



Fire at Arklight, New Year's Eve 2021-22. This 86-foot diameter round home, with a hearth suitable for Rivendell in the Lord of the Rings, was an important meeting place of the New York resistance movement under the lockdowns of 2020. The owner, Dale Hartka, is tending the fire. His son built the hearth and wall. Photo by Eric.

Inner Space for Scorpio

Use What You Know. Learn What You Don't.

Dear Friend and Reader:

You are in an unusual time in your life when suddenly it seems as if all bets are off. In other words, much of what you based your life on — the principles, the expectations, and to a significant extent, your self-knowledge — no longer seem to apply. You are almost in a moment of free-fall, though trying to discern whether you are in motion or at rest.

Many different transits are associated with this state of being. The double-edged sword is that while you may be experiencing significant inconvenience in areas of your life that tended to be much more stable, there are gifts involved. And one of them is liberation from your own personal history, including the thought patterns that governed your thinking until fairly recently.

From the look of your astrology, you may feel like you're facing challenges when it comes to your wheels being on the ground with their usual traction. Normally, once you make your mind up, you are unstoppable. However, the bit about making your mind up firmly and resolutely has not been as easily accessible as it has been in the past.

And it would seem that you are going along fine until partners enter the scenario. By all indications available (through astrology), that is where the confusion enters the picture. And it is made more noticeable by how you move a lot of energy and consideration through the partnership aspect of your life. It is a kind of filter through which you tend to run everything.

You may finally be figuring out where you stand with certain people, and equally significantly, where they stand with you. Even as you get a sense of this, at the same time, you are subject to doubting your perceptions. This makes it difficult to tune into the motivations and intentions of the very people whom you are trying to relate to in a sincere and mutually productive way.

This may be an indication that the role of relationships in your life is evolving in the direction of you becoming much more self-reliant, and defining your existence independently of how others perceive you, or what you think you need from them.

Dancing with Neptune: Mars in Gemini

There are few people for whom Mars retrograde in Gemini has created a more complex scenario in their lives than those with strong Scorpio in their charts. I would propose, though, that you are learning everything you need to know. Or at least you have available all of the necessary information and observations; whether you take that under advisement is up to you.

One challenge is the problem of plausible deniability. Whatever you discover or observe seems to have another potential cause, or can seem not to be 100% true. This can feed your own sense of hesitancy because you don't want to act on incomplete information. Yet there are times when even your firmest conclusion based on the data can have the feeling of being an assumption.

It's difficult to make decisions, particularly very important ones, when you doubt yourself even for a little bit.

Let's assess the first specific point of astrology that I've been going on about for the past 600 words — the nature of Mars retrograde in Gemini, which is your 8th house or place (if you have Scorpio Sun or rising). The 8th is one of the two most complex

houses, because it directly involves the details of relationship, and it covers so many topics that connect to it.

The 8th is where other people, all of their commitments, and their connections to others, enter the chart. The 7th house is the basic house of partnerships, but if we proceed to the very next house, we suddenly end up considering all the provisions and conditions of marriage, and what the in-laws have to say, as well as ex-partners of those we are close to. We end up in territory that is often fraught with contractual situations, conditions, customs and expectations — and the idea and the reality of death.

The 8th also has two particular forms of sticky bonding substance: sex and money. The money aspect is in the definition of the 8th from the start — dowry, bride-price and matters of inheritance.

The sex aspect first enters through the marital contract. But then, though this is in no way indicated or even hinted at by classical astrology, the 8th has a way of describing sexual preferences, needs and desires. It is about sex and the partner as marital property (generally, pertaining to the woman). I cannot document in astrological history how and where the idea of sexual preference and experience enters the idea of the 8th, but we can find it there.

Sometimes it's in the form of attachment, which can mean connection through a contractual arrangement or money in some form. And other times, there is a matter of actual desire. Yet in an environment of both commitment and expectation, desire can get lost in the sauce.

In a roundabout way, I am describing the circumstances surrounding Mars retrograde in your 8th house. Here Mars, one planet that represents you in astrology, has shown up in the house associated with your contractual bonds with others. No matter what, this will compel a review, whether voluntary or one that is thrust at you.

The Gemini factor of this house, in your chart, complicates matters considerably. This begins with a strong tendency to favor the “twin souls” theory of relationship. And it can be difficult for you to figure out where you begin and where someone else ends. Your partner may also have this challenge. Though this lends itself to the quality of “total involvement,” it can become exceedingly complicated when you or a partner changes, and the relationship must in some way follow along.

The Deeper Complexity is from Pisces

Your Scorpio sister Bjork has a fantastic line in one of her songs: *Darling, stop confusing me with your wishful thinking*.

