



CHAPTER ONE



THE BASICS OF ASTROLOGY

You've probably read your horoscope online, in newspapers or magazines, or in publications that focus on the year ahead. These forecasts are based on your Sun sign, which is easily determined by your birth month and day. You might even know some of the characteristics associated with your Sun sign and those of family and friends. Sun sign descriptions are amazingly accurate, even though there's no rational explanation why astrology should work. After all, the Sun, Moon, and planets are millions of miles away from Earth. How can a body in outer space realistically affect a person on Earth?

A Sun sign is just a Sun sign. It's important, yes, because it's the essence of you. It's your ego at work. But from an astrological viewpoint, there's so much more that defines you—your character, talents, strengths, and challenges.

The ancient Babylonians were as perplexed by this astrological phenomenon as we are today. In the four thousand or so years since they invented astrology, no one has discovered an explanation for why it works. But work it does.

Around the sixteenth century BC, the Babylonians began to observe that events on Earth could be correlated to celestial phenomena. Their brand of astrology is what is today called *mundane astrology*, or the astrology of countries, wars, coups, economic conditions, and weather, to name a few. It eventually evolved into what is now known as *electional astrology*, the branch in which the planetary positions are used to select a favorable time to launch an event, such as a wedding, business opening, meeting, or job application. Babylonian astrologers used the 360° circle (a zodiac of twelve signs similar to what is used today) and also developed *ephemerides* (tables of astrological data) that listed the

planetary positions and eclipses. At that point in time, no connection had been made between astrology and the individual.

It wasn't until more than a thousand years later, sometime between the seventh and fourth centuries BC, that the Babylonians developed the concept of natal astrology. The natal horoscopes of the time, which probably were limited to royalty and wealthy people, were inscribed on cuneiform tablets and listed the planetary positions along with comments referring to wealth potential, longevity, family, and status. The natal horoscope was seen as a predictor of the person's life, much as it is today, the difference being that twenty-first-century astrologers—and people—recognize that everyone has free will; the Babylonians considered the chart fateful.

The Babylonian knowledge was passed to the Persians, Egyptians, and Indians. It was readily adopted in India, where today it is considered not only valid but necessary to a successful life.

Great advances in astrology were made in Alexandria, Egypt, in the second and third centuries AD, partly as a result of King Ptolemy I Soter, who ordered the construction of a great library that attracted scholars. During this period, the following concepts were developed: the Ascendant (rising sign) and Midheaven, astrological houses, planetary rulers, aspects, and predictive techniques. Astrology was considered a science and spread to western Europe, where educated people knew Greek and Latin.

Although astrology died out in western Europe with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, it survived somewhat in the Eastern Roman Empire. A general revival of astrology began around 1000 AD and continued for the next five hundred years. Like all else, astrology

benefited from the invention of the printing press, which made information more readily available to the populace. Astrology was taught in colleges and universities and was a required subject for medical students.

Astrology then experienced another decline, which began in the late seventeenth century and lasted about two hundred years. It was still popular in England, however, because the annual astrological almanacs that had been printed since the sixteenth century continued to be in demand by the public. Renewed interest in astrology developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it wasn't until the 1930s that first weekly and then daily horoscopes began to appear in newspapers. The first such column appeared in the London *Sunday Express*.

The twentieth century saw refinements in astrological technique and an emphasis on psychological astrology versus event-oriented astrology. But the basics remain the same today as those developed by the earliest astrologers, and there is a growing interest in older astrological literature as more of these works are translated and made available.

WHY STUDY ASTROLOGY?

Metaphysics encompasses a wide range of subjects and areas, most of which are focused solely on divination, or predicting the future. What makes astrology different from the tarot, I Ching, runes, and other forecasting methods is that it is all-encompassing. You can use astrology not only to forecast events but also to gain great insights into your personality. You may think you know yourself better than anyone else walking the planet; that's probably true. But has

someone ever commented on a personality trait that you were unaware of, at least on a conscious level? Something that you only then realized was a strength—or a detriment—because it is such a natural part of your personality? Something that made you realize you'd just discovered another whole side of yourself? This is part of the natural growth process.

Have you ever asked yourself why you react the way you do in certain situations? Why you repeat negative behaviors even though you know better? Have you ever knocked yourself out trying to do something, when your energy would have been better directed elsewhere? This, too, is part of the natural growth process. It is how we evolve as humans.

Now suppose you had all this information sooner rather than later. You'd be able to use it to your advantage for many more years, to make the most of your potential and in essence speed up that growth process. After all, we don't have all that many years in a lifetime to do everything we want to do.

This is one fabulous reason to study astrology: self-knowledge is the ultimate form of personal empowerment.

You may have heard people say that astrology is difficult, that it requires "all that math." Yes and no.

The math of astrology is nothing more than simple addition and subtraction using preset formulas. But in today's world you don't ever have to pick up a pencil. There are numerous online sites where you can get a computer-calculated birth chart in seconds (see appendix III), or you can take advantage of the free birth chart offer at the back of this book. Later, when you're more advanced in your studies and want

to become a certified astrologer, you can learn the math in preparation for taking an exam. Or, if you're not at all intimidated by math or just want to challenge yourself, you might want to learn this nuts-and-bolts side of astrology now. The point is that it's no longer necessary to first learn the calculations. You can get started right now!

Now, the question about difficulty. Is astrology difficult or isn't it? Yes, it is, or can be, but no, it's not.

