail was a noble pursuit. It used to be that retail meant something. These days, it's a lot different. Retail is one heck of a battleground, of sorts. It's ugly out there. Last time I tried to get some "customer service," my entreaties were met with a rude and abusive assistance, I'm not even sure I got assisted, either, I think I was just shown the back door and told to leave.

Don't feel sorry for me, I'm used to this sort of behavior, especially times being what they are. It would be nice if we could all return to that time when clerks were hired to help customers, instead of the current crop of surely individuals. However, in their defense, if you had to deal with a group of rude folks, each with a particular problem, you might start to get a little surly yourself. Few Sagittarius types work in retail, but that doesn't mean you're not dealing with some of the same flavor of energies. Do something different, act nice. That'll shake the other person up. Sure beats getting tossed out the back door of the store like I was.

Capricorn: One of my regular clients isn't really a Capricorn, but in that natal chart, Saturn lines up exactly with the Sun. Makes for a special, sly and sardonic Capricorn flavor in the chart. What exactly is the Cappy flavor? It's a bit bitter and brittle these days, not exactly in the best of form. Sure, Venus is in your sign, as well as Mercury, but that doesn't add enough to make it all balance out too well. And therein lies the challenge: balance.

You have things you want to do (like go fishing) and you have things you need to do (like go to work) and unless you can package this all up in a good way, then you're stuck with a somewhat brittle attitude because—and this obvious to folks around you—you don't want to be here. Doesn't much matter where "here" is, it's not where you want to be. My suggestion? Just because you don't want to be here, that doesn't mean you can't engage some of that Venus inspired influence and enjoy wherever it is that you seem to find yourself.

Aquarius: Mystical revelations come from many different sources. It could be a divine, apocryphal experience. It could also be a

something a little more mundane. I started keep track of what tacqueria served the best breakfast tacos. One place that I found, it's not there all the time, and it's not open all the time, because it's a "deals on wheels" kind of a restaurant, was just a trailer parked on a busy street corner. The hired help didn't speak much English, which usually made for an interesting transaction, as the hand-lettered sign outside the mobile kitchen included "Huevos and Bacon," or, as I would ask for it, "Huevos y Bacon."

I'm pretty sure that "Bacon" is not a Spanish word. A street-side vendor peddling breakfast tacos isn't the usual source of spiritual enlightenment. But bare with me, on one of those warm afternoon in the Texas sun, your Aquarius butt parked on milk crate while sitting outside of just such a place, watching the traffic go by? You'd be surprised just what you can learn. Some of the greater messages are in the little details. At the very least, you might find a truly delicious and affordable breakfast taco.

Pisces: One of my fishing buddies was telling me about, "Bait that bites." I was amused, so I looked this stuff up on the web. At first, the only I could find was plastic versions of the critter he was describing. Then, a little further, digging around in a search engine, I can across a link to the biology department at the agricultural & mechanical university, and there it was. Pictures of this larval form of Dobson fly, and those were some mean looking pincers on those larvae.

My buddy went to great length to describe what his experience was like with that form of live bait, "It'll draw blood. No, really it will." My buddy went to tell a story about friend who had a friend who actually used that kind of bait. Seems that the little pincers on the end of the larva would, indeed draw blood. Nasty stuff. I suppose that could be an episode for daytime TV, "Bait that bites." My suggestion? You might not be fishing for big bass, but I would definitely look out for bait that bites. Or bait that bites back. Or bait that is certainly more dangerous than the fish itself.

Aries: Rolling a scope out on Turkey Day is a little weird for me. The day, since it's an American Holiday, is lost in the global schematic. It's not a holiday based upon the seasons, or the movement of the planets, or anything useful and timely such as that. Plus there's the problem that no readers outside of the States really understand T-Day. As an Aries, you're starting to think in such global terms. It's been a gradual process, not like you woke up

one morning, and realized, "Those poor souls in Europe and Australia, they don't get to sit around, stuffed with Turkey, and watch bowl games (American Football), all afternoon, surrounded by friends and family. 'Tis a pity."

I would suggest it just sort of gets you right here, and then I make a gesture towards the center of my chest. That gesture, it could imply one of two things, either this is a heartfelt and sincere feeling of sorrow and pity, or, it could also imply (this is a cultural gesture) that I've got heartburn. If something tugs at your "heartstrings" long enough, especially during our American Holiday season, be careful that it doesn't develop into "heartburn." Watch out for an excessive amount of emotional sympathy that develops into a stomach ache. Or headache, from feeling too sorry for those souls who don't have a T-Day. Or for feeling sorry for those of us who have to spend it with family.

Taurus: The last hardcore set of statistics I looked at suggested that 50% of first marriages ended in divorce. When face-to-face with a family holiday like T-Day, that can make for some confusing, and ultimately difficult arrangements. Don't know where to turn to, which family member is supposed to be where, that sort of problem. As a Taurus, you're busy thinking about baking and cooking, only, this presents another problem: the seating chart for the family dinner table. Which couple is supposed to be here this week, compared to which couple is going to be with their other set of parents, and you see how this rapidly becomes a nightmare, as you're unsure about who is going to do what, right?

I feel your Taurus pain. I sympathize. But as I've got a couple of ex-wives I will probably never, ever see again, and Sister is happy with her single relationship, then life, for my family, is okay. Not everyone is so lucky. Managing family arrangements, or just try to control who is going where and doing what with whom is a big chore for your Taurus self. The less you try make everyone else happy, and the more you just look after what you know how to do best, the happier this holiday season will be. I know it might offend your delicate Taurus sensibilities, but when an extra couple of mouths show up, expecting to be fed, grab some paper plates you thoughtfully set aside. You can accommodate everyone, it's just matter of being prepared.

Gemini: I'm reminded of a slice of Texas History when looking at your chart. It was a late April afternoon, in 1836, and the terror of

South Texas, the dictator of Mexico, Santa Anna corned Sam Houston and his motley assortment of irregulars in a bayou at San Jacinto. While the Mexican forces were confident, having overrun most of South and Central Texas, and while they were taking their afternoon siesta, the Texas forces, avenue of retreat cut off by water, snuck up and reduced the opposing army by nearly one half in a battle that didn't last very long.

T-Day begs for a little siesta, too. However, if you take a nap, you might just miss some brilliant military opportunity. Personally, I'm all for the plucky band of motley Gemini irregulars. Always have been in favor of them. Doesn't hurt your motivation to be tuned to the absolute best pitch possible, a little hungry, a little angry, and most of all, a little cornered. Sure helps with the motivation. If you rest on you past accomplishments at this point, you might get overrun and defeated. But stay aware and alert? I'll promise a scintillating Gemini victory.

Cancer: Two planets bear consideration. One is, of course, that long-term miser, Mr. Saturn, now backing through Cancer. The other is Venus, that darling little planet, now arcing her way through Capricorn. I'm seeing this, especially for that one certain Cancer, as a time of certain, important, aesthetic decisions. One of my Cancer buddies, no, I don't fish with the guy, he's just a passing acquaintance, is one of the sharpest dressed hombres I know. He has a certain knack for pulling together a shirt, trousers, and a tie, to make himself look like a million bucks. He's got sales job, so yes, dress is important. He still manages to pull it all off, and he looks studiously casual although he's dressed for making the big bucks.

