

HORRORSCOPE FOR THE WINTER MONTHS 2013:

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

LEO
Reality will take a back seat to fantasy this month. How many of you know, and care, more about Sansa Stark than Julie Bishop? Is Kevin Rudd as clever, or as tall, as Tyrion Lannister? How vicious are those northern wildings from the 'State of Origin' matches?

VIRGO
You have been consumed by contrition since March. Lackadaisical proofreading allowed an atrocious spelling of a contributor's name to slip through. Even reprinting and replacing the sheet in later copies has not lessened the guilt.

LIBRA
Your planets are in perfect alignment — you're snookered. Take a deep breath. Cue your ball, hit hard and below centre and that should double kiss Venus into the top pocket. A delicate massée around Saturn's mate and by Jupiter you're in.

SCORPIO
When you read Choghadiya you find several names of time-periods of Choghadiya-Udveg, Chal, Laabh, Amrut, Kaal, Shobh, and Rog. Run this through Google Translator™ and it might say, "the sun will rise, then set and what happens in between is entirely up to you".

SAGITTARIUS
If you are an artist or a writer your creative juices will be flowing like water. If you one of those adventurous outdoorsy types, double check your hang glider's rigging or the parachute's packing otherwise it might be your life juices that flow like water.

CAPRICORN
Dah-de-da-de — Wow! No deposit, no

interest, no repayments until 2016. Prudence is eclipsed by gullibility this month and you will feel an irresistible urge to splurge. Just remember, by the time you actually have to pay for that TV, dominating the whole room as it does, it will be busted or obsolete.

AQUARIUS
You might have a big win this month, like a car or an overseas holiday. Wait a tick! How could that be so when you are a twelfth of the population. That's way too much stuff to give away.



PISCES
Be careful crossing the road this month except up near the park where it's a diddle. That palaver the RMS puts out about cars not stopping at zebra crossings is all phooey. Try getting them **not** to stop. I've tried looking up at the sky, tying a shoelace — nothing works. Even if it's the only car on the road, it always wants to stop when it sees you approaching the zebra.

ARIES
Many young people are victims of deep disturbances that need careful exploration, sometimes even squeezing. Cut them some slack. Oh, and if you are a young person: "For goodness sake, lift your elbows off the table when you eat!"

TAURUS
Two heads may be better than one. Two hearts may beat as one. But remember, three heads are not necessarily better than two and when three hearts are beating, one might get broken. And then there's the beating the jilted fourth heart might lay on the philanderers.

GEMINI
Moon square Mars and Pluto round your House will cause trouble if he eats all your dog's dinner. Multiple declination cycles are a great way to get to work but don't forget the helmet. An intersection with copper having an adverse day could result in an impecunious denouement.

CANCER
Make a list of all your troubles. Work out which ones can be sorted and which not. Start on the sortables and put the others aside. Go to sleep at night, safe in the knowledge that you're doing the best you can. It's all any of us can do.

Hope v despair

OUT IN THE VAST unending expanse we call the universe, two opposing forces were engaged in conversation about the past, present and future.

These two forces understood that existence is but a fleeting moment between what has been and what is yet to come.

The two forces were that of eternal optimism and its opposite, eternal pessimism. They were old acquaintances. Since time immemorial they had watched the evolution of the tiny planet, third from the sun, both claiming vindication of their respective views as the history of the planet unfolded before them.

"Can there be any doubt now?" asked the Pessimist. "This world now possesses the ability to annihilate all life from its surface. Even you, comrade, must admit that this tiny planet is now more threatened than at any other time since its creation.

"Haven't I said all along that it would be the humans with intelligence and inventiveness who would eventually bring about their own destruction?"

"Not so fast," replied the Optimist. "Wishful thinking is leading you to false conclusions. I'll grant you that humans have been responsible for many unwise developments, some as potentially devastating as you said, but let us not jump to conclusions without taking account of the historical circumstances.

"You have not been idle either, my friend. Don't forget, that last big war you orchestrated, spread right across the globe and was responsible for making a whole generation of people, from many different countries, suspicious of each other and afraid of peace."

"Forget about history," said the other. "Look at what has happened. There is hardly a country on the face of this planet where the avaricious few have not gained ascendancy over their fellows.

"How can you continue to hope that your ideals will prevail in the face of so much adversity?"

"I have one perpetual advantage over you," replied the Optimist. "Every new child is born an optimist and nothing you can do will ever change that."



Into the future by Paul Cockram

"Pessimism, on the other hand, has to be learned by bad experience or a corrupt education. Your influence can only take hold through a process of indoctrination — lies and half-truths, perpetuated by cynics or others to fixed in their ways to be able to visualise anything bar that which advantages themselves."