The boldly idealistic side of Scorpio is seen in the way that Pisces appears in your chart, the sexually playful, creative, fun-seeking 5th house. This suggests that when you're true to your nature, you're a born artist or a born romantic. Scorpions can make people nervous, but you can be as much fun as humanly possible when you're sexually or artistically engaged. As the saying goes, you get into it. But that depends on your ability to connect with any individual person. For you, everything is about chemistry, or as my Scorpio girlfriend from ages ago used to say, *simpatico*.

You have had Neptune crossing this territory for the past 12 years or so, which amplifies both the idealism factor and the chemistry factor. The creativity may be difficult to harness, and the sexual energy of this transit can feel more like fantasy than something you might do in physical reality.

Now, Neptune in Pisces is being activated, provoked, hotted up (choose your term) by Mars in Gemini. There have been two contacts as of this writing — one in October, one in November, and a third one coming in March. This is a layering process you're going through, on the way to figuring out what is true for you. The thing is, whatever that truth might be is likely to be entangled in your sensitivity and needs, those of at least one other person, and heavily tinted by the connection to Neptune.

This pattern can have a self-destructive or self-indulgent quality to it. Squares to Neptune are challenging, though Mars adds a hot, reactive factor — one that is sustained for many months. The essence of it is hearing through the static, cutting through the grease, and figuring out how you actually feel beneath all of the intriguing or complicating factors.

Two of them are sexual attachment and financial involvement, and they may exist in the same place. This makes it difficult to sort out the nature of what is really true. The thing is, you may know; and you may find that truth difficult to access, work with or keep in focus. You may awaken to it and then fall back asleep. If you know your personal truth, I suggest you respect that, and use it as your sole basis for taking action.

Saturn Will Help Clear the Air

In March, days before the last Mars-Neptune square, Saturn enters Pisces. This is a significant shift for all of the water signs because it finally adds an antidote or antithesis to the scattering and clouding presence of Neptune. Saturn is likely to pull focus rather quickly once it gets going through Pisces. Also of note, within days of this, Mars enters water sign Cancer, finally liberated from one dimension of

Neptune's influence. Both are likely to have the feeling of a radical awakening and wondering what to make of that dream.

Whatever else it may be associated with, Saturn wants three things to happen: it acts to *clear space*; it works to *organize space, time and energy*; and it works to *materialize ideas*. When we add this factor to Neptune-rich Pisces, we are going to get some kind of interesting chemical reaction. It's not really predictable, except to say that if you track the factors involved, you may be able to follow the developments.

This will not be easy to sort out because so much happens in March. However, I suggest you pay attention to developments in specific areas and notice how your observations, attitudes and values change as the planets change signs.

Saturn is going to push you over the next few years to do something relevant with your creativity. It's time to come out of dreamer mode and get into tangible action mode, with measurable results. Saturn will urge you to put a studio or even a business structure around your art or other creative endeavors. Saturn will be pushing you to build on your dreams rather than just ponder them. This may feel cold or brusque but it is not.

There is a translation process going from the vapid inspiration of Neptune to the tangible construction process, and it can be alienating. It's easier to dream. But there is no sense of accomplishment from that, and I don't think you will rest well until you actually do what you know you are here to do.

Given the pattern of Mars, associated with Neptune and the 8th house, I would encourage you to consider the extent to which your involvements with other people are supporting or detracting from what you want, or what you must do, with your precious time and energy.

Uranus through your opposite sign Taurus is saying the same thing. This is where you experience your relationships in a face-to-face, level-ground way; it is encouraging you to make a genuine assessment of how everyone in your life feels about you. Their actions will always speak louder than their words.

Where Uranus is present, the matter of ethics must be front and center. Do people treat you in an ethical way? That is more fundamental and less subjective than fair. Ethics means: does someone you are in any form of relationship to do you right? Do they take your needs and plans into account when making decisions? Study the characters in your personal play carefully.

Pluto from Capricorn to Aquarius

The great watershed of 2023 is Pluto changing signs, something that has not happened since 2008, and then 1995 before that. Pluto is slowing down, growing more distant from the Sun, and will take 21 years to cross Aquarius (rather than the usual 14 or so years that we're accustomed to with Pluto transits).

Pluto through Capricorn has been something of a modest project of rethinking absolutely everything. At times you may have wondered if you were OCD, or channeling your grandmother, lost in the Museum of Antiquities, or aspiring to be chairman of the board. (These are some basic Capricorn themes.) Pluto has both dismantled some elements of tradition and revived others. It's had that "everything old is new again" feeling morphed with "Fuck tradition! Who cares anyway?"

Pluto through Aquarius focuses on a singularly important issue, from a therapy context: it is about the pattern of your family.