What's his secret? Thrift stores. Goodwill, Salvation Army, and Austin's host of "second hand" stores, places like St. Vincent de Paul and New Bohemia down on South Congress Ave. Take a page from my buddy's book about Cancer tastes and the problems with Saturn (and Venus), look in nooks and crannies where you don't usual go. While price doesn't always have to be a consideration, given the times and Cancer's astrological climate, a little bit of the cheap stuff, done appropriately, goes a long way. Never can tell when you'll pick a decades old tie that is currently fashionable.

Leo: When I was last shopping for a pickup truck, looking for a good (used) vehicle, I noticed that the prices for trucks in Texas were substantially higher than anyplace lese. A pickup truck is some sort of statement, I reckon. Or required. I'll wager that most of the

trucks see very little, if any, real use. Heck, I use mine to carry groceries, but that's about the only time the back of the truck ever gets used for its intended purpose. Maybe tow a boat from time to time, but once again, that's not really a task that requires a truck. Still, it's almost a point of pride to have such a vehicle.

My tastes run towards older models, one with a little wear and tear, maybe a seat cover that has big hole punched from where the tool belt from the previous owner wore on a spot. Old trucks are a finicky lot, too, as they require a little roadside maintenance from time to time, quite unlike a new vehicle.

With one brand of truck, I used to carry a \$3 "voltage regulator" in the glove box. Seems that this one little electrical part would go out at the most inconvenient times. Screwdriver, pliers, and about three minutes, and the problem would be fixed. Then I'd return the dead part, get the core exchange, and spend maybe \$1 on a new spare. After a while, it quit breaking so frequently.

Look, sometimes it's not a big deal. Being a little extra prepared, like having the right spare part with you? That goes a long way in making this holiday time better. I'm just warning you that there might be a tiny delay due mechanical problems. Like the oven isn't hot enough for the turkey, you know, it takes an extra hour to cook it. Or you didn't get enough propane for the turkey deep fryer. Just be ready for little problems--not big ones--to interrupt the holiday flow. It's not bad, it's just a reminder that there will be a few little--hopefully comic--delays.

Virgo: Appropriate Shakespeare quote this week, huh? While it was really intended as much for me as anybody, seeing as how this is a birthday week for me, I couldn't help but wonder if I'm the only one who's feeling like this. After closely perusing your chart, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't the only one. The fun and games with the holiday, and its concomitant family fallout is a little tiresome. You can only take so much of the togetherness, and you can only take so much of the family's predictably bad behavior.

Which cartoon character was it who used to say, 'I've had all I can stands and I can't stands no more'? Sure, it's not a grammatically correct sentence, but you've had about all you can take of the fooling around, and most of the Virgo types I know don't suffer fools gladly. (To be honest, they do suffer me, but I'm not an ordinary fool, I'm a Fool's Fool, according to what I've been told.)

So? Take it easy on the rest of us, it's party time, or it's supposed to be. You might practice your "rolling the eyes" movement, just so you feel better about your sweet Virgo self. Some of the rest of the signs are going to be pretty silly.

Libra: Deep-fried turkey, sure is good. However, in my many exploits with my own family, I've found that it often times best to steer away from the turkey on the big day. Do something different. While traditions and traditional fare is okay, the best solutions are often found by working around the outside of the problem. On the periphery, as it were. Instead of tackling the big problem straight on, look around the edges to see if there is a flaw, or a weakness that can be exploited.

Like I suggested, doing something different is sometimes better. One year, I had very rare tuna for T-Day. Almost like sushi, and we were along the coast, so it was an excellent dish, fresh from the sea. Another time? Baby-back ribs. Again, this is not usual fare, but why be limited by convention? Working along the edges, seeing what else is on the menu, making a few substitutions, you'd be surprised just what that will get you. Don't tackle that big feast, or whatever the problem is, by going straight into with the rulebook. Around here, I tend to look at rules more as guidelines rather than absolutes. Try that. After all, a lot of this is open to interpretation.

Scorpio: Times are tough for a lot of people. Not much I can do to make that better, not immediately, and it's not my fault. However, I can make a few good suggestions about what you can do with your personal Scorpio life instead, to make your life easier. While that won't solve any world problems, that will help some in your world.

T-day leads to Black Friday, and that lends itself to shopping. To thoroughly twist up a cliché, how about "Shop smarter, not harder"? Did I use this one yet? I might have, but I doubt it. It doesn't apply to just everyone, either, it's targeted straight at Scorpio. You're a little more creative as you can display a mental adroitness usually reserved for more acerbic astrological signs. This is good. Put this mental presence to work for you by "shopping smarter, not harder." Use that extra cranial capacity to make events turn in your favor. Mantra for the week, "Smarter, not harder."

For the Week of: 12/4-10/2003

"If you be mad, be gone:/If you have reason, be brief."

Shakespeare's *12th Night* (I.v.200-1)

Still holiday shopping? Couple of three ideas, and one is – of course – a chart report from us here at the main office. The other idea is rather controversial, but fits out humor.

Sagittarius: Pretty spectacular birthdays this week. Much fame, much fortune. Much good stuff. Don't you just hate when your birthday falls so close to Xmas? It's not like you haven't heard this one before, "Here, it's a combined birthday/Xmas gift..."

Look on the bright side, at least you're getting something. Some of the other signs? They're not that fortunate. Money's tight, and it will be a while before anything really opens up. Put on that Sagittarius happy face and enjoy whatever the next couple of days brings by way of good fortune.

The approaching full moon will set off a few alarms in your Sagittarius head. "Don't panic," as those alarms are tending to be false alarms these days. I watched as a Low Rider with a rather loud sound system rolled slowly past a parked luxury sedan. The bass from that modified, lowered vehicle was enough to set off the alarm. You can be either vehicle, but the fancy car with its alarm? The battery drained before the alarm shut off.

Capricorn: Direct your copious Capricorn attention outside of yourself. Direct your attention elsewhere. Someone needs your assistance, and only you can save the day. It's up to you. You do have Venus in your sign, and she makes everything you touch seem to go better. Mostly. So use that extra fine, delicate expression and make life better for someone else.

Use your Venus-inspired ability to figure out what you can do for that other person. Might be a big deal, might be small deal. "God is in the details," is the expression I've heard, usually bantered about by a certain Virgo. But maybe if you relax a little, and take an extra moment to look at those details, you can help someone out. Being of "Southern Extraction," means that I had good manners beaten into me. So when I'm talking about being nice, or doing something a little extra, it can be as simple as holding the door open for someone. The last time I tried to help a little old lady across the street, given my slovenly appearance, I was rebuked. Details, remember it's all in the details.

Aquarius: Let's start with the end-of-the-year wrap-up. It's too early for some signs to be thinking about this, but frankly put, Aquarius is as ready as the next guy to get this last year behind us. To help, I'm suggesting that you take a full and thorough accounting of the last 11 months. I realize we're barely into the buying season, but this is worthy of your consideration. Mistakes? We've made a few. Triumphs? Couple of those, too. Egregious errors? Sure, happens to all of us. Brilliant, but misplaced intentions? Sure, some of that as well.

This is starting to look like a pathway that would lead you to a dwell on the past, and maybe not in a good way. That's problematic. You've got to take the good with the bad. I'm urging you to start plotting a new course. You're going to make some course corrections to this new plan in a about two weeks, but for the next few days, look back at the last year's mistakes, and figure out what you can do different so you don't have to traverse that old ground yet again.

