

MYSTIC PALETTE GUIDEBOOK



LEE BURSTEN

MYSTIC PALETTE TAROT GUIDEBOOK

BY LEE BURSTEN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CIRO MARCHETTI

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PREFACE

The *Mystic Palette Tarot* is a tarot deck in the standard format of 78 cards, including 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana. The Minor Arcana consist of four suits (Wands, Cups, Swords and Coins). Each suit is comprised of 16 Court Cards and 40 numbered cards. In general, the Major Arcana cards show deep impulses, archetypes and major life events. The Court Cards show different ways people have of reacting to situations. And the numbered Minors show everyday events and moods. The Majors operate at a mythic level, the Court Cards at a psychological level and the numbered Minors on a mundane, everyday level.

This deck uses the themes and meanings often assigned by readers and authors to the classic *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*, but only as a starting point. Many of the *Mystic Palette* cards deviate from those meanings and travel their own paths.

The theme of this deck is the creative imagination—both the artist’s, in creating images that imaginatively play with the cards’ traditional meanings, and yours, the reader’s, in using those imaginative renderings as a launchpad from which to embark on your exploration and navigation of a life, whether yours or someone else’s.

The deck uses standard tarot numbering. All numbers are written in Roman numerals. Each card bears a Roman numeral, except for the Court Cards, which bear their Court ranks (King, Queen, Knight or Page) and the Aces, which bear the letter “A”. No titles appear on the Major Arcana cards. We believe that the images even when deviating in some degree from their traditional counterparts, still clearly identify themselves and should be familiar to most readers.

The names for the Minor Arcana suits—Wands, Cups, Swords and Coins—are used in this book but do not actually appear on the cards. Thus, you, the reader, can choose to use other names for the suits if you prefer (for example, Batons or Rods for Wands, or Pentacles for Coins).

No titles appear on the Major Arcana cards. The Majors can be distinguished by the color of their Roman numerals—a very pale gold or yellow.

Since working with the deck requires familiarity with Roman numerals, here is a refresher. You only really need to know three things:

X = 10

V = 5

I = 1

All Roman numbers are formed with combinations of these three letters. The letters are additive: I means one, and II means two. Each letter can be used successively up to three times: III means three. Instead of using a letter four times, the next higher letter is used instead, with the lower letter in front of it to indicate "less": we use IV to mean four (one less than five), rather than IIII. XVIII means 18 (X is ten, V is five, and III is three; ten plus five plus three equals 18). XIX means 19 (X is ten, and IX is one-less-than-ten, i.e. nine).

Here are the 21 Roman numerals used in the Major Arcana:

I (1) - Magician	II (2) - High Priestess	III (3) - Empress
IV (4) - Emperor	V (5) - Hierophant	VI (6) - Lovers
VII (7) - Chariot	VIII (8) - Strength	IX (9) - Hermit
X (10) - Wheel of Fortune	XI (11) - Justice	XII (12) - Hanging Man
XIII (13) - Death	XIV (14) - Temperance	XV (15) - Devil
XVI (16) - Tower	XVII (17) - Star	XVIII (18) - Moon
XIX (19) - Sun	XX (20) - Judgement	XXI (21) - World

The numbers II through X (2 through 10) are also used for the numbered Minor Arcana cards. The first in the sequence of numbered Minor cards is called Ace instead of I.

The only non-Roman numeral used in the deck is for the Fool, numbered zero. The earliest known references to the concept of zero and the use of a circle to represent it are from India.

For the remainder of this book, we'll be using the Roman numerals, which will make it easier for you to navigate through the book and the deck, since the cards themselves show Roman numerals.

This book, like all books written to accompany specific tarot decks, contains divinatory meanings. Since personal creativity is the theme of the deck, I and I want you to view the meanings listed here as merely a suggestion of the breadth and depth possible for each card. Feel free to use these meanings if they fit in a specific reading, but don't hesitate to abandon them if something more useful comes to mind. In this book, the Major Arcana cards have keywords listed. The Minor Arcana have descriptions and reflections but no keywords, because we want you to rely on your creative reactions to the images when reading the cards.

Needless to say, the genders of the people on the cards has no bearing on the genders of people involved in the reading. We are all Kings, Queens, Knights and Pages at various points in our lives, or even throughout a single day.

The word “querent” is used throughout this book to mean the person being read for. If someone comes to you and asks for a reading, that person is the querent. If you are reading for yourself, you are the querent.

An entire book could be written about the process of reading, but briefly, when conducting a reading, you shuffle the cards face down, lay them out in a spread (or at random if you choose not to use a spread) and tell a story by explaining and linking the cards to address the querent’s question. A spread designed for this deck, the *Mystic Palette Spread*, is described at the end of this book, along with two sample readings.

Some tarot readers shuffle the cards in such a way that when they lay them out, some cards are reversed (upside-down). The reversed card will have different meanings than the upright card. Readers have different ways of determining the meanings of reversed cards. Some readers memorize distinct reversed meanings for each of the 78 cards. Some readers don’t memorize individual reversed meanings but rather use a scheme to modify the cards’ upright meanings, for example a reversed card has the upright meaning but with a weakened or negative perspective. For some readers, a reversed card simply means the opposite of the upright card.

While the *Mystic Palette* deck can certainly be read with reversals, I feel it’s counterproductive to use reversals with such a richly illustrated deck. There is more than enough detail in the artwork to supply all the nuance and depth a reader could desire. I suggest that you read the cards without reversals and see if you feel the same.

To read the cards successfully, you need to apply the meanings, whether traditional meanings or the meanings in this book, very loosely. You will be putting together a story that makes sense in the context of the question, and that often involves shoehorning the meanings to fit the context. Some people find this necessity to shoehorn meanings frustrating, but it’s actually the very essence of creatively working with the cards, and is the source of the insight you get from a reading. This is where the magic happens.

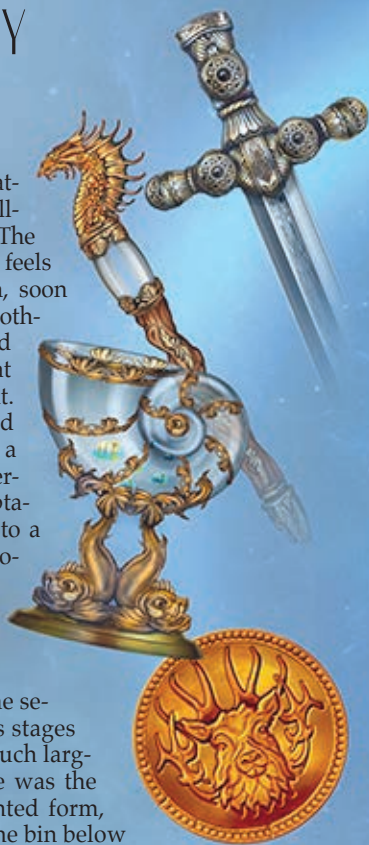
Lee Bursten, August 2021

INTRODUCTION BY CIRO MARCHETTI

Over the years, I have found that creating tarot decks has proved to be a roller-coaster ride of mixed emotions. The high of completing a card that just feels “right” is often a temporary elation, soon followed by the low of working on others that may at some point feel labored and forced. Furthermore, there is, at least for me, no definitive end point. Where finishing the last card should represent a successful conclusion to a project, instead there are often lingering doubts and corresponding temptations to apply yet one more tweak to a composition, or to change the size, position, or color tone of any given element. But at some point, of course, you really do have to decide that enough is enough.

The 78 final candidates are merely the selection that made the cut. At various stages along the way, they were part of a much larger group, which for many their fate was the trash can, be that in a physical printed form, as crumpled printouts thrown into the bin below my desk, or the virtual one on my computer desktop. These rejected efforts ranged from preliminary sketches to, in some cases, quite developed proposals.

Tarot artists often reference the years they have dedicated to whatever deck they were, or still are, working on. But using “years” as the unit by which to determine the time dedicated to the project is vague; after all, it could be that the artist’s work on the deck is secondary to other commitments, and restricted to periodic evenings or weekends. In my case, however, for the duration of any given project, it is very much a full-time dedication. For this particular *Mystic Palette* title, with its two color versions and companion material, I would estimate the involve-





ment using a far more relevant unit of reference, namely over 2,000 hours.

Ironically, I did not begin the *Mystic Palette Tarot* with any intention or plan for an entire deck; I was merely working on a random illustration with no further purpose. Yet, upon completion, it raised that familiar question once again — What if? Just one more deck? After all, that illustration was of a Foolish-looking fellow. All that was required was the inclusion of the little white furry companion and another journey had begun.

Beyond the symbolic Fool as the starting point, there was no logic, rationale or methodology to the order in which I produced the rest of the deck. But early in the process, I tend to start with only a rough idea of the overall mood and style. In this case it was rather undefined — decorative, baroque, with a touch of goth, a dab of Arthur Rackham, and sprinkling of Victoriana. In other words, a veritable visual potpourri, I must admit.

The early stages of a deck involve a significant investment of time just in searching the internet or magazines, even freeze framing movies, for inspiration and reference; everything from textures, costumes, artifacts, to — last but not least — people, expressions and poses. Then it's a case of mixing and matching, for example applying the eyes from one face, the mouth from another, adding some aged wrinkles, or the reverse process of rejuvenating an older figure. A myriad of tweaks and modifications, until something feels right and provides a new and unique reference model whose face might better lend itself to then being illustrated and transformed into an appropriate character, King, Queen, Knight, and so on. Alternatively, body poses, hands, etc., are more deliberate and planned, often based on photos I take of willing or as is often the case, reluctant, friends and family.

In the case of the Royals, who are commonly associated with certain personalities, these characteristic nuances are not easily depicted unless one were to portray them via exaggerated, almost cartoon-like visual clichés. I choose not to even attempt doing so, and instead I portray these characters almost always with neutral expressions, ones that can better adapt to any given interpretation and reading.

But what is the end objective, the design brief as it were, for these multiple scenes and the characters performing in them? What is the criteria and goal that determines the action, content and compositions of each card? Beyond the core structure of 78 cards and their division into four suits plus the suit of Major Arcana cards, what should be depicted in each, how, and more importantly, why? This is the fundamental question and challenge, and the answers will vary depending on who you ask. Tarot's history is replete with proposed answers from many sources, but

with the absence of a definitive original tarot deck and its accompanying documentation, we have in fact inherited an elaborate, rich, but inconclusive selection of responses, the meanings of which are derived from the opinions and assumptions of varying authors and scholars that in most cases were proposed centuries after the initial images were produced.

As a general assessment, I see the tarot community as divided into two groups. While there is a degree of overlap between them, there nevertheless seems to be a notable division of preference and usage between the classical decks of the past, and any number of more contemporary productions. Such preference for the past goes beyond artistic taste, but is also an embrace of what is considered a more legitimate representation of tarot's rich heritage and its content, purpose and function.

For those who prefer older classic decks, any contemporary offerings are often judged according to their perceived faithfulness or accuracy relative to the predecessors whose imagery is considered to be imbued with a sense of authenticity and historical nostalgia, with every nuanced detail credited as being deeply associated with any number of traditional, mythological, religious, political, and philosophical rationales from those earlier times. Possibly so, but it raises questions as to the relevance such associations (assuming they are even correct) may have to today's values. I'm not personally convinced that archetypes are immune to the passing of time.

Another consideration is the assumption that every cut of the woodcarver's tool, or line of the illustrator's pen, transcends mere decoration and instead encompasses a deliberate purpose and therefore meaning. Often credit is given to the most generic or bland facial expressions, seeing in them specific moods or personalities. Every gaze or outstretched hand is perceived as having deliberate intent of focus and direction, which in turn is proposed to visually (and hence contextually) align with some other element within the card, or even that of a connecting card when the two are placed together. Every plant, bird or creature, no matter how generic it may have initially been depicted, has at various points over time been described (but not by the original artist) as something more specific, be that a flower, bird, or animal, onto which corresponding varying traditional significance could then be associated.

While I share a delight and appreciation of those vintage images and the heritage they represent, I do take issue with many of those alleged associations. I often do not fully share the interpretation being proposed of the supposed facial expressions; I question the accuracy of those alleged connected alignments; and I see instances where I cannot honestly tell if that generic petal-shaped stroke of a pen is in fact a lily or any other particular

flower, or if that four-legged creature in the distance was actually intended to depict a fox, wolf or dog ... each of which would then suggest an associated symbolism, i.e. "sly" fox, "dangerous" or "wild" wolf, or "domesticated" dog. This elusive interpretation of imagery is applicable to both the *Marseille* category of decks and also the *Rider-Waite-Smith*. So while I am particularly unqualified to challenge the more scholarly interpretations of much of the symbolic content of tarot's classical imagery, I do question the efficacy and clarity of many of them to convey whatever meanings have been applied to them in the centuries that followed.

My intent here is not to criticize; I have no authority or wish to do that, but to express my curiosity. If there is a discrepancy between whatever was the original artist's intent for any given detail, and the subsequent suggested understandings of it in the centuries that follow, does that undermine its significance, does it prejudice a reading due to any discrepancy? Is the black cat in the *Rider-Waite-Smith* Queen of Wands of significance, or a mere decorative insert of a friend's pet? I would think not; such rigidity of "accuracy" would be restrictive rather than positive. And yet in the case of the VII of Coins, the artist's intent and assumed interpretation might vary significantly. Does the scene show a well-earned harvest, or in fact depict a tragedy of that period, the Irish potato famine? Such ambiguity allows me to feel more comfortable when I veer off the more traditional visual path, particularly in this *Mystic Palette* project.

With that said, despite my personal reservations regarding many specifics associated with earlier images, they have nevertheless justifiably endured over the centuries with little indication that their appeal is diminishing. On the contrary, many decks produced in recent years are accurate re-workings of their predecessors, where contemporary artists continue to painstakingly reproduce every line and block of color, an approach that is clearly appreciated and enjoyed by many. My hat's off to the skill and dedication required of that process, but it's one I have little interest in participating in.

My approach instead has been one of balance, one of acknowledging and sharing certain aspects of those earlier works, but attempting to retell their potential message with a fresh perspective and visual narrative, my aim being to provide the reader with imagery that is detailed, but in many instances also deliberately vague; imagery that is hopefully compelling, but also flexible; imagery that allows and indeed invites the reader to contribute to those new perspectives via their own interpretations and readings, not just once but repeatedly and in different ways, in response to whatever particular circumstance are raised by any given reading.

Here are some examples:

FOUR OF CUPS

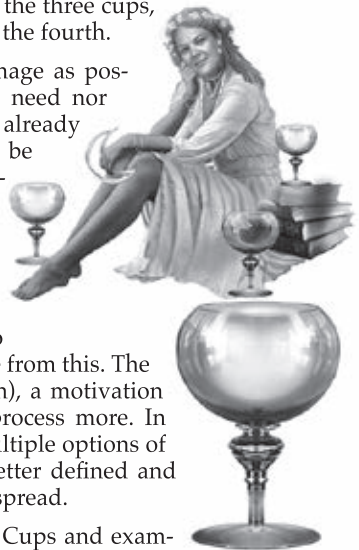
In “The Pictorial Key to Tarot,” A.E. Waite, the creator of the classic *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*, describes the scene as, “His expression notwithstanding is one of discontent with his environment.” By using the term “discontent,” Waite sets the tone for how that imagery should be interpreted, both on its own and in terms of its influence on other cards in the spread.

Artist Pamela Colman Smith’s illustrative style on this card (and many others in the deck) lacks the detail that would allow the character’s expression to be so definitively described. Whether intentional or not, that ambiguity nevertheless actually serves positive purpose as it provides a freedom for the image to be interpreted in various ways, which is also the inherent potential provided by the non scenic minors of the *Marseilles* decks. This ambiguity is one I strive to also maintain in my imagery.

I have departed somewhat from Waite’s use of the descriptive term “discontent,” and have instead attempted to portray an expression of neutral curiosity, one which lends itself to multiple interpretations. For example, in my image, one could suggest that the female (an arbitrary gender choice) is quite content with what she has and what she has achieved, in this case symbolized by the collection of the three cups, while she looks on with an awareness of the fourth.

As such, we are free to interpret the image as positive, i.e., contentment; she has neither need nor desire to strive for more than what she already has. Alternatively, the expression could be that of envy or dissatisfaction, her curiosity aroused by the fourth cup that she doesn’t (yet) process. Seen in the latter form, the image now suggests something negative, the idea that there is never enough, that one is too easily dissatisfied and tempted. But even so there are potential variations to conclude from this. The negative (greed), or a positive (ambition), a motivation for new challenges; to achieve more, process more. In this manner, the image lends itself to multiple options of interpretation, each of which may be better defined and given more clarity by other cards in the spread.

We could journey further into the IV of Cups and exam-



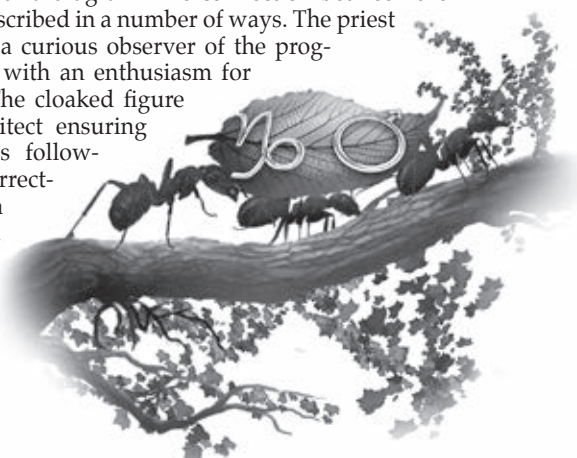
ine the roots of Waite's negative interpretation, which we would find in Etteilla's 1785 book "How to Entertain Yourself with the Deck of Cards Called Tarot" (the first known tarot divination manual). We could also delve further into the Golden Dawn's astrological assignments of Cancer and the Moon. But my guess is that this is farther than most readers want to go. And while such explorations are interesting and enjoyable, we should not allow them to constrain us. Tarot is not frozen in time, like a dead language. Instead, like a living language, tarot breathes, it evolves. My goal is to learn from tarot traditions, and to acknowledge what came before, while hopefully providing some fresh perspective.

