



Sunrise over the Hudson River from North-South Lake state park — on the footprint of the Catskill Mountain House, the first-ever resort in the Hudson Valley of New York. Photo by Eric Francis.

Inner Space for Leo

Remember What Tommy Said

Dear Leo Sun, Moon or Rising:

The whole project of astrology is about self-discovery. Usually that happens when you assert yourself in some way (which can be in relation to your environment, such as through art, to another person, or to an audience); and through vocational activities (what you simply must do, and what you're known for).

If you like this theory, then you're in luck: Your astrology for 2023 is the integration and full expression of the angles of your chart that cover these very themes. There is

something about remembering who you are, so that you can fully express it. Yet there is a bold and experimental feeling to your solar chart this year, particularly when it comes to asserting yourself as a professional at whatever you do.

While the sky itself may not be the limit, you're in a time of extraordinary potential. Success — accessing that potential and turning it into something tangible, and that works for you — mostly comes through a fusion of bold experimentation and understanding the power and wisdom of conventional approaches; and by sincerity. That word means "pure, unmixed, unadulterated" and also "free from pretense or falsehood."

This means being a candid person and avoiding much of what is counted as wholesome here in the digital age: putting up a front, placing image above substance, declaring oneself an expert after 25 minutes, and a diversity of tactics under the "anything goes" school of success. Your success is about who and what you are and what you have to offer. Your integrity matters more than anything; it's the means by which you will release your true talent.

Therefore, I suggest you set a high standard for yourself in terms of the quality of your work product, how you treat people, delivering what you promise, and always bringing a touch of noblesse oblige to the people who you might help.

I'm drawing this line of analysis from two main factors, then we can branch out.

Venus Retrograde in Your Birth Sign or Rising Sign

The highlight of the year for you is Venus retrograde in your sign. This takes place around your birthday. Venus will be retrograde in Leo from July 22-Sept. 3, 2023. The total stretch of Venus in Leo spans from June 5 through Oct. 8. So you will get four whole months of what is usually a three-week transit of Venus through your sign.

The peak is Venus conjunct the Sun on Aug. 13, 2023 (which is the reference chart for this reading).

Assets of Venus in your sign include the power of attraction, the thing that Venus is best at. It is excellent for how you are perceived by others. In Leo, this has a golden touch, and you may find that people just want to help you "because you are who you are."

This would normally be wonderful, though I strongly suggest you never let this prevent you from going through the necessary paces to make sure you are actually doing the work that you know you must do — which is ultimately about developing your gifts.

One of the most relevant things I've ever heard a fashion designer say came from Tommy Hilfiger (born March 24, 1951), and I love him for it. In 1985, when he was a relatively young man, an ad agency came out with a brilliant campaign that practically overnight established him as a leader in his field, instantly making him seem like a peer to the most recognizable and established names in the business.

His fame suddenly exceeded his accomplishments; *he understood this and committed to catching up*. He said he knew he had to work extra hard to be that person in reality and not just in advertising. That is what you want to be: that person in reality.

Venus in Leo is fantastic advertising for you, and you have many other strong suits to your astrology. But you must take your work seriously, apply yourself fully, and never rely on the power of your personality to substitute for doing the actual work that brings you the success you deserve, rather than what is merely bestowed upon you.

People want to see you succeed, and will do things for you to make it so. They will extend you a kind of credit to see what you can accomplish when given the chance. You must be careful about this, and never let how you are perceived get ahead of who you really are and what you know and are capable of. Do the work, and be humble about it rather than proud of it. Save your pride for about 30 seconds to one minute at the award ceremony, then get back to business.

Uranus in Taurus (2018-2025)

Uranus is making its way across the career and recognition angle of your chart. This is the sign Taurus and the house is the 10th: reputation, recognition, and a kind of achievement that others can see. Note that this does not mean that what happens in the 10th is connected to the Dharma. In fact the 10th contains all kinds of temptations to toss the Dharma into the Indian Ocean.

What is the Dharma? On one level, it is acting as if to hold the world together. On another, it is tapping into the underlying property of the universe that would lead you to commit yourself to that.

There are two sides to the Uranus transit. Both have an element of disruption. The Taurus angle is about up-ending tradition, and is giving you some freedom to get past always having "the appearance of propriety" (a requirement for attorneys). This transit is facilitating your experiments in all that is unconventional and rebellious in the creative sense of that; it's a fount of ideas, though they are not always easy to harness.

