

## Pisces-Aries Cusp

Towards the end of August 2015, I started getting into astrology.

It was being brought up a lot in my social circles and online, and there's nothing I hate more than feeling excluded by my peers, so I thought it'd be good to get some of the basic information down. Learn the language, if you will. There's something fun about being able to point to someone and say "God, he's SUCH a Taurus" and having everybody understand what you mean. It's a nice shorthand-- point, laugh, make small talk about Tauruses being boring before going off on some other tangent of conversation.

I still don't know much about it all outside of how it applies to myself and people I'm in direct contact with. I know I'm a Capricorn, which makes me ambitious and judgy. The boy at my local coffee shop, with whom I had a heart-in-throat, spill-the-coffee-he-made-for-me-because-I-paid-him-to crush, was a Pisces-- which in his words meant that he'd take everything I'd say to him "super emotionally". (He then winked at me, and I'm still trying to figure out what he meant by it). My best friend/roommate, a five foot tall lesbian stripper who once insisted the best way to transport a taxidermy deer head would be by city bus? Gemini. Her cat, who once jumped at my face for absolutely no reason? Also a Gemini.

Something about this method of categorization is comforting. When I call my little sister (a Libra) to talk about our mother (an Aries) and latest molehill-to-mountain episode my sister is quick to express her frustrations with it all. It's consistent with the write-ups you find online-- balance seeking child confronted by zealous, hot-headed mother finds herself off-put by the lack of justice. My best friend tells me that the comfort is due to the fact that "within the patriarchal structure, women seek an external locus of control since men run everything." I mostly chalk it up to the pleasure that comes from feeding the mild narcissism that makes you say, 'You're totally right, that *is* me' in response to something written by somebody who does not, in fact, even know you even exist.

Around the same time that I was dipping my toe into astrology, I was also diving head first into the world of contemporary men's fashion. Which is to say, I started following a lot of male models on Instagram.

The primary motivation for this was simple: I wanted to make sure I saw as many pictures of British-slash-Korean model-slash-artist-slash-God amongst men Sang Woo Kim as possible. If one were to see a picture of him one would realize this is a completely understandable goal. He is severe, perhaps even cold in most of his shoots. Flawless skin, piercing gaze, cheekbones so sharp you could cut your hands on them if you weren't careful. He's that silent peer who always has a on the presentation which makes you kick yourself for daring to be dumb in front of him. Untouchable.

Instagram has a feature where you can see all the photos a person is tagged in. I can't think of a reason why this feature was included other than to facilitate the sort of obsessive image consumption I fell into. Mornings and afternoons were spent scrolling through his feed. Through the feeds of people who had tagged him. Through the profiles of friends he had tagged. At some point, the models overtook the college friends and coworkers that had previously populated my following list. I liked it better this way.

I had never been one to care about the cool kids. I tried very hard to drift through my school career removing myself as much as possible from the established social hierarchy. I figured it would do more harm than good focusing on those more beautiful and confident than I, feeling as though I would inevitably find myself at the bottom rung of this ladder. I wasn't good at learning social languages, sometimes even reveling in my ignorance of them. Assuming people won't like you is as good a way as any to convince yourself that your loneliness is a fundamental problem on their part, not yours. I have been trying to get better about this, hence the astrology.

Hence the social media.

Instagram accounts lead to websites, which lead to Twitters and Snapchats and Facebooks. I made rules for myself. No friends requests, no @'s or comments or bookmarks. Just the occasional checkup-- keep these boys at arms length, maintain the fourth wall. But there's something to be said about stumbling into something that seems private. I felt included, in on a joke, piecing together these boys from the fragments I found scattered across the Internet, getting glimpses into a world so recognizable and yet so foreign. It was fun, if not a little self-serving, to feel like a member of their group in my own little voyeuristic way. "Do you think we'd get along?" I found myself asking my roommate one night, picking at our kitchen's peeling linoleum counter-top. This question would soon be answered by Henry.