THREE OF COINS

In the *Rider-Waite-Smith* image, we see a craftsman, probably a mason, working on a stone archway, the three coins depicted in what seems to me to be the style the middle "Decorated" period of the three principal styles of English Gothic architecture, where the changes in architecture allowed the weight of cathedral roofs to be distributed to the ground via the use of buttresses rather than by the thickness of solid walls. This in turn allowed for windows to become larger and for more of "God's light" to enter.

While the mason works, he is being observed by two other figures, one a member of the clergy and the other, considering his decorated robe, possibly someone of wealth, holding what appears to be a parchment or scroll with a diagram. The connection between the three could be described in a number of ways. The priest could be simply a curious observer of the progress being made with an enthusiasm for its completion. The cloaked figure may be an architect ensuring that the work is following his plans correctly, or possibly a wealthy patron and benefactor ensuring his patronage is being well spent.

But while Waite himself makes no reference to it as such, the



common and widely assumed symbolism of this scene is that it represents teamwork between the three figures. I personally wouldn't have come to that particular interpretation based on the imagery alone, but I was willing to embrace it. Therefore in my image I have used the visual metaphor of the three ants transporting an oversized leaf, a task which I am suggesting they can only achieve via cooperation "team work". Their joint effort is illuminated and bathed in the light emitting from a three-coined stained glass window design, whose earlier construction would have required a similar cooperation.

FIVE OF WANDS

I don't consider that the infighting depicted in most V of Wands cards (including my own earlier decks) fully communicates the concept of "inner" conflict rather than just general conflict. Therefore I chose to show a "fasces" in the background. This artifact, initially used in ancient Rome, was essentially a bundle of sticks, each weak and vulnerable in their isolated and separated forms, but which when bound together create an unbreakable bond. This is a perfect metaphor to describe the status of the various individual tribes of the central Italian region at that time and the force and empire they would become when united together.

So iconic and powerful did this symbol become, that millennia later it was enthusiastically embraced by Mussolini, along with the romantic nostalgic connections to those earlier days of glory and empire, to become once again a political symbol, this time of the Italian fascist party. But its "weakness to strength" metaphor was so compelling and easy to understand that it was adopted by more than just the fascist movement; easily recognized, it would serve other nationalistic ideals. Indeed, two large fasces sculptures were used as part of the interior decor of the U.S. Senate. So, by using it in the background on my depiction of the V of Wands, it provides a compelling juxtaposition and significance. The five untied wands depict the dissolution of that bonded strength, and thus suggest the consequences of that breakup.



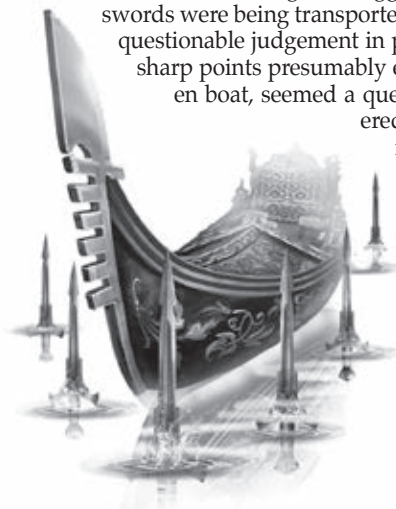
TEN OF WANDS

In its most obvious form, the ten wands are commonly shown as a physical burden, a literal weight. But for most people, our burdens take a less tangible form. More often they manifest themselves emotionally, as concerns over finances, family, health, or what the future may hold. The list is endless, as are their degrees and “weights.” How “heavy” a burden actually is, is one of personal perception and response. In my scene, only five wands are shown in their physical state. The remaining five in the mirror complete the full number, but are mere reflections. And so it is in life; our burdens are a combination of real and imagined glasses-half-empty. They are possibly nonexistent or never to become manifest, but nevertheless in our minds they have substance and weight.



SIX OF SWORDS

In many instances I have referenced my own life and experiences to provide a connection to a card, to create an association that would give it a deeper meaning and rationale. The six of swords is such an example. In the traditional RWS image I struggled to find a meaning as to why the swords were being transported within the boat itself along with the questionable judgement in placing six large metallic objects, their sharp points presumably embedded into the bottom of a wooden boat, seemed a questionable placement at best. I considered the swords would better serve in a more cautionary role and contribution to the narrative, if presented as obstacles that the boat would have to navigate and avoid. In this scene the woman has escaped (for now) a dire situation. Sufficiently so that it justified the risks and price of the journey. A one way trip to a better place, to leave behind the bad and the dangerous. But also to abandon family and all that was familiar, in the hope that what lay ahead would provide freedom, safety and a future. This is



a tale of a woman, my mother and her child escaping an extreme case of domestic abuse and economic hardship, but it could be anyone and any circumstance, a metaphor for many variations on a theme. The plight of refugees would be an applicable point of comparison. However this scene is not one of a completed journey, but of one still in progress. Safety has not been fully achieved. The swords represent any number of obstacles yet to be overcome. As such it can be metaphor for any kind of struggle or obstacle that we are still in the process of striving to overcome. Therefore, while the circumstance will differ from reader to reader I believe that many will have a reference point in their own experience to which this may apply. On a more cheerful note though, beyond the core image and its sober message, there are some lighter and playful inclusions. From the on board companions transported from their children's poetic rhyme, to the various plays of six items depicted in the scene, added together they offer a numerological total that bodes well for the eventual journey's end.

Therefore, in summary, in my images I have attempted to depict scenes that, despite the style of costume or setting, remain neutral in that they are devoid of any definitive historical period. In some cases they deviate significantly from the past and from each other, often with no recognizable or common historical consistency. A different but hopefully still a valid means of communicating a core concept. The various emotions and circumstances being portrayed in alternative symbolic ways are ones that most people can relate to, and will have personally experienced in their own lives to some degree.

I certainly appreciate the importance of a reader's familiarity with the basic underlying traditional meanings and symbolism of tarot, but I also believe in that reader's ability to creatively and personally connect to the cards when interpreting their story. I think of this in terms of the reader's gift, one that ultimately determines the quality of the reading. My intent is for my images to provide a stimulus for that process.

Ciro Marchetti, July 2021

Let the Journey Begin...



PART ONE: THE MAJOR ARCANA





THE FOOL

An elderly man in cosmic motley holds up a card, while his furry friend looks on.

The most striking aspect of this card is the Fool's benign and cheery expression. His eyes twinkle with experience and goodwill. We feel we can trust him; he wouldn't lead us astray. He seems to be telling us something, but what?

The Fool, at his core, embodies what it is to be human. We all try to do what seems rational to us in the moment, but we are not a race of machines, living out our lives in preprogrammed perfection. The Fool speaks to the value of impetuosity, of risk, of change, of growth. A subversive element is necessary to keep all systems alive and lively; otherwise those systems die of stagnation.

The Fool's expression reminds us that when we seek to shake things up, we need to always keep goodwill and self-deprecating humor as part of the equation; otherwise, the result will be the card's negative qualities, humorlessness and chaos for its own sake.

There are actually three Fools on the card: our cheerful friend; the card he shows us; and the tattoo on his forehead. The card he holds is the Fool card from the *Tarot de Marseille*, a style of tarot that originated in 17th century France and that became a dominant pattern in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. (Other cards in the *Mystic Palette Tarot* that incorporate card designs from the *Tarot de Marseille* are the Wheel of Fortune and Death.)

The concepts represented by the Fool are universal in both time and space. Universality in time is suggested by the presence of the antique card; universality in space is symbolized by the Fool's rainbow-colored motley, which encompasses stars, planets, moon and sun. Unpredictability and creativity are essential to humans, no matter where or when.

The Fool's fool tattoo marks him as a devotee of all manner of jokes, pranks and repartee. This is the card for all creative people; the headgear can be seen as color and form literally exploding out of his head, like a jack-in-the-box.

Finally, the Fool's dog, his faithful traveling companion, is a charming symbol of life's unpredictability and mystery. No one can really know

with certainty what pets, or even other humans, are thinking, but we can all muddle through somehow, if we keep in mind the Fool's good cheer and goodwill. He cocks his head at us as if to say, "Okay, your turn!"

The dog keeps a wary eye on the *Marseille* card, where a dog is portrayed in a more sinister light—a village mutt attacking the seat of the itinerant stranger's pants.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Impetuosity. Risk. Change. Growth. Unpredictability. Jokes and pranks. Creativity. Artist. Negatively, uncontrolled chaos and humorlessness.

ASTROLOGY - Uranus - eccentricity, originality, anarchy.

HEBREW LETTER - Aleph (Ox) - an ox is used to till the fields, resulting in growth.



I THE MAGICIAN

The essence of the Magician is the magical act of making things happen. Like the Fool, he seeks to shake things up. But where the Fool's goal is to reinvigorate a stagnant system, the Magician's focus is on the new thing he wants to bring into the world.

The changes he makes can be categorized as physical, mental, emotional and energetic. These are symbolized by the coin, the sword, the cup and the wand, which are also the four suits in the Minor Arcana. The mortar and pestle and the well-used books tell us that these kinds of changes and creations don't simply appear in our lives of their own volition; they require thoughtfulness, study, action and the kind of self-discipline and practice needed to be able to juggle several potentially dangerous objects in the air.

On our left is a device that could be a primitive light bulb, or an energy-filled crystal ball, or a Tesla coil (used for simulating lightning). It suggests energy carefully harnessed and focused on the task at hand.

The Magician's top hat, sunglasses, smoking jacket and cravat suggest a somewhat more modern era than that of the other cards. This is because all societal advancements, including the practical (Coin), the scientific (Sword), the psychological (Cup) and the entrepreneurial (Wand), fall under the Magician's purview. This is also why the tarot card stuck in his hatband isn't the *Tarot de Marseille's* Magician card (titled *Le Bateleur* or *Juggler*), but rather the same card from *Tarot Decoratif*, a previous deck by *Ciro* that gives a more modern interpretation of the classic *Marseille*.

The top hat and sunglasses also give our Magician a raffish, somewhat disreputable look. People who are successful at bringing things into being—for example, some tech tycoons—can have mysterious motivations; it can be hard to distinguish between sincere philanthropy and egotistical attention-seeking. The sunglasses might hide selfish motives. When we look to actual people to provide inspiration and spark our own ability to make things happen, we need to be careful not to become victims of gurus who may only want to exploit us, which would tip the card's energy to the negative.

On the other hand, the sunglasses may merely block out distractions to enable greater focus, a necessary prerequisite to reaching one's goals (the proverbial "rose-colored glasses").

The top hat is reminiscent of a stereotypical 20th century stage magician, thus providing simultaneously a look forward (in terms of fashion) and a look backward (indicated by the Tarot Decoratif Magician card in his hatband, which shows the older concept of a street magician performing tricks). It seems likely that the top hat contains a rabbit.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - The ability to make things happen. Self-initiated change. Willingness to do what it takes, i.e. study and practice. Self-discipline. Focused energy. Negatively, vulnerability to exploitation.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury - ideas brought to life and communicated to others.

HEBREW LETTER - Beth (House) - a builder uses blueprints (i.e. ideas) to create a house where there was none.



II THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Early divinatory interpretations of this card speak of, among other things, science, knowledge, wisdom and education. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, in the late 18th century, introduced the concept of fluctuation (as in the phases and tides of the moon, to which they had assigned the card).

It was A.E. Waite who, in 1909, began describing the card in terms of mystery; more particularly, “Secrets, mystery, the future as yet unrevealed,” in keeping with the *Rider-Waite-Smith* card’s illustration, which seems more like a night goddess than the female cleric of previous decks. Since then, “mystery” has been the touchstone concept for the High Priestess. In fact, some fortune-telling-oriented books simply refer to her as “a mysterious woman”.

She represents all that is hidden. Her secrets could be anything from old family dramas to occult revelations. She might simply be someone who keeps their real self hidden behind a mask (as is true of everyone, at least to some extent). On the *Mystic Palette* card, you can see the mask, on the headdress above the Priestess’ face. The headdress also includes elaborate wings, symbolizing the Priestess’ ability to range freely over her vast inner landscape.

The purple of her raiment can indicate wisdom, mystery and royalty. She may be of humble station in reality, but in the inner realms she is a queen.

The Priestess’ eyes are all white. Perhaps the eyes are rolled up



to indicate a trance state, or perhaps they suggest that she does not see the reality we share and is instead focused entirely inward. The unseeing eyes can thus represent intuitive knowledge, in contrast to the learned knowledge indicated by the Magician, the Emperor and the Hierophant. Negatively, the card can show someone who lives too much in their inner world, as an escape from having to deal with reality.

The snakes are a particularly evocative element of this card. Because of their venom, snakes can symbolize death and thus rebirth. Rebirth is also suggested by the snake's ability to shed its skin. Venom is used as medicine for various ailments, which is why snakes can mean medical knowledge; the modern symbol for medicine shows one or two snakes winding around a wand. Snakes were a Gnostic symbol for wisdom, and the ouroboros, a snake eating its tail, was an Egyptian and Gnostic symbol of the repeated cycles of life and death. Thus, the snakes indicate that the High Priestess' secrets may point to the most profound aspects of existence.

The triple moon symbol at her throat is a Pagan and Wiccan symbol, often referring to the three phases of a woman's life (waxing moon for maiden, full moon for mother, waning moon for crone). Modern Wiccans and Pagans often combine it with the pentagram, another Pagan and Wiccan symbol, which has also been used by Jews, Christians, philosophers and occultists. In modern use it can symbolize the four elements plus a fifth element, or four elements plus a combination of the four.

Candles have been used as symbols by many different cultures. Often they represent a "light in the darkness," i.e. hope, as well as the preservation and continuation of knowledge in times of upheaval.

The symbolism on this card is heady and profound, but in a reading you will probably need to bring it back down to earth, unless a more spiritual or philosophical interpretation is called for. The card may simply mean a matter that is unknown to you or to the querent (the person receiving the reading if you're reading for someone else), or it may indicate a person who is shy and retiring but has a rich inner life.

Most importantly, the High Priestess acts as a conduit, a way for us to perceive material from our unconscious minds—through dreams, intuitions, meditation or divination—that would otherwise be locked away from us.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Hidden things. Secrets. Mysteries. Cycles of fluctuation. Someone whose real personality may be different than the one they present to the world. Wisdom and knowledge, whether spiri-

tual, philosophical or practical, and the preservation and maintenance of that knowledge. Intuitive knowledge. A matter unknown to the querent. Negatively, someone who retreats to an inner world to hide from reality.

ASTROLOGY - Moon - the subconscious mind.

HEBREW LETTER - Gimel (Camel) - as the camel helps people cross the desert, the High Priestess helps bridge the gap between the conscious and the subconscious.

III THE EMPRESS

For the Empress card, early decks show an austere image, a monarch seated on a throne. The *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck changed the game by illustrating it as an evocative archetype: Mother Nature. The *Mystic Palette* deck takes the archetype to its ultimate expression.

The Great Mother gazes warmly at us, surrounded by flora and fauna, her subjects. As with the Magician, the four tarot suits and the four elements can be seen:

Swords/Air: Birds and dragonfly
Wands/Fire: Deer, tiger, chipmunk
Cups/Water: Dolphin
Coins/Earth: Trees, flowers, plants

Personifying nature as Mother Nature helps us understand the Earth as a single self-regulating biological system or entity, as in the Gaia hypothesis. This hypothesis is controversial among scientists, but it can be useful for laypeople because it serves as a reminder that nature and the Earth are an ecosystem that is vulnerable and can be harmed or even made uninhabitable due to poor choices by humans.

Brought down to the level of everyday life, the Empress can show fertility and motherhood in all its forms, whether literal (i.e. having and raising children) or metaphorical (conceiving of and nurturing creative projects, or taking on a nurturing role with family, friends, or co-workers).

