

HORRORSCOPE FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2012:

To allow for the vagaries of the universe and interperative inexactitude, it might pay to read everyone else's stars as well.

SAGITTARIUS

Many of you will become involved with charitable and voluntary activities. This is the cosmic way of saying you are about to be retrenched. Look, it's not their fault OK? It's falling profits, or technology, or the GFC or something. Sorry, try at the next window.

CAPRICORN

Problems will disappear like a tooth in Coke™ overnight. It might be the right time of the year to experiment with good old-fashioned get-togethers. You know, like when the DVD player is on the fritz. Try it and see.

AQUARIUS

This is a month for being highly charged. Don't put up with it. Get on to your credit card vendor and give them heaps, the avaricious bastards. Pursue those career goals, or if you play footy those field goals, but if you play soccer be wary of own goals.

PISCES

Relax, you're not alone. You have a twelfth of the world's population on your side. My life would be a darn sight easier if the people of Africa looked up to different planets. I mean what can I say to you that would apply to them also.

ARIES

The 2012 solstice may be a time of rebirth and regeneration, or perhaps disintegration, depending on how good you are at reading Mayan. We may all end up at one with the universe, our atoms intermingled in cosmic harmony.

TAURUS

If you believe in Santa, write him a letter and ask him to be careful of your solar

panels when he parks the sleigh. Sorry, people who believe in Santa wouldn't have panels anyway because he told everyone there's no global warming at the north pole.

GEMINI

You'll have regular ups and downs, especially if you like the see-saw in the park. Perhaps you should try swinging but that doesn't mean eyeing off your best friend's partner. There are shocking events waiting for you tomorrow morning. Forget the toast, don't put the knife in to get it out. Bzzzzt!



CANCER

It has been said that children are the living embodiment of creativity. I must say they are a lot easier to make than a good solid coffee table. Perhaps if you already have a solid coffee table you could try making children on it.

LEO

Remember, Christmas is a time of giving and it's the thought that counts. But if you think that the present you received showed a total lack of interest in who you are or what you like, give it to them!

VIRGO

Technology and science could enhance your bank balance this month. Before you race off to the Bahamas though, remember, you must pay it all back when the bank discovers its error. Try to create a stable home environment, but of course if you get a horse for Christmas, it'll be the other way round.

LIBRA

If you are careful this month you can tap into the power and achieve your wildest dreams. Clumsy electricians of course should avoid putting power into the tap whereupon it'll be wildest screams. If you're into cattle, money will come in droves.

SCORPIO

A great month to take your car round to Neptune and get that rough idle fixed. Be careful on Boxing day when Mars had three sherries, Uncle Bob is in conjunction with the back seat and don't forget Pluto is still tethered to the tow bar. Give careful thought to your words and don't upset the Highway Patrol when they ask if you've been drinking.

Heavens above, coal barons below

If Jesus Christ came back to earth tomorrow what might He say? Assuming that He would have a smart phone His tweet might be something like, "OMG! What's going on around here?"

There have certainly been enormous technological advances since He was last here. A lot has happened in the last 2012 years.

But what of the fundamental message He came to earth to deliver to humanity? Have the core values changed as a result of we humans taking control of the planet's biosphere and, as some people argue, scragging it?

Now, my theological instruction barely lasted to the end of my school years, so can we put the question of everlasting life to one side for now. What about the idea that: "the meek shall inherit the earth"? Not much sign of that so far.

What about the teaching that the pursuit of money is by itself not a good thing and unlikely to buy you a ticket to the hereafter? Or that it might even get you a: "Go straight to hell, do not collect \$200" card?

To those of you who are devout in your belief, please excuse my impertinence — I mean no disrespect. I believe that all of us, religious or otherwise, have a common responsibility to keep our planet in good working order, regardless of how or why it was created.

The earth is our only home and it has existed for a very long time. A human lifespan is but a drop in the ocean time-wise, but in the last couple of drops we, as advanced technological generations, have made profound and irreversible changes.

Some of our achievements have been magnificent. The triumph of science over disease, the technology of education, entertainment, travel and the opportunity for so many of us to achieve 'our personal best' as they say. Other achievements have been less advantageous. The race for the ability to destroy all life in a thermo-nuclear maelstrom was not the twentieth century's finest moment.

