



*Goddess altar with Botticelli's Venus and tarot cards. Photo by Eric Francis.*

## *Inner Space for Libra* **Aspire to a Beautiful Life**

Dear Libra Sun, Moon or Rising:

The feeling of your charts this year is that you are suddenly looking at new objects on the horizon, almost as if you have been transported to a new landscape. Humans tend to live in the past, based on past expectations. We spend a lot of time looking in the rearview mirror instead of where we are, or where we want to be.

Much of this occurs on what you might think of as your private horizon, or your view of your interior universe when you turn your vision around and search the inner sky. Yet there are also new visitors to your 'real-world' experiences and relationships — people and things you will notice, can talk to, work with, relate to, and draw wisdom from.

Your sense of a shifting and evolving landscape will be accelerated by the arrival of solar and lunar eclipses to the Libra/Aries axis, which happens just once every nine years, and which will last well into 2024.

The prevailing message of your charts: Take your opportunities while you have them. This is no time to hesitate. What matters is not that any potential venture is perfect, but that it feels good and comports with what you want. That is to say, what you want to do with your precious time and energy.

## **A Brief Overview of Libra**

Let's establish some criteria for what this creature "Libra" is about. Gather 'round and your old Uncle Eric will tell you a story.

First, Libra is about beauty. Libra is one of three primary signs associated with the appreciation of aesthetics (all of them Venus-ruled or exalted signs — Taurus, Libra and Pisces). While Taurus and Pisces certainly hold their own, Libra is the capital of forever on this topic.

What we think of as a sense of balance, harmony, and light-dark interplay all pertain to Libra. This is about not just Venus but the exaltation of Saturn in Libra. The blend of qualitative beauty (related to Venus, a multi-sense feeling), and the form and discipline (related to Saturn, *in the style of Libra*), provide the combination of factors that get this result. That Libra is so closely associated with Saturn seems to have fallen through the grill of modern astrology, right onto the coals. Much of what we love about Libra are attributes that come directly from Saturn.

Second, Libra is about sex. It is said to be about relationships, while sex itself is dispatched to the Taurus/Scorpio axis (with their alleged emphasis on seemingly raw desire; it is really more sublime than that). As the sign of balances, Libra specifically seeks to do just that with male and female, and masculine and feminine energies. These energies are at play in ALL sexual relationships and indeed in all other relationships, regardless of who is involved, the context, or the specific species of queer that is introduced.

Libra is about relationships. However, it also describes the ideation and creativity necessary for sex to be meaningful in some context other than reproductive. If we take a lead from Alice Bailey (*Esoteric Astrology*, 1936), any vaguely wholesome or meaningful sexual practice requires the use of ethics.

There must be an exploration of matters of right and wrong, which we tend to assume are going to be completely erased from discussions in the sexual sphere, or attempts at fulfilling one's desires.

It is Libra that places sex and sexuality into a relational context, and this calls for making decisions about what is right and wrong. This is taken way too far by those who make sex an exclusively moral issue. It is not one. Yet some attention to what is appropriate is necessary — and this extends into all matters of partnership, and creative partnership.

Third, the truly impressive initiative factor of Libra must be acknowledged. Speaking metaphysically, this is an extension of the association of Libra to sexuality. Sexuality is the genesis of all that we know. However, too much emphasis has been placed on the procreative aspect of sex, as if everything else — all of the spiritual and emotional material — is an afterthought. What if we have this backwards?

Bailey says that the ignition key to the universe is contained in the sign Aries, and surely the opposite sign Libra will contain some of this. The key to the universe may be sexual, of a certain kind; it may be an idea of a certain very powerful kind; Libra is where we find both of these in the same place.

Libra is often accused of having difficulty making decisions. Yet to make decisions calls for deliberation; this implies variables to deliberate among. And it also calls for conscious access to one's values, ethics and desires in order to have a basis for choosing. For any Libra who struggles with making decisions, tapping values and desire is the mental part of that. Know what is important to you, and think about it a lot.

There is a matter of balancing out the influx of values-driven input from others — that would be coming from Aries (and let's jump right in when the next section begins in 10 seconds).

Addressing insecurity and other forms of hesitancy are another matter. But let's just say when making a choice, for you it is fair to at least pre-select based on what you experience as beautiful. If you want a green one, look at all the green ones, and then decide if they are well-made or serve your purposes, and get one. In this and many other ways, you can allow yourself to be guided by your aesthetic senses, and also by

your interior senses. Let go of your mind, follow your sense of beauty, and then ask questions.

