

We're In A New York State of Mind

By Tracy Allen

For first-time visitors and lifelong residents alike, the sight of New York City's skyline entices with its wide embrace. "It is to the nation what the white church spire is to the village - the visible symbol of aspiration and faith," declared E.B. White.

Our most elevated planet, Neptune, stirs up fantasies of acclaim and glamour, tempting us with an elusive brass ring. But it is Jupiter right on our Ascendant that forever inspires people to come here and try their luck, propelled by the knowledge that the stakes are higher. Jupiter heightens their expectations and dares them to believe that their lives in this place of possibilities will transcend the ordinary. Nicknames like The Big Apple and The Empire City are a nod to Jupiter's magnitude, as is our population of 8.3 million. And we're variously described as too loud, too dirty, too you-name-it. The planet's generous quality is evidenced by our open-door policy. In the words of Moss Hart: "The only credential the city asked was the boldness to dream. For those who did, it unlocked its gates and its treasures, not caring who they were or where they came from."

We definitely do come from everywhere; well over a third of the population is foreign-born. New York is more a world city than an American one, with 49 percent of us speaking a language other than English at home. The well-known cover of *The New Yorker* poking fun at our hubristic center-of-the-universe attitude is admittedly spot on. But as Philippe Petit (famous for his Twin Towers tightrope walk) put it, what makes someone a New Yorker is "the certitude that this city is a continent and its inhabitants citizens of the world." Everything is here for the taking, and people arrive from all over the globe on a quest.

Jupiter trines Pluto in the 9th, reiterating this theme of a transformative quest, and if we pull Neptune into that configuration, it calls to mind the sign by our front door: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore..." The trine intimates how intrinsic foreigners are to the fabric of our city, and Jupiter's other soft aspect - a sextile to Saturn - indicates that one can manifest one's dreams through good old-fashioned hard work.

Jupiter's square to our Sun, however, reveals something else we're known for: an overblown ego. Many outsiders find us arrogant, but we'd answer that we're endeavoring to make something more of ourselves. New York offers the freedom to continuously reinvent oneself, and we're determined to get the most out of life here - a phenomenon Ralph Waldo Emerson summed up thusly: "New York is a sucked orange."

While we may be overconfident know-it-alls, our Libra Ascendant tells a different story, that of the never-ending balancing act we perform just to be here. Daily life is a series of compromises and tradeoffs, as we negotiate equitable solutions to being packed in sardine-style - upwards of 27,000 people per square mile. By all means do your own thing, but don't try to walk a solitary path in NYC. Interaction and transaction are essential in a place as crowded as this, and Libra rising will accommodate vast differences. We'll give people a fair shake to a certain extent, but make no mistake: Libra, the iron-fist-in-a-velvet-glove sign, can be quite competitive, with its constant comparing. And our city - being the height (Jupiter) of civilization and style (Libra) - does require a certain keeping up of appearances.

We also have a decidedly dark side, represented in part by Chiron in Scorpio in the 2nd. An unspoken fear of annihilation and the need to prove our worth fuel our chase for fame and fortune. Caught up in a life-and-death struggle, we're hardly the trusting types. Nobody wants to be the one to go broke or cede power - or die. Stubborn survival is integral to being a New Yorker, as we repeatedly rise from the ashes. New York also purports to help others (Chiron) make money (Scorpio in the 2nd.) Harmonious aspects to the nodes, plus the yod with Neptune and the Moon, imply the growth that might result from working through issues around materialism, control and primal rage.

Yet the last thing we want to do is stay on the straight and narrow. With Uranus conjunct Saturn, we're not the most conservative of Caps. Eccentricity is our tradition; craziness is conventional. As Woody Allen's character in *Annie Hall* commented, "The rest of the country looks upon New York like we're left-wing, Communist, Jewish, homosexual pornographers. I think of us that way sometimes, and I live here." Uranus rules our 5th, inviting people to express their uniqueness, and it tenants our 2nd, attesting to the value we place on individuality (and yes, fortunes rise and fall at whim in this seat of capitalism.) To quote an old NY-based TV show, there are eight million stories in *The Naked City*. So tell yours, and make it original, please. Uranus-Saturn literally throws caution to the wind, signifying a progressive society where personal rights are paramount and the system is adaptable.

On the other hand, Saturn's opposition to Pluto alludes to the ruthlessness of our Darwinian habitat. It's understood that this city will make or break you, and if you survive, you get to be "king of the hill, top of the heap," as the song goes. To do it, you need to persistently build your power, which can feel a lot like fighting for your life. And NYC has always had a much more dangerous reputation than it merited.

One of the main factors contributing to our safety is that people are perennially out and about. A crowded third house makes for a plethora of short trips within the city, and Sagittarius adds the physicality of walking. With the Moon trining a tightly conjunct Venus and Mars, we're bravely going after what we want and require, fighting for what we think is right, perpetually fired up to *do something*. The flow between these three planets leaves no separation between desire, action, need and feeling - adding to the air of promise here. The last degree of Sagittarius suggests the ultimate adventure, and Venus and Mars (rulers of the Libra Ascendant and Aries Moon, combining cooperation and assertion) team up there in a straightforward pursuit of love and money. And that Sag stellium - combined with cardinal angles, an angular Jupiter-Sun square and an Aries Moon - is screaming, "Let's go!" It's also opening our mind, a tolerant perspective being one of the keys to flourishing here.

