

Conjuring Up Courage #101

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi & Bear Ryver

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #101 of Conjuring Up Courage. And this is also the second episode of my 2021 Pridepalooza programming, featuring queer content all through the month of June.

Y'all, I am so, so excited to introduce you to today's guest, astrologer Bear Ryver. It is no secret that astrology is a huge part of queer culture, and Bear is practicing astrology using a radical and intersectional lens. The way Bear speaks about astrology is so thoughtful and poetic, and this episode is perfect for astrology skeptics and enthusiasts alike. We chatted about what astrology is and where it comes from, queerness and astrology, the relationship between courage and bravery, and so much more.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/101. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/101.

This episode is brought to you in part by Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that provides an affirming and welcoming home for diverse individuals to reclaim their inherent worth. The folks at Ample + Rooted created a guided meditation on cultivating self-trust just for listeners, and it's available in the show notes for this episode.

[Music plays]

This is Conjuring Up Courage, and I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. As a self-trust coach, I help people come home to themselves, so they can be more of who they are, and less haunted by who they think they're supposed to be.

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I created this podcast to celebrate what's possible when you commit to being brave. You'll hear from diverse guests who are refusing to let fear and self-doubt stop them from building fulfilling lives and creating a better world for everyone. I'll also teach you my favorite tools, strategies, and mindset shifts so you can do the same.

Consider this your invitation to stop living according to "shoulds" and to step into your motherfucking magic instead. Stay open, get curious, and let's grow together.

[Music fades]

Welcome to the show, Bear! I am so delighted to get to have this conversation with you today.

Bear Ryver: Oh, thank you so much for having me, Shohreh. I'm really excited to be here.

Shohreh: Yay! Well, before we dive into all things astrology, I would love for you to share a little bit about who you are, your journey, and what you're passionate about.

Bear: Yeah, so my name is Bear Ryver. My journey into astrology started as a young kid. My grandma was a Leo, I'm a Leo, I'll be saying that a couple other times [Shohreh laughs lightly], and as a Leo, it's really easy to like astrology. [Unclear 00:02:53] it's very exciting to pursue as a kiddo. And my interest in cycles, timing, literally staring up at the sky as a kid and collecting rocks. By the time I was an older teenager it turned into an

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obsession with staring at the sky and storytelling. Rocks turned into crystals.

So it was a pretty natural evolution for me. I spent my teenage years here in the San Francisco Bay Area, so there's lots of hippies and woo-woo metaphysical folks in these parts. So just talking to folks about crystals and seeing lots of astrology books in used bookstores, you know. A lot of my artsy youth was spent reading in the local bookshops and perusing the astrology and metaphysical books.

So really out of a love for mythology and storytelling, which I think goes back to my Indigenous roots. So I'm a mixed Black and Indigenous person on my mom's side. My family goes back to the interior of Alaska, so I'm half Alaskan or Alaskan native. I'm also Black and a bunch of other mixes of various European lines. A lot of them actually were really early colonizers and settlers here on Turtle Island.

So kind of figuring out what it means to be from so many different lineages, to growing up in Washington State and California in the countryside in a rural farming town, and then in the Bay Area, a massive metropolitan, you know, corner of the world, has really led me to pursue any and all sort of wisdom, traditions, that can speak to that liminal, intersectional sort of space.

Throw in queerness, intersectionality in a political sense, and I think that's like, a really abbreviated way to get into [Shohreh laughs lightly] how I arrived here. When I'm not talking about intersectionality and astrology and storytelling and politics and movement work, you'll

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probably find me either playing music, like the guitar, or you'll find me rock climbing.

And the rock climbing, very interestingly, brings things full circle in terms of doing what scares you most, which is kind of advice that was handed down. We'll talk about that too—doing what scares you most. And really, surprisingly, I think astrology, there's a lot of different ways I see astrology creep up in rock climbing and rock climbing make astrology more clear. So I'm excited to talk about that. It feels like a really juicy space to get into that particular perception or Venn diagram.

Shohreh:

It's so interesting you mentioned how where you grew up really influenced your woo state as a person. Because in the opposite way, I grew up in like a conservative suburb of North Texas, and so I didn't know about anything in the land of woo except what I saw on TV. And usually on TV it was, you know, to "other" a character, right? Like this character is "crazy" because they believe in these certain things.

And so it was only when I started living in more major cities, in Chicago and now here in Austin, that I started meeting people who were into a lot of these different crafts and practices that I was like, oh, I didn't know people actually practiced these things seriously in real life. So it was a big change from what I grew up with.

Bear:

Yeah, absolutely. Growing up as a kid an hour north of Seattle, like watching Dharma & Greg was the only exposure I had to, like, real hippies. My grandparents were hippies, [Shohreh laughs lightly] but then they had to grow up, or grew out of it, or whatever you want to

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say. So yeah, I can really relate to that, just being like, this isn't just fictional. This isn't just an exaggeration of San Francisco people.

Shohreh: Right.

Bear: This is real life. Yeah, absolutely.

Shohreh: Yes. Okay, so this episode is being released as part of my June Pridepalooza content, yay queerness!

Bear: Yay!

Shohreh: And I really wanted to have you as part of this set of episodes because astrology is such a big part of queer culture. In fact, I really only started dabbling in astrology myself because once I came out as queer, I noticed that everyone in the queer community was constantly, like, talking and joking about astrology. And I was like, I don't understand what any of you are talking about. So I need to learn so that I can be in on the joke and understand it, and then, you know, through that process, of course, I've come to enjoy learning these different things. I'm curious, why do you think queer folks gravitate towards astrology?

Bear: This is really fascinating. I've been thinking about this question of queerness and astrology since I came out as a little teenager around here. And for me, it was reading astrology books and being like, where's the discussion about queerness? How does astrology apply if you're not straight? [Shohreh laughs lightly] This doesn't make sense. So I've been interrogating that for two decades now.

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Thinking back to my experience, if you don't have, you know, whether we're talking about heteronormativity, cisnormativity, if you're queer in any capacity, you know, take everybody in the alphabet soup community here—

Shohreh: The alphabet mafia.

Bear: Ooooh.

Shohreh: Someone populated that on TikTok, and I was like yes, the alphabet mafia. I'm a proud member.

Bear: Much better than soup. [Shohreh laughs] Yes, we can talk about soup when we're doing, like, food not bombs. So the alphabet mafia, you know, I think we don't have these representational social scripts that are as easily adaptable. Thinking back to when I was a teenager, so we're talking early '00s, you know, I remember walking around San Francisco and being at Pride and seeing, like, the Log Cabin Republicans and hearing conversations about the difference, or the subtleties, or the nuance between being a homosexual in a way that kind of replicates heteronormativity versus this like, radical, queer, like, you know, I'd hear people say not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you.

Shohreh: Yes.

Bear: That like, queerness is this radical opposition to heteronormativity, not just a matter of being bisexual or whatever other letter combinations. So I think astrology may really appeal to queer people because while

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you can't point to a relationship model, or back then you couldn't—you know, there's more and more representation in the media now so there's more to relate to, and people are like, oh, who are you in The L Word? [Shohreh laughs lightly] But before that, there was, oh, well I have Mars in this sign, and so that it explains it, you know. That's, more people would maybe understand that. Or, like, oh, I'm sun in Leo, and so I got this like, I have swagger, instead of having to explain the nuances of studs and stemmes and butches and femmes.

