

HOROSCOPES

WORDS ANDROMEDA

MIND AND MATTER

ARIES

March 21–April 20

Remember when you didn't care two hoots for the opinions of others? This week is the perfect time to relight that old Aries fire and free yourself from the clammy grip of self-doubt. As your assertiveness returns, so will your admirers.

TAURUS

April 21–May 21

By the end of this week, the cosmos will have arranged itself just as you like it, with power fixed in your house of money. We're talking stability rather than riches beyond your wildest dreams, but even that must sound good.

GEMINI

May 22–June 21

As one door shuts, so another opens: you lose match-making Venus on Thursday but gain the ego-boosting sun on Friday. A fair swap? Yes: Venus's beauty treatments have left you looking great. Your confidence is soaring.

CANCER

June 22–July 22

Deep in your cave is where you should be right now, plotting, planning and dreaming. Shut out noisy pals and neighbours: time spent alone, in quiet contemplation, is crucial this week. You have some big decisions ahead.

LEO

July 23–August 23

Gigantic clues to your future have been popping up all over the place lately. Chances are, though, you've missed the lot. Could it be that your focus is in the wrong place entirely? Quit navel-gazing; the truth is out there.

VIRGO

August 24–September 23

Your status is soaring and applause for your efforts is ringing out – though not from the one whose approval matters. Should that negate everyone else's praise? You're crazy if you let it. Deep-rooted envy is at the heart of this.

LIBRA

September 24–October 23

Your ruling planet makes an important move this week, from the philosophical ninth house to the more businesslike tenth. It's great news if you're looking for a leg up the career ladder. Polish up that CV – the boardroom awaits.

SCORPIO

October 24–November 22

Career matters should be top of your to-do list this week: the window of opportunity created by the sun's transit of Taurus slams shut on Friday, so get moving. The weekend ahead promises major thrills – accept all invitations.

SAGITTARIUS

November 23–December 21

Keep the smelling salts handy: an overload of planetary action in your house of love and your house of sex this week will have admirers swooning at your feet. That's seven sizzling days of red-hot passion to survive – can you cope?

CAPRICORN

December 22–January 20

You know that highly personal secret you hoped was buried for ever? Some big mouth is about to let the cat out of the bag. Your only option is to be brazen about the whole thing. Repercussions can wait; revel in notoriety for now.

AQUARIUS

January 21–February 19

Nothing is going the way you want it to, but the frustration won't abate until you make some fundamental changes. Start with the way you look at the world, and follow that with being kinder to yourself. Things can only get better.

PISCES

February 20–March 20

Your domestic zone has been neglected lately, like a prize-winning garden gone to seed. Roll up your sleeves and start weeding. Good things are lurking in that jungle, just waiting for your green fingers to find them.

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IN STYLE

'IT'S AS NAKED AS YOU ARE EVER GOING TO BE IN PUBLIC, AND IT ASTONISHES ME PEOPLE WILL JUST SPEND £20 ON IT'



IT HAS been said that inside every music journalist beats the heart of a frustrated rock star. And perhaps within every fashion writer there is a designer itching to make it on the world's runway.

Take Ursula Lake. She began her career styling fashion shoots for this very paper in the early noughties and now works as contributing fashion editor for the *Sunday Telegraph's Stella* magazine. But the one thing has always niggled away at her: why is modern swimwear so rubbish? Yes, it's great if you're a model with no bust and abs like a diving board, but what if you're a size 12 on top, 14 on the bottom and would rather be buried up to your neck in sand than reveal your wobbly bits to the poolside proletariat? "I would find a style of bikini that I liked, but hate the colour or the fabric it was made in," says the 35-year-old self-confessed curvy girl (she's a size 10 on the bottom with a DD top half).

"Or I would find that the top half would fit but the bottoms wouldn't. The clasps would get hot in the sun, break easily and were impossible to do up on your own. Bikinis with clasp fastenings don't allow for a variety of ribcage sizes and often provide a poor fit," she says, warming to her theme. "so why should you have a clasp fastening that's the same? So many times I've bought bikinis that are loose, tight, or baggy at the front."

Tops designed with bra cup sizes in mind fare little better. "They always look like you're wearing your underwear on the beach. It seemed bizarre there wasn't more choice in this area."

Frustrated and, at the same time, inspired, she decided to take the plunge and make them herself, the idea being that the better a bikini fits, the more confident you'll feel. However, she is still surprised by the fact that we are willing to spend so little on an item of clothing we will potentially wear every single day for our fortnight in the sun. "It's as naked as you're ever going to be in public, and it astonishes me that people will just spend £20 on it. They seem to think that

because, physically, it's a small item, it shouldn't necessarily cost that much."

Of course, some designer swimwear can cost significantly more than £20 – Elizabeth Hurley and Melissa Odabash's bikinis retail for around the £150 mark, while other brands could set you back even more. "The difference is in the fabric," says Lake. "The fabric I'm using is from Italy, called jersey lomellina, and it is more expensive, there's no two ways about it. It's the fabric that brands whose bikinis are around £300 use.

"It's thicker, so there's more substance to it. High street bikinis are, let's face it, probably designed for teenagers who don't have that much to worry about. But they are really flimsy, quite often they're not lined and the fabric is not really designed to be getting wet and dried a lot."

Lake already had a degree in fashion design, but was able to call in a few favours from her fashion friends to get the ball rolling. The rest of her mates, meanwhile, were called in to test the various designs before she got them just right. "I went through a process of fitting them not just on models but on real people as well; I've got all my friends involved, and myself, obviously, I've been in and out of the shower in them."

The result is a range of four tops and four bottoms in eight colours. Each piece is named after a Bond girl – so you have the Ryder and the Domino, the Galore and the Solitaire. "It's just a bit of fun," says Lake. "I think Bond girls are synonymous with that sexy beach image."

And while there is no one-piece in her collection yet, that is next on her mission. "The fit on that is really important because everyone has a different length of body."

She is in talks to stock her swimwear in stores, but for now it will be available online, which is just the way she likes it. "You can try it on when you're having a thin day, and take your time over it."

RUTH WALKER

Violet Lake swimwear launches tomorrow, with prices from £40. See www.violet-lake.com.

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAMMY JEFFSON