Pisces: Putting up Xmas lights is supposed to be a big deal. There is, that one street in Austin, where they started planning the light show last July. That one stretch of pavement-they now have a website and national recognition-gets a little carried away, in true Texas fashion. Or maybe it's just the infectious holiday spirit.

The relative proximity to an Amy's Ice Cream is the big selling point for me. Cold winter nights, hot Xmas lights, cold ice cream, it's a study in extremes. Naturally, the nights around here aren't always that cold, and of course, the lights don't really generate enough heat to keep me warm, but it's a nice idea.

Pisces is experiencing a similar set of conditions, a study in extremes. Deal is, the close proximity to the justifiably famous ice cream place? That makes all the difference. Doesn't much matter where or how you're located, you've got a couple of extremes, and some of these are not as extreme as you think they are. You'd be surprised how ice cream can warm you up-and ease the holiday tension-on these cold winter nights.

Aries: Every week or so, in the winter time around here, we get these cold mornings that aren't quite as cold as they could be, and there's this heavy fog on the lake in front of the trailer. That fog snarls traffic as well as acting like a big, thick, wet blanket on top of any idea of activity for a day. It even dampens the road noise

from Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road, which can be considerable on some mornings.

That fog, though, is just beautiful. It covers the landscape and mutes the sunlight. The atmospheric conditions have to be just right, and I suspect the fog has something to do with the body of water right in front of my "porch." Careful observation reveals that it sure looks like little tendrils of moisture are either drifting or clawing their way upwards.

That same atmospheric condition is settling on the Aries chart. It's like a fog, and it's going to be lifting soon. Or burning off, depends on how it dissipates, or it could depend on how you want to see it disappear. The problem with the fog, whether it's on the riverfront by my porch or the lake in your Aries head, is that this condition doesn't last too long. But it also goes away slowly and gradually, and that's where you're going to have to be a little patient for the time being.

Taurus: It's no secret that I love certain aspects of language. I'm not poet, nor will I ever be one. However, I love language and the nuances of language. One area that I'm fascinated with is accents. I can usually tell a UK accent from a speaker who was educated with British English, but is not a native. Then there's the Australian accent, again, not to be confused with either the South African dialect or a New Zealand tone.

I have one friend who can place a Texas accent within 50 miles of the homestead, that is, she can get with 50 miles of where the person is from after listening for a short period of time. It's the nuances and the slight twang, the way the words are formed, and to me, there's also a quality of speed, i.e., how fast the words are delivered. Houston folks and Dallas people tend to have a slightly different cadence, the speed nod goes to the Dallas people. Houston is less uptight.

You're delivery during the next week or so tends to be a little faster, perhaps a little more abrupt, than your usual laconic Taurus delivery. If my friend was guessing at your location, she'd be wrong because she'd be figuring a big city. Part of this is due to the globalization of voice patterns, mass media and TV. But part of your subtle quickening is also due to an obscure astrological influence having to do with the Moon. Don't be surprised if you find yourself

repeating your question once or twice, just trying to get the point across.

Gemini: Everyone else is playing, and I'm going to suggest that you get serious for the next couple of days. It's just that simple. I was playing around with your chart, and I kept coming back to the idea that the planet voted most likely to affect Gemini (that would be Mercury) is in Capricorn. Now look here, my fine Gemini friend, this isn't so bad, but I'm serious about you getting serious. Sounds rather like tautological argument, but I mean it. Let's get down to the business at hand.

A Gemini buddy of mine has an advanced degree in linguistics. That's pretty cool. He's also got a drone job working in a cubicle someplace, doing something important with computer stuff. That's pretty boring. He's worked his way around some of the firewall problems with his employer, thwarted some of the net security software, and he does get a chance to play while at work. He's a Gemini--this is to be expected. In two years, he's only been caught once for "unauthorized net access." It was my site that got him caught, too, which gave us both a good laugh.

Over the next few days, though, I'm hoping that my buddy doesn't spend too much time fooling around with this sort of "unauthorized internet access" thing. It's not a good idea. Besides, like I've suggested before, there's a pile of work stuff that needs your Gemini attention, and it's a good time to be serious.

Cancer: I listened patiently the other day when I was doing a reading for a special Cancer girl. I was careful, and I took note of a few dates she mentioned. Then I got started on the standard talk about what was going on in her life, and how the planets were affecting the outcome. Of course, given the circumstances, she was more concerned with the immediate outcome, and as a Sagittarius astrologer, I was more interested in the long-range overview.

My concern had more to do with the "big picture" and she was completely lost in immediate, and to her, pressing details. Makes for a little bit of short-term discomfort, that Saturn influence. Especially in her chart. Once again, there's not a lot I can do about that. I'm looking down the road some, and I can see that there will be an opportunity or three. I can easily see new pathways branching out from where you're standing. It looks like limbs on a tree.

The trick these days, what with the approach of the holidays and all, is not to extend yourself out on one of those limbs too fast. In other words, don't chase an idea down to the point that you're too far gone to get back. When that happens, the only way out of the tree is to let go. Falling's not so bad, it's just that sudden stop at the bottom.

Leo: Most of the pressure is off by now. There's just one little, tiny problem with Leo-Land. Illusions. There are just certain illusions that you're clinging to, some folks would call it denial, and far be it for me to sweep away that thin veil of self-induced deceit to reveal what the true nature of the problem is. I'm figuring this is more a long-term function of a slow moving and mysterious orb rather than the paths of the inner planets, but this is a problem.

Don't get me wrong, that denial and self-deception isn't all bad. It's one of the ways we all cope, from time to time. This is like one of my fishing trips, my buddy caught bass that must've weighed a good seven pounds. Fortunately for him, we'd left the scales behind, and we have no way of knowing that the monster fish was actually seven pounds. I'm not one to suggest that a fisherman would ever exaggerate, either. However, the next weekend, with scales in hand, the next fish that was exactly the same size, tipped the scales at a mere 4 pounds, 11 ounces. See how this works?

Virgo: I met this Virgo girl once, and she was entranced by my ability to discuss a number of arcane subjects with great fluidity. In other words, I felt like I had a great line of organic bovine fertilizer I could spread around. She then insisted on a private audience with me in the confines of her domicile. In other words, we went back to her place, I amused her for a little while, then she got me to quit talking and doing something more useful with my mouth, like kissing.

I'll leave the rest of the experience out of print, and let your little prurient-minded folks make up your own details. (Remember, I live like a monk.) Made me feel pretty good about myself. I felt like I was wanted for my mind and my body, a rather holistic form of desire. Never heard from her again. I'd say it broke my heart, but then, I didn't have enough time to let my heart get involved. I'm not saying that a gypsy Texas Sagittarius will float in and out of your life in the next few days, but I wouldn't be astonished if you have similar meeting of some kind. And I wouldn't be surprised if your Virgo self has a much better way of looking at this Sagittarius influence

than I do. Consider it no more than a blip on the Virgo radar screen.

Libra: I was riding along with one of my buddies, and I was sitting shotgun in his truck. He made an off-color joke about something, and I feigned politically correct shock. Next thing you know, he was talking on his phone to his girlfriend at the time, and the joke was forgotten. It wasn't exactly a three-way conversation because I was listening, and mumbling next to him, unable to make what she was saying, but from the conversation, I could catch the general direction.

Driving and talking on a phone, especially talking to your significant other, isn't a hot idea, even under the best circumstances. With me riding shotgun, it can be a nightmare because I try to inject myself in the conversation.