All of those still have this binary—butch/femme, stud/stemme—that's still replicating heteronormativity. But when you get into astrology, now you've got 12. We're way outside the binary. You can get, like, so much more nuanced, even if all we're talking about is our sun sign or our rising sign because we break out of the false dichotomy if we're represented, and then we can relate to these figures.

Like, Mercury is a queer planet. Mercury is a planet that rules astrology. Some folks might say Saturn, but Saturn's the planet that rules who's an outside, who's an insider. So it's even built into astrology this idea that it's a system that is about being able to see bothness, queerness, liminalness, outsidersness versus insidersness, and all of that's just so resonant in our community.

Shohreh:

I really resonate with this idea of using it as a way to understand our queer selves and others. Because you're right, we don't have as many models for that or scripts—and we don't want to, right? One of the joys of being queer is that we want to break outside of these scripts, but it means that, like, the ways that we're used to hearing people described

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or understood don't necessarily work for us. And you're right, with astrology, there's so much there, it's really rich with opportunity to kind of dig in and try to understand people in this new way.

Bear: Absolutely. And the more nuanced we get, the deeper we get. When we get to the level of synthesizing our whole chart or comparing two peoples' charts, then we can really see some interesting flavors and be like, oh, yeah, you do like older men. We don't need to problematize your relationship dynamic; we can see it right there. When we start to look at relationships and the relationship dynamics that appeal to us as separate from our sexuality or our gender expression, that's when we get into this really radical liberatory space. Or at least for me, I've found that.

Shohreh: Well, of course one doesn't need to be queer to have an interest in astrology, and I'm sure there will be many folks listening who have an interest who are not queer at all. So how about we start with some basics for people who are just completely new to the practice or maybe like me, they've only started to dabble. Like, what is astrology? Where does it come from? And do you need to be a believer in certain things in terms of the universe in order to benefit from it?

Bear: Oooh. I love all these questions. What is astrology? So I guess first I should say there are many astrologies, and to do justice to everyone, I'll say that I'm speaking about western astrology and tropical astrology, specifically. The one thing I think all astrologers could agree on is that astrology is the practice of looking at cycles of timing up in the sky and correlating them to events on Earth.

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What you do after that point, some folks will correlate what happened in the sky with the moment you were born and talk about your personality. Or talk about a set of events that are likely to unfold. They might predict with it. We could use astrology to ask questions. If this is taking place now, what will unfold in the future? That's called Horary Astrology. We can also go, alright, if I know that every time the moon is new, some cycle ends, and I start something that takes two weeks to become aware of, then I can hone in on that time and intentionally end things. That's the very beginnings of what we would call Electional Astrology.

At its simplest, it's just correlating events, which gets us to its origins. Astrology as we know it today, recounts—the academic institution would agree with this, too. If we go back to Mesopotamia, Catalonia in particular, that's when we see this combination of written records and omens based on eclipses. We're actually going to have some eclipses coming up this next full moon. In two weeks will be an eclipse, and then the new moon after that, a month from now, will be an eclipse.

Catalonians started tracking eclipses and saying, oh, when the eclipse happens, the king will die. When the eclipse happens here, this event will happen. And then they started adding math to their astrological observations. So that's where we get the beginning of astronomy eventually and astrology back when they were one and the same. And back then, it was the bare bones: we're just correlating up in the heavens to down here on earth. Some folks might have heard "as

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above, so below," [Shohreh laughs lightly]—that's what we're getting at with that.

And then, do you have to be a true believer? No, definitely not. One example that a lot of folks will give, you don't even have to mention astrology. If you happen to know a first responder, anybody who works in the medical field, especially anybody who's ever been on an ambulance rig, first responders in particular, or, uh, folks who work in ERs and OB/GYNs especially. Yes, on a full moon, are there more ambulance rides, more babies being born, more accidents of every single type showing up in the ER? Absolutely. You don't have to believe in astrology to notice that there is correlation there with those full moons.

So, at its simplest, if you're a person who just observes any set of cycles or patterns and you notice a correlation and you just tune into those correlations, you're not necessarily believing in them, you're just seeing a pattern and adjusting your behavior correspondingly. So that's astrology at its most simple, basic.

And then from there, the type of astrology most people are familiar with, called Natal Astrology, which has to do with your birth chart. And that's where we're looking at a snapshot of the sky the moment you were born and going, alright, so Shohreh, you were born on this day. These are some of the things, some of the gifts that you have inherently, some of the challenges that you may face. This is what your parents were probably like, your grandparents might have been this way, the jobs or type of work that you will be inclined towards.

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And I think the most fruitful for folks who may be like, I don't know if I believe the personality stuff, but insight on timing sounds nice, you can look at that and say, these are the particular times, when the sun's here or the moon is here, this is going to be a time that's very sensitive or useful for you to hone in on acting. These other times, take a rest, take a breather.

Shohreh: I think that one of the reasons I've seen people have this skepticism around astrology is because of course, we believe and want to have autonomy as individuals. And I think some people view astrology as, like, your life, it's written in the stars, and this is fate, and, like, there's nothing you can do, these things are going to happen to you. So people naturally want to resist this notion of like, I'm not in control of my own life.

Bear: Absolutely. That's actually a philosophical quandary I think every astrologer will eventually find themselves in, particularly looking at these different lenses that astrology has. If I can look and say the sky did this when you were born and so here's how you'll be as a seven-year old, as a 30-year old, as a 60-year old, if I could also look and say, for instance—um, the city of Baghdad was founded using Electional Astrology; this is just a historical fact—if I can choose when to lay the first foundation stone in a city to set it up to last for thousands of years, if both of those things are true, yeah, okay, you immediately have to start wondering, is it all deterministic? Is it somehow free will plus some

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fate? If there's both, where is the line between the two of them?

[Shohreh laughs lightly]

Something I've been thinking about a lot recently is this idea of like, let's say opportunity only knocks once. I don't think that's true; I think opportunity knocks many times, you know? We think about in tarot, you know, there's the wheel card. The Wheel of Fortune, it's always turning. But how long does it take the wheel to turn, right? You've ridden a bike with gears. Some gears, they really move fast, but it's really hard to pedal, it's a lot of effort; other gears, really slow, but easy. I'm probably saying it wrong [Shohreh laughs] because I'm not mechanically inclined in that way. But if we think about gears of different sizes, they take a different amount of time to revolve.

And astrology is about knowing which wheel are you on? Is that opportunity coming back the next new moon, 28 days from now? Don't stress out so much about it. Is there a lot of fate involved in the next four weeks? Well, we all intuitively understand when we get in the car, there's some amount of free will involved. I can be a defensive driver. I can be an aggressive defensive driver. I can be a really cautious defensive driver. And there's some amount of fate involved. We don't have any control whether someone's drunk on the road.

I think astrology is pointing to that same thing: we have our consciousness, and there are also other things in motion. And that's really easy to, I think, be more comfortable with when we think about it in the context of like, America has a chart. I don't worry that the United States, where I live, has its whole culture in motion that I have no

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control over. That's fate. I do have free will as an American and how I interface with America, but I don't have control over the nation itself. And I think that's where astrology can get really interesting.

Or even like we started off this episode, I didn't choose to grow up in a small community where Dharma & Greg was my exposure to metaphysics [Shohreh laughs lightly], but that absolutely set the stage for how I was able to interact with it. It's uncomfortable, it's a lifelong conversation, and I think whether or not a person has ever heard of astrology, we'll still have to navigate that same little nuance of where do I actually have control over this ride that I'm on? And where am I just being swept away?