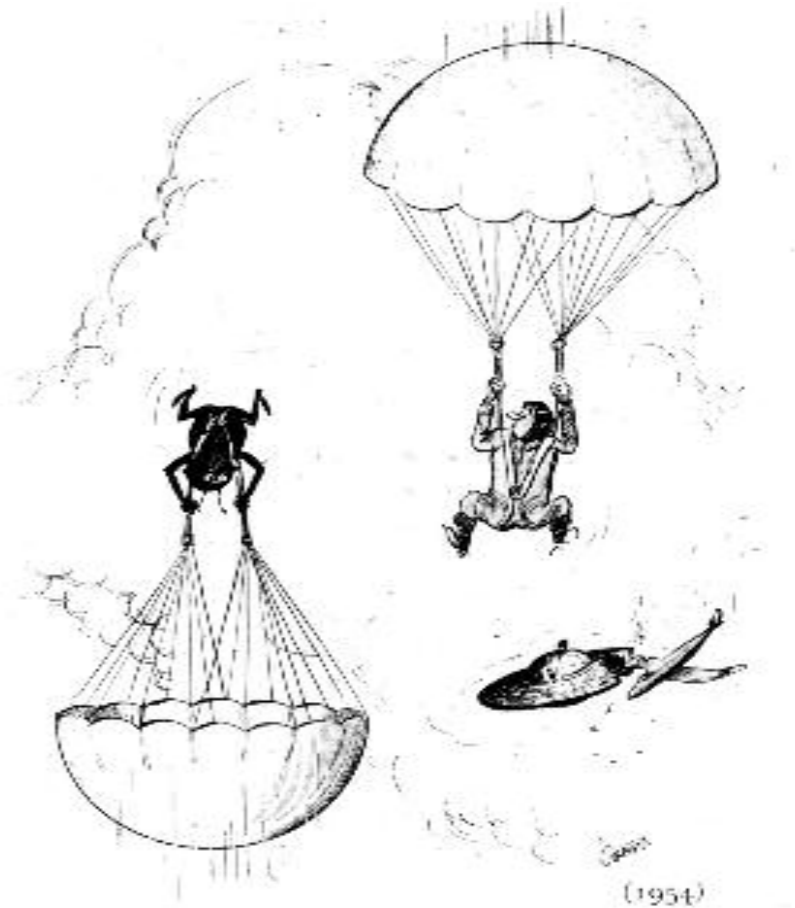
"It is this that sustains my hope. You require an evil apparatus; a system that will bludgeon and blunt a child's natural optimism and imagination, whether by force, false propaganda or trickery.

"But it is here that I will defeat you. No matter how effective you and your minions become in suppressing hope for a better future, through your vile and pernicious self-interest, you will always lose ultimately through the nature of wondrous creation.

"Admit it my friend," said the optimist, summing up.

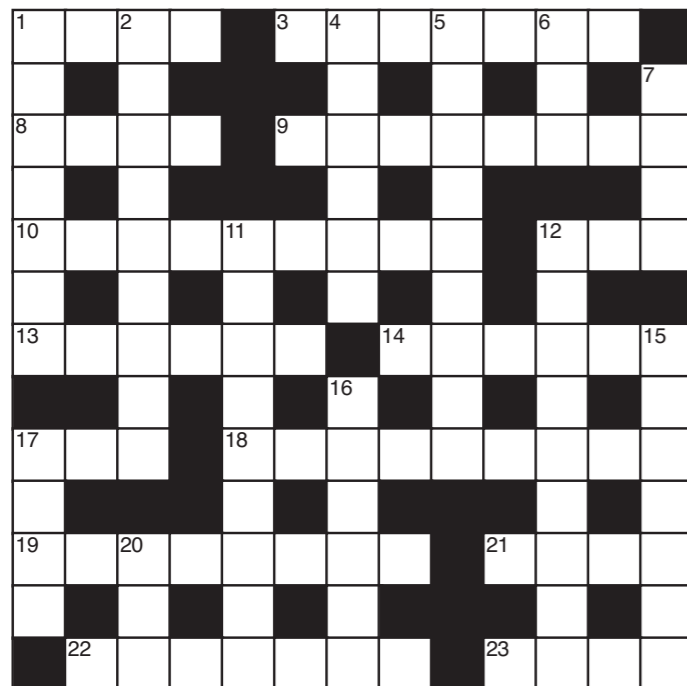
"You can do your very worst to promote doom and destruction but you cannot change the fact that every newborn human being is an optimist from birth. And if by chance or good fortune, the parents of that child have kept a little optimism of their own, with which they support and encourage their child, then the world will be steered away from the road to darkness and despair. Instead, the path will lead to a world with new ideals, a safe environment and peaceful coexistence."

If this story sounds a bit 'trippy hippy', it might well be. I wrote it in 1981 just after the birth of my first son, Patrick Cook. Maybe it's a bit dated, but even now, thirty years on, I have yet to find a philosophical or political strategy that doesn't benefit from optimism.



(1954)

BRAIDWOOD? BAFFLER #4



ACROSS

1. Witticism (4)
3. Cantors (7)
8. Numeral (4)
9. Drag across coal when in trouble? (4,4)
10. Murderers, political or otherwise! (9)
12. Expression of surprise (Colloq., Slang) (3)
- 13, 18 Across. Follow this colourful route? (6,5,4)
14. Cloud formation (6)
17. Posh gravy (3)
18. See 13 Across
19. Road home quite alarming! (anag.) (4,2,2)
21. Girl's name (and answer to last issue's, Who Am I?) (4)
22. Flowery wreath (7)
23. Printer's instruction to let it be (4)

DOWN

1. Start of the year (7)
2. 17 down, 22 across, often did this. (4,5)

4. Right sloping print type (6)
5. Purists would call this a club. (4,5)
6. Speed up or man of the cloth (abbrev.) (3)
7. Expression of cold at the start of our town? (4)
11. Leisurely, yet fast cooking? (4,5)
12. Seabird (9)
15. Most miserable (7)
16. This movie character needs oiling! (3,3)
17. Girl's name (4)
20. Type of stove (3)

SOLUTION TO BAFFLER #3