This has many names, and from my training, I have seen how helpful it is to do family-of-origin work of any kind. This also goes by many other names: family constellation work, internal family process, family of origin work, your love map, and many other ways to describe what essentially is the same thing is.

One way to think of it is that you have internalized your family pattern and it has become a template of thought and feeling. There is an excellent book about this, called *A General Theory of Love*. In an odd way, this book explains what we think of as karma, but connects the effect to emotional imprinting before the age of three. For example, why do we keep having the same kinds of relationships; and why do people around us constellate in a way similar to how our family of origin conducted itself? This can often come down to seemingly ridiculous details, or manifest in a broad strokes kind of way, where, for example, someone keeps marrying their mother.

Scorpio is especially sensitive to this phenomenon. Aquarius tends to hold the whole concept of group dynamics, and you have this particular sign as your 4th house. Both of these tend to hold early childhood imprinting, so together, the effect is multiplied.

It is worth mentioning here that the 3rd house, Capricorn, where you've had Pluto for the past 14 years, also contains important elements of early childhood dynamics, so you have some experience studying and growing through these matters. As someone who has worked with thousands of clients, and from corresponding with the public, I cannot overemphasize the importance of this area of self-study — and it is very much an internal field of inquiry.

The Internal Family Constellation

That is the whole point. The people around us may constellate externally, however, the idea is that the original pattern is held in our emotional and mental patterns. And then when it shows up in the world, it looks like this mysterious thing called karma. I am not saying that karma is not involved. However, that is something of a black-box nature, and it includes all kinds of “lessons for our own good” rather than practical issues to address.

Our society seems to have some immunity or resistance to discussing family pattern issues. But we sure do get clobbered by them: note the behavior of society all through 2020 and 2021, under the influence of Saturn in Aquarius. Our society felt that it was justified in forcing people to take action against their will at the point of a needle, unemployment (loss of career and potentially one’s home), or brutally oppressive policies that were taken in stride by most people.

But if anyone is wondering why the big *machers* can order society to stay home, surrender its income, convince people to make enemies of their son or mother, and then line up for a shot of government mystery juice even as it makes thousands of people sick, you will find relevant information in the study of families and family patterns.

Because people tend to love and even admire their relatives, few people want to hear that family patterns tend to be fascist. This is not usually the overt fascism of *Mommy Dearest*, but the sly fascism of social control, in-group and out-group thinking, the keeping of “state secrets,” and lots and lots of drama around death.

They may seem like lovely people and grandma makes awesome apple cake. It’s just that too often, they love you more if you become a bank teller rather than a bass player, or marry that person instead of this one.

Speaking from my experience as an astrologer-consultant going back to the 20th century, you really see the dynamics come out in death dramas (and notably, that is what we were dragged through in 2020 and 2021). Underneath all the policies and mitigation measures was a threat: You’re going to kill someone, or they’re going to kill you (and somehow your seven-year-old niece was allegedly involved).

Pluto through Aquarius seems like the perfect transit to expose all of these dynamics in your life — and to give you an opportunity to detach yourself from them and live more independently. However, the cost of freedom for you is being willing to either stand up to those people or leave them behind. There is really no middle ground, or rather, the middle ground is to keep getting dragged into their dramas that you do

not want. Yet the only way out is to make changes and adjustments within yourself, so that you can spot the patterns and then make decisions about what you want.

I would suggest leaving your ideas about karma out of the equation for now, and stick to what you can document in behavior, historical knowledge and your understanding of how the two meet up as psychology. While I don't have a reading list at this time, *A General Theory of Love* is a very good start, and I am happy to pass recommendations provided by my readers onto other clients.

This is an area of healing that takes careful self-observation, reading, and potentially therapy. The intensity of the dynamics is likely to increase until it gets your attention, and you finally say, "What is this really about?" That is the question, and it has an answer, though you may discover it through a process that goes in layers.

Jupiter in the 6th house or Aries; Venus Retrograde in the 10th House or Leo: Recognition for Your Work

In the past section, I've been talking about your deep inner life, and matters that relate to the distant past. These, in turn, govern something about your self-confidence. Scorpios are something of a contradiction here, because they are often seen as being so assured and bold, but can be hampered by a low opinion of their abilities, intelligence or talent. This is a nagging kind of self-doubt that can be invisible, or subject to agitation by people you associate with.

That said, Scorpio was born to shine. For a diversity of reasons easily found in your astrology, you identify with your work and you want recognition for your accomplishments. Any struggle with self-esteem you may have usually manifests as doing a very good job but feeling like you don't get recognized for it. So you keep your nose to the wheel and keep doing your best — and your tendency is to be totally invested in what you're doing. This is more for its own sake than it is for the credit or acknowledgement.