At one point, between the politically incorrect humor, the girlfriends, and me, I finally told him to stop the truck and get out, as I wasn't go to have that going on while I was riding someplace. "Dude," he stopped talking to the girlfriend, "it's my truck. I'm driving." The implied irony was lost on him, while he was dealing with the girlfriend question.

Are you the driver in this situation? Maybe the passenger? Or are you like that girlfriend, hopelessly mired in a three way conversation that you're only a distant party to? Personally, I prefer the bumper sticker that says, "Hang up and drive."

Scorpio: Weather's a weird topic, particularly in Texas. It's pretty unpredictable. Not that it's bad, or good, it's just what it is. I discovered that the true joy in living where I live is that there are winter days when the sun is high overhead and the temperature gets up 70, when I finally get out of the trailer, I'm able to comfortably wear shorts. This is important to me. Just the way that I am.

Then, after that winter sun sets early, like around rush hour, and when I'm home, a chill starts to set in. I'll go from comfortable day-time wear of shorts, almost a tropical look, to winter pajamas. Flannel. Soft, worn out in places, one set has a broken fly on it, but I'm home, alone, that doesn't bother me much. Besides, it's warm, and that's all that matters.

Your Scorpio life is feeling a little similar. Warm days, cold nights. After an active day outside, or at work, or doing whatever else it is

that you're doing, just getting back to the domicile, and slipping into a flannel pajamas and threadbare old robe to shuffle around the living room is a good idea. Yes, it's holidays, and yes, there's much to do, but this might not be the time that you want to be out. It's cold out there, and that flannel night wear is rather warm and inviting. You make the call, but I'll be snuggled up at home.

For the Week of: 12/11-17/2003

"They that dally nicely with words/May quickly make them wanton."

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (III.i.14-15)

Mercury is starting his retrograde pattern. In Capricorn. Soon.

Sagittarius: I was watching a vaquero and a cowboy working some horses in the corral the other morning. The cold winter sun, low and hard against a clear blue sky, the breath of the horses steaming the air – there's always one horse that has to be a little different. That mare, she was pulling at her reins, straining the harness, rather upset about wherever it was she was. Nothing seemed to fit her right, not the tack, not the saddle. Maybe it was the color of the saddle blanket, didn't go with her horse eyes.

Whatever it was, me and that horse were on the same wave length. Something just ain't right. When the cowboy let her reins go, that one horse would drift off towards a less populated portion of the corral. The vaquero, now he had her number, as he would approach, and snag the reins, and talk gently, in Spanish, to that one horse. Sometimes, it takes a different touch to get a horse properly motivated. Something might not be a quite right, but with gentle Sagittarius guidance, it'll start to work out. Spanish horse-whispering might be the secret.

Capricorn: I was in social setting the other evening, one of the "pre-Xmas" kinds of thing, and as I got introduced to the various couples, I noticed that the dominant theme was that the other couples were all second wives. Sotto voce, I referred to this arrangement as the "trophy wife club," however, that term was not met with any kind of acclaim. I don't think any of the women enjoyed that idea. I meant it as a compliment, never mind that these were all long-standing relationships, married for more than 20 years.

I was just observing that the female contingent seemed to be a lot younger–and better looking–than their male counterparts. From my point of view, that term, "trophy wife," was supposed to be a compliment. One of the girls giggled, one looked at me with "that look," and my date corrected me. "You'd better come up with a better term, Mr. 'astrology writer' boy."

Words and terms are important. It's the holiday season. I'm sure your Capricorn self would agree that calling all those wives "trophy

wives" was the correct way to address the situation. But not everyone will agree with you or me. I'd urge you to curb some of your funny nuances with the language these days. Might not be met with the same enthusiasm that you-or me-intended.

Aquarius: One day, I was half-naked, sweating lightly in the middle of the winter afternoon, not a cloud in the sky. The very next day, something happened to the weather, and the cat was busy trying to nudge her way under the covers with me. It's Texas weather, and it's highly unpredictable. Aquarius weather is like this, as well, one minute, hot as can be (for the given situation) and the next minute? It's cold. Very cold.

We were up to our hips in snow, or so seemed, must've been most near three quarters of inch of snow. It happens around here, in alternate years. The word is to be cautious. Texans tend to be rather precarious drivers, even in the best of conditions, and that little bit of snow? Even just some precipitation? Doesn't take much to upset the Aquarius these days. Go slow. Matter of fact, maybe don't go at all. You can always call it a snow day, even if it really isn't snowing.

Pisces: I was riding to the airport with an unnamed cab driver. We were exchanging horror stories from the road, and when he found out I was westward bound, he launched into a tale about his interaction with the Border Patrol at one particular stop. "Man, I'm a shaman, you know, so I have this big bag of mugwort with me. They were just sure that it was a big bust. Back in the hutch, there was one native-I guess the guy was an Indian-who was just laughing his head off. He knew what it was all about."

Turns out, further into the tale and the collected road stories, that the guy was saved by a seemingly miraculous action. As far as I know, it all could have been a fabricated story, but the improbable tales usually have more than their share of truth. You're liable to have a similar encounter with some kind of authority figure-maybe even federal agents-and never mind that your Pisces self is right, there's always a hint that some of the officers are not amused. Be sweet, and you'll have miraculous tale to tell, too.

Aries: I was looking at a new fishing catalog, one I got in the mail the other day. I noticed a line of lures that I found rather amusing. There were "Flashers, dodgers, & teasers" on one page. I'm not sure if it was intentional or not, but I found those names rather

seductive. I almost whipped out the plastic, right then and there, and I almost called up the order line to get me some of those guys.

"Flasher, dodgers & teasers." While these were just fishing lures, I found that the listing of those names seemed to fit rather well with what's going on in your chart. It's a Mars thing, and I'm sure your Aries self thinks I'm making a big deal out of Mr. Mars, but see, he's about to enter your sign. I'd take one, long, hard look at those lures and their names, then I'd figure a way to apply them in your Aries life. Day-to-day, moment-by-moment. If the titles were just "flashers and teasers," then I'd think this was an overtly sexual reference, and maybe not a good one, at that. For the next couple of days, though, it doesn't hurt to hint rather than come out and say, so that means you need to imitate the action of all the lures mentioned. That includes being a dodger.

Taurus: Focus. Concentrate. Pay attention. Sure, it's Xmas time, but that's no reason to lose track of what it is that you're supposed to be doing. Hawks, especially the native Red Tail Hawk, is fairly common around here. You can find them sitting on telephone poles and high wires, sometimes riding winter thermals generated by parking lots, all over Texas. Those hawks are pretty majestic, soaring, or just looming like they do. They also seem to have a lesson or two for the rest of us.

Those hawks don't get their feathers ruffled if some human gets too close. The hawk will just lift itself up on its wings and move someplace else. We don't seem to bother them too much. Those birds of prey maintain a steady eye for intruders, and those birds do fairly good job of staying out of our way while still looking for a tasty morsel. I can't think of a single Taurus who would consider a field mouse as a tasty afternoon treat, like for tea.

So take this hawk-like symbolism and apply it with a little caution. But watch one of those guys, and you'll notice that they don't let most distractions interfere with their goals. Even Mercury doesn't get to those guys.

Gemini: It's a childhood fear. It's fear that's haunted me most of my life. My father, Pa Wetzel, taught me how to shake Xmas packages to guess at what's under the tree, back in the old homestead, many years ago. These days, though, I'd be a little afraid to shake any package that isn't packaged for shipment. I'd be afraid to just grab

any old package out from under the tree and give it a good shake, fearful that it might contain some easily damaged goods.