Shohreh:

Mm, that's such a good point because if we just completely take astrology out of it, we have to grapple with those same questions, right? There's so much in our lives that is completely out of our control, things that were set in motion, literally by the zip code we were born in, right? We know that the zip code we're born in has a huge impact on our lives in terms of our health and socioeconomics and all of these different factors. We had no control over that, and that literally sets the trajectory of our lives. So it's like, even if you're not talking about the stars and the planets, there's always the tension of those two things happening.

Bear:

Absolutely, and I think astrology can be such a beautiful tool for transformation, whether you believe in it or not, because it's pointing—or it can be one way of pointing to hey, in these areas of your life, you have lots of control. Focus your energy and effort here. In these other

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areas of life, relax, give yourself grace, give yourself forgiveness, ease up. Sometimes it's roll with the punches, sometimes it's like, remember to count your blessings. It happens to all of us.

And other parts can be really confusing, especially as, like, a post-modern person to figure out is this me? Is it capitalism? Is this a trauma response? Is this how everybody feels? You know, especially we're more and more divorced from communities that are grounded in one place for a long time. You can have an anchor and, like, talk to other folks who have charts that are similar.

You know, folks in our generation are gonna have a very similar unfolding of anybody born on other side of a three-year cluster or so. You know, anyone born between like '85 and '88 is going to have a similar set of experiences as life progresses, and that does give us a bit of that consistency to figure out, like, oh, that's not me, that's everybody my age is having this experience. I think that helps illuminate where there's that, like, oh, there's fate and here's my free will. A little bit more agency, and I think more agency always leads to more empowerment.

Shohreh: The other thing too, is I think people feel that they have to take and read everything related to astrology, like, very literally or very predictive. We were talking before we started recording about the CHANI app, which is my favorite app for looking at my horoscope.

Bear: App CHANI is amazing [laughs lightly].

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Shohreh: Yes, App CHANI, amazing! And I was saying how regularly my weekly horoscope reads me for filth, and I'm just like, wow, that is so dead-on. But the reality is, of course, there are some times that it's not as great of a fit, or specifically for app CHANI, they say, you know, if your sun isn't looking quite right that week, you know, go look at your rising and see, you know, if that seems like a better fit. So there's already some flexibility there.

But I think one of the other things people get in their heads is they're like oh, well, if the horoscope isn't dead on, then like, you know, the astrology is wrong or it's fake. Instead of seeing that, like, it could be talking about all kinds of different things that are going on in your life that maybe you also aren't consciously even aware of to be able to understand it in the words that are in front of you.

Bear: Absolutely. Astrology is so multivalent. What I mean by that is any given planet, part of the chart, is representing many things simultaneously. So the sun, in everybody's chart, is always going to be a little bit about our identity. But only Leo rising, so only one of twelve rising signs, will have the sun represent them in their chart.

As a Cancer rising, me, myself, the sun, yeah, it's me, but it's also, more than anything, the sun in my chart is representing how I interface with resources: self-esteem, material acquisition. But not even so much the acquisition as like the stuff in my possession. Somebody who is a Virgo rising, the sun in their chart is gonna represent the way in which they identify with the other, isolated, or potentially enemies or fears.

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Another area that is kinda easier to think about, there's one part of the chart where you would look to see, who is your marriage partner? It's the seventh house, it's the opposite of your rising sign. But the seventh house is also the house of open enemies. And business partners [Shohreh laughs lightly]. All of those things are there. So, you know, in any given reading, I might actually have to stop and say, okay, I know we just talked about this planet being your mom, but this planet is also how you feel about food and nutrition. So, we're going to switch gears; same planet, but we're using a slightly different lens.

You know, I was a personal trainer in a past life, you know, my late teens, early twenties.

Shohreh: Me too!

Bear: So I think we can think about any given exercise, or a given movement pattern, right? So, yeah, Mars we can think about as being strength training, generally. But we could get more specific and say, Mars is plyometrics, whereas Saturn is, like, powerlifting, right? For our rep range, Saturn, we're going to have the smaller number, Mars is gonna be a little bit more vigorous, like—and we could switch out the lenses.

We could talk about HIIT training versus plyometrics versus endurance training. And maybe if we're talking about endurance, maybe we're talking about Mercury. Maybe Mercury is a middle-distance runner, Jupiter is a long-distance runner, Mars is, like, our sprinter, just like 100 meters, no more [Shohreh laughs lightly]. This person's gonna just, like,

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pass out if we ask them to work. Or the way that we progress in an exercise. A push-up is a push-up until you tweak it just a little bit.

Again, if we, like, remove astrology from the equation, there are lots of ways that we can see in life that, you know, if we're talking about the importance of being hydrated, we can talk about it from the perspective of how it benefits sleep. We can talk about how it benefits cognitive function. We can talk about the importance of water for the Krebs Cycle and our metabolic processes and how that affects—the options are endless, but we're still just talking about the water.

So as an astrologer, if you're trying to talk to a million people simultaneously, you gotta pick one or two things. You can't talk about all 40 different versions. And so there's gonna be weeks where you're like, oh, water didn't show up. Like my water stopped working actually [Shohreh laughs lightly]. I really needed to take a shower and I just stank for like four days and it was really upsetting. I don't know what you're talking about, about hydration making me feel better. That did not happen to me [Shohreh laughs].

But, like, the key words: water, being really important. Like, yes, water should seem very, very central that week. So that's one of the ways where sometimes you have to get a little bit abstract with what we're hearing, what we're reading in a horoscope because it is trying to speak to everybody—you know, one-twelfth of the population.

Getting down to the level of your birth chart, I've had clients that I've seen six times, spent 12 hours with, and we will have a lifetime to

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continue to talk about their chart 'cause it's always unfolding and we're always having new experiences. There's always a cycle that's resetting and a new one beginning. There's nuance. There's—you go in there, there's a lot of, like, playing around in the same way that we're gonna have to do that in any other context where we're trying to engage in both self-discovery and self-improvement.

Shohreh: So understanding that when we're using a tool like, again, an app that is intended for millions of people that, of course, we are generalizing something that you can get into much more individual detail on. And so it may not perfectly align with you every time, and that's okay and that's really to be expected under the circumstances.

Bear: Yeah, with like App CHANI, I spent a brief time working with them, a wonderful, wonderful crew of astrologers and also folks who are on the tech side and the customer service side. You know, if you get in on the premium side and look at those long-term transits, you start to build your own relationship and understand, okay, when I hear "family of origin," I actually know this is about, like, this house I just moved into. This has been the main thing, I'm moving houses. So when I hear "family of origin," that's actually code for fourth house.

And you start to build this language and vernacular. You start to stay, oh, I get it. In the same way that I remember when I was a baby gay and I didn't know anything about flagging or hanky code, and I was like, I see all these people with hankies, and some are in this pocket, some are in this pocket, a lot of people are wearing the same color. Are they like

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gay gangs? What's going on? [Shohreh laughs] And one of my queer uncles was kind enough to explain—

Shohreh: Gay gangs. It's the mafia again!

Bear: —they're like, yeah, so this is how it works. The alphabet mafia, right, before anyone would have ever said any of those things. I think it was still GLB. I'd say just those three back then. Like left pocket means this. Right pocket means this. These are some of the colors. Okay, I get it. This is a secret way of communicating with people about things.

