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Vol. 20 No. 52 December 25, 2023

Everybody's Talking

Neon signs: Anyone who might need a neon sign for a special event should look no further than God's Own Junkyard in Walthamstow East, a suburb of London, England. The outfit can provide seasonal holiday signs, ones that say "vacancy" or "open," and signs depicting food items, brand names, eyeglasses, hearts, rainbows, arrows, flags, and much more. The store-rental-production warehouse has thousands of new, used, and salvaged neon signs, as well as items for movie sets, circus lighting, and architectural signs. The curious browse through them, and neon sign aficionados make purchases and trades. The location even has an in-house cafe where shoppers can relax—under the glow of neon, of course.

Red river: An adventurer who doesn't mind a little rain may be interested in hiking the trails near Palcoyo Rainbow Mountain in the Cusco region of Peru during the area's rainy season, which occurs from December to April. That's when about 5 kilometres (3.1 mi.) of the Palquella Pucamayu ("Red River") fills with red water, due to wet weather run-off from the mountain. The colour is only apparent at that stretch of the river and during wet weather. Usually, the water looks muddy and brown, but precipitation causes iron oxide-rich soil to give the water its temporary blood-red hue. The hue can change from pink to red depending on the amount of rainfall.

Small bank: Anyone needing simple financial services from a reliable banking institution can go to Kentland Federal Savings and Loan in Kentland, Indiana (U.S.), the bank's one and only branch. Don't try to find an ATM or a website because they don't exist. Also, the bank does not charge transaction fees. With only about \$3 million in assets, it offers home mortgages and savings accounts, and not much else. The bank, a member of the Independent Community Bankers of America, is managed by James A. Sammons, the great-grandson of the founder who started the bank in 1920 in the same location. Sammons, along with one part-time staff member, keep the place going with friendly, face-to-face services.

Street art: Paris is home to an unusual sort of shrine honouring the anonymous graffiti artist "Invader." His pixelated, ceramic tile mosaics first started appearing in Paris in the late 1990s. The first may have been one in an alleyway on Passage de la Main d Or. Now over 1,300 are installed on walls, buildings, and houses around the city, with a total of more than 4,000 of Invader's pieces in 80 cities around the world. The Paris alley, called Invader Ground Zero, contains tributes to the artist, including some exact replicas of his work. Fans come from far and wide to acknowledge Invader and to add their own creations to the wall.

Quoteable Quotes

"Light tomorrow with today." —Elizabeth Barrett Browning
"Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance." —Eckhart Tolle

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Trivia

1. A cantata is a musical composition for voices and instruments— T/F?
2. The card game bridge requires two, four, or six players?
3. The capital of the African nation of Mali is Bamako, Dakar, or Lagos?
4. Who wrote the novel The Count of Monte Cristo?
5. England's famous Wimbledon tennis court surfaces are made of what?

(Flip bottom of page for answers)

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Your Weekly Horoscope

ARIES
(March 20 - April 19)



The holidays sometimes bring up old wounds. If that happens for you or a loved one, encourage a release of the emotions that emerge, in order to aid healing. Lucky numbers: 3, 6, 11, 16, 26, 27.

TAURUS
(April 20 - May 20)



Over the next four months, the energetic pattern may give a boost to your sense of self-confidence. Just be careful of any tendency to be stubborn when dealing with others. Lucky numbers: 5, 6, 16, 33, 36, 47.

GEMINI
(May 21 - June 20)



Geminis are known for their sharp minds and intellectual exchanges. However, the end of the week may bring an opportunity to soften your style and socialize with others. Lucky numbers: 4, 14, 18, 20, 24, 43.

CANCER
(June 21 - July 21)



As 2023 comes to a close, this may be a good time for you to wrap up any loose ends. Which efforts do you want to drop, and what would you like to carry into 2024? Lucky numbers: 9, 10, 31, 32, 34, 42.

LEO
(July 22 - Aug. 22)



Be aware of any temptation by you or those around you to overdo holiday partying. A good reminder for you this week may be "all things in moderation." Lucky numbers: 8, 12, 15, 22, 25, 39.

VIRGO
(Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)



Don't feel pressured if you are not up to partying this week, particularly on New Year's Eve. Mark the transition to a new year in whatever manner makes you happy. Lucky numbers: 7, 8, 13, 20, 42, 45.

Lucky numbers this week: This week's odds favour Taurus winners with the luckiest number being 33.

LIBRA
(Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)



The opposite polarity of Libra's tact and diplomacy is a temptation to overlook hard truths. You may encounter this dynamic at week's end. Try not to side step it. Lucky numbers: 11, 13, 15, 30, 33, 34.

SCORPIO
(Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)



The midweek energy portends a high probability of miscommunication. So you may want to be extra careful in what you say, particularly at family holiday events. Lucky numbers: 2, 13, 23, 31, 39, 45.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 22 - Dec. 20)



Do you have a project that aligns with your highest values? Now may be a good time to outline a plan to manifest it, but perhaps wait a few weeks to get started. Lucky numbers: 15, 21, 24, 28, 43, 47.

CAPRICORN
(Dec. 21 - Jan. 19)



At week's end, you may have an opportunity to focus on your relationship. As we close out 2023, this may be a good time to consider what you want in 2024. Lucky numbers: 10, 14, 15, 17, 23, 46.

AQUARIUS
(Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)



You may find that your heart and mind are not in sync at the end of the week. Take a deep breath. Wait a few days for things to reset. Lucky numbers: 6, 9, 11, 31, 41, 46.

PISCES
(Feb. 19 - March 19)



Be aware of any potential triggers, including family dynamics and excessive partying. Prioritize your wellness. Give yourself permission to readily withdraw from any negative situations. Lucky numbers: 12, 15, 21, 29, 46, 48.

Did You Know...

Oscar wins: American actor Tom Hanks has received six Oscar nominations for Best Actor in a Leading Role. He won two, for the title role in *Forrest Gump* (1995) and as Andrew Beckett in *Philadelphia* (1994).

Impressive size: Giant sequoia trees in California's Sierra Nevada mountain range (U.S.) grow to be very big, and old! Some are known to have lived for 3,000 years. They can be 250 to 300 feet (76 to 91 m) tall.

Busy place: Kyoto, Japan, is home to the Nishiki Market, which has been operating for 700 years. Its five blocks of alleyways have over 100 vendor stalls that sell everything from soy donuts to pickles, grilled squid, and cookware.

Warning bell: Friday the 13th might be a scary day for some. But a 1939 law helps folks in French Lick, Indiana (U.S.), avoid adding black cats to that fear. All black cats must wear a bell on any Friday the 13th.

Odd-looking beak: The shoebill stork lives in Central and East Africa. Their identifying feature is their huge bill, which is over 19 cm (7 in.) and shaped like a shoe. In the wild, they can live to be 35 years old.

On the Lighter Side

Bob: "Did you hear they pulled the word 'gullible' from the dictionary?"
Bill: "Really?"

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?* Beezer. *Beezer who?* Beezer black and yellow and live in a hive.

Where do young plants go to learn? The nursery school.

I owe a lot to sidewalks. They've kept me off the streets for years.

A girl brought a ladder to her first day of school. She was starting high school.

Answers

Trivia answers: 1. True 2. Four 3. Bamako 4. Alexandre Dumas 5. Grass

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