Then there is the 10th house angle. This can represent a shakeup in how you address authority, to which you have usually taken a respectful and tactful approach. Uranus in the 10th is anything but these things. You may have woken up one morning during the past three or four years and decided that you could say or do whatever you wanted, and miraculously not care what anyone thinks.

Somewhat akin to the power to throw thunderbolts, you want to use this judiciously. In fact it's essential that you adopt cordial and respectful positions with those people you consider powerful, even if you are seen as something of a renegade. If you are not seen as trustworthy and able to cooperate, you will wear out your welcome. You can stake your image against this, but that would be squandering it.

Save your rebellion for coming up with brilliant ideas in those areas of life where the world is perfectly dull — or sleepwalking from doing the same thing every day for the past half-century. Strive to wake people up with what is illuminating. Thunder is merely intimidating, but lightning turns night to day and allows a moment of seeing in the dark. It's up to you to take those momentary flashes of vision and turn them into something that shifts the creative flow rather than topples anything or anyone. You have much power to shock, disrupt, interrupt; yet that's not really what your astrology suggests is the best idea.

Instead, figure out how to be brilliant, and then present those ideas *as a possibility to consider*, rather than the product of a streak of genius. If something is brilliant, it will seem so, and you're a good salesman. But you want to undersell and under-promise; and then over-deliver when the time comes for making your ideas real.

And remember this will always require cooperation and power-sharing in a group environment.

Putting Taurus and Leo Together

Here is the key to your astrology for the year. I have more to say, though consider this formula.

Taurus, your 10th house, is ruled by Venus. Venus is the significator for all things associated with the 10th (again: reputation, recognition, achievement and at best, being in the flow of the Dharma).

Venus, in turn, will be spending a big part of the year in your sign. So through Venus, you are conveying the properties of the 10th house to your 1st house. (If you can follow this, you will be able to read an astrology chart, no problem.)

That means you have the ability and the opportunity to fully embody the drive, ambition and aspiration of the 10th as part of you. You get to become what you want to be, and what you want to be known for.

Venus — your professional life — moving into your 1st house takes something external to you (the 10th, which has much to do with the perception of others) and brings it directly into your personal being and physical form (the 1st, which is what you express from the inside out, and also how you present yourself).

In another context, Venus represents your 3rd house or place, Libra. This is your ability to communicate and to do so eloquently. The challenge here is developing a coherent point of view that you present with some boldness, instead of the “it may be this, or it may be that” style of Libra communication.

Jupiter Enters Through Your 9th House — Aries

Later in the year, you have yet another extraordinary transit: Jupiter enters your 10th house, Taurus, for a year. This spans from May 2023 to May 2024. It follows a five-month transit of Jupiter through Aries, from late December through May.

So let's cover that first. Remember that how you handle Aries, your 9th house, strongly influences how you handle the 10th house. The 9th is closely related to ethics and your personal philosophy. The 10th is how you express your power and influence.

To have Aries (the sign of I am) on the 9th house (who and what is God, how do I relate to my 'higher power' and what is the role of religion in my life?) means that the essence of your spiritual orientation is some form of self-actualization.

This is a lifelong process, and for most people it is so difficult that they don't engage it consciously. In our wholly externalized time, where there is believed to be no substance and only image, it is not even a relevant cultural topic of discussion — though it is relevant to you; potentially the most vital and necessary topic of them all.

Should you be of the inclination to grow, to discover yourself, and to build a worldview that is ethical and humane, I consider it necessary to understand what living in the digital environment has done to your concept of being a person. We are all in the same

boat here. In effect, when we were born, there was one God; and now when we are adults, there is another God: the omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful, all-consuming digital realm.

You may think this has something to do with your use of the internet. It does not. What I am talking about is how the entire world has been uploaded to the digital realm; and how exposure to the digital realm has influenced perception of what remains of the physical world and its relevance. What is happening is part of the “invisible environment” or the ground of being. A shift in the ground of being is the single most profound thing that can happen to a person, though they may not know it. Still, it influences every perception, expectation and experience.

Thankfully you have this going on in the house that is associated with your spiritual experience and ideation. That is precisely the correct forum in which to have the conversation.

Aries, your 9th, has been a kind of crime scene going back a century (due to the presence of Eris), and what has been stolen is humanity. This may seem like a bold statement, but look at the state of the world: the conflict, the self-centeredness, the refusal to care covered up by pretending to care, and many other qualities that subtract from our humanity and our connection to Source.