## **The Spectacular 2023 Aries Show**

Aries is your polar opposite sign, which you contain and which contains you. The sign pairs work as a single system, and there is no better place to discuss this than the Aries/Libra axis. The easiest way to describe the relationship between the 1st and 7th houses is that the 1st represents you and the 7th represents the other. While true, it's a little more complex than that.

The 7th, in your situation Aries, describes your total environment and also what you project into it. By "total environment," I mean the world you see when you walk around, and also what you experience when you look at others eye-to-eye rather than in some other situation (such as being their boss). The 7th should represent *level relationships among peers*.

There are unusually rare transits happening in Aries right now. In addition to slow-movers Chiron and Eris, Jupiter is making a sweep through your 7th house. This can come with great benefits; and it can also magnify anything and everything in your interpersonal environment. So as you read, ask yourself: How is this situation here to help me? What is constructive that can I offer to this situation?

For you, Aries is the externalization of your ideas, thoughts and experiences, as the people and the environments that you explore. This is never 100% but it's good to always remember that the one thing all of your experiences and perceptions have in common is you.

Aries as your external sign means you live in a hot environment, in that people are expressing their desires and intentions to you on a nonstop basis, and you are having to process all of that incoming data. It may be difficult to tune that out and notice what is coming from you, and what is not. We need to make that distinction so that we are working with a boundary — and I think you will find that boundary to be a helpful and useful tool as you go about the process of deciding your way through life.

The dominant force in Aries right now is Chiron, on a nine-year mission (2018-2027) to help you entirely rethink your concept of a relationship. Chiron represents both people and situations; it describes circumstances; and it can reveal the places within situations where healing and growth need to be applied. Your relationships have become the

principal area in your life where growth and healing are centered — or they are calling you to honor that necessity.

One of the reasons that Libra is considered such a relationship-oriented sign is that you have Aries as your opposite sign (also called the 7th house or place). We tend to seek ourselves in the angle of the chart where Aries is located. This marks many of the most interesting differences between the signs. And you have Aries in the primary house of relationships. This creates a dependable anchor into existence for you; a point of reference. It will continue to do so, though in increasingly unusual ways.

Chiron moving through Aries and your 7th house brings this question forward: to what extent do you identify with others? This said another way: to what extent do you orient your self-concept through relating to others? It's likely that this has been a vital part of your personal journey. Chiron is making this more difficult by showing you just how different others are from you. This has been a lesson that has increased in intensity over the past few years.

Discovering how different someone is can make you question your relationship to them, which is just what Chiron seems to have in mind. You may have situations where you realize you just can no longer identify with certain people in your life. You may also be discovering the extent of certain injuries that they previously concealed.

Among the effects of Chiron through the 7th, you may be noticing just how injured so many people are — which contradicts the images that they present of themselves. There can be the feeling of having X-ray vision into those issues, and it can be exhausting if you are a compassionate person. This can potentially present specific problems with intimacy when you are confronted with people's issues and untended injuries on a constant basis. You may be asking at times: what in the name of the Lord has happened to our planet?

Then there is the self-aware question: How much of this is about me? How much is about my perception? What is this here to teach me about myself and my relationships? These are the real questions.

Without going too deeply into the territory, one of the very most central issues is what the digital environment has done to your relationships. For most people, there may not seem to be much of a difference between now and pre-2020. But society has been changed; the ability of people to trust one another has been contaminated; and social patterns have been crushed and partly remade, in reduced form, from the fragments of what used to be.

There is more to say about the social pattern angle, which I will get to when I cover Pluto in Aquarius in a bit.

## **Chiron Manifesting as Teachers**

In addition to Chiron in the 7th house's ability to magnify the problems people are having, it can manifest as an important teacher of some kind. This may or may not be someone in a formal teaching role. When I watch the internet go by, I see a lot of people presenting themselves as teachers, healers, mentors and gurus — it's almost always appalling. So be on the lookout for the mentors who charge young women \$6000 for a few sessions.

That said, Chiron contains the idea of mentorship as it is expressed by astrology. This is about one-to-one teaching by example. The easiest way to handle this, without going in search of the teacher, is to treat everyone as one.

