

FEATURES STORIES

'How I became friends with an octopus'



These fascinating, life changing experiences have been documented by South Africans Craig Foster and Ross Frylinck in a newly released book entitled *Sea Change - Primal Joy and the Art of Underwater Tracking* following eight years of diving without wetsuits and scuba gear in the icy waters of Cape Town. Mr Foster said he developed an amazing relationship with an octopus during the course of his daily dives into what he described as the "golden" underwater kelp forest outside Simon's Town, which lies on the Atlantic side of the Cape peninsula. "I had the privilege of visiting this incredible animal for almost a year. It totally trusted me, lost all fear, it would take me on hunting expeditions and let me into its secret world. "Octopuses have different personalities, some are quite bold, others very shy, she was in between," Mr Foster told the BBC, describing how she would come over and greet him when she became accustomed to his visits. "It is a great privilege to step into that world to learn - not like a mammal - but like a fellow spineless creature in her invertebrate world," he said. Her den was mainly a hole she had dug in the ocean floor, which the diver described as a "proper home". "She hunts over 50 species but you can only find that out when you're allowed into her den and can pick up the bones of the animals she has eaten," he said, referring to the lobster and crab shells he saw. "You realise, my goodness, her life is so detailed and crazy connected to everything around her." "Human are not on a shark's menu" The diver has also had amazing encounters with great white sharks, possibly some of the ones that have been responsible for attacks on surfers and bathers on surfers and bathers in nearby False Bay over the years. Unlike the aggressive hunters of human flesh they are often portrayed to be, he paints a totally different picture of a magnificent serene animal. "When the great white sees a human it scans us, its search image is picking up something that's not prey. They are not sure what we are, they may be curious but it's not something that's good for them to eat and they know that. "They aren't animals that are after us, if they were, there would be attacks every day. If they see a seal, a fish or some of the other prey that's a different story but humans are not on their menu. "The one attack a year is an aberration. There's something in that person they attack that's triggering a response in that shark, it's incredibly rare. Maybe it's the muscle tension that's high, maybe the shark is in a bad mood. "I have made eye contact with them. I once had five great whites circling me in open water and I could see no aggression towards me whatsoever," Mr Foster said. "I've had a couple of close meetings with Tiger Sharks but they're also very gentle if you're relaxed. These animals are not the killers they're made out to be." Mr Frylinck, despite a scary maiden encounter with a big shark, has also become more comfortable with the much-feared animal. "White sharks very rarely enter the kelp forest, they patrol the fringes. They swim around this bay which has one of the highest concentrations of white sharks in the world. "One day we were swimming around the edge of the forest and Craig's friend Danny, who was with us, told me a white shark had just swum three to four metres away from my shoulder and had watched me quite intently. He described it as an absolute monster - between four and five metres," Mr Frylinck said. **Underwater tracks** Mr Foster, an award-winning film-maker of natural history, managed to adapt to the underwater world the tracking techniques he learnt in the Kalahari desert from the San people, widely regarded as being the best trackers in the world. "It involves a number of things like looking at subtle changes in sand and sand texture to see what animals have been around, looking to see if, for example, there's been a kill, if a worm has been digging, slime trails, egg casings - there are a multitude of signs underwater. "Initially I thought it would be impossible to try and track underwater but I was desperate to try and break into this very cryptic world," he said. "This crazy idea was in my mind for a long time and then eventually I started seeing the first underwater tracks, that's when I first thought it could work but I had no idea that I could develop it into such a detailed way understanding of animals underwater." **Diving 365 days a year** It was this understanding that led to Mr Foster uncovering eight new species of shrimp, one of which - *Heteromysis Fosteri* - has been named after him. The three new species, mostly bright red to orange in colour with series of either spots or stripes, belong to the genus *Heteromysis* and differ from previously known species by colour pattern, eye shape and the patterns of spines on their legs and tails. Having managed to meet his commitment to do 365 dives a year, he said his interaction with sea life has made him realise the importance of changing the way he lives. "The whole way I've been taught by other humans to live on this planet is completely unsustainable and I've also realised that these animals, particularly the phytoplankton, provide the oxygen for every breath I take. They provide the basis for every meal I have. "They have taught me that all the financial, political and other issues we hear about in the news are inconsequential compared to that natural foundation that holds everything up and we're chipping away at it," Mr Foster said. "We need to nurture it rather than doing the opposite." *BBC*