I think as we start to learn the secret language of our birth chart, we can start to decode what we're hearing. Like oh, yeah, yeah, okay, they're talking about workouts, I know that that means face your fears.

Shohreh: [Laughs lightly] Yeah, so basically what I'm hearing is that I need to book a reading, so note to self.

Bear: Yes.

Shohreh: Clearly we need a deeper dive into the birth chart. Everyone needs a deeper dive into the birth chart.

Bear: Modern rite of passage.

Shohreh: Yes, absolutely. So just for background information for those who are just trying to get their head around this a little bit more, could you just talk a little bit about what the relationship can be between like sun, rising, and Moon? Because I think people hear those all the time but

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they maybe don't necessarily know how to orient themselves within those.

Bear:

Yeah. So those are the big three, as many astrologers will call them. And I like to just think about the world, like the actual outside when you go look at the sky. The rising sign is literally where the sun rises in the day. So what does that mean for us personality-wise? It's literally our first breath of life. It's what we come into the world and everyone notices—the first thing that people notice about us. I have recently become an early bird [Shohreh laughs lightly], and the first thing I noticed for sure is that, oh my goodness, there's a bunch of birds chirping, the sun's about to come up, right?

The sun coming up is such a big deal, just like the rising sign. The way that we—it's the energy that comes into the room before we do. It's not necessarily our reputation, that's a diff—that's like the mid-day part of the sky. That's for our personal meeting time. But that spot where the sun comes up, it's what people first see or think about. So I'm a Cancer rising. People, typically they look at me and they're like, you seem really nice. You seem very, like, caring and genuine and sensitive. Classic Cancer traits. People—it can be like...it can even indicate how people look.

So, like, Julia Roberts is a good example. She's a Leo rising, which means that she's one of those few people who is ruled by her sun. She is her sun. Her sun is in Scorpio. She looks like a mysterious person, kinda [Shohreh laughs lightly]. She's got that like magnetic charisma.

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Those are Scorpio words. She's got a Leo mane. Her hair is just epic [Shohreh laughs]. She literally looks like a Leo with a Scorpio vibe.

Shohreh: Fascinating.

Bear: So that's our rising sign. Our sun, that's our identity. If we think about, literally, the sun is the center of our solar system. The sun in our charts is the center of our personality system. All the other bits and pieces gravitate around me, myself, I. That's the part of us that's having like, I am the leading character in this movie. That's the sun.

Another way to think about it is like, I was in theater in high school, so I think about it like the lights on the stage. Literally the sun is the light on the stage. How our, the spotlight that's shining on us. And the sign that we have, sun in Aquarius, that's like the gel, the color on the light. So everyone has a light, it's a white light, and then there's twelve different colors, so to speak.

But that might be—that's a little bit of, like, how we shine our light in the world. The way that we identify with things, what we're aware of. So Virgo sun might be really aware of Virgo and Mercury things, so their thought process, strategies, processes, details. If you know a Virgo person, you're probably like, that sounds [Shohreh laughs lightly] like my friend.

Conversely, the moon, what does the moon do out in the sky? The moon reflects the light of the sun. You can think about the way the moon waxes and wanes. Some ancient peoples talked about it like the moon was eating up light. So if we think about the traditional

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association with the moon has to do with eating—rest, eating in particular, so there's that relationship with nurturing.

If we think about if the sun is our ego and our awareness, the moon then becomes our unconscious, becomes the way that we experience the world. So I'm aware that I'm holding this cup in my hand because the sun is shining on it, like, right, lighting up this cup. I only start to experience it when I ingest it and assimilate it and digest it. And that's what the moon is doing. It's bringing that unconscious. I think about it, like, very somatic in that way: how I come and take in all the things that I'm aware of so that I can experience those things.

And that's why those are the three things that, if anything, you'll hear those talked about over and over again because they are so central to our identity, the way we understand ourselves. Whereas Mars, the way that we do stuff, yeah, that's cool, but that's not core, just like everything about me, the way that I know myself to be in the world.

Those are the big three, I think, just thinking about what is it like at sunrise? What is it like when the sun is not here? I mean, you never see absence of the sun so much. How does the moon move in this, like, cyclical way, the moon pulling the tides, pulling our emotions, feelings being cyclical? Whereas our sense that "I am a person" is pretty constant, just like the sun is constant.

Shohreh: I could listen to you talk about that for hours. That was so poetic.

Bear: Thank you.

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Shohreh: It's really beautiful imagery that I think, uh, puts that into perspective for me and for many who are listening as well, of a different way of thinking of those things than, you know, the two-line description that you usually get in any app or anywhere else.

Bear: Oh, thank you so much. It's so relational, and I think that's the thing that gets, you know, between astrologer and client, building that relationship, building that vocabulary between ourselves and the chart. It's about building a relationship with—whether we think about it as parts of ourselves, you know, modern psychological astrology, whether we think about it as planetary intelligences, renaissance tradition, astro-magic and all of that, whether we think of it as pure timing indicators or predictive, a little bit more of the ancient techniques there.

My kind of, as a mixed Indigenous person with a lot of different backgrounds, I think about the planets as, um, ancestors. We can talk more about that later, but I think the key there is just building a relationship in the same way that we build a relationship with the moon. That's how literally all of our cultures developed a sense of what is time is building a relationship with the sun and the moon culturally over generations, and we can do that in our own lifetimes.

Shohreh: Mm. Well, that's the perfect segue because you've mentioned tradition and history and your own identity, and I know that practicing astrology using an intersectional, post-colonial lens is very important to you. Can you explain what astrology looks like when it's not practiced through that lens, versus what it looks like when it is?

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Bear: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So, the tradition—and when I say tradition here, I’m speaking to Hellenistic Astrology largely, that would be my formal training, in right around zero, the transition before the common era to the common era, so circa 2,000 years ago, what would be not post-colonial and not intersectional would be any time that Venus and Saturn are in aspect of a chart, the person would be either homosexual, a pervert, or a deviant.

Interestingly, I have seen that there’s Venus-Saturn contacts for queer folks very, very commonly, but I wouldn’t necessarily say they’re specifically homosexual and definitely not necessarily perverts or deviants. And when I say pervert, I say that with all due love to my fellow kinky peoples. Is it true? Yes. [Light laughter] Is there another way of looking at it a bit more nuanced? Absolutely.

So back in the day, they would think about Saturn as like, oh, your wife will be old. She will make you depressed. She will ruin your life. Because Venus would be the wife, Saturn is old, bad things: death, depression. So you’re like, you’re gonna marry a spinster and she’ll ruin your life.

Shohreh: [Sarcastically] Great.

Bear: It kind of makes sense culturally if you think about what life was like way back then. Another good example, the sixth house is the house of slavery. Yes, slaves would be found in the sixth house. Today we talk about pets. That’s a weird association, that’s a weird connection, correlation there. But what we’re looking at is where there is labor that is in a servile position or where there’s servitude.

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So if we were to just take old stuff and be like, oh you've got a lot of stuff in the sixth house, you must have been a slave in a past lifetime. That would be not post-colonial.

If we look and say hm, there's a lot of stuff going on in your sixth house, do you have an experience that your labor's exploited? That you're doing visible labor that you're not being, like, acknowledged for or that you're underpaid for your work? There's ways that we can read class and power and privilege into, or we can infer that out of those primary source documents.