Chiron’s transit through this region of your chart (early 2018-early 2027) is about seeking your wholeness, deepening your connection to yourself as a spiritual practice, deepening your connection to spirit, source or God, and finally, living as if your understanding is true.

Through the first part of 2023, Jupiter sweeps through this house, a transit that may fill you with the sense that you truly understand something that is in fact difficult to grasp. Please be cautious of what I call “false clarity” — thinking you know when you do not know. This is especially tempting when you have been presented with difficult, nagging or other persistent questions about your own nature.

I suggest that in the presence of Jupiter, you maintain a perspective of questioning rather than of believing or of thinking you know. Chiron rules this house now, and one element that Chiron requires for growth is documentation. That means specific methods of marking your location, where you are heading and your progress.

I understand this can be difficult to assess. You will need to devise your own ways to measure or observe this, and your own ways to verify that you’re not merely seeing

what you want to see. Think of yourself as moving through space and time in relationship to every other entity in space and time. Notice how your perception of all of these other entities and objects changes and evolves.

To do that, it helps to document as you go — anything tangible will do, any form of a written record, and even a photographic record, though it would help if you wrote captions.

In particular, you might consider what you learn in your relationships to your teachers. If you are not merely following along, you will not swallow everything whole, but come up with your own analysis that may comport with what you're learning, and in some ways may not. The key is that you develop your own individual concept of reality, and second, that your concept be relatable to another person in such a way that they understand it.

You may wonder why that is; and I will admit that being a writer and presenter may be a kind of bias. I believe that we teach what we most need to learn. Expressing your ideas and developments — when you're ready, or as you become ready — will help you clarify what you are saying to yourself, through the experience of saying it to others. When you speak or when you write, listen to yourself and know that you are, as you proceed, defining and exploring your reality.

Jupiter in Taurus and the 10th House

In some of my comments earlier in this reading, I described the attributes of Uranus moving through your 10th and what I perceive as your need to proceed in all matters in an ethical fashion; as well as to maintain cordial and respectful relationships with those in authority.

Beginning in May and through May of 2024, Jupiter will be in Taurus. This is encouraging you to be bold about what you're doing, and to do the work of building your reputation. This is, among other things, about a significant increase in your visibility. It's about being taken seriously for who you are and what you do. And it's another one of those "tread lightly on the Earth" kind of transits, because it contains so much influence.

This happens only once per 12 years, though the special distinction — the once-in-a-lifetime element — is that at the end of the transit, in the Spring of 2024, Jupiter will make a conjunction to Uranus. My reading on this is: don't be in too much of a rush to succeed, to be seen, to be known, or to be respected. Rather, let your respect follow your achievements, your growth and your gradually building confidence.

The Jupiter-Uranus conjunction of April 20, 2024 will more than compensate for any seeming delays in getting noticed. And it's likely to have the effect of connecting you to certain important collaborators or people who can help you develop and promote your work.

Therefore, build slowly, move through any seeming setbacks, and keep going. Notice small advantages when you have them. Never assume someone is "less than" or "unimportant," since you never know who you're talking to until you find out. Therefore, present yourself at all times with the most impeccable Leonine respect.

I would remind you to never worry about impressing anyone with anything other than your ability to keep promises, to be dependable and more than anything, to be generous in all ways.

Your Exterior Environment: Aquarius

The sign opposite your own, or your 7th house or place, is the region in the chart most closely associated with the perceivable, external environment you live in. This includes your relationships, particularly the visible ones: business partners, domestic partners, marital partners, and anyone who openly competes with you.

For you this is Aquarius. The positions of all the signs relative to any one of them describe something distinctive about each. This is essential to understanding the Sun signs, and it will work in almost any form of astrology.

To have Aquarius as your house of environment and primary relationships indicates that you have an affinity for group situations; that you are influenced by social patterns; that you are deeply influenced by astrology no matter how you may feel about it, or what you may think about it.

What approaches you from the 7th is generally experienced as an exterior factor, and this can also be a projection of your own awareness seen as something originating from outside of you. While I cannot go over all of the philosophical implications of projection (there are plenty, and they can be as controversial as they are useful), A Course in Miracles goes so far as to say that *projection makes perception*. Said another way, you see only what you project (and this can be a provocative idea, as it argues against objective reality).

Under this idea, all that we see outside of ourselves is either the direct product of our own thoughts, or at a minimum is pre-selected, colored and influenced by them. There

may be objective reality, but viewpoint is crucial. Standing on the 1st house and looking out at the 7th house (the usual viewpoint), is in itself subjective: a *point of view*.