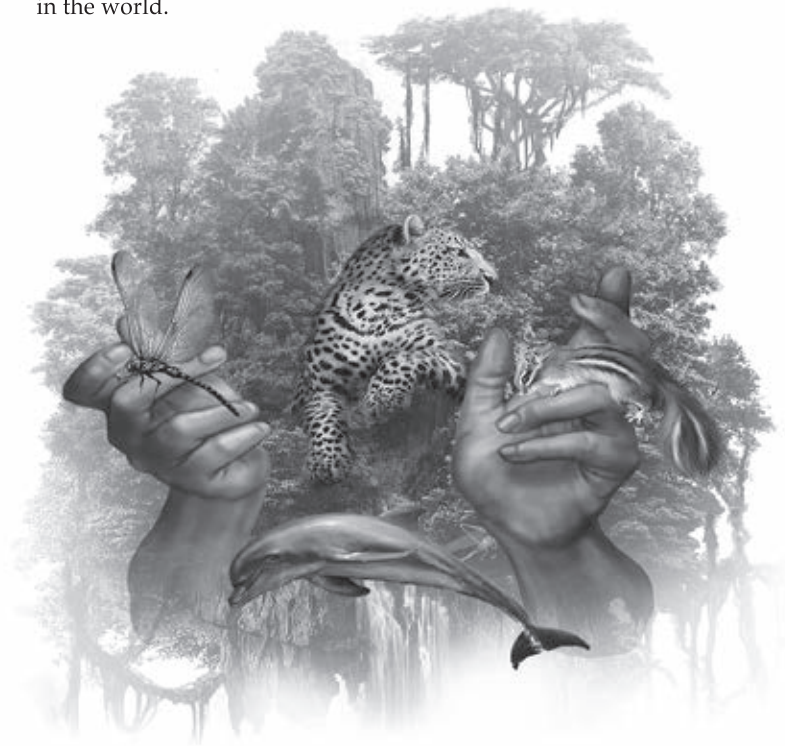
It's helpful to see the Empress' emotional and nurturing approach as a counterbalance to the Emperor's rationality. Ideally, both are present to

some degree in any situation, and the lack of one of them can point to the negative qualities of the other. Without the Emperor to provide some structure, the Empress can be domineering and smothering.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Mother Nature. A warm, caring, nurturing approach. Fertility, gestation and caretaking, whether of a person or a project. Anything related to nature, for example gardening or a trip to the park. An emotional approach as opposed to a rational approach. Negatively, overly emotional, domineering, or smothering.

ASTROLOGY - Venus - beauty, harmony, and love.

HEBREW LETTER - Daleth (Door) - a creation must pass through doors, literally or metaphorically, as it leaves its place of gestation and manifests in the world.



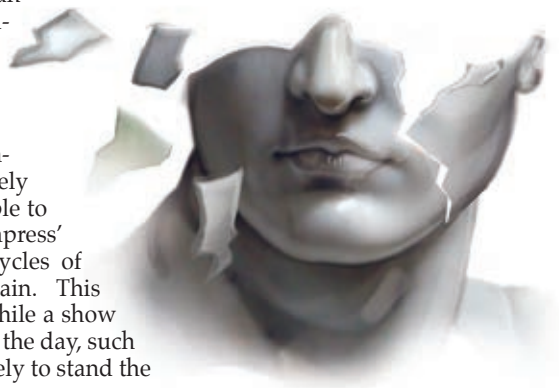
IV THE EMPEROR

This card's name and standard image are easy enough to interpret: authority, government, a politician, a leader. Intellectually, it can mean rational systems of organization. The fascinating image on the *Mystic Palette's* Emperor card, on the other hand, requires a fresh appraisal. It shows a statue of a young man's head breaking apart, revealing an older flesh-and-blood face underneath.

An emperor's reign is inherently temporary. Unlike a king, who is likely to rule a single homogeneous region, an emperor rules several heterogeneous regions, likely holding together a contentious set of kings by sheer force of arms and will. A king might have a reasonable chance of passing rule to his offspring, but an emperor is far less likely to bequeath the empire to his children. For example, many Roman emperors tried to pass their reign to their children but only a relative few succeeded; most Roman emperors attained their position by winning civil wars rather than by inheritance.



Thus, when taking the long view, an emperor's influence on the world is likely to be brief. The statues and monuments built in his honor will, in relatively short order, crumble to dust, while the Empress' jurisdiction, the cycles of nature, will remain. This reminds us that while a show of force might win the day, such victories are unlikely to stand the test of time.



The image can also lend itself to other interpretations, depending on the context of the question and other cards in the spread. It could show a person who has been maintaining a facade but has now outgrown it and has no further use for it, and so the facade is breaking away. Or, negatively, some deception has been revealed; “the truth will out” (this picture would make an interesting cover illustration for Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*).

Perhaps, like many royal personages throughout history, this Emperor has had to grow up quickly, and thus his youthful countenance belies his mature outlook. The image invites us to consider the age-old human tendency to glorify leaders while forgetting their flesh-and-blood frailty.

As his outer shell breaks apart, the monarch’s vision expands, shown by the fading away of the columns as they reach the level of his eyes. He is learning to see beyond the artificial boundaries that have so far focused his vision and defined his existence.

In a sense, any leadership position requires the donning of a “mask” or persona; the members of a group must look up to and idolize their leader to a certain extent, or else why would they accept that leader? The danger comes when leaders start believing their own hype and confuse the myth with the reality. Ultimately, the most successful leaders—or, really, the most successful people in any role—learn to transcend (i.e., break out from) their masks and fulfill their duties, not as inflexible statues, but as humans, wrinkles and all.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Authority, a boss, a politician, a leader. Governments and rational systems of organization. A temporary victory by force or will, that is destined to fade as the forces of nature—and human nature—reassert themselves. Someone who breaks free of a facade or self-image because it has lost its usefulness. Someone’s true nature is revealed. Someone who is more mature than they appear. Finding success by humanizing a previously inflexible stance. Negatively, a deception has been uncovered; too much faith in that which is only temporary.

ASTROLOGY - Aries - pioneers who discover and organize new lands.

HEBREW LETTER - He (Window) - providing order and structure to concepts by building a frame through which to view them.

V THE HIEROPHANT

While the Emperor provides structure in the practical and organizational realms, the Hierophant supplies the same kind of structure, but in the spiritual and philosophical realms.

The Hierophant can also be compared with the High Priestess. “Hierophant” is a Greek word meaning “priest”. In ancient Greece, the Hierophant was the chief priest of the Eleusinian Mysteries, an initiatory cult. The High Priestess was also an official in the cult’s hierarchy, and it is an interesting fact that the two were considered of equal rank. Today, the tarot’s Hierophant is often interpreted as an embodiment of exoteric (public) religion, for example the Roman Catholic Church, while the High Priestess represents esoteric (private) spirituality, for example Wicca.

And indeed, the *Mystic Palette Tarot* shows a Wiccan or Pagan High Priestess, whereas the Hierophant is represented by the Catholic Church’s leader, the Pope. If we want those specific religions to themselves serve as symbols, then we might think of the Hierophant as indicating an approach based on intellectual discourse and traditional dogma, while the High Priestess might represent a more personal and intuitive approach.

Of course, when dealing with symbolism, there is always the danger of falling into oversimplification and stereotyping. In real life, both religions obviously encompass a vast variety of human experience. It would be just as valid to see the religions indicated on the two cards merely as suggestive examples, rather than carrying the analogy farther than is useful.

In a reading, the Hierophant represents ways of thinking, viewpoints, or ideologies that can inspire action or affect our emotions, particularly involving traditions or mores perpetuated by families, geographic regions, ethnicities, or religions. The Hierophant is inherently conservative, as he seeks to maintain and preserve traditional values.

Here is an example that highlights the difference between the Emperor and the Hierophant. If the Emperor, who embodies laws and governmental structures, represents the pressure you feel to get a good education and a good job rather than embark on a life of crime, then the Hierophant, whose jurisdiction includes family traditions, would represent the pressure you feel to attend a certain college because a parent attended the same college.

On the card, the Hierophant stands in front of a stained glass window that depicts the Emblem of the Papacy. This emblem is comprised of:

- 1) the Keys of Heaven, the crossed keys that refer to the keys to the kingdom of heaven that Jesus promised to St. Peter as a symbol of authority;
- 2) the triple tiara or triregnum, that represents the Pope's power as father of kings, as governor of the world, and as vicar of Christ;
- 3) the pallium, a vestment worn by the Pope and certain other Catholic Church officials, comprising a narrow white band with six black crosses (seen on the emblem as a narrow ribbon beneath the crown); and
- 4) a cord that binds the keys together, as in Jesus' words to Peter, "and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in heaven".

Superimposed on the emblem is the Chi Rho, a monogram abbreviating the name Jesus Christ. The symbol is named after two Greek letters that are overlaid atop each other: Chi (X), the "ch" sound, and Rho (P), the "r" sound, the first two letters of "Christ". Under the elaborate emblem we see the astrological glyph for the sign of Taurus.

The Pope gives the traditional hand gesture indicating a blessing. (Some physicians believe that the first Pope, St. Peter, had nerve damage that prevented him from extending his ring and pinky fingers. According to this theory, subsequent Popes up to the present day have imitated the infirmity as a sign of respect for St. Peter, a great example of the Hierophant's emphasis on tradition.)

The two doves represent the Holy Spirit, and one of them carries the Hebrew letter Vau in its beak. The Pope's three-tiered crown and white vestment are real-life embodiments of the items seen in the papal emblem behind him.

The monogram Chi Rho also spells out Ciro's first name and its correct pronunciation, and thus also serves as the artists signature initials on this card .

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Spiritual authority or tradition, and people who embody them such as spiritual counselors or trusted family members. Negatively, feeling pressured to conform to traditions, ideologies, or religious dogma.

ASTROLOGY - Taurus - a conservative sign which seeks to preserve traditional routines.

HEBREW LETTER - Vau (Nail) - "Nailing down" beliefs through explanation and communication, and using the sharp end (i.e. our sharp minds) to penetrate the unknown (and, negatively, to punish apostates).

VI THE LOVERS

Compared to many of the other Major Arcana cards in this deck, the symbology of the Lovers is relatively simple. A couple embraces while the sun rises (or sets) in the background, against a beautiful red-orange sky.

Both the man and the woman wear the Fool's traditional cap and bells, suggesting that the Major Arcana sequence comprises what many tarot authors have referred to as the Fool's Journey, a sequential set of scenes that the Fool experiences on his journey through life. In a sense, all the characters on all the cards are the Fool.

Two of the coxcomb crests, one from the man's cap and one from the woman's, touch their tips as if kissing, forming a heart shape. Below, two swans echo the pattern, also forming a heart shape.

Beneath, water flows, the universal symbol of the subconscious and of emotions.

The Lovers card can be taken literally to represent a love affair or marriage, but it can just as easily represent any other significant relationship, even a business partnership. It can symbolize any passionate feeling you have about a project or a new interest. The card also shows your commitment to the object of your affection, represented by the swans, one of the

few members of the animal kingdom known to be truly monogamous.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - A romantic relationship. Any relationship or partnership. Someone who is passionate about a project or interest. Commitment, monogamy. Negatively, too much commitment, i.e. a relationship that has not succeeded in adapting to change (in other words, inability to let go when appropriate).

ASTROLOGY - Gemini - communication between people and an understanding of the relationships between things, or between people and things.

HEBREW LETTER - Zain (Sword) - the existential barrier between any two people, so that total union always seems out of reach.



VII THE CHARIOT

The standard elements of traditional Chariot cards—rider, cab, wheels and horses—have here been deconstructed and reassembled into a more abstract arrangement.

At the top we see not one but two drivers. These drivers' helmets match the horses beneath—one black and one white. Like their horses, these drivers seem to be at odds, facing away from each other. This provides a clue to the theme of the image—a group of disparate elements forming, through force of will, a cohesive whole despite some conflict, just as an actual chariot driver needs to control his or her horses to maintain forward motion.

The two drivers, one helmeted in black, one in white, can be thought of as the angel and the devil on our shoulders. Somehow, these seemingly irreconcilable parts of our personalities manage to work together when necessary.

The chariot's wheel contains eight spokes, bringing to mind the dharma-chakra or wheel of dharma, a popular symbol for Buddhism. The Buddha is said to have set the wheel in motion when he introduced his teachings. The eight spokes of the wheel represent the Eightfold Path, the recommended practices to overcome ignorance and attain insight.

Beneath the wheel is an astrolabe, an instrument with many uses including astronomy, astrology and navigation. It suggests that as chaotic as a ride on the Chariot may be, it can be capable of precise calibration to take you where you want to go in life.

The image in its entirety looks like it's ready to fly apart at any moment, but it manages to lurch forward through the sheer willpower of the co-charioteers.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Willpower, drive to succeed. Forward progress by a person or a group of people, despite inner turmoil and dissonance. Aggression or anger, i.e. charging at the foe. Negatively, a controlling personality that insists on having things its own way, as the chariot drivers keep a tight rein on the horses.

ASTROLOGY - Cancer - the sign that symbolizes home. The sign's symbol is the crab, which lives securely inside its home/ vehicle/ shell.

HEBREW LETTER - Cheth (Fence) - like the crab's shell, a protective shield that shapes and gives protection to that which it encloses.





VIII STRENGTH

In many earlier decks, this card shows a woman forcing open (or closed) a lion's jaws. The *Mystic Palette* Strength card shows a much quieter scene; a woman stands near a reclining white tiger. She pours moonlight onto the tiger's head, which clearly has a calming effect on it. They are on a stepped platform that leads to a pool of water. In the background, huge stone faces keep watch.

The tiger represents our baser instincts (hatred, greed, anger, selfishness), and the woman is our inner self. Rather than forcing the cat into submission as in the earlier decks, she has found a gentler way of influencing its behavior. But she isn't simply suppressing those baser instincts. Rather, the lady and the tiger have a symbiotic relationship. The tiger needs the woman's thoughtful and rational approach to prevent it from simply eating anyone who represents an obstacle. And the woman at times needs the tiger's anger and aggression to avoid her gentle good nature being taken advantage of. In the image, the woman seems in control, but the looming tiger head behind her brings the dominance back to the tiger. Together the tiger and the woman perform a mutually dependent dance, now one leading, now the other.

The stone faces suggest that the scene is a profound and ageless phenomenon, and one that carries great significance to our lives.

The entire scenario—the nighttime, the moonlight, the water, the white-clad angel, the white-pigmented tiger, the ancient stone faces, the intricate carved steps, the silence—seems to take place in some inner mythic landscape, one not readily accessible by the waking mind. In our daily lives, we struggle with the competing interests of our inner angel and inner animal. The Strength card suggests that somewhere deep inside, the two are reconciled.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Calmness. Thoughtfulness. Using both patience and anger at the appropriate times. De-escalation; answering aggression with gentleness.

Negatively, over-suppressing one's aggressive side.

ASTROLOGY - Leo - physical strength, dominance, dramatic energy.

HEBREW LETTER - Teth (Serpent) - like the tiger, an untamed animal energy.

IX THE HERMIT

Some modern decks show the Hermit as a small figure in a vast landscape, or with his back to us, or with his face otherwise obscured. The *Mystic Palette* deck takes the opposite approach with an extreme close-up, emphasizing the Hermit's humanity. Paradoxically, he also seems to blend into the forest clearing that he inhabits. If you follow his hair down the sides of the card to the bottom, you'll notice that the hair blends into and becomes tree bark. Or perhaps we're gazing out from inside a tree. The image recalls the legend of Merlin, imprisoned in a tree by his enemy and ex-student Nimue, in the enchanted forest Broceliande.

The Hermit can be compared to the High Priestess and the Hierophant. Like the High Priestess, the Hermit is solitary, but while her actions are intuitive, his are more self-aware and analytical. He takes on some of the rational and intellectual characteristics of the Hierophant, but the Hierophant is public-facing and works to improve others, while the Hermit is alone, and works on himself.

The Hermit enters his inner landscape with a lamp, to shine a rational and analytical light upon that which is often lacking in rationality. He will emerge wiser, able to frame his perceptions and conclusions in the context of the knowledge he discovers about his own humanity. His friendly gaze suggests that he has taken the opportunity to befriend himself and learned to love himself.

In a reading, he represents the desire to go off alone for a while to recover, reflect, meditate, and to absorb and process what life hands us.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Working on yourself. Organizing your thoughts about inner processes. Learning to love yourself. Solitude, reflection. Taking time to process events. Counselor, teacher, mentor, guide. Negatively, too much solitude; keeping aloof from others.



ASTROLOGY - Virgo - careful, deliberate, and prudent analysis.

HEBREW LETTER - Yod (Hand) - the Hermit foregoes technology and relies on his own hands (i.e. his own inner resources) to survive in his forest clearing.

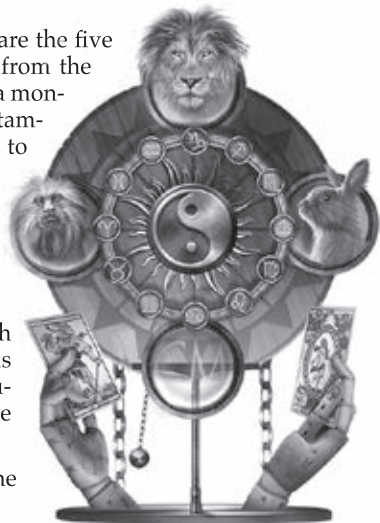
X THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

This card raises issues dealing with existential questions. Are we victims of fate, or do we have free will? If we have free will, is it complete or is it limited? If everything is predetermined, can we then be held responsible for our actions?

The card's imagery includes several different sunburst designs layered over each other at varied depths. A sunburst serves two symbolic functions. As a wheel, it references the name of the card and represents the turning of our fortunes; everyone's lives can be measured by these cycles of good and bad luck. As a celestial object, it references astrology, one of the three divination systems pictured on the card, thus bringing the existential questions down to the level of the very activity we are engaged in—reading the cards. Does asking about the future imply that the future is fixed? Do we somehow change the future by the very act of trying to read it?

The first image elements we notice are the five metal circles containing, clockwise from the top, a lion, a rabbit, a clear lens and a monkey (more precisely, a golden lion tamarin, an endangered species native to Brazil). These circles represent different stages we find ourselves in as we journey around the wheel. In the middle is a yin-yang symbol, the ultimate avatar of cycles. The two sides of the yin-yang—good and bad, up and down—define each other and morph into each other as they chase each other's tails in a mutually dependent dance. Each side carries the seed of the other.

The four stages grouped around the wheel can be interpreted as follows:



- 1) Lion - on top of the world, king of the hill.
- 2) Rabbit - keeping a lookout for threats, ready to run on a second's notice.
- 3) Lens - a clear-eyed appreciation of circumstances.
- 4) Monkey - in an endless loop of analysis. Overthinking. The "Monkey Mind".