There's, like, one particular technique that's a little bit advanced, so I don't want to belabor it too much. But, there are things called lots, Arabic parts, and there are some calculations that are based on your gender. And by gender, they definitely mean genitals, and it is 100% only your genitals at birth. That's all they're concerned about. So what do we do as modern practitioners if there's two different ways to calculate the lot of marriage based on your assigned sex at birth and you're talking to someone who's genderqueer or is trans? Do I use your assigned sex at birth? Do I, like, astrology deadname you, so to speak?

Shohreh: Yeah.

Bear: Do I compare both and see which one fits? You know, that's an area where there are intersectional astrologers and radical astrologers today who are kind of gathering that research, and we're talking amongst ourselves as professionals and kind of pondering like, what do we do with this when we see things that technique-wise are working that run

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contrary to our sentiments today? Or, what do we do conversely, you know, with those sixth house things? Sixth house and twelfth house, the tradition we have to deal with hidden enemies, or slaves, or slavery, or runaway slaves and fugitives. We do have incarceration, so do we just swap slavery for wage slavery? Is it that neat and clean? Are there other things that we can see there?

I think getting more nuanced with our understanding of how the chart is speaking to social relationships within society is one place where we can get intersectional and stay grounded in the tradition, [unclear 00:37:15] so to speak. And then other times, I think we really have to break those norms and bring in our own modern understanding.

Saturn as like, the one who keeps insiders versus the outsiders, we can see that back in the ancient technique, but that's a bit more of, like, engaging Saturn as a concept and seeing what does Saturn mean today for us? I think it's always a little bit of a two-way street. And that's gonna be true of a lot of ancient techniques, you know? Unless we happen to be in an intact culture, like, unless you are born into a really intact lineage and you're getting direct hand-me-down transmissions, I think a lot of us, especially in the U.S., it's hodgepodge melting pot, a lot of syncretic practices.

We're going to need to be massaging things, and especially as queer folks, more radical folks go into the root and doing that work ourselves, 'cause it's not going to be an established canon tradition. I mean, typically, anything that defies or questions or interrogates the power structures and longevity is usually gonna be buried and occulted, right,

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hidden. And astrology has been a hidden oracle to knowledge systems for a very long time.

Shohreh: It's interesting because I'm hearing you say that there's this interpretation piece, right? Who it is, in what time period, that is interpreting this practice, of course is going to be different based on whatever the social norms are and everything at the time.

But I also think about how...there's this article I was talking about with someone recently that came out in the New York Times that's basically like, this is the gayest generation. What they're really saying is that we have more people who are openly out as queer and trans and genderqueer than before because it's become more normal. It has become safer to do so.

All of these folks existed back, back, back centuries and were there. Perhaps in the interpretation at the time were not included or were just viewed completely differently. So there is both, like, a newness in the interpretation, but also, like, historical pieces of this that have existed as well.

Bear: Absolutely, yeah, and historicity is a problem that all fields of academia experience. You know, back in the day, astrology was [laughs lightly] part of the academy—

Shohreh: Right [laughs lightly].

Bear: —before we got booted out. It actually veered in the parties of probably a historicity part is a problem. And there's also cultures that

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didn't have recorded history to begin with, so we're not going to be able to access parts of that. There are other astrologies that are not this western, tropical astrology that I'm speaking to. There's the Jyotish tradition, some people might have heard of it as the Vedic tradition or the Indian tradition that goes back, parts of it pre-date any of the Babylonian, western astrology that I'm talking about.

There's clear evidence that, you know, during that whole period where Alexander was going over there was cultural exchange, including astrological cultural exchange between India and the Greek empire, the Hellenistic eastern part of the Mediterranean base and however we want to just define these geographic areas. China has its own astrology system. There are other cultures in southeast Asia that have their own astrology systems. The Mayans had their own astrology systems. And so I do want to be clear that I'm speaking to only one type of astrology and mostly only one historical period of that astrology to get there.

Like you said, it is really, really culturally based. There's lots of examples we see, especially when people are talking about physical descriptions, you know, we have to understand most people, up until very, very recent history, 100, 150 years ago didn't really travel more than 10 miles [Shohreh laughs lightly] from the place that they were born. You know, so some of it is like you have this configuration of placement, you're going to be a farmer and you'll be poor. Well, there were only so many options of what you were going to be doing, and therefore a lot of them came down to farmer, working with sewage or plumbing, like, most people had non-glamorous jobs and not very much choice.

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And so that's even one thing that we see, you know, these traditions that seem so fatalistic, so deterministic, life was more fatalistic. You couldn't just decide, I'm going to save up for six months and fly on a plane and get a work-study visa and live in a different culture six months from now. That was just zero percent on the table. And even folks that did travel a lot, that was their whole life.

Shohreh: And they—I'm thinking too of how at the time there was a more clear-cut caste system. I don't want to say that there isn't a caste system anymore because if we look at the U.S. [laughs lightly] and we look at the prison system, we have a very clear caste system in the U.S. But it's not open as it was then, where it was like this is your class and you get slotted into it and this is where you are. And, of course, in a practice like astrology, that is going to affect how you read people because you may be looking at it as, oh, well, this thing means that you are in this caste, and that's just where you are 'cause this is what the stars say.

So astrology, like any tool, can also be abused by people in power to say this is where we think you should be 'cause the stars said so.

Bear: Yeah, it's really tricky. There's this question or this statement that I think we hear a lot in the metaphysical community: you're exactly where you are supposed to be. That's tricky. Am I supposed to be experiencing these types of oppression? Can I see them in a chart? Oh, look, I see it in the chart, am I meant to experience this oppression? I think emphatically no, that's not what the chart is saying. That the very

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idea of astrology is saying we are correlating and we're saying, oh, this thing that is true also shows up here, not this thing is true because of...

I personally don't think it's plausible; some astrologers may. So exactly that: oh, you have Saturn and Venus together, therefore you're going to be queer and have a terrible love life. No, that's not the move. Oh, you have Saturn and Venus together, interesting. Okay, so we're working with a whole world of Saturnian concepts and Venutian concepts that are going to come together. How can we give you culturally relevant understanding of what that means in a way that is empowering to you and gives you more agency?

I think it means not getting Pollyanna with it and saying sometimes, oh, wow, your chart is configured in a way where like, how have you experienced servitude, labor exploitation? Have you experienced incarceration or institutionalization? Not that your chart is saying that's meant for you, you deserve it. That's your destiny. But it's saying, hey, I'm seeing that what you've experienced is in this realm. Are you teaching folks that are incarcerated? Are you deep in prison abolition work? 'Cause those are also very real reads, but we can only get there if we're willing to see the way in which, like you said, like, caste systems still exist today. Slavery does still exist today. That's what prison labor is, you know?

And so I think it involves our own politics as well, and not every astrologer and not every client has to engage astrology in that way to get something out of it. That's my praxis, that's my lens. And because I'm so committed to collective liberation and empowerment on the

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individual level is part of what is required to get to a place of collective liberation, that's how I'm reading it. That's the way I'm using that tool. Just like any other tool, I think there's lots of ways that are appropriate and ethical, and there's a lot of tools that by virtue of my limited experience we can't be discussing today either.

Shohreh: Yeah, and I think the client relationship is so important as well because I imagine, as a fellow different kind of practitioner, but as a practitioner and a service provider, you know, you want to be affirming of your clients. You don't want to be giving readings that are harming who they believe themselves to be or certain aspects of their identity, and that is a power and responsibility that you hold as someone who is doing readings for other people, is to be considerate of those aspects of the client who is in front of you.