Resource extraction has been seen as

the inevitable progression for humans from cave dwellers to 'masters of the universe'. It has also made a few people exceptionally wealthy and as a result, very powerful.

From the time of John D Rockefeller, the world's first oil baron, it has been accepted that the earth's riches belong



towards the future by Paul Cockram

to the discoverer. Some countries have challenged this orthodoxy, like OPEC in the arab states and some others, but it holds true in Australia.

That brings us to coal. When Jesus was last reported to be walking amongst us nearly all of the world's coal reserves were in the ground. Just recently, historically speaking, it has been the fashion to extract coal from wherever and whenever possible.

Coal 'baron' has replaced the barons of yesteryear. Although the definition of: 'a member of the lowest grade of

nobility' does seem to fit well according to recent newspaper reports.

Getting back to theology, it is common to most religions that life is a gift to be appreciated and lived well. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' is possibly the simplest explanation of why most of us behave reasonably with our neighbours.

Surely that can be extended to: 'don't take from the planet today a greater share than will be available tomorrow'. Our children's children are entirely dependent on our sense of fairness for their energy security.

Some people argue that technology will solve our energy needs at some time in the future, but it remains prudent and responsible to keep our usage of irreplaceable resources to a minimum until it is clear that our grandchildren will get their share energy reserves.

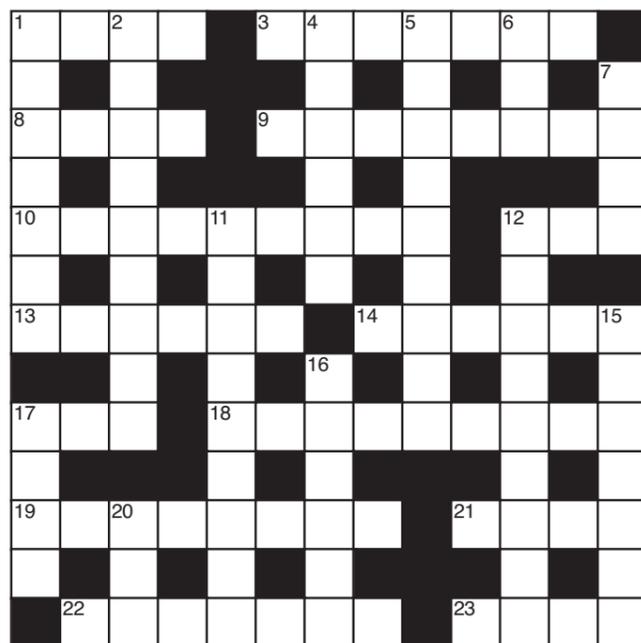
It's not just coal mining we need to be mindful of now, there's a new brand of baron on the block — and it could soon be on your block!

Seam gas forms part of the energy reserves under our feet and the fossil fortune lobby have it in their sights. A vast network of pipes is spider-webbing its way across the landscape, not just here, but in many 'advanced' countries.

The barons will forever be looking for ways to discover and appropriate the energy wealth that belong to us all, both present and future. That's how the game of barons and vassals is played.

But I bet that's not how God (or goodness for atheists) intended life to work. Not when there's an inexhaustible and freely available energy supply in the heavens above our heads.

BRAIDWOOD? BAFFLER #2



ACROSS

- ? It comes inside at Christmas (4)
- Friend (3)
- He has a very shiny nose (7)
- Finishes (4)
- The original Santa (8)
- Christmas singers (9)
- Dismal (3)
- Infuriate (6)
- Emulate (6)
- ? Bumbling but busy (3)
- ? Make a flimsy lasso — not in hose (4,5)
- Teacher (colloq.) (8)
- Kills (slang) 4
- Gift (7)
- Symbol in music notation (4)

DOWN

- Dark Syrup (7)
- Large plant of the genus Sambucus (5,4)
- Applicable to both genders (6)

- Sacks made from this (2,7)
- Second-hand (4)
- Consulates (9)
- ? The puzzle setter omitted a clue last time, so she feels this way (9)
- Stinks like (5,2)
- Underling (6)
- Superior (4)
- Belonging (to a female) (3)

SOLUTION TO BAFFLER #1