Italy storms: Two families killed in Sicily house

Two families have been wiped out in Italy after a river burst its banks submerging their house in Sicily. Nine people died in the incident in Casteldaccia - from children aged one, three and 15 to their grandparents. Only three people who were outside the house at the time survived. Three other people died when their cars were swept away on the southern island. Days of heavy rain and winds have killed at least 17 other people in Italy, mainly in the north and west. Some of the worst damage was to roads around Belluno in the northern Veneto region, after days of storms had dislodged mud, rocks and water. Six regions remain under alert - from Veneto to Sicily and Sardinia in the south. The tragedy in Casteldaccia occurred overnight on Saturday. Twelve members of two families had gathered to spend the night when water from river Milicia swamped the house. Three of those on the premises had lucky escapes. A father and daughter had gone out on an errand at the time. The third - another father of two - survived by climbing onto a tree. In addition to the three children, the dead included the mother of two of them, her brother, sister and their parents - and the mother of one of the surviving fathers. One of the neighbours described the scene minutes before the incident. "I heard the dogs barking. It was around 22:30 (21:30 GMT). I told my husband to go out to see what was happening. He opened the door and water filled the house," said Maria Concetta Alfano. Town mayor Giovanni Di Giacinto spoke of a "frightening tragedy" - given the Milicia was only a small river that had never had much water.



"It has never presented a threat to Casteldaccia, and it wasn't a very rainy day, anyway," he added. Elsewhere in Sicily:

A man and a woman died when their hired car was swept away in Cammarata

A petrol station worker's body was found in his jeep in Vicari

And rescuers are looking for a doctor who was heading into Corleone hospital to start his shift. His car has been found abandoned in a part of the road hit by flooding and landslides

HOROSCOPE - DECEMBER 2018

ARIES: BIRTHDAYS FROM 21 MARCH to 20 APRIL

General Highlights: For representatives of the Zodiac sign of Aries, December 2018 should turn into a measured and consistent period. Now, you need to align your desires and opportunities in a very accurate manner, because your main patron the Sun is not in the most successful position on the heavenly bend during this period. Also, keep in mind that this period is not good for focusing on the future. Pay attention only to the things surrounding you right here and right now, and do not try, figuratively speaking, to reach over your head. But, in terms of relationships, this can be a very good time, especially taking into account that Mars is your heavenly patron. The "Red Planet" will require you to be determined and to clearly assess your own possibilities. Do not rush into battle provoked by something insignificant, but if the situation really implies the most violent and irreconcilable attack, then it is almost your duty!



TAURUS: FROM 21 APRIL to 21 MAY

General Highlights: Thanks to an exceptionally successful location of Venus, Taurus representatives will be able to fix a lot of things in December 2018. If you approach questions objectively, then during this period you will really get many significant advantages, not only over your obvious and potential competitors, but also over some of your life circumstances. Thanks to your heavenly patron, you can pull yourself together, mobilize forces, and catch the right rhythm. This is a very good time to ask for someone's forgiveness without feeling embarrassed, without looking at stupid stereotypes and old principles. Now, sincerity is the best tool for achieving the desired result. Of course, with such an introduction, your communicative skills move on to the leading positions, although other methods should not be forgotten, either. It is important to note that this is a truly harmonious time, which gravitates toward measured progress in all directions.