Of course, it's not like I receive much fine china these days, not given the peculiarities of my lifestyle. But it could happen. I'd hate think that I was rattling a wrapped gift, only to discover that I broke something while playing at guessing the contents. "Wonder what's in this one? Sounds like a lot of broken glass-now." That's your cautionary note for the time being. No need to guess at something that is supposed to stay wrapped until December 25th. Got that? It's a trick of the trickster Mr. Mercury, and I wouldn't worry about it too much.

Cancer: It was a cold, clear morning in Lubbock. I was in a room on the top floor of the local hotel. My room faced south. As the sun came streaming in the window, I couldn't help but notice that I felt like I could see all the way into Mexico from where I was perched, way up on the top floor of that local skyscraper.

Your Cancer self might not be in the Texas Panhandle this coming weekend. You might not even be in Texas. You might not even be in the penthouse suite. I would hope that you're facing South, but that's just a personal preference. You will see, through a trick of the planets (Mercury versus Saturn), that you feel like you can look across the vast, barren expanses and the vista that unfolds before you eyes, you're going to feel like you can see forever. Or all the way to Mexico. It's probably a trick of the light, or the way the terrain in front of you fools you into this sense that you have decent overview of what is going on. But yes, you can see the big picture rather clearly. Doesn't make any of this better. After looking out the window and marveling at the beauty, I still had to go downstairs and go to work. Same series of events for you. Just remember that omniscient view.

Leo: Ever have that feeling that there's an inadequate supply of material resources to cover a given situation? It's like that old parable about the guy with a few fish and loaf of bread or two, you know, and he fed the whole party with just a few little sleight-of-hand tricks? It's my guess that your weekend, stretching on into next week, is looking a little bleak. You're like that one feller, standing there, trying to figure out how to feed the hordes of folks coming over for a holiday meal.

Mercury is heading backwards soon enough. This can work in your favor, believe it or not. You can get Mercury's evil little mischief to work for you, if you're willing to play along. In order to cut some corners, and to make that fish and bread product stretch as far as you need it to go, try a little sleight of hand. I know it's been done before, but I was reminded of this recently. For a while, California Cuisine was all the rage. That meant it was a big plate with small portion in the middle, and some sort of fruit juice concentrate was drizzled all over it to make the package look more appealing. Use Mercury's mayhem to make what you've got stretch to fit the task at your Leo's hand. Like that trendy food.

Virgo: I went by a buddy's place the other evening, a Virgo buddy. Xmas lights were all over the place. His girlfriend was telling me about it, "He was out, the day after Thanksgiving, stringing those lights up." It's a Virgo attribute, I'm sure. "Yeah, five or six cars went by while I was doing it," he was telling me, "I got proposed to twice and at least three guys shot me the finger." On another level, I'm sure I feel his pain. It's not unlike my Virgo buddy Bubba stringing up the Xmas decorations, right on time. 2 people stop by to give you accolades. Maybe two, or possibly three, folks stop by to give you a dirty look for doing a good deed.

No good deed ever goes unpunished. Don't let a couple of folks get you down. Never hurts to be too prepared, either. My buddy? He wasn't in trouble or anything. He was just doing a good deed to make the girlfriend happy. Payback was immense even though in the face of mounting public opinion, he was a little too good. Don't forget, some of the neighborhood males were "less than enthralled" with Bubba's domestic display. Don't ask me about setting a good example, I'm not Virgo, but setting a good example, even in the face of overwhelming odds, is bound to insure domestic bliss.

Libra: I passed by a fishing buddy's place the other afternoon. His boat, his pride and joy, our trusty fishing vessel was parked on the street. I hammered him about this as it was obviously too cold to be fishing, and I surmised—correctly—that he was coerced to move the boat out of his garage for some activity related to holidays. I took advantage of his situation to chide him about that prize vessel being parked curbside.

But look at the way this works out, his boat resides happily under cover, in the safety of the confines of his garage for 11 plus months. That boat only has to live outside for short time in

December. Besides, with a tarp thrown over the craft, it's safe. Let's look at this, like, on a spreadsheet or something, from January until mid-December, his boat is secure from the elements. Besides, it is a boat, it can stand a little moisture. So for a couple of weeks, the boat sits outside. Got a good image of this? He wins close to 95% of the time. Those are good odds, better than you get in a town like Vegas, that's for sure.

A little give and take is important now. Mars is moving some stuff around, and it's not a bad idea to go ahead and give in for a little while. In the name of compromise, just for the holidays.

Scorpio: We stopped for gas on one of those Texas back roads I'm so fond of. It was little town, on the edge of the prairie, and one of the main industries in the area is cattle. So there were a number of cattle trucks stopped at the same place. Being in a small town and all, it's safe to assume that the cattle trucks, close to a half-dozen of them, were stopped for some social interaction as well as fuel.

What caught my eye, though, was the way a couple of the trucks, big 18-wheeler cattle hauler rigs, were done up with Xmas lights. To borrow a clich , "they were lit up like Xmas trees." Which was the point. Made for a mighty fine rolling art show, as well. As I walked around the little truck (relative to the big boys) that I was driving, one of the real cow trucks rumbled and I kept hearing a shifting noise.

A cursory examination revealed that there was a load of cows in it. (Burger & BBQ on the hoof?) Still done up like an Xmas tree, the guy was having a good time while working. It's a trucker's way of expressing a creative, holiday energy while still getting the load to its destination. You're going to light up like that truck, like an Xmas tree. Which doesn't mean, after you stop for coffee, you can't get on down the Scorpio road and actually deliver what you're supposed to deliver.

For the Week of: 12/18-24/2003

"if you spend word for word with/me, I shall make your wit bankrupt."

Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (II.iv.37-8)

St. Nicholas is on a few minds these days. In our ongoing search for truth, justice and good cup of coffee, the real story is that St. Nic, before he was a sanctified, was a pawnbroker, and he personally rescued three daughters of a pauper – the pauper was, no doubt, facing destitution trying to support three females at Xmas time. No, wait, that's not the story.

Mars moves into Aries, finally, back up to speed.

Sagittarius: I looked out the trailer's window, nominally the kitchen window, and I saw a brightly colored Porsche Boxer sitting there. I started to do a little math. Trailer to the right of me, costs about so much. Trailer behind me, I know he's renting, but that runs about so much per month, and over year, it adds up to so much money. Then I thought about my place. And then the trailer two spots over, and I was still quite shy of the price of that one vehicle.

Such incongruities aren't uncommon in life, and they really aren't that uncommon these days. I think it took me, and about four of my neighbors to equal the price of that one sports car. While those little cars, I suppose, are fun, you really can't haul a lot of stuff in the trunk. I'd bet you, despite the vaunted horsepower, you couldn't really tow a boat, either. Not much use. Instead of dreaming about a gleaming little sports car that's erotic and exotic, how about thinking a little more practical? Can it tow a boat on a Saturday morning? Can you fill it with two months' worth of groceries in the back?

In fact, the more I thought about it, I couldn't fit a decent 7-foot rod (Flipping Stick) in it unless the top was down. How silly would that be? Fishing rod poking out while I was breezing down the highway? It's okay to dream, but try and be practical. Now, a new truck? There's an idea. Doesn't cost near as much, either. Think: practicality.