The use of these three particular creatures also has a traditional precedence from an earlier *Marseilles* deck, where their significance was described as Rabbit-I shall be King, Lion- I am king, Monkey- I was king. And the bottom empty circle- I am not king.

The metal circles are set against a wooden disc or platter, and below is a second wooden disc, this one seen edge on. It serves as the base of what appears to be a primitive clock mechanism with a pendulum, with two automaton hands. The robotic hands inspire consideration of questions about fate versus free will, reminding us of the theory of determinism (all things, including human nature, are determined by prior causes), which arguably denies the existence of free will.

We'll group the remaining symbols according to their systems of divination:

Astrology: the signs are shown in order, encircling the yin-yang symbol. They're color-coded by their elements. The fire signs are red, the earth signs are green, the air signs are gray and the water signs are blue.

Tarot: the automaton hands each hold a tarot card, the Fool and the World cards from the *Tarot de Marseille*.

Palmistry: the automaton hands have palmistry lines drawn on their surfaces, along with astrological glyphs.

The Wheel of Fortune card can be interpreted in a reading as an indication of the cyclical nature of our lives. If things are going well, it advises appreciating the good times while they last; if things go badly, it reassures us that the wheel will spin and before long circumstances will change for the better. More simply, the card as a whole can mean good fortune.

The design of this card forms the basis for the *Mystic Palette Spread*, which will be described later in this book.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Considering free will versus determinism. Cycles in our moods or in external events. Problems or situations resolve themselves; factors we thought were opposed to each other turn out to be more mutually dependent than we thought. Changing circumstances. Good luck. Negatively, feeling as if you have no control over your life.

ASTROLOGY - Jupiter - optimism, abundance, good fortune.

HEBREW LETTER - Kaph (Palm) - palmistry is referenced on the card as one of the systems of divination we use to help us consider cycles of destiny.

XI JUSTICE

The usual Justice card shows a stern woman sitting on a throne, her scales in one hand and a sword in the other. Here, the figure—Themis, the Greek goddess of law—flies through the air, suggesting a more dynamic and transcendent vision of Justice.



She holds an elaborate set of scales up to the sky. The scales are filled by cosmic energies, representing the belief that a higher power balances the bad with the good. Four objects float before her, one of which is the traditional sword. But this sword seems more ephemeral than in the classical image—halfway toward the tip, it fades away. Closer to the viewer, and thus given precedence, are a metal-nibbed quill pen and two scrolls of writing, clearly illustrating the concept that laws, legislation and the courts are superior to force of arms as a way to settle disputes and keep civil order in a democratic society. Or, phrased more simply, the pen is mightier than the sword.

Justice represents concepts of fairness, rationality and adjudication. She tells us that disagreements should be handled in a formal process, guided by an objective mediator. Her dancer-like bearing and her flight through the air show us that justice needs to be flexible and alive, and to grow to meet new challenges, rather than a dogmatic, unyielding set of principles that ultimately oppresses the people.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Justice, fairness. Rationality. Law and court cases. Choosing to appeal to the judicial process rather than rely on force of arms. Negatively, being overly judgmental or setting standards for others to meet that are unrealistically high.

ASTROLOGY - Libra - a balanced and harmonious environment.

HEBREW LETTER - Lamed (Ox-goad) - the goddess Themis uses her sword to goad or prod us toward righteousness.

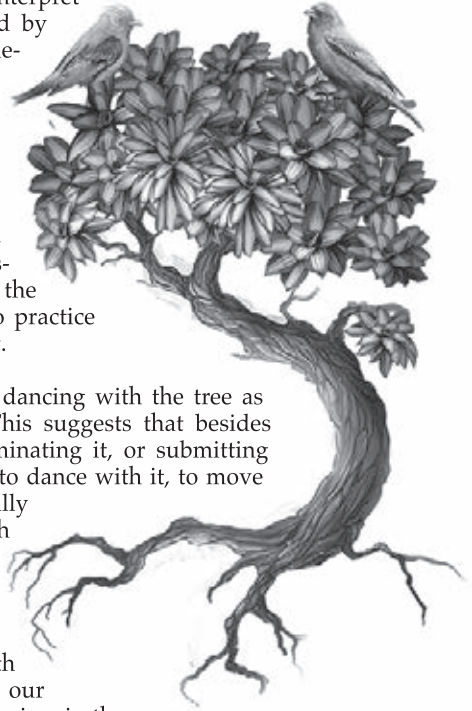
XII THE HANGING MAN

As with the Justice card, the Hanging Man image departs from the usual static, immobile scene by changing it into a dynamic, fluid one. The Hanging Man is a dancer who moves gracefully before a tree. Both tree and dancer float in the air. Two birds helpfully hold him up by his leg so that he can dance freely.

The Hanging Man is often interpreted as someone who is forced by circumstances to wait for something. You are suspended, and have no power other than to wait patiently for conditions to change. But this Hanging Man is very active. He may be undergoing an enforced waiting period, but rather than going into suspended animation, he's using the time to express himself, or to practice the discipline of an art or craft.

Interestingly, he seems to be dancing with the tree as if they are equal partners. This suggests that besides ignoring a circumstance, dominating it, or submitting to it, there is another option: to dance with it, to move together with it in a mutually dependent pas de deux, much like the one illustrated on the Strength card. This is part of growing up; it's the development of a mature outlook that allows us to partner with other people and things in our environment, making compromises in the short run so that we may ultimately succeed, rather than trying to hold things together through force of will, as on the Chariot card.

Alternatively, it can show someone who is constrained by circumstances but who uses their imagination to roam freely.



KEYWORD MEANINGS - Using enforced waiting time as an opportunity for creative expression or practicing a discipline. Dancing with circumstances, i.e. adapting your approach to take advantage of opportunities around you rather than clinging tightly to having your way. Roaming freely in your imagination despite constrained circumstances. Negatively, prolonging a waiting period because of reluctance to enter the fray.

ASTROLOGY - Neptune - blurring of distinctions and merging with the collective unconscious.

HEBREW LETTER - Mem (Water) - water flows freely and takes the shape of its container.

XIII DEATH

The jaunty figure of Death is a woman wearing elaborate Día de los Muertos makeup. *The Tarot de Marseille* Death card is present as well, being held by a scorpion, which balances on Lady Death's finger. A white rose, and a green horse wearing a bridle with blinders over its eyes, complete the image.

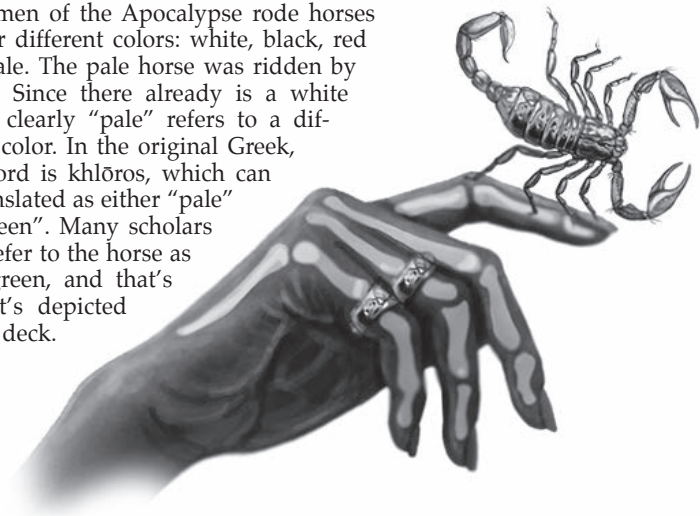
There are several clues that suggest that this card isn't as dire as the title might lead us to believe. First, Lady Death isn't actually dead, nor is she a supernatural figure of death; instead she is merely a human woman. She achieves her pallor with makeup. Her hand isn't a skeleton hand but a human hand wearing a black glove with bones painted on it. Next, there are many flowers on the card, certainly a sign of life, including the white rose and the vivid blooms that serve as her crown. The card's Hebrew letter, Nun, signifies fertility and regeneration.

The most important message of the Death card is that death is not the end of the journey. It's certainly not the end of the sequence of Majors; it's only the 13th card, and we have eight more cards to go before the final Major card (the World). This tells us that rather than being the climax to life, and the destruction of it, death is simply one stage of our journey, and not even a very important one, with lots more ground to cover after it. The horse's eyes are blinkered or covered to suggest that the reason that we see death as the final chapter is because our vision is limited.

This is not to suggest, however, that we should be casual about human life. The concept of death being “merely” a stage on the journey is only presented here for a very limited purpose, as a cautionary note not to let anxiety about your own future death diminish enjoyment of your present life. Everyone’s life is precious, and to be casual about, and reckless with, other people’s lives, or even your own, would be self-destructive nihilism.

The fact that we’re seeing a person dressed as a personification of death suggests that the card is more about the concept of death and not death itself. In other words, the card does not predict death for the person receiving the reading. The card invites us to consider how we feel about death and endings, and how we deal with them. In much of the western world, death is a subject to be avoided at all costs, and when it can’t be avoided, it must be faced solemnly. But our reaction to the card doesn’t have to be negative. In Mexico, *Día de los Muertos* is a day of celebration, a colorful and playful festival to remember loved ones who have passed, and this is the spirit (in both senses of the word) that we see expressed in the card.

Since the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck, many Death cards have shown a white horse. Here, the horse is green. Why this horse of a different color? The white horse refers to Revelations in the New Testament. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode horses of four different colors: white, black, red and pale. The pale horse was ridden by Death. Since there already is a white horse, clearly “pale” refers to a different color. In the original Greek, the word is *khlōros*, which can be translated as either “pale” or “green”. Many scholars thus refer to the horse as pale green, and that’s how it’s depicted in this deck.



KEYWORD MEANINGS - New life emerging from an ending. Death or any ending considered as simply one stage of a journey that continues. Widening one's vision so as not to overly focus on endings. Remembering with pleasure friends and family who have passed. Negatively, too preoccupied by endings.

ASTROLOGY - Scorpio - sign of death (and birth).

HEBREW LETTER - Nun (Fish) - fertility and regeneration.

XIV TEMPERANCE

Temperance may be considered the opposite of the Chariot. The Chariot succeeded by barreling through a world of black and white, using brute strength and force of will. Under the influence of Temperance, we begin to use our analytical powers, our maturity, and our awareness of shades of gray and subtle distinctions to pursue our interests in such a way that everyone is happy or at least satisfied.

Shades of gray and subtle distinctions are indicated by the angel's activity—pouring light from two pitchers of different colors. The light takes on the colors of the pitchers, until the streams unite into a white light. The angel, who is of indeterminate gender, is measuring and mixing ingredients in order to form a carefully calibrated whole. The wings, headdress and elaborate beadwork all attest to the angel's creativity and subtlety of perception, which allows it to maneuver through a situation and reach a destination while avoiding self-defeating conflicts with others.

The Chariot leads others by energy and charisma and a little bullying. Temperance leads others by carefully considering the mix of personalities and supplying what is needed for each in such a way that everyone can feel good about the result.

While Temperance makes clear the limitations of the Chariot's approach, there are times when the Chariot's aggressive posture is more appropriate. At these times, Temperance's eagerness to get along and to please everyone can be a detriment. Temperance can also be too focused on process, needing the Chariot to provide the push needed to get things done.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Carefully combining ingredients to form a harmonious whole. Shades of gray and subtle distinctions as opposed to simplistic answers. Measurement, calibration. A solution that includes and satisfies everyone. Negatively, being too eager to please everyone; being too process-driven.

ASTROLOGY - Sagittarius - broadening one's mind through religion and philosophy allows a greater sensitivity to others' viewpoints.

HEBREW LETTER - Samekh (Tent-peg) - support. The angel believes all should be supported. The circular shape of the letter suggests inclusivity and consideration for all.



XV THE DEVIL

The Devil is a pathological narcissist. He is boastful, attention-seeking, self-absorbed, callous, manipulative, exploitative and authoritarian.

The Devil is also charismatic, charming and seductive. While the angel of Temperance perceives subtle distinctions and shades of gray, for the Devil there are no such distinctions and shades. For him, there are only two classes of people—those who are for him, and those who are against him. In an uncertain world, he offers us illusory certainty. In a world of moral ambiguity, he offers easy—and immoral—answers. In relationships, he seeks to manipulate and exploit others.

This card is not about any actual devil. Instead, it's about us. It's about the potential we all have to either exploit others—or to be exploited. How easy, how simple it is to give up having to make the difficult decisions we all face every day. All we must give in exchange for this freedom from decisions is our humanity (or, in more theological terms, our soul).

In the *Mystic Palette* Majors, a clue to each card's main figures can often be found in their headwear. The Devil's head sprouts curling horns, like those of wild sheep or goats. The horns twist in on themselves, indicating his self-regard and self-absorption, and the twisted nature of his reasoning.

The Devil and the High Priestess both have blank eyes, but the High Priestess' eyes are blank so that she can turn her attention inward, while the Devil's eyes are blank because he is incapable of perceiving that anyone else really exists other than himself.

On the Devil's forehead is a chimera, a fantastical creature or monster made up of different animals' body parts, in this case a goat's head and upper body attached to the lower body of a serpent, with flippers or batwings for a tail. The chimera represents the often ridiculous fantasies that a narcissistic leader offers to his followers, and the irrational things that you will find yourself doing—and turning into—if you allow someone else to make your decisions for you.

We see two symbols from the Old Testament: the apple and the snake or serpent. In the story from Genesis, the snake offers the apple to Eve, who eats and then offers it to Adam, who eats as well, thus indicating

mankind's vulnerability to temptation. Like all multicultural symbols, the snake can take on different meanings depending on context. In this card, the snake slithers across the Devil's face, suggesting corruption and a lack of humanity. The apple is the latest shiny object that the Devil is offering to his followers. He's already taken a bite out of it, adding to the general atmosphere of creepiness and unwholesomeness. The snake seems to pass through the apple, as if it were a worm discovered inside the fruit.

Notice that the Devil doesn't appear self-confident or happy. Instead he has a terrible expression of burning desperation. He's desperate for you to love him and to obey him. Without you, he's powerless. The big question the card presents to us is, how we will react to the Devil when we encounter him?

The best way to react to him when his card appears in a reading is to ask yourself if the desire to avoid thinking for oneself has caused you or someone you know to start traveling down an unethical or immoral path, in the service of some ideology, organization, or person. The card is a warning to avoid simple answers to complex problems, especially if those answers involve intolerance.

In the Adam and Eve story, it's the humans in the tale who are the real transgressors; after all, it's the humans, not the snake, who eat the apple. Likewise, it's our responsibility as humans not to fall for the Devil's act. It's up to us to recognize him for what he is, because we all have the potential within us to become the Devil's followers, in other words to accept his siren song of hatred and bigotry.

Those who follow the Devil are notable for their inhumane—and downright inhuman—behavior. The Devil is a vengeful god who demands we sacrifice our humanity for his own aggrandizement. The New Testament says, "by their fruits ye shall know them". Insanity, cruelty and bloodlust are the fruits we will reap if we follow the Devil to his logical conclusion.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Boastful. Attention-seeking. Self-absorbed. Callous. Exploitative. Manipulative. Authoritarian. Aggressive. Abusive. Unable to feel empathy. Arrogant. Simple, easy answers that lack a human perspective. Temptation. Positively, our refusal to succumb to the temptation he offers.



ASTROLOGY - Capricorn - when applied to the Devil, we need to focus on the negative aspects of Capricorn: emotionally limited and cold, ungenerous and fearful, which all describe the Devil's inner landscape.

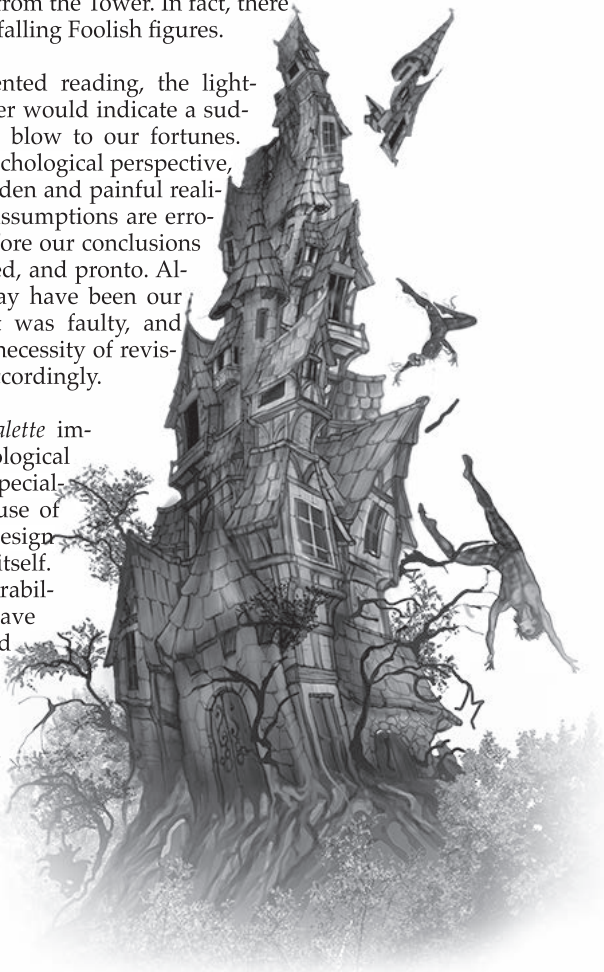
HEBREW LETTER - Ayin (Eye) - the Devil is characterized by blank eyes, indicating his lack of true perception and his inability to acknowledge the existence of others as human beings.