Have you ever done anything in your life that was difficult at first but then came easily, such as playing a musical instrument or sport, speaking in public, or learning a language? Chances are, you have. And each came with a learning curve that began with initial excitement and quickly acquired skills, followed by the middle ground that required more study or practice to jump the hurdle to a comfort zone of confidence. Learning astrology is no different than learning anything else. It requires some patience and a lot of practice.

But how difficult is it, really, to read a birth chart? To glean all the insightful information about you and your personality? Not as hard as you might think. It's a matter of learning what each factor in the birth chart symbolizes and then blending the information until you have a full picture. Although that might seem like an oversimplified answer, consider this example using astrological keywords, which is the way every future astrologer learns to interpret a chart: Sun (ego) in Capricorn (ambitious) in the personal financial sector (second house) conjunct (next to) Jupiter (expansion) adds up to an individual whose self-esteem is linked to achievement and high earnings but who also spends freely on status symbols. It's that simple!

There are a few important tips I can give you to speed up the learning process (you'll learn the terminology mentioned below as you read this book):

1. Learn, and practice writing, the glyphs (symbols) for the planets, signs, and aspects. The inside back cover of this book has a handy list of astrological glyphs for your reference.
2. Learn the essential keywords for each sign, angle, planet, house, and aspect.
3. Learn the rulership relationships of the signs, planets, and houses, and the essential keywords for each.
4. Use the charts of people you know well—friends and family. This will help you see how the various factors manifest in real life.
5. When you study the chart, focus on a single planet or angle at a time and then move on to the next and the next until you've studied them all. Make notes and sentences using the keywords (as in the previous example) as you do this.
6. Talk with the person whose chart you've studied and explain what you've learned. Ask for feedback and listen closely to what you hear in order to determine what was correct or incorrect in your assessment.

Before long, you'll be reading a chart just like an astrologer!

WHAT YOUR BIRTH CHART REVEALS

As the ancient Babylonians observed, astrology is the correlation of celestial events to life on Earth. The planets do not cause events to happen on Earth or in individual lives; rather, they reflect the events that occur on Earth and in individual lives. As above, so below.

Life may appear to be random or even fateful, but it's not. Have you ever made a decision you later regretted? Of course you have. Everyone has. But what if you could almost always make the right decision about major life events, such as finances, relationships, and career? Astrology has the potential to help you do just that.

You can glean a phenomenal amount of information from a birth chart. In fact, you will be astounded once you discover just how much you can learn. To give you an example, a friend of mine asked me to look at the chart of her daughter's fiancé. My friend had some nagging doubts about the relationship and wondered if I could discover the reason why. (She did this with her daughter's knowledge.) I looked at the fiancé's chart, mentioned several things, and then asked about the man's financial attitudes. The chart indicated that he was a high roller, a big spender who had the potential for serious financial problems. My friend said that, to her knowledge, this had never been an issue, and her daughter confirmed that, adding that her fiancé was somewhat secretive about money matters. I suggested that she ask to see the man's credit report before they proceeded with the wedding plans. It was no surprise to me that he refused, and that she broke off the relationship rather than risk her excellent credit rating.

My friend's daughter later learned that her former fiancé did indeed have a history of serious financial problems. Needless to say, they were and are extremely grateful.

Life is about making choices. In this case, my friend's daughter used the power of astrology to make an informed major life decision that undoubtedly saved her from years of regret. This is what you will be able to do in almost any situation, for yourself, your friends, your family members, and possibly even clients.

I've seen a look of amazement on the faces of countless clients. Most people who know little or nothing about astrology don't realize just how much an astrologer can learn about them from their birth chart. This is one reason that many people in the know are reluctant to give their birth information to just anyone. Inevitably, some of these clients, first through body language and then through words (or the lack thereof), clam up when they realize that their personality, attitudes, and issues are as visible to an astrologer as are their talents and skills. Those who are open to the information use this powerful tool of self-awareness to learn about (or perhaps become fully aware of) their detrimental patterns of behavior and how they can reverse them. Astrology can be used not only to identify what holds you back but also to learn how to change these things to improve every facet of your life.

Astrology is a symbolic language. Each planet and every other factor in a birth chart represents certain traits, characteristics, people, talents, and areas of life. Everything that involves your life on Earth is represented in your horoscope.

A birth chart is also a map. Your birth chart is a map of your life and your potential as represented by the planetary positions at the exact time, date, and place of your birth. In it are eight planets and the Sun and Moon, along with other factors that provide much more insight into your personality. (Astrologers refer to the Sun and Moon as planets for ease in terminology and thus use a group of ten planets, not eight.)

Your birth chart is unique to you and thus reflects you, the individual. You share certain personality traits with others born with the same Sun sign, but the Sun is only one of ten planets and the many other factors that go into a birth chart. You're a person of many facets, likes and dislikes, and strengths and weaknesses. By studying your birth chart, you can identify the areas in which you naturally excel, those that are challenging, and everything in between. Astrology has the potential to teach you more about yourself than any other field of study. And when you know yourself well, you can make the most of the map of life that is your birth chart.

It's well recognized that environment helps shape personality and that people are a complex mix of innate talents and skills, experience, and family influences. Your birth chart is a reflection of all these things. If you study the birth charts of your family members, you will see many similarities to yours. These common factors symbolize not only your similar childhood experiences but also the genetic traits you've inherited from your parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and so on. These similarities will add to your depth of understanding about your own personality because you'll immediately identify