

MERCURY IN RETROGRADE OCT 31-NOV 20

by Louise Atkinson

IF IN the next few weeks you find everything going a bit haywire – you keep losing your keys, messing up at work or arguing with your loved ones – don't blame the fast-approaching winter, economic instability or errant hormones. The real reason could lie in the heavens – in a strange alignment of the planets that millions around the world view with real foreboding.

The phenomenon is known as Mercury retrograde and, according to astrology fans, it's when all planetary hell will be let loose – a black spot in the astrological calendar during which it is essential to lie low and avoid making any big decisions. Experts advise us to watch out for flight delays and missing luggage, unsigned contracts and broken gadgets and to beware a heightened risk of accidentally hitting 'reply all' on sensitive emails.

And, unfortunately, the next Mercury retrograde is just around the corner: From October 31 (Brexit day, the day the UK is scheduled to leave the EU, by the way) to November 20, mischievous Mercury – a planet with the power to disrupt all our communications – is set to wreak havoc.

But before you despair, top British astrologer Yasmin Boland says there are easy ways to navigate the coming weeks and not only avoid disasters but actually harness the curious power of Mercury to change your life for the better...

SO WHAT ACTUALLY IS IT?

ASTROLOGERS and their vast army of believers say we are hugely influenced by the movement of the planets across the sky, with their positioning affecting every detail of everyday life. So when Mercury, a planet that governs communication, transport and technology, appears to travel backwards through the heavens, this is a very serious business.

In fact, it is an optical illusion. Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and its orbit is shorter than Earth's – a mere 88 days compared to our 365 days, which means that Mercury experiences four years in the time it takes us to complete one orbit of the Sun. And this produces an unusual visual effect through the telescope as Mercury appears to speed past Earth, slow down and then move in a backwards loop over a period of roughly three weeks – the phenomenon of Mercury retrograde (or Mercury in Retrograde, as it is often known).

An illusion or not, it's hugely significant to astrology fans, who say that as Mercury appears to recede, the energy of the planet actually intensifies – with dire-sounding effects. Communication systems start to slow down. Gadgets malfunction, computers crash, emails fail to arrive or go unanswered.

Mercury also rules buying and selling, and contracts and agreements, so if you buy an expensive item now you're more likely to find it's worth half as much later, or you'll end up regretting not reading the small print because trouble is likely to ensue.

While Mercury is retrograde, you can easily end up feeling as if the world has gone mad: best-laid plans

BEWARE!

Mercury in Retrograde is on its way

And that means 3 weeks of chaos from lost keys to family fallouts and even email disasters. Scariest of all? It begins on Brexit Day...



VITAL DO'S AND DON'TS

- DO:** Finish things you've already started. Halfway through a DIY project at home? Use the next three weeks to complete it. Or if there's a course you never finished, use the time to study and pass the test. Just don't start anything new – you'll only have to redo it later.
- DO:** Keep your mobile charged and back up your digital data. Beware you're more likely to lose your phone or get a computer virus during these three weeks.
- DO:** Get together with old friends and expect to bump into old acquaintances. Double-check and confirm all dates, plans, meetings, appointments in advance.
- DO:** Read every document twice before signing, make sure you read the small print and keep the option of changing your mind.
- DO:** Expect and allow extra time for delays and cancellations when travelling and make sure you have a back-up plan.
- DON'T:** Make major purchases – bide your time and compare prices for something you plan to buy later. Remember, if you do buy something, keep your receipt.
- DON'T:** Begin a new job without being prepared for false starts.
- DON'T:** Make life-altering decisions you expect to be absolutely set in stone (because they won't be). Instead, focus on renegotiating existing agreements you aren't happy with.
- DON'T:** Start a new relationship – it is likely to be an on/off romance that will be forever under the influence of the cycle.
- DON'T:** Waste time on gossip and avoid jumping to conclusions. Pause before speaking and repeat yourself if necessary.

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES COTTELL



go nowhere and conversations drift off mid-sentence.

There's more bad news – this next phase looks set to be more intense than usual as the forthcoming period of retrograde falls in Scorpio – a particularly intense sign. So brace yourselves!

Normally, retrograde might merely trigger lost documents or missed trains, but when it occurs in a water sign, we should expect an extra bumpy emotional ride.

Astrologers say that, more than

any other sign, Scorpio is a star sign that likes to dig under the surface of things to see what's being glossed over or whitewashed.

From October 31, expect dishonesty of any kind to come back to bite you. If there are secrets in your life, Mercury retrograde will be busy shining a light on them.

And with our communications awry, it makes sense to avoid contentious subjects. Be warned, this is not a great time to be having a serious debate.

IT'S A PHENOMENON STORMING THE INTERNET

IF YOU think it all sounds a bit bonkers, you're not alone – how much can the planets really determine our luck and fortune?

Not so long ago astrology was the domain of the decidedly eccentric but now it's got lots of people talking. All types are cursing, joking and chatting about Mercury and its mischievous movements. Type

'Mercury retrograde' into photo-sharing app Instagram and you'll find more than 20,000 posts on the topic.