XVI THE TOWER

We saw the Fool and his journey referenced in the Lovers card, and here we see him again, this time falling from the Tower. In fact, there are actually two falling Foolish figures.

In an event-oriented reading, the lightning-struck Tower would indicate a sudden, unexpected blow to our fortunes. From a more psychological perspective, it suggests a sudden and painful realization that our assumptions are erroneous and therefore our conclusions need to be revised, and pronto. Alternatively, it may have been our information that was faulty, and now we see the necessity of revising our beliefs accordingly.

In the *Mystic Palette* image, the psychological viewpoint is especially relevant because of the whimsical design of the tower itself. Stability and durability seem not to have been top of mind when it was built. We can all think of times in our lives when a faulty assumption began a sensible-seeming chain of reasoning that ultimately led to a disastrous conclusion.



From a spiritual viewpoint, we can see the Tower as a higher power, or the universe itself, giving us a wake-up call, showing us the error of our ways (as shown by the falling Fools).

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Sudden, unexpected bad news. A painful realization that faulty assumptions have led to a major error. Poor planning has a bad result. A wake-up call. Positively, now that the air is cleared, we can proceed to build anew.

ASTROLOGY - Mars - the god of war destroys the status quo.

HEBREW LETTER - Peh (Mouth) - in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, the united peoples of Earth, who all spoke a common language, began building a tower that would eventually reach the heavens. God, to avoid this, caused them to suddenly begin speaking in different languages, resulting in confusion and chaos, so that the project was abandoned.

XVII THE STAR

After the storm undragn of the previous two cards, the Star gives us a break. Whenever things go wrong, there's always a period of inactivity that follows, allowing us to catch our breath and to process what has happened.

The Star Maiden kneels in water, against the backdrop of a night sky with an elaborate star pattern. The pattern contains seven glowing lights, referencing the seven planets of classical astrology (the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn; the outer three planets had not yet been discovered). By working under their lights, she is acting in accordance with ancient laws.

Water is a universal symbol of the unconscious and of emotions. The Star Maiden is pouring the water from her pitchers into the deep waters of the collective unconscious, replenishing the storehouse with a lifetime of collected memories.

Lotus blossoms float in the water. In Hinduism, the lotus can represent the potential for perfection; in Buddhism, it symbolizes purity. The lotus is often used in Eastern religions as a symbol of humanity; it manages to unfold its divine beauty despite its roots in muddy water. Beneath

the surface goldfish float, which can mean tranquility and serenity (as well as prosperity and friendship).

KEYWORD MEANINGS - A period of inactivity after much drama. An opportunity to rest and process what has happened. The collective unconscious. Accepting guidance from ancient spiritual laws. Perfection and purity. Using the messiness of life to grow beauty and purity.

ASTROLOGY - Aquarius - unconventional thinking allows us to find opportunities for growth.

HEBREW LETTER - Tzaddi (Fish-hook) - an angler must maintain a quiet demeanor so as not to scare away the fish. Also, note the similarity between the shape of the letter and the shape of the woman and pitchers.





XVIII THE MOON

A hierarchy of evocative symbols arises out of an ocean at night, and climbs towards a giant moon above. A purple crab or lobster reaches its claws up, out of the sea. Two rock formations, shaped like towers, likewise rise above the waves. The giant figure of a woman coalesces out of the night, bathed in blue, eyes shut, hovering between the towers, her hands grasping them, as if using them for leverage to pull herself up. A dog and a wolf complete the arrangement, while at the top of the card, the moon shines down, presiding over all.

All these symbols, except the hands, appear on other Moon card designs. The shift from the traditional manmade stone towers to rock formations takes us further away from rational thought and more towards the unconscious or preconscious processes that are the jurisdiction of this card. Similarly, the small pool of water on the traditional image has now become a boundless ocean.

Pools of water have appeared in other Major cards, but this is the first time we see the ocean, here representing the collective unconscious. The High Priestess introduces us to the dimension of the personal unconscious, a part of the mind that is normally inaccessible to the waking mind but that influences our thought processes. She acts as a sort of mediator, allowing us to glimpse our unconscious through dreams, visions and coincidences. The Star Maiden kneels on the surface of the waters, replenishing the collective unconscious, an ancestral storehouse of experience and memory.

In the Moon card, we're plunged into the collective unconscious. Individual distinctions are swept away, and we are in danger of being lost in the waves and tides. The purple crustacean, a symbol of the mind at its most primitive, reaches its claws out of the water, trying to find something to cling to. The blue woman, submerged in the water, has found the rock formations and is using them to pull herself up, reestablishing and rediscovering her existence as a personality distinct from the collective. In a reading, this might manifest as an effort to break away from family or cultural norms to establish one's own identity.

The wolf and dog are usually interpreted as representing wildness (the wolf) and tameness (the dog, with a collar). I also see them as a steadying and (ironically) a humanizing influence on the wild spiritual energies that flow through the card, similar to the Fool's canine companion.

In a reading, the card can mean any situation in which we are made aware of the unexpected depth and breadth of our minds. Older sources for divinatory meanings sometimes list “madness” for the Moon. Such an operatic interpretation probably won’t apply to readings very frequently, but it can mean being troubled or disturbed by dreams, desires, or seemingly inexplicable impetuous reactions. Like the High Priestess, it can simply mean mysterious or hidden thoughts, feelings, or events.

This is an important card for creative people, because the creative process can often feel similarly mysterious and at times overwhelming. When your creative project seems to take on a life of its own, with depths and details that seemingly come from nowhere, then the Moon card will immediately strike a chord.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - An experience of the unconscious mind, through dreams, visions, surprising reactions or coincidences. An effort to establish one’s own identity and boundaries. Something that serves, like the dogs on the card, as a focus to steady us and bring us down to earth. Hidden feelings or motivations. Negatively, troubling states of mind.

ASTROLOGY - Pisces - transcending ordinary reality.

HEBREW LETTER - Qoph (Back of the Head) - literally “behind the mind” i.e. the unconscious.



XIX THE SUN

The *Mystic Palette* version of the Sun card is very much oriented toward astrology. The planets laid out against a circle immediately suggest a horoscope chart, as does the geometric design of the circle.

In modern Western astrology, the sun is considered the seat of consciousness, the engine that drives our personality, suggested on the card by the sun's size relative to the planets. It can also represent the goal of individuation in the Jungian sense, that is, the integration of the various parts of the personality (symbolized by the planets) with each other and with one's experiences, to form a well-balanced whole. (The Moon card shows this coalescing of the personality in its early stages.)

Besides the geometric sun design and the large size of the sun, there is a third reference to astrology—the hand that holds the device from which the planets hang on wires, like a marionette's control bar. The hand controlling the strings can be seen as a reference to the eternal astrological debate over free will versus predestination (a subject we first approached in the Wheel of Fortune). Astrology posits a pattern and a logic that somehow describes or affects human affairs. Does this mean all is predetermined? Are we simply marionettes, being controlled by cosmic strings? Does free will exist? And if it does, then to what extent? Of course, the same questions could be asked about any divination, including tarot reading.

The hand also raises metaphysical or religious questions. If there is a pattern, then who made the pattern? The hand could be seen as representing the hand of God, or it could simply be a personification of the pattern itself, without necessarily requiring the existence of a universal consciousness to set it in motion.

The Hebrew letter, Resh, is placed front and center. Resh means the front of the head, or the face, thus echoing the concept of the sun as the center of consciousness (as opposed to the Moon's letter, Qoph, which means the back of the head).

In a reading, the Sun card can address more mundane matters, of course. The philosophical implications can be translated into control issues between any two people. Which one holds the strings? Which person submits to the other's sun-like charisma?

The standard divinatory meanings are based on the ways we experience the sun, i.e. light and heat. Light can suggest illumination, thought and discovery (either positive or negative). Heat can refer to physical or emo-

tional warmth, as well as anger (as in a heated discussion). More generally, the Sun card represents energy and a sense of well-being.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - The personality. Integration/individuation. Conscious thought. Issues of boundaries and control between two people; for example, when one person hold the strings in a relationship. Light, illumination, discovery. Emotional warmth. Energy. A sense of well-being. Negatively, anger, or the revelation of an uncomfortable truth.

ASTROLOGY - Sun - the seat of consciousness.

HEBREW LETTER - Resh (Front of the Head) - that which is conscious. Rational thought.



XX JUDGEMENT

Throughout human history, one of the main purposes of religion, myth, fantasy, philosophy and metaphysics has been to grapple with the reality of death. All things, us included, will come to an end. Does my personality, my consciousness, my awareness, survive death? After my death, will I awaken in another world? Or will I awaken in this world but in a different form? Or, if my personal consciousness doesn't survive, will I survive in some other form, as in the Buddhist notion of a complex of causes and effects (karma) that, even after my death, still needs to play itself out in this world?

These questions can also be broadened to encompass not just physical death but also anything else that is subject to change and ending (in other words, everything). Clearly, things from the past affect and influence the present and the future in some way; after all, the world isn't created completely anew with each passing instant.

The card shows a giant, winged, beckoning hand reaching out of the sky, toward insubstantial human figures who rise from their graves. This illustrates the traditional Christian (and, earlier, Jewish) concept of resurrection, in which the bodies of the dead will be brought back to life and reunited with their former occupants' souls. The card's title, "Judgement," refers to another Christian concept, the Last Judgment, in which God will (or already has) judged mankind.

In a world where everything will eventually morph into something else, Judgement shows something miraculous happening—humans are resurrected, rescued from ceaseless change and death, to find permanence in some other realm and/or some other form. Stripped of its religious or philosophical significance, we can see the card as simply describing the process of something—anything—being resurrected. It could be the return of a relationship that you had given up on. It could be an old friend who reestablishes contact after being out of touch. It could be the rekindling of a once-abandoned hobby or interest.

The elaborate mausoleums, memorials, grave markers and cemetery gate represent mental constructs or intellectual artifacts that melt away under the light of the awakening angel. This tells us that whatever is being resurrected, something about it will be new, and we'll have to think of it in a different way, a realization that could either develop slowly or come in a flash of insight. This is actually the essence of the card: constant change is

not a curse but a blessing. The figures on the card are being liberated from their mindset of expecting everything to stay the same, and entering an exciting and creative world of constant birth and rebirth.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Welcoming change. Dealing with inevitable change constructively and creatively. Something from your past returns—a circumstance, a person, a situation, an interest. A realization of a new way of thinking about something or someone. Negatively, being too judgmental, or judging something and finding it lacking.

ASTROLOGY - Pluto - transformation and regeneration.

HEBREW LETTER - Shin (Tooth) - as in the shedding of baby teeth, which are replaced with adult teeth, symbolizing a more mature outlook.



XXI THE WORLD

The sequence of Majors in the *Mystic Palette Tarot* has directly referenced the Fool's Journey on five cards—the Fool (of course), the Lovers, the Wheel of Fortune, the Tower, and for a final time on the last card in the sequence, the World.

The Fool's Journey can be seen as a set of episodes and characters that the Fool encounters, one after another; for example, the Emperor, the Empress and the Hierophant are the parents and exemplars of authority and society that we encounter on our way through life. Alternatively, the journey can be seen as a set of personas that the Fool himself takes on, such as starting to make his way in the world (the Chariot), engaging in relationships (the Lovers), and exploring himself (the Hermit).

In the sky above the Fool appears a vast vision comprising several elements. The image, which originates in Christian symbology, shows a woman in an almond-shaped border, surrounded by an angel, a lion, an ox and an eagle. The woman appears between two scepters decorated with lion faces (these scepters echo the slender white wands that the dancer holds on the *Rider-Waite-Smith* World card). She gazes down at the Fool and holds a gold chain bearing the astrological glyph and Hebrew letter assigned to the card.

The woman is a personification of the soul of the world. She represents the connections between the world's multitudinous parts (symbolized by the four animals that surround her) and their ultimate oneness. The almond-shaped border, called a mandorla, acts as a kind of halo, indicating the holiness of that which it encloses.

The four animals can be thought of as representing a horizontal plane, which includes all material objects and creatures of this world, while the two scepters can be seen as a vertical plane, representing the occult maxim "As above, so below", indicating a correspondence between the macrocosm (the solar system, or metaphysical or spiritual truths) and the microcosm (our mundane lives).

The four animals represent the four fixed astrological signs (Aquarius, Leo, Taurus and Scorpio), and thus by extension symbolize the four directions and the four elements.

Since the late 19th century, the World card has been interpreted as completion, fulfillment, success and reward, because the best kinds of

success are those which inspire a feeling of deep connectedness to the world around us. Those meanings still apply to the *Mystic Palette* card. The woman holds out her chain as if rewarding the Fool with a prize, in the same spirit as the Wizard of Oz handing the Scarecrow a diploma, or the Tin Man a silk heart (a heart-shaped clock in the movie).

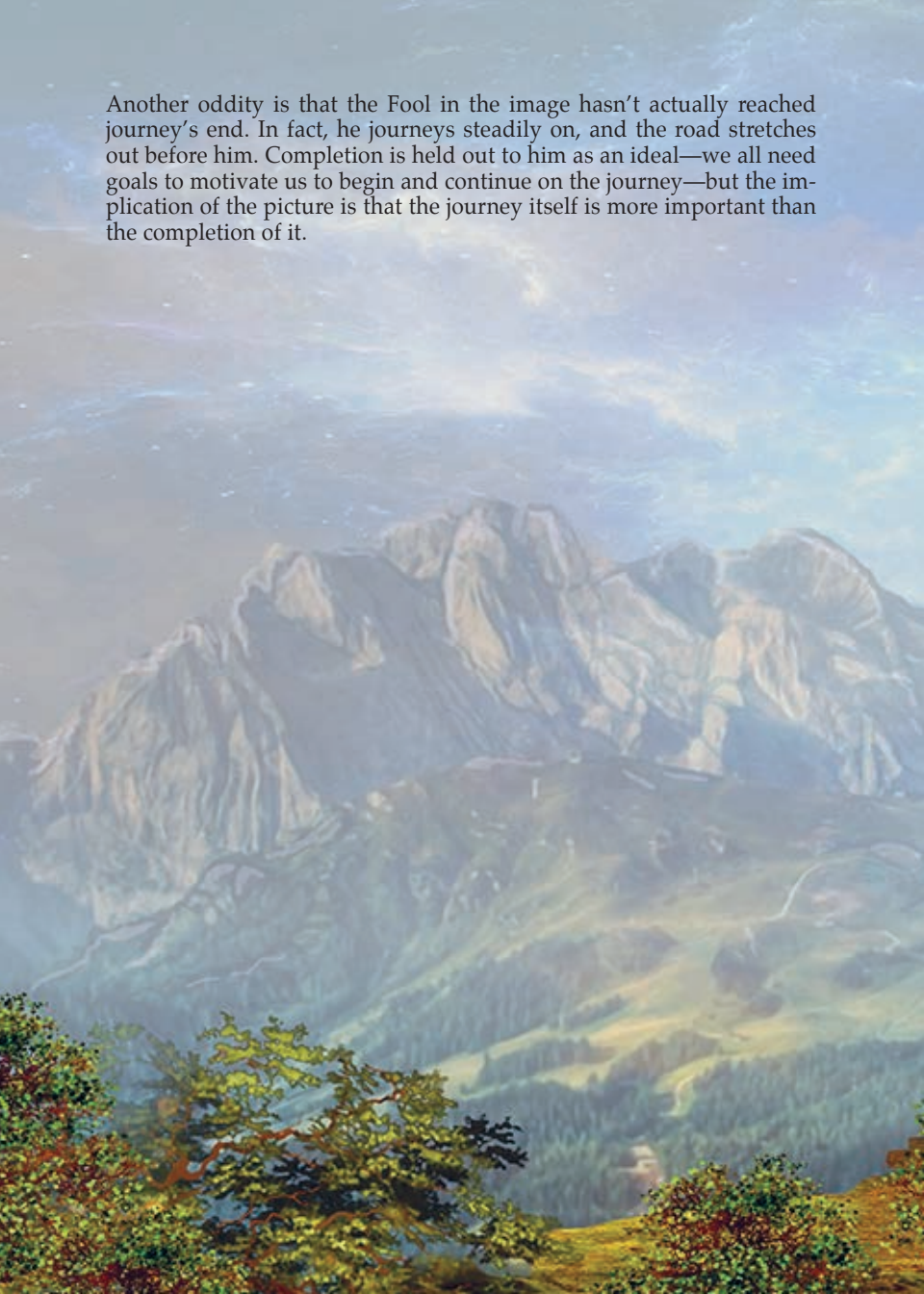
With all this talk of completion and success, it's curious that the image contains some suggestions of restriction. The woman is enclosed and isolated in the mandorla; the gold chain she holds is, after all, a chain; and the astrological glyph that hangs from it is Saturn, planet of limitations. In this life, we don't ever experience complete and total fulfillment and satisfaction. There's always some factor limiting the feeling of accomplishment, because we're human, with a human's limited perceptions. In fact, we actually feel more accomplishment when the journey has been difficult and our opportunities limited, suggesting that true completion comes from overcoming or accepting limitations rather than achieving some imaginary state of perfection.

KEYWORD MEANINGS - Completion. Fulfillment. Success. Reward. A feeling of interconnectedness and oneness. Fulfillment in spite of—or because of—limitations. The journey is more important than the destination. Negatively, too much concern over worldly events.

ASTROLOGY - Saturn - planet of limitations.

HEBREW LETTER - Tau (Signature or Seal) - the universe rewards your efforts with a metaphorical diploma—signed, sealed and delivered.