GEMINI: BIRTHDAYS FROM 22 MAY to 21 JUNE

General Highlights: A lot of celestial objects will perform on the side of Gemini in December 2018, but it will be enough that your main assistant, Mercury, will take the dominant position. That is why in the finale of the year Gemini will get a real chance to achieve their cherished goal (and maybe even one of their dreams). You have enough perseverance, but now a little bit of additional luck that will be kindly provided by the stars won't hurt your chances. At this stage, it is very important not to neglect the possibilities, and not to stop in any case. Of course, under certain circumstances, a meaningless move forward can harm you instead of doing you good. That's why this month will be especially convenient for those Gemini who have already everything planned by the beginning of the month, and will be ready for any twists and turns. The ability to step back from everything happening and to look at the situation without prejudice is of particular importance this month. At this life stage, you don't really need outside assistance.



CANCER: BIRTHDAYS FROM 22 JUNE to 23 JULY

General Highlights: Because of the rather interesting position of the Moon and Jupiter, December 2018 will be a time of revelations for Cancers. Now, it is very important to always put yourself in the other person's place before making any decisions about him. The situation can develop dynamically or at a much slower pace, looking rather static, but this is not your problem. What is important for you is the way you are going to achieve your goal. Do not relax, especially if everything is looking easy. Some challenges you will definitely be expecting along the way. They will not be that serious, but they will still take place. Be ready and focus more on your feelings, because your mind and logic can really fail you, even in a situation where its importance looks seemingly undeniable. It is a good time to establish contacts for business development. Now, you can make small and medium-sized purchases, but it is better to stay away from major ones.



LEO: BIRTHDAYS FROM 24 JULY to 23 AUGUST

General Highlights: The main heavenly patron of the Zodiac sign Leo, the Sun, will not be in the most successful and promising position in December 2018. You can start worrying, but keep in mind that Mars will give you all-around support, so the Sun's negative influence will be completely neutralized. It is important to note that you will pass through this life stage in a rather relaxed state. At least, you should do everything in order to reach this state and stay in it; for now, strong emotional outbursts (especially within your household) are simply not recommended for you. On the other hand, make sure to restrain yourself in a moderate manner, because you will definitely encounter some situations when you have to demonstrate endurance and stamina. Feel free to enjoy what nature has awarded you. But be careful - long trips and major events can turn into a serious problem for you. That is why the stars recommend Leos leave their houses as rarely as possible during this month. In addition, this period will be especially important in terms of establishing relationships.



VIRGO: BIRTHDAYS FROM 24 AUGUST to 23 SEPTEMBER

General Highlights: December 2018 will be an amazing time for Virgos, who are usually patronized by Mercury, but will also be assisted by Venus. This Venus assistance is what makes this period fantastic, because being your exultant, Venus was generating only negative things in the past. You'd better not risk too much, even under such favorable circumstances. Do not get involved in adventures, and try to avoid major events that may require investing too much of your time or efforts. Your advantage at this stage is all about preserving your energy. You will gain advantages over your competitors and ill-wishers by acting slowly but steadily, without trying to prove anything to anyone. In fact, this period is quite simple and stress-free, if you just make sure to restrain yourself, and then you will be able to enter the upcoming year being creatively and positively recharged. By the way, this is really a good month to dedicate yourself to artistic endeavors for those with a genuine desire to do so.



LIBRA: BIRTHDAYS FROM 24 SEPTEMBER to 23 OCTOBER

General Highlights: Libra, in December 2018, will be patronized not only by Venus and Saturn, but also by Mars. Mars is usually quite aggressive towards representatives of this sign, and everything will start looking much easier for the members of the Libra sign. In fact, such an assessment can be quite objective, even though you will have more than enough of energy, internal strength and motivation! The main thing is not to get caught up in the routine, and to not lose your drive that, according to the stars, you are guaranteed to have at the beginning of the period. In general, the ending of the year is ideal in terms of making the maximum possible amount of purchases. It is also a good time to establish relationships at work and at home. You can enjoy blissful laziness, or you can also safely go on an exciting journey - both options will come in handy. In fact, the stars do not limit you in any way: you can act in full accordance with your plans, no matter how insane they may seem to you.