Yet this can get in the way of that thing known as advancement. Two different factors strongly suggest you will have some excellent opportunities to do that — if you can stand a bit of the limelight, and are willing to claim your accomplishments. That act of claiming your true being would be first to yourself and then to anyone who might find the information useful, mostly to assist you in rising up in the world.

That is the whole point: becoming more visible and more successful in the ways that you desire. That, in turn, is usually done with the support of partners, friends and allies. Some will be people you now know; others will be from the past; others will be those who enter your life for the first time. I know I'm making it sound like something special is in the works, and I think that it is.

In terms of planets, let's go in this order: Jupiter in Aries; Venus retrograde in Leo; then Jupiter in Taurus.

Jupiter arrived in Aries Dec. 20, 2022. Jupiter arrives in Taurus May 16, 2023. While it visited Aries briefly in 2022, this is a dramatic sweep that will take Jupiter from late Pisces (where it is as of this writing) clear through Aries and into Taurus in just under five months. Jupiter, with a 12-year orbit, spends one year in each sign on average.

As discussed, Aries is your 6th place, related to work and wellness, which tells us something about why you are so closely identified with your work. One will identify with anyplace Aries is placed in their chart, and the Scorpio solar chart has it in the 6th. You take your work personally, and you know that doing a good job is your investment in both the world and yourself. If this is not your current point of view, you may find great relief and satisfaction in adopting it.

You already have Chiron working its way through Aries, a nine-year thing that is focusing the wellness aspect of "work and wellness" and making it crucial that your work environment supports your overall health. With Chiron here, you could sustain some kind of work-related injury, and it would be wise to consciously avoid that. Remember, your boss is not your doctor. Your boss's doctor is not your doctor. Your boss's lawyer is not your doctor.

Jupiter moving through Aries describes productivity, though the implication is also that you may be too big for what you're doing. As the line in the Billy Joel song goes, "They sit at the bar and put bread in my jar, and say man, what are you doing here?"

The Venus Retrograde Factor

This year we have a once-per-eight-year Venus retrograde in Leo. Venus will be retrograde from July 22-Sept. 3, 2023; Venus in Leo spans from June 5 through Oct. 8, which in my view is the timeframe that we are considering.

Let Venus guide you upward to greater things. It's an invitation to step into your true role, which includes leadership, recognition and responsibility. Remember that the basis of earning this would be having excelled at something, and you never want to abandon that principle. Venus is more about invitation than it is about aspiration, but this is Venus in fiery mode.

As you increase in status, it would be wise to keep developing your skills and to make sure that you're directly involved in the activity of making or doing whatever your enterprise is about. Delegate tasks only to those who do what you do better than you.

Venus can rise up as a matter of intention. One thing to remember is that Leo always looks good. Maintain both your integrity and the appearance of propriety. That does not mean being a stick in the mud; it means being sincere and also remembering that where the 10th house is concerned (for you, Leo), you are in the spotlight. You are being noticed. Conduct yourself that way at all times, or at least until you close and lock your door and back away from all your devices.

Jupiter Lands in Taurus

One highlight of 2023 and well into 2024 is that Jupiter will be in your opposite sign Taurus. This spans from May 16, 2023 through May 25, 2024. For you, this is a light on the horizon, and may represent the first sense you've had in quite a while that your environment is opening up, and that your relationships are stabilizing.

The factor that has seemed to be destabilizing is Uranus in Taurus. Yet this may be showing up as an environmental influence (coming from outside of yourself) that is taking action where you did not have the confidence to provoke certain changes, or to challenge partners to recognize what you need.

For whatever reason, unless you are exceedingly adventurous, Uranus in the 7th is a bit agitating and may describe certain unexpected and spontaneous changes that have come into your life the past few years. In a way, Uranus in your 7th describes a situation that everyone is in: created by the electrification of the world, and the tribal conditions created by both electricity and digital technology.

It's hard to feel relevant in today's world. It's difficult to feel like one has a place — many people feel this, and many just fake it and pretend it's all not that bad. Besides keeping a positive attitude — itself, not so easy — the only antithesis to this dehumanizing time we are living through is to keep hold of your humanity; your physical feelings and emotions; your connections to people and to critters; and to make every last thing you do a creative act.

I recognize there are not necessarily so many people to whom those ideas will be relevant. Yet there are many who wish they could adopt such a perspective anyway. It's not that anyone is incapable; it is, rather, about how they think of themselves. And in this, you have many options. However, all forces and cycles point to one truth, which is that your reality begins inside of you and extends outwardly.

We can both experience the profound shifts that happen when we suspend the illusion that all that stuff is outside us, and adopt the posture that Sting described so beautifully — in the empire of the senses, you're the queen of all you survey.

There is a deeper world than this, tugging at your hand.

With love,

Eric Francis