Capricorn: I realize it's winter and all, but I was really hoping we'd get one of those cool, clear Saturday mornings when it's good to go fish. The bass tend to move out into deeper waters, and with the right equipment—and a good fish finder—moving off the grass and into the creek channels offers some good fishing. Problem is, most

of those guys are on the bottom of the lake, in the deeper water, and none of them are particularly active. Plus, it's pretty chilly, first thing in the morning.

The fish aren't the only ones looking for warm places to hide out. Then there's that little problem I have with rigging up the right arrangement for tackle, something to get in there deep.

Feel like you need to drag the bottom to get what you're looking for these days? You know what would help? A good sonar system. Problem is, Mr. Mercury will return false findings on your personal sonar system. About the time you get everything lined up and the target looks good, then you discover that Mr. Mercury was just playing games, and it wasn't really a school of fish. It wasn't anything but a false echo from a thermal differential in the water. Besides, that Saturday morning I was going fishing? Too cold. Decided to stay in bed. Sometimes, that's a better option.

Aquarius: Christmas isn't even here yet, and you're all but done with it. Had about enough of the jingles, the marketing, the hype, all that crap? Haven't we all? Look: there's ONE Aquarius I know, and she's having a fine time with all this holiday merry-making, but the rest of us?

The other Aquarius types are just having a little bit of Christmas Past come back to haunt us. It's not like, it's not that we can't have any fun, it's just that there's not a lot going on that really piques our Aquarius interests. Starting next week, Ms. Venus enters the sign of the Water Bearer. Good news, albeit, some of you are thinking that this occurs too late. However, there will be a last minute dash, a sudden change in spirit, and suddenly, you're all geared up, and ready to go-next week.

Pisces: Yea-haw. I should be more thrilled, but I was talking with one Pisces girl the other afternoon, and she was saying, "I'm ready to cry at just about anything." Knowing males will nod appreciatively, and suggest something about a certain cycle, and do their best to stay out of her way. But that's not what this is really all about.

It's a trick of several planets, and it means that this is a good time to consider what it is that you want to do, then also consider that-not gender specific-what you really want to do is to curl up on the couch, maybe flip through a magazine, maybe watch a rerun on TV, maybe even just stare at the TV without turning it on.

The stuff going on in your own Pisces cranium is a lot more interesting than anything offered up on the tube. Or even the internet. The other portion of this equation is that there are a lot folks who seem to be a little testy. The dear, sweet Pisces psyche can only take so much of their testing before you feel like you want to cry, too. My best advice? Xmas Tea. It's part Peppermint, part Hibiscus. Goes with that whole "Red and Green" seasonal concept. A good cup of tea, curled up on the couch, and you'll feel much better. Don't let them get to you.

Aries: I was looking at my schedule and got to thinking, "It's about time to make Xmas reservations for travel." No sense doing any of this too early, right? Problem being, all the good deals are gone. All the sweet, low-cost, inexpensive, cheap seats are sold. Makes travel a little more problematic.

See, a while back I suggested that Aries make a list of tasks that you wanted to get accomplished, then I suggested you check that list periodically to make sure everything was getting accomplished. In true Aries fashion, though, you missed the second half of the concept, going back to make sure you checked off everything in that list. Like me, you're stuck trying to scramble, shuffle the credit cards and figure out how to pay for airfare back to the old homestead. Or maybe it's that one, last Xmas gift you want to get for a special person. Maybe you remembered one last gift. An astrology report is available, and looks like I'll be working online until Xmas day gets here. That's the beauty of internet delivery.

However, not everything will get accomplished. Hey, take your wins where you can and drop that one last person a card, and let them know you didn't forget. Or, do like I'm doing this week, trying to figure out which card isn't maxed out, so I can snag a ticket out of here.

Taurus: The packages are wrapped, you remembered what kind of fishing lure I wanted, and as the weekend gives way to next week, life keeps getting better and better. This won't apply to everyone, but in the Land of the Bull, in Taurus Land, yes, as Xmas approaches, as we hit that magic point when the Sun slides on into Capricorn, you're going to find that life, your Life of Taurus, just feels a little bit easier.

Unlike some signs, you shouldn't be stuck with that last-minute, frantic dash to the mall for "just one more item." You should be

sitting on top of the world. This self-satisfied feeling isn't going to happen overnight. Stupid little Mercury is making it hard for a great number of folks. You will get a last minute flash of someone- or something- you wanted to get done. If it hasn't happened by now, though, there's a good chance it's not going to happen; therefore, relax. Isn't that simple? Yes, it is that simple. Don't let silly Mercury ruin the good cheer and good holidays.

Gemini: Mercury is pretty firmly heading in an apparent backwards direction, and what's worse, this is going on in a place that brings a little tiny spotlight onto your relationship stage. It's like a narrow beam of white light, shining on you, or where you're supposed to be, only, the guy running the spotlight?

You and him seem to have a mixed up script. You go to the left, and the spotlight moves to the right. You try and follow, so that you are well and truly in the right place so you shine, and that irksome lighting crew moves the light in another direction. While this makes for fine comedy, this doesn't do anything to help your Gemini fears, or, for that matter, none of this action helps your anger management program.

You can't hit a moving target. Just doesn't work. So while your dancing all over that Gemini stage chasing after the light that should be rightfully shining on you, the rest of us are cracking up about this Gemini scene. If, and that's a pretty big "if," but if you can accept that this is working out, just not the way you planned, then the holidays won't be so bad. You are getting the attention, only, you're getting it by not getting it.

Cancer: There's a sappy, maudlin strain to the way the week feels. Part of it is more like that old ghost of Christmas Past, and even if you don't follow that particular belief system, there's a still that sentiment floating around in your sign. Part of it is a trick of the Moon's ever-changing condition, and part of it can be attributed to Mercury now in an apparent retrograde pattern. Part of it is Saturn, as well, pushing one of those Cancer buttons that many of us feel like shouldn't be pushed.

What are you going to do? Sit there and feel sorry for yourself? I've got one client that learned a really valuable lesson from me. Self-pity is allowed, but only for 24 hours. No more than that. You can feel sorry for yourself for exactly one 24-hour period. That's it. No more. C'mon, it's the holiday season, and the paucity of cheer in

your quarter of the sky is no reason to let this get you down. So if you slip into that sense of despair and doom? Remember the 24-hour rule.

Leo: I was listening to one of my favorite operas the other evening. You know, I just slid it (four CD's) into the player and let it run for a spell. There's one uplifting part/song/aria where this character, near as I can make out, renounces her faith or something, all for the love of a young warrior. I can't make out a word they're singing on that one CD set, but I sure do enjoy the music.

And the passion? That carries through. You have the same passion, and with Mercury in his current state, you're just like one of those opera singers--we can't really understand a word your singing. Doesn't make it any less passionate, that's for sure. Nothing matches a decent Leo passion. However, just like me and that opera music, I don't always understand every single word. To be honest, I understand exactly none of it. Maybe a word or two. So you're singing a similar tune, right before the Xmas holiday. Maybe we can't make out the words, but your sense of passion certainly carries through.

Virgo: This scope really isn't for every Virgo. This should rightfully be addressed to just that one Virgo. It's special set of conditions, the way I see it. Sure, little Mr. Mercury is backwards, and he's cutting an errant path through the dirt signs (Virgo, Capricorn, Taurus). While that makes for some rough and tough times -- as no one seems to understand what the point is that you're trying to get across -- that doesn't make this whole mess of a pre-holiday (or post-holiday for some) week any less easy to deal with.