Another oddity is that the Fool in the image hasn't actually reached journey's end. In fact, he journeys steadily on, and the road stretches out before him. Completion is held out to him as an ideal—we all need goals to motivate us to begin and continue on the journey—but the implication of the picture is that the journey itself is more important than the completion of it.



Perhaps J.R.R. Tolkien had something similar in mind:

*“The Road goes ever on and on,
Down from the door where it began,
Now far ahead the road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And wether then? I cannot say.”*

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring

The Fool’s companion looks back at us and wags its tail — “Are you coming? Let’s go!”



PART TWO: THE MINOR ARCANA

THE SUITS

Like playing cards, the cards of the Minor Arcana are divided into suits. English-speaking countries use the French suits for their playing cards (Clubs, Hearts, Spades and Diamonds), but the tarot suits are based on Italian playing-card suits: Wands, Cups, Swords and Coins. The names of the suits are somewhat variable, depending on the deck; Wands can be called Rods or Batons and Coins can be called Pentacles or Disks.

There is a tradition in tarot of equating the four suits to the four classical elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth. While different systems were proposed by different authors and groups, the following correspondences endured, and are used in the *Mystic Palette Tarot*:

Wands	=	Fire
Cups	=	Water
Swords	=	Air
Coins	=	Earth

The elements can be a valuable tool for tarot readers, because they provide a built-in sensory world for each suit, providing an immediate and visceral “feeling” whenever we turn over a suit card in a reading. Wands/Fire cards are exciting, illuminating and dangerous; Cups/Water cards are peaceful, with occasional upheavals and hidden depths; Swords/Air cards are efficient but can be painfully cutting; and Coins/Earth cards deal with mundane realities like building materials and exchanges of value.

In this deck and book, the elements have been used as overarching symbols and themes for the suit cards. However, while many of the suit cards show symbols of the elements, such as flames for Wands cards or wings and birds for Swords cards, the classical elements aren’t strictly necessary for reading purposes. For a more stripped-down, straightforward system, the reader can ignore the elements and simply imagine the

Wands cards as being swung or carried, symbolizing action. The Cups offer sustenance, thus suggesting hospitality and personal connections. The Swords move as swift as thought and they can wound like words. And the Coins indicate value, as well as the material things that coins can be used to purchase.

THE ROYAL COURT

Earlier in the history of tarot interpretation, the divinatory meanings for Court Cards were relatively simple and succinct. The main purpose of Court Cards was to identify actual people in the querent's life, by age, gender and physical characteristics such as hair color.

Starting in the 1970s, tarot book authors started broadening the possibilities for Court Cards, in an attempt to move readers beyond tall-dark-stranger-style fortune-telling readings. They began including long personality profiles for each card, somewhat similar to the descriptions of zodiacal signs one finds in astrology books. But this kind of interpretation is problematic in its own ways. Does the Court Card represent the querent, or a person in the querent's life? And a long personality profile can be awkward to work into a sequence of cards in a layout, not to mention difficult to learn and memorize.

For the *Mystic Palette Tarot*, a new method for interpreting Court Cards is presented. The interpretations generally won't conflict with the more usual kinds of modern interpretations, but it's hoped that the reader will find them easier to deal with, while still being relevant and useful.

The key to reading the Court Cards is described in a single word: reaction. The Royal Court figures are personifications of how we react to various situations. Their reactions are to a large extent dictated by their associated elements. Simply put, Cups/Water courts would react emotionally. Swords/Air courts would react intellectually. Wands/Fire courts would be likely to take action. And Coins/Earth courts would do something physical. For that reason, each Court Card contains the alchemical symbol for that suit's element.

The cards should be seen as representing the reactions of the querent, rather than someone in the querent's life. The exception would be if the question itself is about someone else's reaction, or if you have a spread position specifically labeled as representing the viewpoint of another person.

In addition, there's a tradition for Pages and Knights that may seem a little quaint these days, but it's worth considering. The Pages can always indicate news or new information. Older books sometimes refer to the Pages as messengers, but basically they indicate news having to do with the subject matter of the suit/element. For example, the Page of Cups could be news about a relationship or new information that you've learned about a feeling someone has.

Knights, on the other hand, can indicate thoughts. The kind of thought would depend on, again, the suit/element. For example, the Knight of Wands would be thinking about taking action.

The descriptions below reference the gender of the figures on the cards, but in a reading the gender has no bearing, nor does the age. All the reactions shown on all the Court Cards are available to anyone, regardless of age or gender.





WANDS

Fire is represented in Wands cards by crystal-tipped wands or batons. The crystals often glow with power. The wands on many of the cards are topped with dragons, which, according to legend, breathe fire. The Wands Court Cards show flames.

Wands are the cards of action and energy. Anything you do is described by Wands energy, such as going for a walk or starting a business. A desire or inspiration to do something is also covered by Wands, such as a desire to reach a goal or realize an ambition. Businesses, enterprises and organizations in general are ruled by Wands. Besides one's own actions, inspiring or leading others to take action would be a Wands activity. Having enthusiasm, or kindling it in others, would be the perfect expression of Wands-ness.

But pure drive and enthusiasm will only get you so far. No enterprise or action will ultimately be successful without the ameliorating influences of the other suits—awareness of feelings and interpersonal relations from Cups, intellectual strategizing from Swords and practical considerations from Coins. Without these factors, Wands will quickly burn themselves out and fail to achieve escape velocity.

ACE OF WANDS

A hand grasps a wand, staking its claim. The crystal in the wand sparks with power and displays the elemental glyph for Fire. A wild cat looms in the background, with strangely human eyes.

The Ace of Wands is the impetus, the spark that kindles a desire, an action, or an empire. When you suddenly find yourself wanting something, or interested in something, or needing something, that you had never had the slightest interest in before, then you know you're experiencing the power of this card.

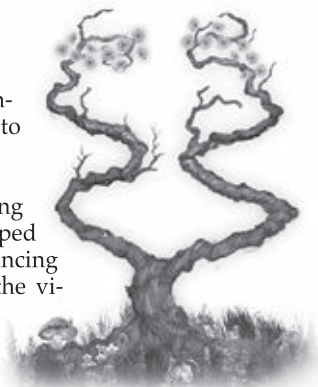
It could be a tickle of interest, or a torrent of enthusiasm, or anything in between. But the energy must be put to use, whether acquiesced to or channeled into some other area. Don't be misled by a seemingly small beginning. Long journeys start with a single step, and what seems inconsequential may in the future be life-changing.



II OF WANDS

Two wands float among bare tree branches. The human-shaped tree seems to grasp the wands in its arms.

A plan, endeavor or enterprise is taking shape. The purple flowers and red-capped mushrooms, as well as the flowers dancing around the wands' crystals, attest to the vitality of the endeavor. Duality is vital to the card's action; perhaps a conversation between two people (symbolized by the dragons facing each other) is clarifying the plan, or maybe a single person is comparing and contrasting the plan with something else in order to better understand its nuances. Even if the card simply indicates a conversation between two people, the talk is sure to center around desires, ambitions, impulses, enthusiasms and outcomes.

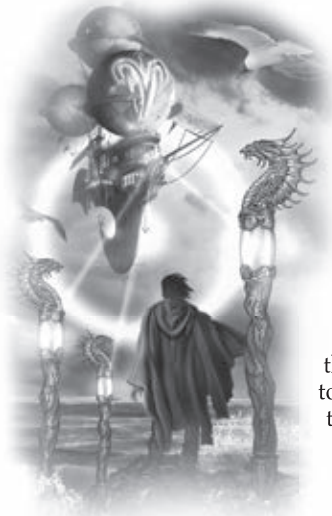


ASTROLOGY - Mars in Aries - the beginning (Aries) of a tremendous expression of energy (Mars).

III OF WANDS

A person stands on a promontory, facing the sea, surrounded by crashing waves and three wands. A fantastic vessel hovers overhead.

Traditionally, the person on the card has been described as a ship owner who has sent ships out on a business venture and now is waiting for their return, as in the cliched phrase, "waiting for my ship to come in". In general, we may think of the venture as being conceived in the Ace, clarified in the II, and now in the III the initial steps have been taken and some



early success has been attained. The fantastical nature of the ship may indicate that despite the initial success, there is still some naivety or pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking involved.

The presence of the ocean, the crashing waves and the seagulls all point to some incursion of the element Water into this Fire card. You may be emotionally attached to your project and its outcome.

ASTROLOGY - Sun in Aries - you take charge of a situation (Sun) by taking direct action to influence events (Aries).

IV OF WANDS

This surreal image suggests a traveling carnival or county fair. In the center is a festive structure reminiscent of a merry-go-round.

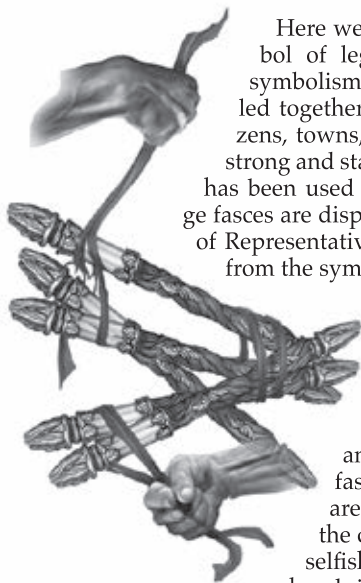
The Fool appears at the front of the structure, and an enigmatic figure is seen peering out from beneath a canopy. Fireworks explode into the night sky. Below the structure are three step-like platforms, and the entire arrangement—structure, steps and fireworks—floats in the sky between four huge dragon-topped wands. Two of the dragons face each other, but the other two are rearing their heads, or perhaps looking up to watch the fireworks.



The gathering energies shown in the previous Wands cards are now bursting forth. Everything is running on all four cylinders. A business has become a going concern and is making money; a painting is taking shape on the canvas; an author is generating pages for her book. The figure in red might represent wild, untamed energy that for the present has been harnessed.

ASTROLOGY - Venus in Aries - you create an environment to your liking (Venus) in a direct and forceful way (Aries).

V OF WANDS



Here we see the fascis, an ancient Roman symbol of legal and governmental authority. The symbolism is straightforward; thin wands bundled together, representing disparate elements (citizens, towns, or states) who join together to form a strong and stable whole. At different times, the fascis has been used to represent both democracy (two large fascis are displayed on the rostrum in the U.S. House of Representatives) and fascism (which takes its name from the symbol).

On the card, a typical Roman fascis is seen in the background, while in the foreground another fascis is being pulled apart by two people who are unseen except for their hands. This is an ambiguous card. If the symbol of the fascis is seen as a positive, then the hands are doing damage, claiming allegiance to the concept of unity but allowing their own selfish interests to destroy it. On the other hand, if the fascis is seen as a negative, then the hands are doing good work, advocating for individual rights against an authoritarian backdrop. You will have to rely on the question and the surrounding cards to determine which interpretation is appropriate.

ASTROLOGY - Saturn in Leo - the creative individuality of Leo battles with the restricting influence of Saturn.

VI OF WANDS

In a scene that reminds us of classical Greek mythology, a triumphant woman sits astride a flying white horse. She holds aloft a wand with the Fool's banner.

This card means, simply, victory; specifically, the heady rush of victorious feeling. It may be a straightforward win, or the victory may be fleeting or illusory. The crystal on the goddess's wand either glows with

its own power or is merely catching the sun's rays, while the crystals on the five wands below her are quiescent. We are left to wonder whether the goddess has earned her moment in the spotlight, or if, like the crystal on her wand, she just happened to be in the right place at the right time to catch the sunlight for a moment.

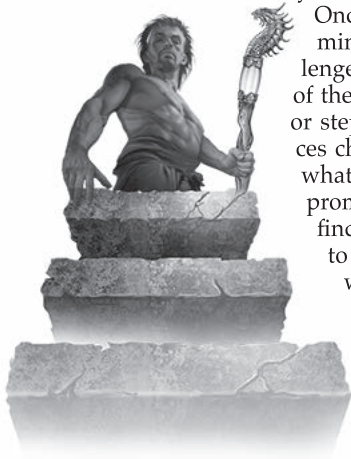
ASTROLOGY - Jupiter in Leo - in the victorious moment, we experience a rush of excitement and confidence (Leo) and receive the universe's bounty (Jupiter).



VII OF WANDS

A man stands atop a series of stone platforms. Six floating wands contest his position as "top dog".

The challenges and precariousness shown in the VII of Wands naturally follow as a result of the victory of the VI. Once one has obtained a victory or a prominent position, it's inevitable that challengers will come sniffing around for a piece of the action. Notice that the stone platforms or steps look aged and cracked. Circumstances change, the Wheel of Fortune turns, and what once appeared as a secure position of prominence now seems a bit shaky. If you find yourself in such a position, you'll need to strategize on how best to defend it, and whether it's even worth defending at this point.



ASTROLOGY - Mars in Leo - one who enjoys pride and authority (Leo) finds that being under attack (Mars) comes with the territory.

VIII OF WANDS

In place of the arrow-like astrological glyph for the sign Sagittarius, we see a living centaur with a bow and arrow, which is how the Babylonians and ancient Greeks interpreted the constellation of Sagittarius. Eight wands lift off like rockets from their launchpad.



Continuing the rocket analogy, we might say that in this card the project or enterprise whose story we've been following so far is really taking off, or achieving escape velocity. Great energies are being expended, and all systems are go. Even the centaur's arrow is taking off—it's actually a bolt of golden energy. Other interpretations might include someone who is being very forceful or direct, as well as a situation where things are taking off with you or without you, so you'd better jump aboard if you don't want to risk being left behind.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury in Sagittarius - the far-ranging and expansive effects (Sagittarius) that are felt when the mind is working at its peak capacity (Mercury).

IX OF WANDS

In this ambiguous image, a soldier huddles as he floats in the air, naked and vulnerable beneath his helmet and cape. Below him, what was once a bundle of wands is now undone. The dangling red ribbons clearly indicate the bundle was a fasces, as is pictured on the V of Wands. The undoing of the bundle, a process begun in the V, is now complete. Eight ravens congregate around the wands, while a ninth is perched on the soldier's shoulder.

One of the birds holds a thread of red ribbon in its beak. Are the birds going to bring the fasces back together? If so, the soldier has reason to hope, and we can predict that a final supreme effort will lead to success.



Or, perhaps the birds are further dismantling the bundle, in which case the raven on his shoulder is whispering into the soldier's ear that he will be victorious "Nevermore". This needn't indicate that your cause is hopeless; it may simply mean that someone's trying to convince you that it is.

ASTROLOGY - Moon in Sagittarius - the Sagittarius glyph is placed among the unbundled fasces, indicating that for now, the path to victory is clouded and the energy quiescent, while the Moon glyph is placed near the soldier, indicating his passive and defeated mood.

X OF WANDS

Like the IX of Wands, this card shows a person huddling in a fetal position while floating in the air. The IX shows a soldier, but on the X it's a dancer, bearing five wands. A large mirror reflects the wands so that there are ten wands in the image.

Traditionally, the card means bearing a burden. This dancer is certainly bearing a burden, and yet there seems to be a performative aspect to the scene. The dancer looks at us as if gauging our reaction. Ten wands seem like a heavy burden, but there are actually only five, the rest being mere reflections. This seems to be a person who is making a show of their burden, or even exaggerating it to make it look worse than it is..



ASTROLOGY - Saturn in Sagittarius - expressing limitations (Saturn) expansively (Sagittarius).

PAGE OF WANDS

The Page of Wands reacts by setting things in motion. She's a catalyst. She goes through life sparking things—positively, she could spark projects; negatively, she could spark conflicts. On her hand she balances a young dragon. It may be small now, but eventually it could change the world. As a messenger, she brings news or information regarding enterprises, projects, or actions.

KNIGHT OF WANDS

The Knight of Wands reacts by advocating. He commits to a cause and champions it. His confidence and commitment can improve the world, or he could veer into fanaticism. Notice how the top left beam of light is emanating from his crystal and simultaneously being breathed from the dragon tattoo's mouth. Does the knight follow the cause, or does the cause adapt itself to the knight? This knight's thoughts are about enterprises, projects, or actions.

QUEEN OF WANDS

The Queen of Wands reacts by studying motives—her own and others'. She holds up a dragon's egg, symbolizing her penetrating observations of the motivations of those around her. She might use her power to astutely analyze her friends and assist them in meeting their goals, or she may see hostile intentions, so that she sparks conflicts and creates enemies. Her fiery crown shows the potential for both.

KING OF WANDS

The King of Wands reacts by changing the game. If the Page of Wands hatches the dragon, the King is the one who will ultimately send it out, thus changing the face of the world. Expect the King of Wands to have the power and courage to challenge the status quo, for good or ill. But the burn scars on his face tell us that he may pay a price for his recklessness.



CUPS

Water is represented in Cups cards by glass goblets. Several of the cards show bodies of water or are actually underwater. Animals associated with water predominate, such as fish, swans and seagulls, as well as more fanciful creatures such as mermaids.

Cups can refer to several related concepts. First is emotion. Happiness, sadness, satisfaction, nostalgia and more can be seen on the cards. (Fierier emotions like anger are seen on the Wands.) Next, interpersonal relations, both relationships in themselves and the effects those relationships have on us. Then we have feeling—an unspoken communication of non-rational mood or tone. Cups can refer to creativity, particularly in the arts. Finally, the suit has traditionally been the province of intuitive activities like divination.