SCORPIO: BIRTHDAYS FROM 24 OCTOBER to 22 NOVEMBER

General Highlights: Instead of Scorpio's usual patron, Mars, unstable Moon will act on its side during this time. As a result, December 2018 may not be the most stable period. You will really face some serious problems, but the stars assure you that there is nothing to worry about! Now, all the developments will have their own purpose, so do not panic! In general, the final stage of the year is especially good for your sign because the level of your activity will not affect the resolution of fundamentally important situations. Either you will get everything fixed or not - everything is that simple. You do not need to attract any additional resources, pressure yourself or any of your friends. Stop, take a deep breath, and think carefully. In fact, everything is much better than you could imagine. No one will be rushing you anywhere, no external factors will threaten you directly. This is a great time to think about where and why you are moving the way you are, and what ultimate outcome is waiting for you.



SAGITTARIUS: BIRTHDAYS FROM 23 NOVEMBER to 23 DECEMBER

General Highlights: Sagittarius, which will be patronized by Eris and Mars in December 2018, may experience a quite interesting period, but it will be necessary to keep your eyes open in order not to miss some especially lucky moment. You do not need to hurry anywhere at the end of the year; being hasty can only hurt your chances. In any situation, try to focus on the communicative aspect. Try to reach agreements and look for compromises. In spite of the fact that Mars can push you towards some active developments (moreover - it will also help you if necessary), it is better to stay away from those. Now it is very good to smooth everything over with someone you recently had a conflict with. Any offenses can be forgotten, especially if your intention is sincere. Do not worry if someone is not responding in a similar way.



CAPRICORN: BIRTHDAYS FROM 22 DECEMBER to 20 JANUARY

General Highlights: For Capricorn, who in December 2018 will have many patrons on the celestial ribbon, this month will turn out to be quite unusual. This is primarily about the fact that you will probably have to face difficult situations that won't be directly related to you. Do not rush into doing things that do not have anything to do with you. This period should become contemplative for you to a certain extent; you will start receiving some remote information. This wording is difficult to understand, but you will clearly realize what is wrong when you come across the described situation. In general, your sign is recommended to solve all your problems as quickly as possible; in any case, do not leave them until next year. This is really important, and although such a statement may be true for many signs, it is of particularly paramount importance for Capricorns. It also makes sense to be as communicative as possible, as you will need it in the future.



AQUARIUS: BIRTHDAYS 21 JANUARY to 19 FEBRUARY

General Highlights: Just like another representative of Air element, Aquarius will be patronized by Mars in December 2018, although usually this planet has nothing to do with your sign. Also, your main heavenly patron, Neptune, won't go anywhere. As a result, the final month of the year will be surprisingly successful in terms of achieving new heights. It is an ideal time for learning and absorbing new information. It is unlikely that someone will be able to stop you if you really want to find out something. In addition, this month is very good for improving your skills, for developing your spirituality, and creativity. This very positive time still has some specific peculiarities that need to be considered in order to succeed. The month is good in relation to the financial sphere because it will be possible to act relatively freely, not really targeting anyone. On the other hand, you will have to control yourself; otherwise, you can waste a lot of resources.



PISCES: BIRTHDAYS: 20 FEBRUARY to 20 MARCH

General Highlights: In December 2018, Jupiter and the Moon will perform on the side of the Pisces, and this will be enough to make the final stage of the current cycle a successful life period for you. Now, you should not worry about any trivialities and stuff your head with various small problems. The stars recommend for you to focus on some long-term dreams. It is the dreams that must control your actions, and you do not need to be embarrassed about it. Anyone who laughs at you behind your back will very soon regret their actions. You not only don't need to worry about it or get nervous because of it - you can simply stop thinking about it at all. When you are being sincere, the field of personal relationships will open up to you in a new light. You patron the Moon recommends that you open up your heart. Now, it is definitely worth listening to this advice, so that you do not regret later things that could have been done but never were done for this or another reason.



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