Meanwhile, if you are involved in a relationship where the theme and format are about focused teaching and learning, get to know this person and seek an understanding of how they got to be the way they are. You may not need to know every detail, but have a sense of the big stones they have hopped along that have led to today.

Relationships of this kind must be handled with impeccable respect. If there is money involved (as there is in nearly everything these days), you must decide whether the price is fair. I suggest that the money be considered an offering rather than a fee. In any such relationship that does not involve the movement of funds, I strongly suggest that there be some exchange of energy; something that you offer in exchange for what you are learning.

Every relationship that is defined by Chiron can have a double edge, so you must be careful when you handle it. It's important to recognize that teachers, no matter how influential, are people, and you may discover that they have some strange situation or flaw that you just were not expecting to discover.

I would leave you with one last reminder re: Chiron in Aries. There is not one person in the world who does not feel some alienation from the human family, and there are many people who feel quite a bit. Others feel total alienation, as if they belong nowhere. Chiron's movements could be exaggerating this sensation for you. And it can be difficult to move through if you don't feel the motivation to make contact, out of fear that you might be rejected.

Take it easy here. Jupiter's presence may give you a sense of immediate relief; and it could point out the spots where you may need to make an extra effort and do some work. One thing I suggest you remember is that there are plenty of people who feel like you do, wherever you may land on the gradient. It's just that few of them will have the courage to admit it, or to open up to anyone about it.

## **Jupiter from Aries to Taurus**

Jupiter will move through Aries in one sweep from Dec. 20 through May 16, at which time it enters Taurus for a year. There is hardly anything negative we could say about this. Jupiter in Taurus, which is your 8th house of inheritance, could represent the inflow of resources into your life, through others.

This may come in the form of a significant increase in shared resources. Make sure you understand which part of that is your share, and on what terms.

It can also represent someone investing in you. Again, the necessity is for clear terms in any such agreement, which could be lucrative for everyone. One keynote of the 8th house is contractual arrangements. You must maintain the highest level of stringency regarding anything of this nature. For example, the first rule of contracts is not to commit to anything you cannot deliver.

(You will find these little rules in contracts that demand odd things that are impossible to deliver, such as plagiarism insurance in England, to give one ridiculous example. Plagiarism insurance? Really?)

With Jupiter in Taurus, the offers could be very good. Just make sure that any agreement has a clear way in, and a clear way out. Make sure you don't have to cover anyone else's costs, and that your costs are covered. With this transit, you can afford to push matters, and not be intimidated by anyone. Another thing — make sure that the whole financial arrangement is fully comprehensible to you. Make sure that ALL of your questions are answered before you are fully involved or committed.

One last thing: if you find that funds come your way, accept that they are in fact yours, and take full ownership. Do not allow any questions of "deserving" to get in the way.

## **The Pluto File: Capricorn to Aquarius**

Of all the signs, I think that Libra is in the best position to experience Pluto in Aquarius in the most productive and liberating way, particularly given that you've been through 14 years of Pluto in Capricorn. So let's start there.

Libra likes to live on a firm foundation, preferably in a house made of bricks. That foundation is Capricorn (your 4th house or place), which (to me) is synonymous with the library at Columbia University. It looks and feels like it's going to be there three civilizations from now. However, Pluto through Capricorn since 2008 has done a little job on all that we thought of as permanent.

Capricorn is the 4th place from Libra, which is associated with security, emotional grounding, the four walls that surround you, your father's influence, and your father's estate. It is usually stable territory for you, though Pluto moving through this house has been like living in an earthquake zone. Or rather, a zone of constant seismic shifts enhanced by the occasional temblor, rumble, tumble or The Big One.

No matter what sign is involved, Pluto through the 4th is about cultivating deep roots and being able to stand on your own. It is likely that many of the sources of support you had 10 years ago no longer exist. You have been compelled to stand much more firmly on your own, and also to cultivate new sources of nourishment. In a sense, it is fair to say that you have rebuilt your foundation.

Now Libra, Pluto is moving into your 5th house or place. You have Aquarius here, which is an interesting influence as it is what you might call the creative filter. While Aquarius itself is not considered especially creative, many Libra natives make astonishing contributions, particularly to rock music. And we might put the two together and remember that the Saturn-as-exalted in Libra is Saturn the ruler of Aquarius; there is a natural flow of energy between your sign and your 5th house. The Aquarius element also gives you a natural sensitivity to what will please the crowd, without having to act like a crowd pleaser.