Money is undoubtedly another key. The mutual reception of Jupiter and Venus inextricably ties our hopes to getting rich, not to mention finding love. With a Capricorn Sun on the IC, we're über ambitious and concerned with security; work and real estate are everything. New York's identity as a Capricorn is amusingly confirmed by the moniker "Gotham," a word derived from a medieval English village called Gottam, meaning "goat's town." And all things considered, it's a highly efficient Cap city, though we can't stop complaining about it. New Yorkers consider kvetching to be an inalienable right (woe-is-me south node in Cancer and "I'm walkin' here!" Moon in Aries), but if you really hate it here, we'll help you pack. The truth is we need your place. We've been known to comb the obits for apartment leads, so don't think we won't show up with a U-Haul if you lament leaving California one too many times and you've got good closets.

For those of us who proudly call this town home, we give each other privacy and take particular pride in doing the same for celebrities. Joan Didion captured New Yorkers' Sun-on-the-IC penchant for anonymity when she recounted, "I began to cherish the loneliness of it, the sense that at any given time no one need know where I was or what I was doing." It seems appropriate that the city that never sleeps would have the Sun at the midnight point in the chart, and the Sun's position also connotes a me-against-the-world sensibility. One carves out one's niche here, forming a personal relationship with this overwhelming metropolis. "You start building your private New York the first time you lay eyes on it," Colson Whitehead wrote. And frankly, we don't much care if visitors fail to see what there is to love about NYC, because at the end of the day we know who we are.

That knowing is reinforced by Mercury's conjunction with the Capricorn north node in the 4th, which also echoes the 3rd house emphasis. And with the reverse chart set up by Libra rising, our nodes are in opposite signs to their houses, underscoring the extreme challenge New Yorkers face making a go of it here. Driven to succeed, we're well aware it would be easier to live someplace else. Home-career balance is difficult anywhere, but it's next to impossible in a city where both entail fierce competition. Our nodes demand that we continue to seek both external success and internal grounding, and their square with the Moon adds to the tension of the opposites. The lunar placement in front of the north node is yet another indication of personal striving. And Mercury also squares the Moon, suggesting heated conversations where we let you know just how we feel. That square makes us prone to changing our minds, a problem exacerbated by the Libra

Ascendant and Mercury retrograde. Despite our Capricorn capability, final decisions are not our strong suit.

The Aries Moon lacks patience, though - which brings us to New Yorkers' reputation for rudeness. We engage with each other and tourists in the 7th, and the Moon's rulership of the MC cements our public image as fast and furious people who don't suffer fools. We walk at a jogger's pace, we're tough, resilient, blunt and very much ourselves - take it or leave it. As Denis Leary joked, "If the Popemobile happened to cut you off in traffic and you immediately gave him the finger, you, my friend, are a real New Yorker."

A first-quarter Moon is a call to action, and New Yorkers are coiled springs. On the plus side, we respond instantly to requests for directions, merely asking that out-of-towners understand we're on our way somewhere and have only got a New York minute to spare. We also ask that you pick up the pace yourselves! Conan O'Brien referred to slow-walking, hand-holding tourists as human blood clots in the circulatory system of our city, and I think many of us would agree.

It's not just the Aries Moon that keeps us on the move; New York has no fixed planets and flat-out refuses to maintain the status quo. In addition, structural Saturn conjoins Uranus and opposes Pluto, hinting at the ubiquity of change. There's always a new order being introduced, and as cardinal as we are, we can be surprisingly reluctant to embrace it. Our Sun on the IC, coupled with the south node in Cancer, gives us an awareness of and yearning for our past. This nostalgia for old New York is evident in titles such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *My Lost City* and the use of wistful words like vanishing and ephemeral in various websites and documentaries about our ever-evolving home.

The Cancer Midheaven shows our softer, sentimental side, but it also alludes to gestation. Something new is forever being born here. And the Moon's rulership of the MC places the populace at the top of the chart, eliciting Shakespeare's question, "What is the city but the people?" Residents and visitors alike are stimulated by the collective flow of human energy in the air. Henry James said of it, "This precisely is what makes an adventure...of almost any odd stroll." Despite all that free-flowing energy, NYC's chart has no water planets, which might explain our compensatory reaction: we're notorious therapy-goers who frequently quote our analysts in conversations.

Perhaps we need to be a little insane to begin with to love this place, but New Yorkers have proved time and again that we'll stick it out together. For several years, on the corner of Greenwich and 7th Avenues, homemade tiles hung on a fence, memorializing September 11th. One of my favorites read: "We still know how to laugh. We still know how to cry. We still know how to push you out of our way on the street. We are still New York."

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