Bear: Absolutely. And fortunately, astrology for an astrologer gives us a really great way of seeing, what does my client need to be held? Where and how does my client need to be held gently with a lot of compassion, a lot of affirmation. Where does my client need like a firm nudge in the butt [Shohreh laughs lightly] or a pat on the shoulder? Or, like, actually, you've got four more reps in you, take a deep breath [Shohreh laughs lightly], keep going. Four, I'm counting four again, yes. Four again. Three, four, two, one. Now you're done. See, you had six more in you, congratulations [Shohreh laughs lightly]. All of that is right there.

Shohreh: Yeah.

[Music plays]

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[Ad break]

Hey y'all. Let me take a moment to tell you a little bit more about Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that is directed by my dear friend and colleague, Neathery Falchuk. The awesome practitioners at Ample + Rooted not only serve folks locally here in Austin, they also serve folks online all over the globe. Through therapy, mindfulness practices, courses, trainings, and events, they support, guide, and hold space for folks to feel valued and nourished.

We talk a lot about systems of oppression on the show and how they can disconnect you from your inner knowing. And the Ample + Rooted group believes it is your birthright to both inhabit and trust your physical and emotional self without shame. Luckily for y'all, the kind folks at Ample + Rooted created an exclusive guided meditation on cultivating self-trust for listeners of Conjuring Up Courage.

You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music fades]

Shohreh: Alright, so like me, you believe in the importance of cultivating courage and of cultivating bravery. I know these are important concepts to you, and I would like to talk about kind of how you define these terms and how you view the relationship between them.

Bear: Yes, yes. I've been thinking about this the last couple of weeks, actually. So bravery and courage. How are they different? Are they different?

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A quick little search of etymology gives us some interesting information. Bravery is all unknown origin. It could mean a lot of things but it seems like the way people have been using the word "bravery," at least in the mid-1500s, they're talking about being bold. They're talking about valor. It's usually in some kind of association with a battle, very often. But it has something to do with, like, being splendid, being, like, a paragon at something. Going in in such a way that people will go oh, yes, that person is an example of that.

Courage is a [unclear 00:47:39]. To me—well, to kind of get to the astrology of this 'cause it's very interesting from that vantage point. So, for me, when I'm thinking about bravery versus courage, with courage I'm thinking of, you know, to take heart, to, like, really get centered in a space of passion. Or, to, like, get Greek with it, we have ethos, pathos, and logos. We're talking pathos. What moves me? What gets me into a space of love? And when I say love, I'm thinking of bell hooks's definition of love, that love is a verb and it is a set of actions that we undertake for the sake of another person, specifically for the sake of their growth or their well-being. Their, like, holistic benefit, right?

So courage, then, to me, is about aligning ourselves with the praxis, right? Like not the theory, but the actual undertaking, in action, of doing the verb of love. Whereas bravery, to me, has more to do with this thing that, uh, one of our teachers said: given the choice between doing two things, do the thing that scares you most. You know, my sweetie would say do the hard thing. Some people really resonate with the idea of staying with difficulty. And those are all ways, you know,

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speaking to be being brave, that it has something to do with being afraid and choosing to go forth anyway.

I mentioned rock climbing at the beginning and how it's been odd to me that rock climbing has illuminated so much astrologically and so many other, um, metaphysical concepts. Things that are slightly less metaphysical, like love and whatnot. But rock climbing has illuminated this sense that—I started rock climbing thinking I would conquer my fear of heights. Do what scares you most: eradicate your fear of heights [Shohreh laughs lightly]. I have not done this, but I have created a relationship with fear that allows me to distinguish between when my body is telling me, you are in danger, do not do this thing, and when my mind is saying, this is scary. Bad things happened in the past, or we can imagine bad things happening.

And so bravery is the ability to go, okay, I'm going to sit with this feeling. I can feel my palms sweating. I can see the tunnel vision coming. This is my mind telling me that something bad might happen or once happened. I'm going to sit with this feeling. I'm going to let this feeling exist in me and I'm gonna do the thing anyway. In rock climbing, it's I'm gonna make the next move. I'm gonna go up, maybe I'll fall, maybe I won't.

Or moving in such a way that we go, oh, that's my body saying this is not good. I am in danger. This situation is out of integrity for me. And the brave thing to do then is, like, I'm not gonna be concerned with being embarrassed and saving face. I'm gonna acknowledge that this is bad. My body is giving me a no, and rather than, like, capitalist hero

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mythology, I'm not going to push myself through and just go, no fear, it doesn't matter. Bravery in that instance is going, mmm, I'm gonna do the scary thing. It's saying, this is beyond my depth. This is actually dangerous. This exceeds my capabilities. That's a bit of the difference there.

And astrologically, I think we're talking about the difference between like Mars, this planet that's about, literally, it's Mars, it's Aries, warrior. There's our bravery. Versus the sun, Leo, literally, like, that's totally on the heart of the lion. Someone who has the heart of the lion has integrity, they have honor, they act from a place of love, or they act in a way that is consistent with their, like, inner dignity. And so I think, like, a lot of people would resonate with those two different vibrations. Like oh yeah, they are different.

They're related. If we can't be courageous, it's hard to stay brave. And there are times where being courageous is an act of bravery.

Shohreh:

I think they are terms that definitely have overlap and then they also can go in their own direction as well. Someone recently posted on my Instagram—I had put up a post explaining, like, some of the different faces of courage that people don't often think of. Kind of like what you just said about how courage sometimes is the no, it's not always the yes. And one of the things I had said too, was like, sometimes courage is taking up less space instead of more.

And someone had written in the comments, like, what's the difference, do you think, between, like, courage and wisdom, for example? And

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what I had said to them was that there is an action piece to courage, right? You know, courage is about alignment with your values. I often think about values work goes hand-in-hand with courage, where when you know what the values are, then you can act in courage to stay in alignment with your values. So there's this piece of you are doing something, and that is the courageous aspect of it.

Whereas wisdom is something you can hold without actually doing anything, right? You can be wise and not act from your place of wisdom or not do anything with it, necessarily. But they also have an interplay where you can use your inner wisdom to inform your courageous action as well. And so I think what you said about the action of bravery and the action of courage is so important. And redefining what the boldness is, right? It doesn't have to be this, like, heroic, going out into battle thing.

Like when I was trying to name the podcast with Conjuring Up Courage, I was like, I need to put the right words with the word courage that people aren't thinking of, like, a veteran or, you know, battles or things like that. And this is how I came to Conjuring Up, which I felt gave it a totally different meaning of this is something within you that you are capable of cultivating, which is so important too. 'Cause I think people are just like, oh, some people are courageous and some people aren't. I'm like, no, it's a practice, it's a skill.

Bear:

Yes.

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- Shohreh:** It can be learned and practiced, which is so important. Maybe some people are more inclined to it than others, but it's not that you have it or you don't.
- Bear:** Yeah. I think it's easy to conflate courage or bravery with the willingness to take a risk. Or, like, um, a higher or lower threshold for risk-taking, especially thinking about rock climbing. You know, I think many people have heard of that Free Solo documentary.
- Shohreh:** Yes [laughs lightly].
- Bear:** About Alex Honnold climbing El Capitan with no ropes or protection after many, many years of rehearsing that climb with lots of ropes and protection. And that's exactly what he did. You know, he talks in that film about, like, that, it was scary. It was too scary for almost a decade. He wasn't just like, I just have so much courage and no fear so I'm gonna go do this thing.
- Shohreh:** Yes.
- Bear:** He's like, that's absolutely terrifying. I need to practice and practice and build a relationship with the things that scare me here so that over time I can come into this place of being able to conjure up, draw up from inside of me the presence of mind, and like, this commitment. Yeah, just like mindfulness, you know. It's not like some people are born able to meditate for an hour [Shohreh laughs] just without ever having done it before. They cultivate that skill, like five minutes at a time over years.

