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Echoes of the Red Earth

Written By Canadian Author Cornelius van Dijk

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Everybody's Talking

Lucky snake: A beloved pet snake, missing for over a year from its home in Spennymoor, England, made a surprising return when it was spotted atop a neighbour's garage roof. Speculation arose among locals and an animal rights officer that the snake may have been inadvertently transported by a crow, then dropped due to its weight and bulkiness. Despite the ordeal, the resilient, 3-foot-long (0.9-m) reptile managed to endure both the avian encounter and the harsh winter temperatures. Snakes, being ectothermic creatures, depend on their surroundings for warmth, making its survival all the more remarkable. Its unexpected reappearance brought immense relief and joy to its owners, who had long feared the worst.

Tone transformer: A Japanese firm has created an artificial intelligence filter that transforms angry screams into calm speech, aiming to alleviate the stress faced by call centre operators. Developed over three years, this technology detects aggressive tones and softens them into a polite voice, without altering the words being spoken. The filter works in two stages: identifying anger and then changing the intonation. Engineers trained the AI with over 10,000 voice samples from actors mimicking common angry phrases. Nearly half of the members of a Japanese union of service and other workers recently reported being on the receiving end of anger and other intimidation.

Buzz beer: Scientists at a university in Wales are revolutionizing the beer brewing process by forgoing traditional hops in favour of honey bees. These insects naturally harbour brewer's yeast in their guts. In collaboration with researchers from the University of Namibia, the researchers extracted brewer's yeast from naturally deceased African bees and combined it with yeast from Welsh honey bees to brew several batches of beer. Beyond offering enjoyment of the beverage, this project is exploring how the pollination of certain plants can help to develop new drugs to treat superbugs and antibiotic resistance. The scientists hope to find a brewer willing to continue producing the beer, with proceeds supporting the ongoing research.

Island hoppers: In northern Scotland's Orkney Islands, an extraordinarily brief flight connects the islands of Westray and Papa Westray, spanning just 1.7 miles (2.7 km), which is shorter than some airport runways. This flight typically lasts around 90 seconds, although favourable winds can reduce it to under a minute, while rough conditions can extend it to nearly three minutes. The flight is served by a Britten-Norman Islander, a small aircraft with eight seats and no in-flight service. This route, often likened to a bus ride, is crucial for the island's inhabitants, who otherwise face weather-disrupted ferry rides. Despite environmental criticisms, it remains a vital link for locals.

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Quoteable Quotes

"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things." —Robert Breault

"The sun himself is weak when he first rises, and gathers strength and courage as the day gets on." —Charles Dickens

What's Happening

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Trivia

1. How many toes does a rhinoceros have on each foot?
2. Phobophobia is the fear of blood, beetles, or fear?
3. Dorothy Hamill competed in skiing in the 1976 Olympics—T/F?
4. John Cleese and Michael Palin belonged to this comedy troupe.
5. Does Europe have any deserts?

(Flip bottom of page for answers)

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Your Weekly Horoscope

ARIES (March 20 - April 19)



You probably need to resist the temptation to be impulsive or to get into an argument right now. Try taking a deep breath or two and waiting

for this week to pass. Lucky numbers: 2, 4, 6, 10, 29, 34.

TAURUS (April 20 - May 20)



Are you feeling in a stalemate right now about what to do next? Look to your values to help you decide, and make any necessary adjustments to break through the barrier. Lucky numbers: 3, 4, 19, 23, 31, 44.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 20)



Recently you may have been swamped with a lot of potential ideas. Have you decided which one to pursue? Might you need more training to be successful with your choice? Lucky numbers: 18, 25, 34, 35, 42, 45.

CANCER (June 21 - July 22)



You may find yourself out of sorts early this week. Look for the source of this irritation. If you can't immediately resolve the situation, seek outlets to reduce your negativity. Lucky numbers: 9, 13, 32, 38, 40, 47.

LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22)



Over the next few weeks, you may want to just kick back and have fun. Enjoy this time but try not to drop the ball on any important responsibilities you might have to others. Lucky numbers: 7, 8, 19, 22, 38, 45.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)



You may find yourself woolgathering early this week. This might feel uncomfortable for you, but try to go along with it. Important information could surface now. Lucky numbers: 7, 17, 22, 26, 28, 46.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)



Others may be surprised if you step outside of your pleasant demeanour this week. If you are in a stalemate with someone else, take time to explain

your position to them. Lucky numbers: 10, 14, 15, 17, 30, 37.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)



Are you running into obstacles this week? Your intensity may intimidate those who are blocking you. Could you make them feel comfortable and more agreeable to your plan? Lucky numbers: 1, 10, 17, 19, 29, 43.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)



For the next few weeks, you may feel like you want to just be a free spirit. Which responsibilities could you set down for a bit and which must you continue to fulfill? Lucky numbers: 8, 19, 23, 25, 33, 43.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)



Accomplishment is an important theme for Capricorns. As Pluto moves from Capricorn to Aquarius, consider what you want to achieve, in alignment with your values. Lucky numbers: 4, 18, 23, 29, 37, 40.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)



Sometimes Aquarians have difficulty expressing their feelings to others. The next few weeks may provide you with an opportunity to more easily open up and share. Lucky numbers: 19, 26, 27, 31, 37, 46.

PISCES (Feb. 19 - March 20)



Your mystical side may be in full force this week. Take advantage of creative endeavours being more easily advanced. Make adjustments to address any negative habits. Lucky numbers: 5, 17, 31, 46, 47, 48.

Lucky numbers this week: This week's odds favour Leo winners with the luckiest number being 7.

Did You Know...

Bear origins: A.A. Milne, the author of Winnie-the-Pooh, didn't invent the bear's name. His son, Christopher Robin Milne, called his own teddy bear Winnie after a visit to the London Zoo, where he saw a bear named for Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada).

Staying warm: The small Arctic fox lives within the Arctic Circle, where the sun never rises from late September to early March. But its thick fur coat helps it maintain a body temperature near 100°F (38°C), and its tail acts as a warm blanket.

Feline festival: In New York City (U.S.), cat lovers can enjoy a selection of short films about felines at the annual New York Cat Film Festival. The films, submitted by cat owners, must showcase something essential about cats.

Gaga's godsons: Elton John, one of pop music's most successful artists, and his partner David Furnish have two sons, Elijah and Zachary. They designated the famous American singer-songwriter Lady Gaga as the boys' godmother.

Bridal colours: In North America, brides typically wear white, symbolizing purity and simplicity. In China, the tradition is to wear red, representing luck, happiness, and celebration; white is often associated with death and mourning.

On the Lighter Side

Swimmer: "Are you sure there are no sharks on this beach?"
Lifeguard: "Yes, they don't get along with the alligators."

Knock! Knock! Who's there? Mara. Mara who? Mara, Mara on the wall...

What did the bunny think of the scary movie? Thought it was hare raising!

Skydivers chute first, ask questions later. No wonder they are so grounded.

My kid's grades are so bad they're underwater. They're below c-level.

Answers

Trivia answers: 1. Three 2. Fear 3. False 4. Monty Python 5. Yes

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