'Is Mercury retrograde again or am I just emotional?' asks one exasperated Twitter user. 'Thank God I got my new job before Mercury is in Retrograde!' says another.

Even celebrities are jumping on the bandwagon with big names such as pop star Katy Perry and Taylor Swift tweeting about the

planet and the havoc it is about to cause.

HOW TO FIGHT BACK

NOT that those three weeks *have* to bring torment and misery. In fact, it's possible to learn the 'tricks' of Mercury retrograde and start working to turn them to your long-term advantage.

In part, it's a question of learning to cope. This is not a good time to

launch something new, for example. Focus instead on improving what you already have or completing unfinished projects.

Be warned: you might find it hard to nail down a plan and struggle to get decisions from others – and any decisions that are made are likely to be subject to change. Anything

started or purchased when Mercury is retrograde may need to be revisited and revised. But it's also a question of developing solid habits that will help at any point in the calendar.

If you take an extra second to hang up your keys by the door when you arrive home, read important documents several times and try to be a bit more forgiving when a friend says something daft, you could sail through unscathed. Per-

haps if one gadget breaks down, its replacement will be better; a contested agreement can be re-negotiated in your favour or a criticised project improved.

Expressing yourself clearly might be more of a challenge than usual so focus more and listen harder. Try to be honest with yourself and others at this time.

Aim to avoid negative thinking, too, especially the impulse to lash out at someone before they can attack you. Talk face-to-face or on

the phone instead of relying on texts or emails. If you don't get a reply to an email, don't assume you're being ignored. Some people put their life on hold when Mercury is retrograde – and perhaps they're right. This is an ideal time to take a break and recharge your batteries. And if things do go wrong, try not to assume the worst.

Give others the benefit of the doubt – like you, they are more likely to be careless, mistake-prone and forgetful right now too.

Make yourself open to the opportunities that present themselves and try not to rush into judgments. You can make the best of this planetary phase – and emerge the better for it.

It's a good idea to avoid new projects – and that includes relationships – so this a great time to deal with unfinished business (whether emotional or practical) instead, to tie up loose ends and create a clear vision for the future.

If you take advantage of retrograde, you'll be all fired up and ready for what's next when Mercury (and, hopefully, life) returns to normal on November 21.

Adapted by Louise Atkinson from *The Mercury Retrograde Book* by Yasmin Boland and Kim Farnell, published by Hay House on October 15, priced £12.99. Offer price £10.39 (20 per cent discount) until November 5. To pre-order, call 01603 648155 or go to mailshop.co.uk

What it means for your sign

The alignment of planets during this next Mercury in Retrograde could have a specific influence on each star sign.

ARIES JEALOUSY and obsession can become a problem and promises may be broken or delayed, so pay special attention to loans and debts. You might have to discuss sexual issues, and intimacy can be harder to achieve. This can partly be due to secrets coming to light at this time. Feeling overly emotional and pessimistic can make you see the worst in every situation.

TAURUS COMMUNICATION problems are likely, so beware of misunderstandings. Remember that missed connections, confused conversations and lost emails and text messages are more likely.

GEMINI YOU might experience confusion in your routines with schedules being thrown out of the window. This can trigger clashes with co-workers and missed deadlines. Or you could find you've got things wrong and have to redo work. Remind yourself this is a temporary phase – don't dramatically walk out.

CANCER YOU might find you are lacking creative energy and experiencing less of a spark around the things you usually love. You and your partner seem to be missing the mark with each other and arguments could be blown out of all

proportion. Try to be less judgmental and slow down a bit.

LEO EXPECT domestic confusion and family issues from the past to make a reappearance. Chances are, they aren't new – they're just brought more sharply into focus. This is a very good time to go 'back home' or revisit the past.

VIRGO COMMUNICATION can be very frustrating – expect missed phone calls, lost phones, emails and texts accidentally sent to the wrong person plus botched travel plans. Make sure you have

understood the other person's point of view before you go off the deep end. And don't make promises you can't keep.

LIBRA MERCURY Retrograde can play havoc with your cashflow so it's a good time to revisit old, nagging issues in terms of your finances. Spending a little time now reviewing how you handle your money could save you a small fortune in the long run.

SCORPIO THERE could be confusion about your image, your reputation and how others see you so this is a

time to think about the image you present to the world – and make changes if necessary. But don't drastically cut your hair or throw out clothes until after the Retrograde.

SAGITTARIUS YOU could be more sensitive and your intuition could be thrown out of whack. This is a good time to seek closure on issues that still bug you and the more time you spend in meditation and contemplation now, the better.

CAPRICORN PREPARE yourself for misunderstandings with friends: gatherings may be

postponed or cancelled, and friends may be uncommunicative or give off mixed signals. Ignore gossip and rumour – you might decide to withdraw from the social scene for a while.

AQUARIUS TAKE extra care at work that silly mistakes don't mar your performance. There may be issues with your career at this time; but be patient and take a cautious approach. This isn't a good time to apply for a new job.

PISCES TAKE extra care if travelling – you could end up on wild and wacky adventures and valuables are more likely than usual to get lost in transit. Be prepared to deal with plenty of delays, cancellations and traffic hold-ups.