However, for that one particular Virgo, there's a little relief in here. It all goes back to Jupiter, the lucky star. The problem is the rest of the people that you have to deal with. The problem is not your Virgo self. It's us. Unless you live in a Virgo-perfect world where there are only other Virgo folks you have to deal with, then sometime in the next couple of days, you're going to run into one of us, doing the Scrooge imitation. Or a Mercury variation of a Dickens' character. Don't let this interfere with your good humor.

Libra: I always enjoy the image of a Santa Claus wearing a cowboy hat. You know, the usual big guy in the red outfit with its white faux fur trim, and instead of an Xmas hat, instead of what you're expecting him to wear, around these parts, he's got on a big Cowboy

Hat. It's different. It's that touch of Texas. It's that oddball routine we all like to throw in to shake things up.

To someone not from around here, that little discordant touch seems odd. However, in the correct spirit of times, it's still a nice addition. All righty, you're just like that merry figure of St. Nick, and you're just like my localized version of that guy, wearing his big ten-gallon hat. To folks in distant lands, or even the people across the street, this image seems just a bit more odd than most. However, let's not forget the spirit of the times. There's also one other aspect that goes to this image. See, you're about to step out for the evening, maybe even in a Santa Claus suit, and you're looking around for that floppy red hat. Can't find it. Just slam a ten-gallon hat down, call it a day. Never hurts to be a little different. That's a good solution to Mercury Mayhem induced sartorial choices and miscues. "Yeah, I meant to wear the hat."

Scorpio: If I could get your Scorpio head out of the clouds for a minute, I could get you to focus on some items here on a "to do" list that need to be attended to. Like now. Not next week, not next month. These are deadlines that really do require your attention at this moment. These are items which desperately need to be addressed by no one but your Scorpio self. I realize that you're not much in the mood for this, being a holiday time and all, but there really are a few little niggling little problems that no one can fix but yourself.

Such words will surely not curry me any favor with the Scorpio slice of the sky, but Mr. Mercury is moving in a position to remind us that there is something you've left undone. The problem is, Mercury will remind all of us about the item on your list, that one unfinished task, and it's going to be popping back up again and again, until it gets finished. What's worse, the rest of us, non-Scorpio types, are going to be patiently reminding you about what's been left undone. Well, most folks will be reminding you. I know enough about Scorpio's to skip that. No matter how nice I try to put to you, the information is not well-received. I won't bother you about this task. Just be a little extra Scorpio prepared, though, as someone else will remind you.

For the Week of: 12/25-31/2003

"At Christmas I no more desire a rose/Than wish a snow in May's
new fangled shows,/But like of each thing in season grows."

Berowne in Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* [I.i.105-7]

First show of the New Year, El Paso, Texas. See website for details

Capricorn: "It's one of them pointer-setters, you know, them Christmas-y flower plants." It was the first time I heard the expression "Point-setter," and I was sure they were referring to one of those pure-bird dogs, used for hunting. Instead, my fine, highly-esteemed and very Texan conversationalist was trying to make a point about traditional floral arrangements. Not dogs.

So it's Merry Xmas, that time of the year, and we're all looking forward to a good New Year, now that the big celebration has passed us. Deal is, there's more than one favorite Capricorn having a birthday this week, and as such, there needs to be some good cheer. There will be. There is.

Mercury? Yes, Mr. Mercury is still spinning backwards and as such, the usual communications problems arise. Dogs or flowers? Not sure? Doesn't hurt to back up and ask the person a second time. Either way, both are welcome, the dogs and the flowers. It's going to be good, but you might misunderstand a heavy accent from time to time. "Flowers that can hunt?"

Aquarius: I could be way wrong here, but I think it's called "Seasonal Affect Disorder." It's a kind of depression that comes from going without sunlight for too long. Plants need sunlight. It's all a part of that "photosynthesis" chemical event. Aquarius is in dire need of a little sunlight, too. Just a bright spot in the horizon, a single ray of hope while we're all in the darkest hours. "So this guy walks into a bar and says...." You've heard enough jokes, you can probably fill that one out with some tired version of your own humor. I'll laugh, too. See: this happens every year, right about this time, and the whole mess of the planets are in, is just compounded by that recalcitrant Mercury doing his backwards moon-walk in Capricorn. None of this is helping. My tired attempts at humor don't work. My exhaustive repertoire of sick humor isn't working, either. About two days ago, I had to do a quick, emergency reading for an Aquarius friend. I felt like the only way to perk her up was to smash a beer can on my head. Didn't work, and now I've got a lump on my forehead from trying to be entertaining. Relax and enjoy the

holidays. Such as they are, and then get ready because your Aquarius turn is coming, just up and around the bend.

Pisces: I've built a number of websites. Not anything that I'm too proud of, just stuff that I do for friends, or occasionally clients, in order to make ends meet. Not really a big deal for me. I've done the sites for friends and family, and playing the role of "webmaster" can be fun. There's one problem. Maybe not a big problem, but a theme that comes back time and again, "Hey, can you fix that one glitch/layout/design issue? Now?" Doesn't much matter what that one problem is. This scope starts on a holiday. Sure as can be, though, at least one of the web clients I've got will call. Probably that Pisces. The odds of getting through to me personally are pretty limited to immediate family. Since they're no Pisces in the immediate family doesn't mean that I won't have a loaded voice mail with a litany of Pisces complaints by Friday. It might be a cash-paying proposition, but that doesn't mean goals and tasks will be accomplished on the Pisces timetable. Remember that. Some of us, for whatever reason, mostly non-Pisces people, consider ourselves to be on holiday at this point. You're normal, orderly flow of work is going to get interrupted.

Aries: Nobody realizes how hard it is to write a decent Xmas day horoscope. I spent, literally, hours staring at the screen, waiting for some inspiration. Cold, rainy December days, not quite enough green stuff to go around, it's just hard to get in the spirit of the season. With existing publication deadlines, there's always that problem, I feel like I'm living in next week when it's not yet next week. One column I ran across, horoscopes, no doubt, called themselves, "Tomorrow's news today." Good claim. Too bad they can't live up to the claim. I can't live up to the claim, either. I watched a wrangler work with a pony, not long ago. The little horse was spirited, but apparently, a little mean tempered, too. That pony was used to going her own way, not following the lead very well. Probably a little Aries mare. That's the problem, too, there's a wrangler trying to gently teach you a lesson, and you're not paying very close attention. Like that little pony, stomping its wee little hooves, the people who you want to give you sugar aren't paying attention. Doesn't mean it's a bad holiday, but you're going to want to learn to follow the lead a little better.

Taurus: Christmas Day is a new dawn for you. Sure, the littlest planet is doing backwards bounce, and that's going to screw up

some of the usual lines of communication. I was told to be at the family homestead promptly at noon. I rolled in about 1 in the afternoon, and my immediate family was attired in bed clothes--still--rather jacked up on coffee, and just a tad irritated with my late appearance. But once we got around to igniting the wreath, and the rest of the day's celebration, it all got better. I was able to pass it off as Mercury fouling up the appointed time for the celebration. But I'm a professional astrologer, I can do that. Either way, though, it's like the new cell phone I delivered that day, great toy; however, I was unable, despite being the family's designated alpha geek, to get the thing to work. It's a mercury problem. Still, it was okay. Little things are going to go wrong. Forgot batteries? Didn't charge up the battery in the new toy? None of this is life threatening, nor is any of it that much of a kill-joy. Enjoy the holidays, however you celebrate. I'll promise that things in Taurus land are about to turn around.