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Shohreh: Yeah, courage is not the absence of fear. And I think that people, when they hear courage and bravery, they often think that. And I'm like, no, everyone has fear. It's like you mentioned earlier, it's being able to discern, is this a fear that means stop, that means no? Or, is this a fear that is just going to be a part of this and I have to learn to hold it while I do the thing anyways? And a lot of the times it's the latter, but people get stuck because they think it's the former.

Bear: Yeah, there was a time where I was like, oh, maybe I'm just never gonna get over my fear of heights. And like there's something wrong with me, it's been so many months and it still scares me to be up this high. Now, years later, I'm a much stronger climber and I still have those moments where I go wow, like, this isn't even hard. I'm well aware of the fact that I could literally hang and just be here for two minutes. But it's just high enough that my body, like, cortisol, adrenaline, like we are still animals. Our animal bodies are gonna do what they do, you know?

And I think, particularly since this is going to be a June episode, and thinking about queerness and, like, the relationship between courage and bravery and queerness. Particularly for me, I came out very young, but I also came out in the Bay Area. So the amount of courage and bravery that were required were a little bit different. Although this was a lot closer, you know, Matthew Shepard had been murdered not but a couple years before I went to high school. And while I was in high school, Gwen Araujo, a young trans woman, she was murdered just the town over.

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You know, I think speaking to that article that you read, there's, you know, this is the gayest generation [Shohreh laughs lightly]. Yeah, kids are so much more queer. I overheard someone talking about their sixth grader having a GSA, a Gay Straight Alliance club. I kind of broke my bartender rules. Like I'm supposed to pretend like I can't hear you two feet from me [Shohreh laughs lightly], but I just heard you say this. Is that right? In high school, I had to like fight the administration. Do you really mean to tell me that ten years later that we have these in elementary schools?

Yeah, that, like, it's not the absence of fear, it's still scary to come out. Even in the Bay Area, it's still scary to come out. And we've got, like, Trans March and Dyke March and Pride. And I think I had like five different queer youth groups to choose from and I could have been at one almost any day of the week. But that doesn't mean that suddenly it becomes not scary. Just like in climbing, I never—there will never be a day where I'm not afraid of heights. It's just the human-animal bodies, very life-preserving technology, fear. But we can arrive at a place where we're able to be present enough with the fear to deliberately choose, am I willing to take this risk?

And I think that's where astrology can be helpful. Like, what is the risk? Is this risk in alignment with my values, with my purpose, with the work that I wanna be doing in the world? Is now the right time for the risk? And if the risk isn't quite right, what can I change to make it acceptable? Or is it within my power to change the conditions, to make the risk acceptable or not? All of those things kinda get woven in

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together. And I imagine that that's, you know, for folks who either come into understanding their queerness later or choose to not come out right away, that that's probably a lot of the calculus that's going on too, you know?

Like if you don't ever see another queer person, or the only times you hear about queerness are in a context that makes it obviously dangerous to be queer, then what is the courageous thing to do? Maybe to preserve your life, and like, do the hard thing of not getting to be seen fully in order to, like, live and survive so that you can get to a place where you can be seen fully in safety. You know, everyone is kinda making their own personal decisions of what that feels like.

Shohreh:

Yeah, there's this spectrum of fear, essentially, where depending on so many different factors is gonna determine what that level of fear is for you. And even bringing intersectionality into it, right? A white gay man is probably naturally going to have less overall fear, even in the worst of circumstances, than a Black trans woman because of the way that they are treated in the world. And those considerations are so important.

And this is also why we cannot give blanket advice in general, and certainly not in the queer community, right? People have asked me before about, is it okay if I'm not out? Like, do I need to come out? Am I not living like my bold, true self? And, you know, I always tell them, this is completely up to you. Only you can decide if and when you want to come out, to who, right? Maybe you don't wanna be fully, publicly out, but there are a few people that you feel safe with and you can be your authentic self with them.

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There's never just one option. It's never just black and white. Like, we have choices and we can assess risk, and like you said, change the risk factors to make things more tolerable. Like there are always options.

Bear:

Yeah, absolutely. There's, you know, like, you know, for trans folks, this sort of when to disclose, not to disclose, is it okay to be stealth? Does that mean that you have internalized transphobia if you're a stealth person? Like, no, maybe you, like, are very cognizant of the community you live in. Maybe you have a different idea about what transness means in your own purpose, in your own values. There's—I think there's so much where that nuance, you know, nuance exists, full stop. And it does really matter.

And again, like, as a queer person, especially as a young queer person who is, you know, and I've seen these questions of like, well, why do I like people who are like this? This book isn't explaining it. This book just sounds like straight people stuff [Shohreh laughs]. This doesn't apply to me. Thinking about the way in which you can see some of those things in your chart. Like, oh, Venus and Mars together. Venus is liking "feminine" people and Mars is liking "masculine" people. Oh, yeah, I'm, like, really pansexual. I like people who are masc and femme. I only like genderqueer people.

Things like that, like you can see all those things in the chart and start looking at this nuance and go, oh, but all of that is below the horizon, it's in the bottom part of the chart. That's really private. I actually am not a super loud, out, public queer person, and not everybody has to be a spokesperson or a role model. In the same way that in movement

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work we don't expect every single person to be out on the frontlines. Some people are medics, some people are storytellers. Everyone needs childcare, someone's gotta be babysitting all of our revolutionary friends' toddlers that we don't want on the frontlines.

So there's a role and a space for everyone, and I think looking at that intersection, especially thinking about intersectionality, you know, our positions of power and privilege really do matter. They do influence and inform, I don't think what is possible for us—I think that we are all capable of defying norms and expectations—but the things that will be readily available to us with ease versus things that we will have to really make a concerted effort around, I think you can see that in the chart. I think we can see that show up, in you know, like for me, oh yeah, brown person but in the Bay Area, super close to San Francisco, not at all shocking or surprising that there were queer youth groups and things that made it feel safe, despite the fact that in the early '00s it was not safe to be queer, to be out, as it is today.

Shohreh: Yeah. And yeah, it's so context-dependent and where you live. I mean, literally depending on the country you are in completely changes that. Not even thinking about the city within the country, there's just so much that factors into it. And I hope for a world eventually where everyone can be queer and as out as they want to be without those considerations of, you know, how are people going to treat me based on this choice?

Bear: Yeah. Maybe we'll all experience the day when nobody even has to explain anything unless you're trying to date someone.