In light of your being about to have one of the most important 7th house transits of your life (more significant if you are Leo rising but a highly significant transit in any event), I suggest you always remember the importance of your own viewpoint and take charge of that.

That transit I am referencing is Pluto through Aquarius, a 21-year journey that begins in March and will influence your life for the foreseeable future, and beyond. There are a lot of ways to describe the effect of this kind of transit. However, the simplest explanation is that it represents an intensification of the effects of your environment.

Pluto can manifest as raw power. The 7th is a direct confrontation. Therefore, you will want to avoid any kind of blow-for-blow situation, or direct engagement of combat. Settle your affairs amicably. At the same time, there is a caution here against being intimidated by threats. So Pluto in the 7th has a rise-to-the-occasion feeling. One thing that may be “rising” is your recognition, which can accompany Pluto entering the 7th house. And this is supported by many other transits.

Thankfully, related to Pluto, this is a sea-change that will fade in over the next two years, though the beginning of any Pluto transit through a sign is a critical moment to observe shifts in your environment and how you perceive them. I suggest you not take too seriously the words of books that characterize this transit, as they will tend to be blunt and needlessly menacing.

As someone with the sign Cancer rising, I have recently lived through most of a Pluto-through-the-7th-house transit. Apart from any specific events associated with it, the net result has been a complete revision of my concept of intimate relationships and partnerships.

As with Cancer rising, Leo and Leo rising place a Saturn-ruled sign as the one that is opposite yours. Aquarius is about structure, though in the form of social patterns rather than the arrangements of buildings and other tangible structures. So you will, in one sense, be well-placed to feel the edge of the wave front that is about to transform society yet again.

It will help if you loosen up your bindings and work with the factor of fixed-sign Aquarius that says the only constant is change.

Mars in Cancer

Mars arrives in Cancer on March 25, 2023. It will be there through May 20, 2023, when it arrives in Leo. I've said quite a lot about your relationship to the all-important social world, and that is being influenced by the current Mars retrograde in Gemini. That finally ends when Mars makes its way into Cancer in late March.

Relative to Leo, Cancer is your 12th house or place. This is about non-ordinary consciousness, the pleasures of the bed, the accumulated residue of unprocessed ancestral stuff — and fear.

The very short way to sum up this transit will be: do not let your anxiety get the best of you. Keep working through your feelings, and recognize the emotional hooks that bind you to any anxiety you may experience. Allow Mars to flush out old fears that have filtered into the shadowy spaces of your mind.

Saturn Enters Pisces

The Saturn-in-Aquarius era began on March 21-22, 2020. Saturn in Pisces begins March 7, 2023 and extends through early 2026. Let's end here, as it's a transit that is close to home in the sense of relating to matters at the center of your personal affairs and those of any partners with whom you may share a combination of sex and a financial relationship; and their relatives; and any matter of legacy or inheritance.

Saturn has just spent three years moving through your 7th, clearing space and ironing out your personal associations. Here at the end of Saturn in Aquarius, we all have a better sense of who our friends really are (and there is still a little left to this process). The bizarre rearrangement of ALL social relationships that took place during the first few months of Saturn in Aquarius was epic, in terms of the basic syntax of a transit showing up in the world as vividly as a movie director portraying a script in vivid, high-impact scenes.

While the injustices are piled higher than any mountain on Earth, one effect was a period of sorting out, and of clearing space — in the world and also in your personal relationship environment. We have all had a diversity of, "Oh that's who that person was!" moments of revelation.

Saturn through Pisces and the 8th is a radical change of color. It brings the matters of clearing space and sorting out closer to home. There may be some development of issues connected with the 7th house transit of Saturn, though my take is that Saturn via

Pisces is its own creature entirely. In terms of your closest relationship involvements, it's about seeing what you've been missing; there is a filter of realism placed before your eyes.

The planet that's been creating a kind of fog effect is Neptune, making a long transit through Pisces in your 8th house. Once we add Saturn to the house where Neptune is, you can suddenly start to "see it all for what it is." This is very much in the spirit of our times. More than you need any specific relationship, or form of relationship, the underlying necessity is about relationships in which both you and others can be sincere — and it does not feel like mixing oil and water.

This transit will help you learn why you are in any relationship, what the actual role of the partner is, determining what is available for adjustment and negotiation, and what is not. When you strip away all of the subject matter of the 8th, the underlying principle is working out a power-sharing agreement that works for everyone.

With love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric Francis". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" and last name "Francis" clearly legible.