Pure Cups energy, when left to its own devices, is too passive, inward-facing and moody to provide happiness in the long run. Energy and activity (Wands) is needed, as is intellectual stimulation (Swords), and, most especially, the ability to deal with the real world (Coins). The lotus, which grows on water, needs to sink its roots in mud (i.e., earth) and reach its blossoms above the water (air) to absorb the sun's rays (fire) in order to thrive

ACE OF CUPS

This elaborate underwater construct is a glass goblet. The bowl of the goblet is shaped like a nautilus or ammonite shell. The two golden fish that form the stem are reminiscent of the two fish on the *Tarot de Marseille* II of Cups. Between the fishes' tails is the elemental sign for Water.

The Ace of Cups can refer to either the beginnings of a new emotion, or a sudden rush of emotion. When interpreting the card in light of a relationship, it would show not the relationship itself (the Lovers or II of Cups would be more appropriate for that), but rather the emotional impact of a new relationship, or a new emotional phase of a long-standing relationship.

The card might mean a new invitation or approach from someone who wants to show their interest. It could mean an inspiration or idea involving a creative project. No matter how it manifests, we can think of it as an emotional "a-ha!" moment.



II OF CUPS

Among the two “relationship” cards (the other being the Lovers), the II of Cups examines the day-to-day, down-to-earth aspects of any relationship, whether romantic or otherwise. The first things we notice on the card are the two large blue profiles, which seem to be made of stone and coral. Below them are two similar but smaller profiles. Interestingly, the more realistically-drawn profiles below are actually more ephemeral, mere projections onto the glass goblets, while the blue fantasy figures seem more concrete. Which are the fantasy couple, and which the real?

Another interesting factor is the gender flip between the “real” couple and the “fantasy” couple. This could indicate our tendency to create a persona for the other person while keeping the real self hidden. It could also refer to Jung’s theory of an unconscious masculine aspect of women (“animus”) and corresponding feminine side of men (“anima”). Finally, it can simply remind us that gender roles are just that, roles; in any relationship, there is always some fluidity of roles.



The submarine or underwater dwelling at the top of the card could symbolize the relationship itself, as a concept or idea created by the two participants whose foreheads it connects.

In a reading, the card can be a generic token for “relationship,” and the reader would look to surrounding cards and/or the layout position meaning for indications about the state or condition of the relationship. Otherwise, the card is a reminder of the reflections, refractions, complexities and subtleties inherent in any human relationship.

ASTROLOGY - Venus in Cancer - your impulse to relate (Venus) finds a home port, a dependable focus for its attention (Cancer).

III OF CUPS

Three mermaids undulate to their own rhythm. This card traditionally signifies celebrations and the successful conclusion of a matter. More recently, it has been interpreted as friendships between like-minded people, or affinity groups. Negatively, it can indicate overindulgence. We might call it the “party hearty” card.

Mermaids, and similar creatures such as selkies and sirens, have appeared in myths and legends of many cultures. Like substances ingested at parties, these beings can be both benevolent and treacherous.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury in Cancer - communicating to others (Mercury) your feelings of well-being and rootedness (Cancer).



IV OF CUPS

A woman sits among lakeside grasses, under a tree. A swan floats by, holding the sign of Cancer in its beak. The woman watches a glass goblet moving toward her, skimming the surface of the water.

The woman is holding the Moon, the planet of emotions. The swan seems to be offering her emotional safe harbor, symbolized by the Cancer glyph. The approaching goblet speaks of possibilities. A swan image appears on the goblet, either a reflection or a prediction. The woman seems bemused and interested, but doesn't move to grasp the approaching goblet.

This card represents a moment in the balance. An opportunity appears. Do you like your life the way it is, or will you accept the offered potential for change?

ASTROLOGY - Moon in Cancer - having attained a secure and comfortable environment (Cancer), you may feel moved to look for greener pastures (Moon).



V OF CUPS

There's a lot of drama in this picture. A woman sits on her windowsill, hunched over, clutching herself, while her glassware tumbles and breaks around her. Behind her, unseen, floats a giant goblet.

Clearly she's experiencing a romantic disappointment—two roses are tumbling along with the glassware. If appropriate to the reading, we might see her despair as a touch overdone. We might even imagine that the giant goblet behind her is clearing its throat—"ahem!"—to announce its presence.



Someone is sad, but is focusing too much on the sadness. It's time for the person to turn around and notice the potential for happiness—greater happiness than what was lost—that is there for the taking.

ASTROLOGY - Mars in Scorpio - circumstances force you (Mars) to reconsider what's important to you (Scorpio).

VI OF CUPS

Six hot-air-balloon-colored goblets float, suspended in the sky, their gondolas shaped like fantasy creatures. A young girl and her pink teddy bear watch the scene from a fairy-tale meadow.

Traditionally this card means nostalgia. It could mean an overly rosy memory of the past, or any unrealistic memory, whether too positive or too negative. It could mean unrealistic expectations of the present or future (even the rainbow is unrealistic, standing on its end).

Contrarily, the card could be taken as encouragement to use your imagination and creativity, either in a creative project or simply to solve a dilemma by thinking outside the box.

ASTROLOGY - Sun in Scorpio - an intense longing (Scorpio) for experiences remembered with warmth and joy (Sun).





VII OF CUPS

A clock; minarets; jewelry; a mysterious blindfolded figure in red; a key; a book; a snake. All are contained in a set of seven glass goblets. Behind them, a rainbow hangs in the sky.

Interpretations of this card usually center around two concepts: choice and fantasy. Usually the card shows the breadth of choice available to the querent, who will need to decide which path to pursue. The reader could decide to focus on one of the goblets as significant, based on whichever one seems to jump out during a reading.

The querent may be blocking their own forward motion with indecision or daydreaming. Perhaps they are spending too much time on social media or gaming, and their real-world life is suffering from neglect.

ASTROLOGY - Venus in Scorpio - preferences (Venus) are rooted in deep-seated and intense feelings (Scorpio).

VIII OF CUPS

A woman is half-submerged in turbulent waves but is also turning her back on them. The choppy water and the elaborate fish glimpsed beneath the water suggest that there's a lot going on beneath the surface. The woman has decided that she's had enough of the emotional turbulence, and is instead focused on the calmness and freedom of the seagulls.



We all have days where nothing seems more appealing than just chucking it all and escaping to a new life. It's important to note that while the woman wishes to escape the waves, she's also still a part of them. If she actually does make a move, she may find that she brings some of her old troubles with her, especially if she continues to avoid dealing with them by turning her back on them.

ASTROLOGY - Saturn in Pisces - an impulse to end (Saturn) involvement in unexamined feelings (Pisces).

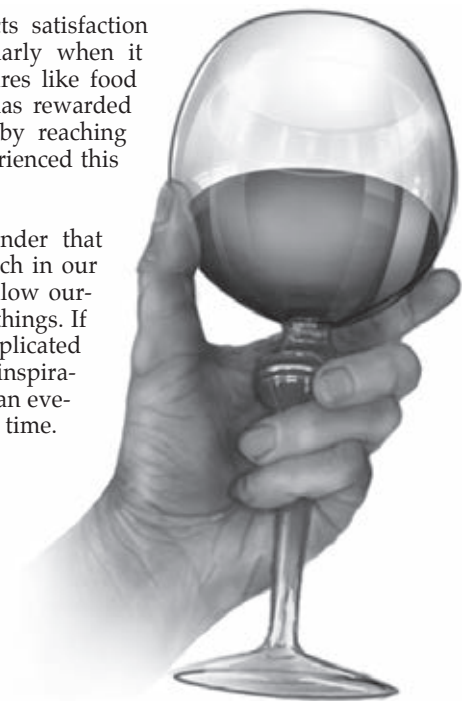
IX OF CUPS

Good times are promised by the signboard depicting wineglasses and grapes. In the background are the exteriors of two pubs, the Hollybush and the Horseshoe (both common names for pubs in Great Britain).

Generally the card predicts satisfaction and contentment, particularly when it comes to mundane pleasures like food and drink. Anyone who has rewarded or comforted themselves by reaching for a donut will have experienced this card's energy!

The card is a good reminder that sometimes we live too much in our heads, and we forget to allow ourselves to enjoy the simple things. If you're grappling with complicated concepts, you might find inspiration by forgetting it all for an evening, and having a good time. Cheers!

ASTROLOGY - Jupiter in Pisces - simple abundance (Jupiter) can lead to deeper satisfactions (Pisces).



X OF CUPS

Ten goblets float in the air, with many indications of a happy and well-established family home: framed portraits, a hutch cabinet with books, a fireplace, a cat and dog, a picket fence, and, representing the passage of time and generations, a book with its pages flipping in the wind. All of these symbols are embraced by the branches of a vast tree.

This card emphasizes the importance of family in our lives. Many of us have actual families that we can share the good times with, and who will support us and give solace in not-so-good times. For those who don't currently have much family, or whose overall family experiences have not been positive, there are found families or families of choice.

In a reading, besides referring to biological families or families of choice, the card can stand for any situation that is long-lasting, stable and positive. On the negative side, the image might suggest some wishful thinking or unrealistic expectations.

A bittersweet note is sounded by the book with its pages riffling in the wind. Time passes, memories fade, and soon enough, our own page will have turned. Perhaps the ultimate meaning of the card is that at the end of our journey, a cozy hearth and faithful friends await.

ASTROLOGY - Mars in Pisces - the drive to establish one's domain (Mars) is tempered by awareness of a higher reality (Pisces) underlying everyday family events.



PAGE OF CUPS

The Page of Cups reacts by daydreaming. Submerged in her own world, she processes what happens to her by watching what comes across her inner landscape. In this case, she watches a turtle who is himself daydreaming (we can imagine that his oxygen bubbles are thought balloons). In her arms is a seahorse-shaped jellyfish, indicating the malleability of her inner world. As a messenger, she brings news or information about feelings or intuitions.

KNIGHT OF CUPS

The Knight of Cups reacts by seeking emotional adventure. Not content with superficial appearances, he plumbs the depths of emotion, daring himself and others to acknowledge feelings, no matter how profound or uncomfortable. When this knight appears in a reading, it's a sure sign that there is some emotional truth that the querent has been avoiding. The knight invites the querent to confront it head on. His thoughts are about feelings or intuitions.

QUEEN OF CUPS

The Queen of Cups reacts by taking everyone's emotional temperature. A born diplomat, she attunes herself to the emotional currents in the air, and subtly adjusts her words and actions accordingly. Perhaps her sea anemone headdress acts like an antenna, helping her sense the currents. She can be difficult to pin down regarding her own preferences, because she's so focused on other people.

KING OF CUPS

The King of Cups reacts by managing storms. People experiencing emotional distress tend to seek him out for his advice, his compassion and his tranquil strength. His serenity can be misleading, though; the swordfish on the card suggests he can be ruthless when necessary.



SWORDS

Air is represented in Swords cards by birds, wings and clouds. The sword itself is a good analogy of the swift, efficient, effective, but wounding and double-edged nature of thoughts and words.

In playing-card divination, Spades (the playing-card suit that corresponds to the tarot's Swords) is traditionally the suit of bad news. We can still see echoes of this tradition in the Swords suit of the *Mystic Palette Tarot*. Several of the Swords cards are alarming, disturbing, disquieting, sad, melancholic, or otherwise negative.

The playing-card tradition depended on suits being happy (Hearts and Diamonds) or sad (Spades). Modern tarot readers, however, tend to see each card in each suit as having the potential for positive or negative interpretations, and thus we interpret the Swords cards from a more neutral position. Swords, from the modern viewpoint, represent thought, rationality and communication. The various birds and wings symbolize the lightning-fast processes of the mind (and lightning too makes its appearance in this suit). Swords cards show victory through the exercise of thought, but they also show the difficulties that can be caused by an over-reliance on thought, or by its misuse.

The sharp edges of Swords can be ameliorated by the energies of the other suits, primarily Cups to provide compassion and an awareness of others' feelings. Also helpful is Wands energy to get you out of the planning phase and into the doing phase, and Coins energy to remind you that there are real-world consequences to thoughts and words.

ACE OF SWORDS

In this striking image, an elaborate sword hilt stands upright, bearing the elemental symbol for Air. An eagle has its wings outstretched as if landing, and an extreme close-up of the eagle's face looms over all.

The main meaning for this card is a new idea, perfectly symbolized by the landing eagle. New ideas often seem to appear out of the blue, shocking us with the force of their immediacy. And these ideas are not just passing fancies, but have significant, life-changing implications. These are the kinds of ideas that have wings, that are able to lift us up to a different level or carry us to a different place.



Besides being a symbol of thought and communication, a sword is also a weapon, of course. Thus, the card can mean a use of force, either responsibly (such as a reasonable defense of self, home, or family against attack) or irresponsibly (out of anger or fear).

II OF SWORDS

A sword dancer guards the Fool's inner sanctum.

This card appears when the querent is keeping information, or a part of themselves, hidden. The dancer is keeping her guard up, not letting anyone slip by her defenses. She keeps herself blindfolded so as not to be fooled by appearances. Of course, this isn't sustainable in the long run; eventually she'll have to lower her guard and learn to trust, if only to maintain her own health and sanity.

Alternatively, she might be weighing and judging between two possibilities (symbolized by the swords) that seem of equal value. Like the figure of Justice, the sword dancer blindfolds herself to be sure her judgment is fair to all concerned.



ASTROLOGY - Moon in Libra - our natural tendency (Moon) to weigh, analyze and compare (Libra).

III OF SWORDS

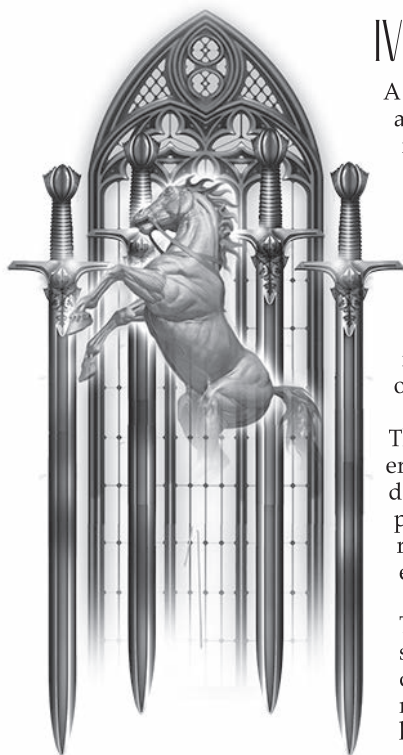
A man, whose eyes are filled with tears, reaches toward a tattoo on his chest. The tattoo, a winged broken heart, drips real blood onto his hand.

This is traditionally the card of heartbreak and sorrow. One might think such negative emotions belong on a Cups card. Cups has its own unhappiness card (the V of Cups), but the III of Swords refers instead to the mental aspect of sadness, how the mind can amplify and prolong negative emotions by turning an unfortunate incident into a permanent grievance. The actual blood dripping from the tattoo is an indication of how much real damage can be done by the mind's obsessive nature.

From a more positive perspective, the card can be seen as describing an upsetting but necessary action, such as leaving a situation you have grown accustomed to but that you know isn't ultimately where you belong.

ASTROLOGY - Saturn in Libra - difficulties (Saturn) experienced on the path toward ultimate balance (Libra).





IV OF SWORDS

A winged angel, prone, floats in the air, shrouded in white. A white horse rears up. A church window stands in the background.

This card stands for a period of rest and recuperation. Perhaps there has been a physical, mental, or emotional difficulty that requires recovery. Or it may simply mean rest and relaxation in between periods of hard work.

The white horse is a vision of the energy that exists as a future potential, despite the present inaction. This emphasizes the necessity of regular periods of rest in order to stay at peak effectiveness.

The church window suggests that spiritual understanding often requires a quiet space and a quiet mind. In a spiritual context, a white horse can mean enlightenment.

ASTROLOGY - Jupiter in Libra - creative abundance (Jupiter) will flourish in a peaceful environment (Libra).

V OF SWORDS

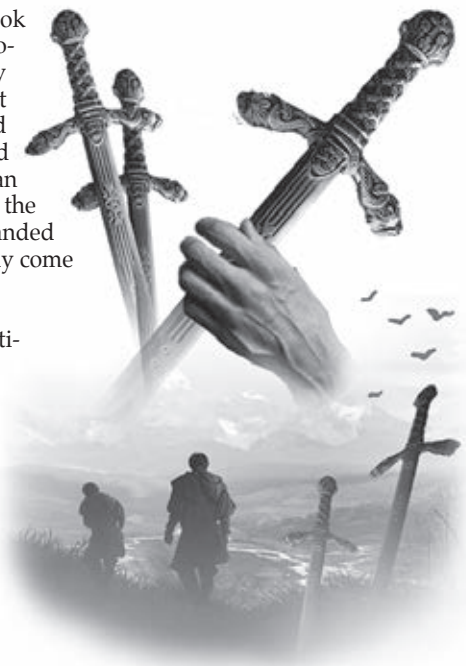
This card shows the aftermath of a fight. The losers are slinking off with their proverbial tails between their legs, injured or just embarrassed. The winner looks back at us with a suspicious expression. The swords are the spoils of his victory, and he grasps one of them by the blade. The sky is ominous, with storm clouds and carrion birds.

The V of Swords is about a confrontational, us-versus-them attitude. Everything is reduced to who is winning and who is losing. Notice that the

victorious figure doesn't look very happy about his victory—instead, he's already on the lookout for the next threat. Grasping a sword by the blade is never a good idea, and in this case we can be reasonably certain that the victor won by underhanded means, which will eventually come back to bite him.

In a reading, we may identify with the winner, who in the end may not have won much at all, or the loser, who is humiliated but may return to fight another day.

ASTROLOGY - Venus in Aquarius - valuing (Venus) our own cause (Aquarius) to such an extent that we forget to have consideration for others.