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- Shohreh:** Right. Exactly. Yes. That fact that we have all the labels we do, I regularly talk about, is as a result of heteronormativity. We wouldn't need them if anyone could like anyone they wanted.
- Bear:** Yeah, then it'd just be like, hey, I think you're cute.
- Shohreh:** Yeah, it'd just be your personal preference. It doesn't have to be a set out, I am this thing [laughs lightly].
- Bear:** Yeah, yeah. But that sun, there is a part of us that always is coming back to, like, the I am, I am, I am. So it's getting that "I am" oriented around, like you said, values. Getting that "I am" oriented around like, what does integrity look like for me? Then we get so much empowerment, so much room for growth and flexibility and adaptability from a space that is, you know, getting back to basics.
- You know, for me, I've been thinking a lot about basics as bravery, authenticity, sovereignty, integrity, courage, exploration. So, like, I've been thinking a lot about getting back to basics over and over again. How can I get back to basics? How I can use this chart as a way to, like, really bring myself back to those core fundamental values where all of the nuance is actually in service of more truth, more alignment, more love, more living with purpose, more joy.
- Shohreh:** I love that. A lot of my work is aligned around helping people with that, so that warms my heart to hear. Alright, I have two things to wrap up. The first is for those who are listening and maybe they're interested in learning a little bit more about astrology or diving into their chart

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specifically, do you have any recommendations for people of where they could just, like, start?

Bear:

Yeah, so if you are a fresh beginner and you would like to learn a little bit more, you're like, I don't know about a reading yet, I need to know a bit—a few more facts before I dive into a birth chart reading, grab Chani Nicholas's work. I would highly, highly recommend her book—I knew I was going to say this the wrong way; I keep thinking about Lady Gaga because Chani is equally fabulous [Shohreh laughs lightly] in my world—Born For This. Her book is a really great introduction to how astrology works, like giving you the beginning language to start to put together your own like, choose-your-own-adventure style understanding of your birth chart. And then App CHANI is a great supplement to that. So self-guided, for the cost of a book and like two cups of coffee a month, you can set yourself up with some really, really good learning tools.

Obviously as an astrologer, I think the best way is to find an astrologer who resonates with you, get a reading. If you can get a reading once a year, great. If you can get a reading twice a year, fantastic. If you are the kind of person who just gets really gung-ho, get on Twitter, find astrologers who speak to you, maybe on Instagram, check out their Patreons, uh, and start engaging them. Most of us are just regular folks who have a very niche interest [Shohreh laughs lightly]. And I thrive to interact with people and to be of service, so if you find someone whose work resonates with you, like, pretend they're like some cool person

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who's in your community. DM them if their DMs are open. Leave a comment. Ask a question.

I think Patreons are really great spaces 'cause it gets that like community, sacred reciprocity thing going on, and there's always so much more juicy information to be had when there is that personal relationship, just like working with a coach of any kind. Yeah, you could ask for a workout plan and a personal trainer could do that. Yeah, you could have, like, a one-off values assessment inventory with a life coach. Or you could build a relationship with them over time, and then they're going to be like, oh, hey, Bear, you're back again. How are you doing with this one thing that I know is a challenge for you? Let's dive in.

That would be my big recommendation: if you start to get a taste of astrology and you just love it, work with an astrologer with the same type of regularity that you would work with a personal trainer or a life coach and really, you know, like, take ownership of that process. It's you that they're trying to help. It's your chart they're reading. I would say that, and then take the long view. Just like a diet should properly just mean the sum of all the stuff that goes into your face, like Beach Body or fill in some other name. So diet, nutrition, exercise, we're thinking about developing holistic well-being in our bodies. We're not thinking about the next six weeks, eight weeks. We're thinking about the next year, the next several years, how to set ourselves up to be able to do laundry when we're eighty by ourselves [Shohreh laughs lightly].

So kind of thinking about the same thing. We're not, especially with astrology, you know, Saturn returns once a 30-year cycle. So the lunar

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cycle, 30 days. What can I do this next month? Look at the moon. Start developing your own relationship with your own cycles that already exist. And then give yourself permission for it to feel like your own process.

Shohreh: Beautiful. I will include links for the specific things that you mentioned. Also, you do have a Patreon, so...

Bear: I do have a Patreon.

Shohreh: So if you all like Bear, yes, you can definitely check out Bear on Patreon as well. And I will put the links for that in the show notes. But we'll get to all of your links in a second because the last the last thing I want to ask you, because this is one of the Pridepalooza episodes, I am having all of my Pridepalooza guests finish a very simple phrase for me, and that phrase is: Queerness is _____.

Bear: Radical, ecstatic, communion with ourselves as part of nature.

Shohreh: Phew, that was impressive. I did not tell you that in advance, you just did that on the spot. I like, especially, the addition of the word ecstatic because I think that is a word that really well describes coming into my queerness. Especially, as someone who, you know, came out late in life and has had some changes of labels and really developing that and figuring out who I am. Every step I've gone further in my queerness has brought more joy and ecstasy to my life [laughs lightly].

Bear: Yes. Yes, it's so easy to think of, you know, "queer as in fuck you" and this opposition to heteronormativity. But when I imagine what will it

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mean to be queer in a world that has experienced collective liberation, I think it will mean—Brene Brown talks about braving the wilderness, and we are folks who are just in a deeply ecstatic relationship with ourselves. Just as natural, human animals.

Shohreh: And I get so much of that from the queer community. It's one of the things that has been so lovely about it. I do think that we are in community with each other in a way that I have not been in community with people who aren't part of the community, so.

Bear: Yeah, choosing to live bravely. It's a baptism by fire, but it's a beautiful fire [Shohreh laughs lightly], and we all get to dance around it.

Shohreh: Exactly. Lots of dancing [laughs].

Bear: Yes.

Shohreh: Thank you so much, Bear. This was so much fun. For people who would like to follow your work, how can they find you? And what is the best way that my listeners can support you at this time?

Bear: The best way to find me right now is gonna be, yeah, Patreon is probably going to be the easiest. I'm doing a little rebranding and changing my website right now. So Patreon.com/BearRyver. Bear like the animal, and Ryver, R-Y-V-E-R. And the best way to support me would be to book a session if you're inspired and excited by astrology. I love to get to be of service and meet new folks and you know, help introduce people to their charts. The easiest way to book right now is

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to go to [BearRyver.as.me](https://bearryver.as.me). That's my QV booking link. You can see all the sessions that I have available over the next couple of months.

And the only thing I can think of is just if you resonate with my work, share it far, share it wide. If you had a session in the past and didn't send a testimonial before, it's never too late. And just more than anything, choose the thing that scares you most today. If there's a thing that brings you joy and it requires just a little act of bravery, lean into it, and if anybody asks you why, just say, 'cause Bear told me to.

Shohreh: Bear told me to [laughs]. Perfect, I will link all of that in the show notes so it's really easy for people to find if they want to book a session or go to your Patreon. Also, y'all, I'm going to include Bear's PayPal and Venmo links as well, so if you enjoyed this episode and you want to send a tip Bear's way, that would be much appreciated.

Bear: Yes, indeed.

Shohreh: Because Bear has recently completely gone out on their own, solo, in their business, which is super exciting. So now is a great time to offer support.

Bear: Yes, yes, indeed. It would be much appreciated. Thank you so very much, Shohreh, for having me. This has been an absolute delight. Such a pleasure to talk about—

Shohreh: You are welcome.

Bear: —courage and bravery with you today.

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Shohreh: Yes, thank you for being here. This was great.

[Music plays]

And that's our show for today. If you're enjoying Conjuring Up Courage, don't forget to subscribe through your podcast provider of choice so you never miss an episode. Additionally, if you haven't left a rating and review in the Apple Podcasts app yet, you can do so from any Apple device to help more people find and benefit from the show. I also love hearing from listeners, so feel free to take a screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. My username is @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. Finally, you can sign up for my email newsletter, The Sunday Share, and get more details about how to work with me by going to ShohrehDavoodi.com. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you'll join me for the next episode.

[Music fades]