Gemini: I got done wrapping some gifts last week, and I looked at two packages that I thought I'd labeled. Both boxes were long and thin. One had a riding crop in it, purchased at a saddle and tack shop in West Texas. It was to be a special gift for a dear friend who enjoys those kinds of toys. The other box had the most delicate, long-stem silk rose. A special rose, a yellow rose, a type of flower that Ma Wetzel is particularly attached to.

Whenever I'm headed back to the old homestead, she claims that a yellow rose will appear on the bush in the backyard. Both these gifts were in similar shaped boxes. Similar paper. In my haste, and I can blame Mercury, those boxes got tagged wrongly. Went to the wrong folks.

Ma Wetzel got a riding crop, and the dominant female friend got a silk yellow rose. Both recipients were thrilled, but both were a little puzzled about the meaning. So Ma Wetzel spent a portion of Xmas telling people what to do, and making thwacking noises with a riding crop, enjoying herself immensely while my other friend was just sure that I was sweet on her. Mercury is backwards. Be careful about packages, wrapping, and what message your sending. In the confusion, though, you might make some folks happy with your mistakes. I did.

Cancer: The other evening I wandered through a local coffee shop, it was after a seeing a movie. The purpose of my visit was to get one of those sinful Egg Nog Latte drinks that I so enjoy. Steaming

the egg nog itself cuts the sweetness factor by a degree and makes it more palatable. Then, considering that just about everything in life is better with a shot or two of espresso, this kind of holiday fare is perfect for cold winter's night.

I watched as a young couple came in, shook the cold off, and then, after gathering up some drinks, they started to sort through the game boards the place keeps around. They managed to find the backgammon board, several in fact, but they couldn't locate any playing pieces. No token, no markers, no plastic chips, nothing.

"Oh great," the guy shrugged, "I guess we'll have to talk." He rolled his eyes. "Oh no, don't worry, we'll find some game pieces. Here," the girl suggested, "we can use these checker pieces." Mercury, Mars, the Sun, the holidays, it all adds up to not finding the gaming pieces you're looking for. That's the bad news. The upside is that you might find yourself talking to someone you actually enjoy spending time with. Might not be today, but I'm sure your version of this story plays out soon enough.

Leo: Merry Xmas. Good, we got that over. This happened a few years ago, not recently, okay? I was at a department store, a few days after Xmas, and I was shopping to fulfill my own wish list, get the things that I wanted rather than getting all those gifts that rarely fit in my trailer. I was with a girlfriend at the time, and I was trying hard to entertain her while we were shopping.

The shell-shocked staff were vaguely amused with us. When I was sure that I had a good audience, like, about three staff members, I held up a shirt on a hanger, turned to my date, and tiredly asked, "Honey, do I like this?" She rolled her eyes, and back in the truck, a few minutes later, after I did buy the shirt, I received a brow beating for making her look like a person who brow beats her boyfriend. I cowered as I drove, "Please don't hit me again," I pleaded.

So I found the whole episode amusing. She did not. I found an anecdote to tell, time and again. She shrewishly complained about being made out as a shrew. Once the big day is over, there are bargains to be had. Maybe go this alone. Maybe don't involve other people. Maybe take it easy. In my example, you can be either one, but the problem with that, one person winds up unhappy. I don't want any unhappy Leo's these days.

Virgo: Merry Xmas! (Or happy whatever you celebrate!) I was with some friends, and one of them gave another one a DVD version of particular movie, one of those films that I love because it's so campy, and we all watched it. There's a death scene in it, wherein an ancillary character (best supporting death scene ever) gets shot. In the hands of the hero, or anti-hero, depending on one's critical approach to it, the agony of the dying character gets a little too drawn out. Maybe stretched to the limits, even. The gurgling, gasping, final words seem to stretch out for an eternity.

Funny as can be. Remember, these are actors, in a professional setting, and no one was actually harmed in the making of the film. After watching the film for about the third time, we all started to giggle at that one scene, mimicking the noises. "Gurgle, gasp, hack, it's growing dark now!" Then more gurgling noises. Much hilarity ensued. And to think, that one gift was more a gag gift, too. You never can tell what's going to hit the mark, and especially with certain gifts. Something will hit your funny bone, and while it might not be what you expected, much hilarity will result. Enjoy the holiday.

Libra: It was a few weeks ago, I had a chance to watch a lady buying a saddle. You know, a real horse saddle. She had a myriad of questions about fit, duration of the purchase plan and what would happen if the custom-made saddle didn't fit.

Picture this, she was astride a saddle, in a tack shop, with her rancher's face, lined and sun bleached, a heavy shock of premature gray hair swept back. What if her pony didn't like the saddle? Could she get her money back? How about if the saddle was too short? Could the stirrups be lengthened for her legs? Was there something that could be done about the tooling on the saddle itself? I think she wanted her ranch's brand on the saddle someplace. The cowboy salesman was patiently answering her questions, dealing with each and every item on the list. Almost as if he'd heard all these questions before.

I don't know what I would do in his situation. You're probably feeling a lot like that cowboy salesman, too. Questions, questions. Coming from everywhere. And some of the questions? They are downright stupid. Be patient, as both Mercury and Mars are leaning on you. You can make the big sale, to the pretty rancher's wife, and you can answer all the questions. But it's going to sorely test your Libra patience.

Scorpio: You know that Mercury is backwards, right? Right. You're smart, you've learned to keep track of this information. And you know that much hilarity can result from Mercury being backwards. Right? Right. Then you can also sense that I'm winding up to dump something on you, right? Wrong.

I just have one, little example. Ma Wetzel will be giving me and Sister some fairly identical gifts. Comes in a little box. It's calendar set. Sister and me, we'll squeal with glee as we open our gifts. Then we'll look at each other, and behind Ma Wetzel's back, we'll swap our gifts because Sister got what I wanted, and I got what Sister wanted. She got the earrings and I got the pendant. That's my guess. I realize that most boys don't get earring for Xmas, but then I do have pierced ears, and new dangly things are fun. Or Sister wanted the Star Trek calendar and I wanted the Duct Tape one. I don't know, I haven't opened the package yet.

Sagittarius: It's cold in central Texas. It's cold in a lot of places. We'll get a few days of relatively warm weather, but the forecast is cold. Doesn't do much to warm the cockles of the Sagittarius heart, either.

Scrooge paid a visit this year, I wound up with a load of coal. Way it goes. Maybe I wasn't a good boy in the last year. Might have been a few things I could've done differently. Then again, when I was bad, there was that one girl who loved it so... and maybe that's why I'm getting coal.

Personally, I figure this is a mix up due to the Santa's list, and the way things are, and Mercury and all that. As a professional astrologer, acting in my professional capacity, I can easily gaze skyward, try and pick out Mercury, point to the little bugger, and blame him. It was obviously a foul-up on some other person's part. Maybe an elf, who knows?

The more time spent trying to explain the problem though, that's just a waste in breath and energy. Look, events aren't really turning around until after the first of the year, kick back, enjoy family and friends, celebrate the spirit of the times, even if the events aren't quite keeping up with your expectations. Like Bubba always says, "When life gives you lemons, that means it's time for tequila shots!"

Fishing Guide to the Stars: 2003



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