Pluto into your 5th is likely to unleash some never-before-seen creative mojo for you. It's also likely to fire up your sex drive, by which I mean your curiosity and your willingness to experiment. We are lectured about love, love, love where sex is concerned. This has not proven to be a 100% safe activity. But I think those romantic types are missing something when they don't hold curiosity and the willingness to experiment as central

to sexual fulfillment, which is good for relationships. And they are more tangible and easier to define.

As for love, I suggest you stick to trust as the primary indicator. The word love is thrown around casually, to the point where most people don't know what it means. As far as I am concerned, trust is what we really mean when we say love. If there is no trust, then love is irrelevant, or worse, a conflicting emotion that is not a dependable guide. So if you feel the desire to experiment, and if you feel your curiosity about your eroticism re-awakening, you can allow and invite those things to guide you toward some new experiences.

Since this is about Aquarius, I would remind you of this: the digital realm is taking over both sexuality and all creative endeavors. Do what you can to have and create as much non-digital sex and art as you possibly can. That said, if you bring a lot of creativity and the human touch, there will be some fun ways to relate sexually in the digital realm. But in the spirit of the 5th house, these will only be as fulfilling as you are willing to take risks.

## **Mars from Gemini to Cancer**

Transits of Venus and Mars this year are likely to work significantly in your favor, particularly in the area of building opportunities for professional success and some long-awaited improvements to your social situation.

Let's start with Mars. Its somewhat dramatic retrograde through Gemini, which stretches (in its residual forms) into late March, has been about a quest for your personal truth on the most intimate spiritual level. There is also something significant here about sorting out the misperceptions, denial and other points of confusion that important partners in your life may have. They show up in the astrology as the same thing.

We might say that as you find your own sense of what is right for you at this time in your life, and set aside what is not, you must evaluate the perceptions and ideas of others and see if there is a match. If you do not have sufficient spiritual substance to share with those in your life whose perspective you are evaluating, you will be likely to shift the relationship.

Gemini, the scene of Mars retrograde, is your 9th house or place, which is a crucial testing ground for how you work out your ethical principles. This is necessary preparation for what happens in the 10th house, where you start to move real power in the world.

Mars arrives in Cancer, your 10th house or place, on March 25, 2023. Because Mars will have been in Gemini for seven months, this will come with a sustained burst of energy, well through May 20, 2023, when it arrives in Leo. Mars through the 10th for those two precious months will motivate you to make progress on building your reputation, collecting on the work you've done in the past, being visible, and making contact with your professional peers.

This is a high-energy transit that will get results if you stay in harmony with its message of integrity. There is no doubt that you or your enterprise will make a kind of debut under this transit, gaining considerable attention. You will need to sense in your body what is right and wrong for you — which you are likely to notice immediately upon meeting a person or encountering a situation.

### **Venus Retrograde in Leo**

(July 22-Sept. 3, 2023; Venus in Leo spans from June 5 through Oct. 8.)

Venus is the planet that rules Libra; it's the stand-in for you, in almost any astrological chart. So to understand the story of Libra, we want to track Venus carefully.

Leo is your house of public relations: the 11th, considered by many astrologers to be the best of the lot. You have a *mitzvah* here this year: Venus will spend four months in the territory, making its once-per-eight-year visit (by retrograde).

Remember that Mars will come through the territory first; make sure you're diplomatic about your aspirations and your plans over the first half of the year, at the same time as you are gutsy and persistent. Mars will serve as the opener (putting yourself where you can be seen), and Venus will serve as the closer, helping you collect the rewards of being known as who you are.

That is the thing: where your outer journey draws significantly on your inner one. With personal planets making their presence known in the most visible angles of your chart, it's essential that you master the art of being who you are at all times. There are many options, but none of them result in a fulfilling form of success. It has to be you who succeeds, and you whose values are expressed to the world around you — not those of someone else, or of something else.

It is worth doing the inner work to get this right, and you have help. Yet there is no substitute for showing up and being real, which requires some squirming around under the glare of being seen and known for who you are. If you find yourself having what are

called vulnerability hangovers — that feeling (usually the day after) of: my God, I cannot believe I was that real — then you know you're on the right track.

Insecurity is essential to sincerity. It's the feeling of the ego shedding its skin, melting away, or being toasted off — so that the genuine person you are can emerge, without any of that clutter.

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.