Henry is, as far as I could tell, one of Sang's best friends. He's pale and tired-looking with an air about him that suggests he never quite got used to his body. It also suggests that he's prone to languishing on

couches and saw Trainspotting at an impressionable age. Where I found myself in awe of Sang, confident in his path to success and the beautiful head on his shoulders, my relationship (for lack of a better term) with Henry was far more muddled. Henry is cool in the way most discontented early 20s white boys are cool. With his Dylan hair and stick-n-poked Morrissey tattoos, he's clearly aiming for a look akin to 80s post-punk. But the edges of this identity feel like puzzle pieces that only fit into place with some force-- his leather jacket always just a little too big, his pearl earring just a little too calculated. He is at once an object of desire and reproach.

It was while trawling through his Instagram that I found it, a single anime screenshot nestled between your more standard try-hard cool kid images, a piece of paper that read "Pornographic and Tragic" in disjointed cursive, a Raf Simons New Order jacket. It was surprising that something like this would be public. A fondness for anime isn't usually something people who are trying to be cool advertise. It was incriminating-- irrevocable proof that there was no difference between me and these people. These people, who I probably wouldn't like in any other context, who I would roll my eyes at in order to disguise my own envy, were just kids like me, their too big features and gawkish bodies hardly more remarkable than my own. They were just better at posturing, at holding themselves. I suddenly felt like one of them. Their level of cool seemed not only accessible, but achievable. I found it exciting, comforting even.

This new discovery didn't cause me to break my rules, but I did get far more lax in my approach to the models. I felt like I had cracked some sort of code, like I'd seen past the curtain and now had a license to talk about them like the giant dorks I now knew them to be. Photos on my own blog ended up being cataloged with increasingly expressive hashtags, captioned with things like "#💧stay hydrated love💧" and "#I love & support this kid I feel a kindred spirit kinda deal w him & I hope he's staying rested". It was a strange amalgamation of crush and admiration and concern. I didn't know this person, I probably would never know him, but here I was feeling a level of empathy far more intimate than what one would expect to feel for a stranger.

There is a thing people do to both friends and celebrities where flaws are pointed out with love, but couched in potentially scathing language. With friends there is the understanding that you know each other, when I tell my roommate she's being "such a Gemini", she knows I understand the nuances of her character. I'm not implying betrayal or indecisiveness, just an inherent level of absurdity. When people say things like "Your face is so stupid I hate you @johnkrasinski", there's an understanding that the person writing it does not hate John Krasinski or his face, but in fact probably adores it. What's

more, there's usually the assumption that celebrities will never actually see what everyday people have to say about them. They're the cool kids, unaffected and unaware of those of us separating ourselves. It was in some combination of both of these mindsets that I made the post "Henry Kitcher is probably my favorite poser."

It is, I believe, not unreasonable to assume my comment would drift through cyberspace unnoticed by anyone, a pebble falling into a canyon. Again, my affection for the boy cannot be overstated. It's charming, watching him exert so much effort to pull off effortlessness. He succeeds as much as he fails, his ostentatious pearl earring as endearing as it is eye-roll worthy. What's more, he is out there being paid by the likes of McQueen and Versache to be beautiful, while I sat in Minnesota trying to keep all my appendages intact. So imagine then my surprise when weeks later while at work, I found the following in my inbox:

**Go fuck yourself! - Lots of love Henry Kitcher**

It was a shock. How did he find me? What compelled him to reach out like this? What does "lots of love" even mean in this context? In the past this would have mortified me and sent me in to a spiral of anxiety over his assumed hurt feelings, there was a self-satisfied thrill that came from his message. *He* found me. *He* broke the wall. *He* was the one trawling through social media, through *his own tag*, presumably responding to a weeks old post at one A.M. London time while I was minding my own business scooping popcorn in the Midwestern United States. He saw a post, my post, and thought to himself, 'this simply can't stand'. I had in some small way made it on to the radar of these people. It was beautiful. Absurd, but beautiful.

It was his birthday recently, something I saw his little group posting about on Instagram. It seemed like they had a lot of fun. I was happy for him, glad that he had a tight network like that. I mentioned it to my roommate in passing as we sat on our phones that night, and she asked me what that made him. I had to look it up, but eventually found him to be at the cusp between Pisces and Aries-- emotional and hotheaded. Sad with poor impulses. It didn't necessarily shift the blame, but it offered some plausible reasons for his hyper-sensitivity.

An external locus of control, if you will.