VI OF SWORDS

In the *Rider-Waite-Smith* version of this card, two hooded figures, one large, one small (presumably a parent and child) sit in a boat, which is being pushed through the water by a boatman or gondolier. Typically, the image is interpreted as a somber, quiet journey away from a troubled situation.

In the *Mystic Palette* card, the boat is occupied by a woman and a cat. The boatman has been transmogrified into a blackbird and an owl. As in a fairy tale, the birds are animal helpers—the blackbird lights the way with a chandelier, and the owl guides the boat. The six swords, rather than being stuck into the deck, are now in the water, lurking like landmines or torpedoes.



The boat is specifically a gondola; the six “teeth” on the prow are a traditional symbol on gondolas for the six districts of Venice. Ciro has a personal connection to this image; as a child, his mother brought him to England from their native Italy to escape domestic abuse.

The owl, the cat and the boat are also a reference to the nonsense poem by Edward Lear, “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat” (“The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea/In a beautiful pea-green boat”).

There is plenty of symbolism here, but the card’s significance in a reading can rely on its mood or tone, suggesting an uneasy escape, a melancholy but hopeful journey to a new life.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury in Aquarius - a strategy (Mercury) for accomplishing one’s goal in an unorthodox way (Aquarius).

VII OF SWORDS

This hawk is acting more like a magpie, carrying away five swords in his claws and the moon in his beak. He looks back sadly at two more swords stuck in the ground, which he will have to come back for. In his greediness, he’s overloaded himself, and he must beat his wings frantically to stay aloft while weighed down by his ill-gotten loot.

We experience the VII of Swords every time we try to get away with something that we know we oughtn’t get away with. Whether it be a pen we brought home from the



office, or something more consequential, our spirit, like the noble hawk's, is diminished when we act in unethical ways.

In a reading, the querent may be acting sneakily in some fashion, or may be the victim of such behavior. On a more positive note, sneakiness can be characterized as diplomacy, a non-confrontational way to get what one wants without harm to others.

ASTROLOGY - Moon in Aquarius - as humans we share a tendency (Moon) to rebel (Aquarius) against ethical guidelines.

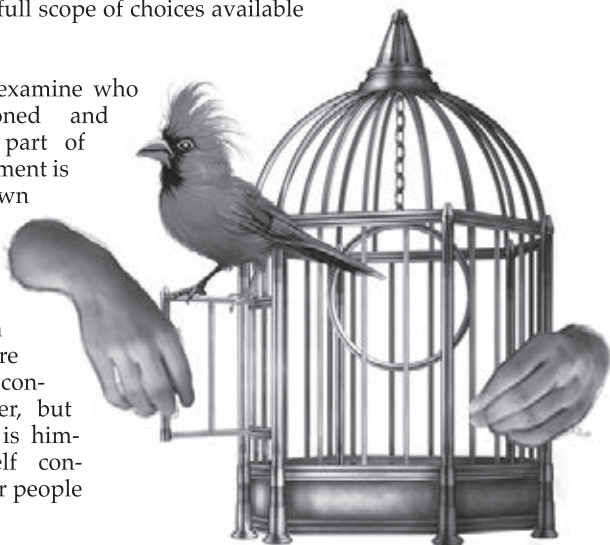
VIII OF SWORDS

A blindfolded woman is surrounded and hemmed in by eight swords. She's opening the door of a birdcage, but the bird (a northern cardinal) stands on the cage door, refusing to fly away.

The cardinal has been freed but is still captive, because of its own fearful mindset. Likewise, while the woman appears imprisoned, it's only her own fear of freedom that keeps her trapped. Or perhaps she simply finds it easier to live in a prison of the mind than to explore the full scope of choices available to her.

In a reading, examine who feels imprisoned and whether any part of their imprisonment is due to their own self-doubt or fears.

This card can also describe a situation where one person is controlling another, but the controller is himself or herself controlled by other people or forces.



ASTROLOGY - Jupiter in Gemini - the mind has been too active (Jupiter) and has woven the complicated web (Gemini) which now imprisons it.

IX OF SWORDS

The meaning of this card can be discerned entirely from the woman's stance and expression. Her look of extreme anxiety and her fetal position tell us that she is quite stressed. There are various clues to her disordered state of mind. The moon above looks somewhat distorted. Many of the birds, representing her thoughts, are turning into swords and surround her threateningly. On her arm hangs the glyph for destructive Mars. She seems captive to her anxiety and unable to break free.

In a reading, this may be an ultimately positive card, because it can indicate that something that the querent is worried about is a problem more because of the querent's anxiety about it than because of any actual threat.

ASTROLOGY - Mars in Gemini - an overactive imagination (Gemini) becomes preoccupied with conflict and struggle (Mars).

X OF SWORDS

Playing the creative and subversive role of the Fool can take its toll. The winged angel on the card is exhausted and spent, held captive by energy beams emanating from ten swords. He has just removed his fool's cap and bells, which dangle from his hand.

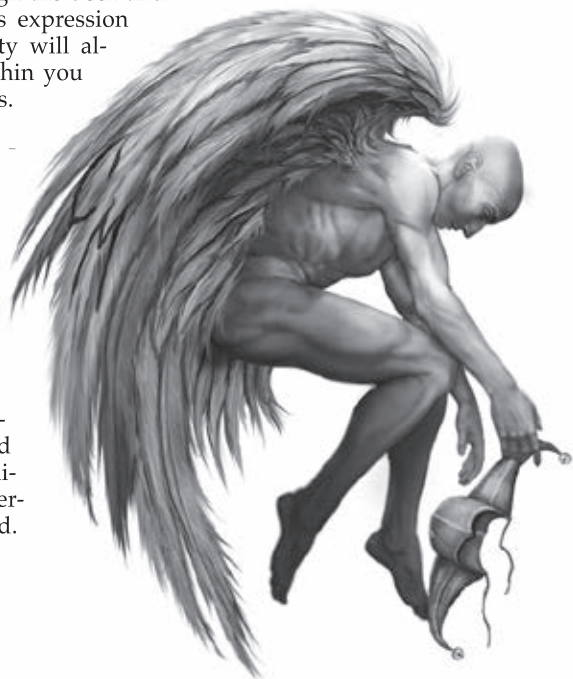


The miraculous powers of the mind can help us reach the highest heights, but they can also take us to the lowest depths. This card shows the depths. The VIII, IX and X of Swords illustrate the increasingly dire straits the mind will take us to if left to its own devices, unchecked by the mitigating influences of the other suits.

In the X, that which we hold most dear—that spark of humor and humanity represented by the Fool—is abandoned, replaced by crushing despair. The conscious mind, the ego, wants nothing more than to be always right. A curious, searching, hungry mind is willing to admit its mistakes and to learn from them, but a cynical and self-victimizing mind wants only to wallow in its victimhood.

Fortunately, there is a way out of this nightmare, and we see it right in the picture—the fool’s cap. Because we’re human, we often let our obsessions and anxieties get the best of us. But also because we’re human, we always have access to the Fool’s spark of humor. Go through the deck and find the Fool. His expression of genial humanity will allow the angel within you to spread its wings.

ASTROLOGY -
Sun in Gemini - here we see the end result of identifying too closely with our ego consciousness (Sun), what Buddhists refer to as the Monkey Mind, which chatters endlessly and obsessively (Gemini) so that true perception is obscured.



PAGE OF SWORDS

The Page of Swords reacts by not reacting. Instead, she plans (symbolized by the wings on her head). We can admire and emulate her ability to forego short-term satisfaction in order to achieve long-term goals. On the other hand, she can represent a dangerous tendency to plot revenge rather than deal with negative emotions in a healthier manner. As a messenger, she brings news or information about ideas and communications.

KNIGHT OF SWORDS

The Knight of Swords reacts by jumping to conclusions. Positively, this knight makes snap judgements that are often valid, and he gains advantage by being the first to act, while everyone else is still hanging back, waiting to see which way the wind will blow. Negatively, if his initial assumption is wrong, it can start a faulty chain of reasoning that can ultimately lead to the disaster shown in the Tower. This knight's thoughts are about ideas and communications.

QUEEN OF SWORDS

The Queen of Swords reacts by trying to see things from others' point of view. This enables her to understand others' positions more clearly. Her ability to put herself in other people's shoes makes her a sincere philanthropist and thus creates goodwill. On the other hand, her eagerness to understand others' viewpoints can make her reluctant to advocate for herself and her loved ones when such advocacy is necessary and appropriate.

KING OF SWORDS

The King of Swords reacts by strategizing what to do next. He doesn't waste time by putting things off until some future date; instead, he plans for immediate action, as indicated by the eagles on the card. While the Page of Swords plots success or revenge in some indefinite future, the King is ready to act.



COINS

Earth is represented in Coins cards by flora and fauna. We might imagine all these animals, birds, insects, trees and plants as being close-up views of the ones emanating from the Empress's head. In a literal sense, earth is the growing medium for most plant life, which in turn feeds the animals. In human society, money is a convenient system of exchange that we use to obtain the resources we need to live, and thus the element Earth is symbolized by coins.

Coins refer to the natural world and, by extension, materiality in general. Coins can symbolize ideas or thoughts, but they would be practical or mundane considerations, rather than airy abstractions. Several of the Coins cards suggest the cycles of growth and harvest. As a system of value exchange, the suit can mean money specifically or finances in general.

If one wants to build a house, it's not enough to dry or bake mud bricks (a Coin activity). To begin the project, you will need to borrow some inspiration and drive from the Wands cards. Swords will be necessary to plan out the architecture (and to cut things with!). And some Cups creativity will contribute much-welcomed esthetic values.

ACE OF COINS

In dense woods, flora and fauna surround a large coin or disk stamped with the image of a stag and the elemental symbol for Earth.

Coins are the suit of the material world and of value systems such as money. Aces are beginnings. Thus, the Ace of Coins can be thought of as the "seed" card. In the context of gardening or landscaping, it could be a literal seed. In a broader context, it could be a youthful stage of any living thing (several of the creatures shown in the card are young), or the early stages of a project that involves working with physical materials. In finances, it could be "seed money," a loan or gift used to start a business or make an investment, something that will hopefully generate profits down the road.

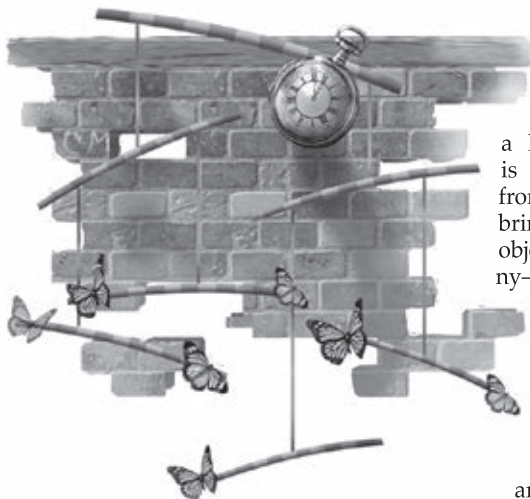
The shape of the coin itself has some interesting dimensions. As a coin, it symbolizes payment for services and exchange of value. As a plate or platter, it carries and holds food. As the base for the goblet that is the symbol for the suit of Cups, it supports and makes possible the hospitality and



emotional life of that suit. As a flat, circular plane, it suggests the circumference of a planet, or the plane of a solar system or a galaxy.

When this card appears in a reading, materiality or value are an important aspect of the situation. A seed will take root, a coin or a plate will be offered.

II OF COINS



A woman sits on a brick wall, which itself hangs suspended in the air. In one hand, she holds a large coin; a bluejay is either taking a coin from her other hand, or bringing it to her. Other objects keep her company—a pocket watch; the goat-serpent chimera seen on the Devil card; and a mobile or kinetic art piece, constructed of blue and pink striped wands and monarch butterflies.

This card symbolizes the one ubiquitous characteristic of the material world, which is constant change. The birds are bringing and taking away the coins; she only gets to hold them on a temporary basis. Time is ticking away on the pocket watch, signaling change second by second. The chimera is a freeze-frame image, a goat captured in the process of turning into a fish. The hanging mobile is constantly forming new shapes with every little breeze. Even the brick wall that supports the woman is changing, with bricks simultaneously appearing and vanishing.

In a reading, this card will show where change is an important element. The woman's untroubled expression reminds us that successful living depends not on how high we can ascend in life, but rather on our ability to manage change.

ASTROLOGY - Jupiter in Capricorn - channeling the unlimited potential of Jupiter through the structure and discipline of Capricorn will help you to realize accomplishment through managing change.

III OF COINS

On this card we see leafcutter ants in action. Leafcutters, a type of ant comprising many different species, have a remarkably complex cooperative social structure. Not only do they cooperate with each other, but they also have an interdependent relationship with a type of fungus that they cultivate in gardens in their nests. The ants keep the fungus fed with leaves; in return, the fungus is used by the ants to feed their larvae.

When this card appears, cooperation is the order of the day. The card may be suggesting or describing a cooperative approach. Together, the cooperators will achieve a result that would have been impossible if they had acted separately. The ants' complex social structure reminds us that things may be more connected than they appear at the surface.

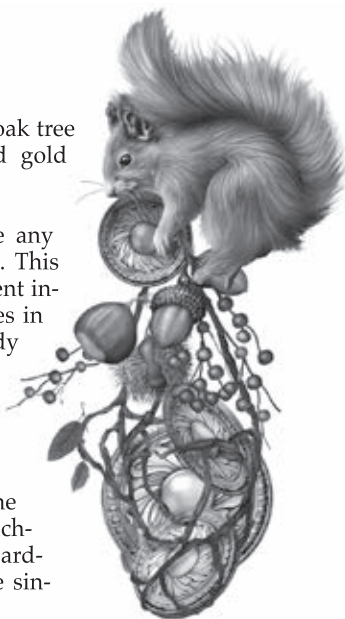
ASTROLOGY - Mars in Capricorn - The self-disciplined Capricorn helps harness the transformative energies of Mars for the common good.



IV OF COINS

In this fanciful image, a squirrel in an oak tree stores walnuts, acorns, chestnuts and gold coins for the winter.

In a reading this card would indicate any kind of hoarding, saving, or investing. This could include anything from a retirement investment account to a stash of Twinkies in the closet. Notice that unlike the "Greedy Man" of the *Rider-Waite-Smith* card, there is no value judgment here. It's perfectly natural to gather resources, just as it's perfectly natural for a squirrel to store nuts for the winter. At the same time, just as with any of the cards, there can be too much of a muchness, and we might find ourselves hoarding those Twinkies with a squirrel-like single-mindedness.



ASTROLOGY - Sun in Capricorn - your ego (Sun) can all too easily find itself creating its own prison (Capricorn).

V OF COINS

An elderly man studies a coin that is falling into his outstretched palm. Golden light pours down from a church window.

This card can be interpreted in different ways depending on context. From a spiritual perspective, it could show a study of sacred writings, or spiritual pursuits in general. It might show someone who pays too much attention to the outward forms of spirituality, such as dogma or ritual,



while ignoring its greater context (the man on the card focuses on the coin in front of him while seemingly ignoring the greater spiritual pattern revealed above).

Setting aside the religious or spiritual context, the image could simply mean someone receiving something. The church setting might suggest that the gift is as a result of social obligation rather than personal feeling. It's a gift from someone of higher social status to someone of lower social status, not an exchange between equals. Such a gift, while usually welcomed by the recipient, also creates or reflects a gulf between the giver and the receiver.

If we see the man as outside the church instead of inside it, then it emphasizes the above interpretation of a social obligation rather than a gesture of friendship. The church might symbolize a social institution that spits out a coin for the man but still locks the door against him.

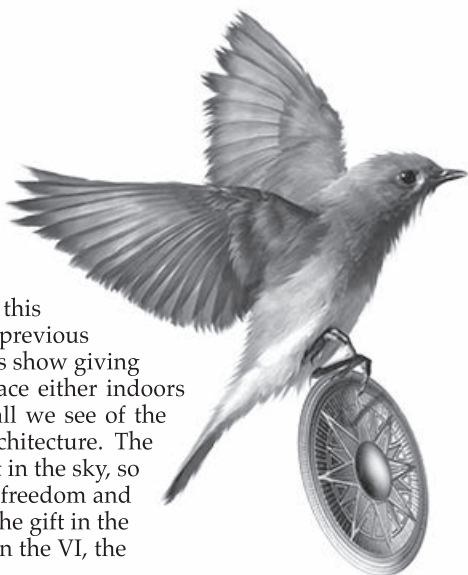
Alternatively, perhaps it is the man himself who keeps the door shut. Because he sees himself as an outcast, he refuses to approach the door, which might open to him welcomingly if he would but knock.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury in Taurus - a careful and deliberate (Taurus) study (Mercury).

VI OF COINS

A woman with a benevolent expression takes a coin from her basket of coins, and places it into a bird's nest.

The easiest way to consider this card is to contrast it with the previous card, the V of Coins. Both cards show giving and receiving. The V takes place either indoors or directly outside a church; all we see of the environment is man-made architecture. The VI takes place outdoors, in fact in the sky, so there is an immediate sense of freedom and openness compared to the V. The gift in the V is a social obligation, while in the VI, the



giving is motivated by a more personal feeling, a maternal protectiveness with love at its core. The woman's action of placing the coin in the nest reminds us of a mother bird feeding her hatchlings.

In a reading, the card means giving and receiving as an expression of love.

ASTROLOGY - Moon in Taurus - maternal, compassionate and protective instincts (Moon) expressed in a patient and tireless way (Taurus).

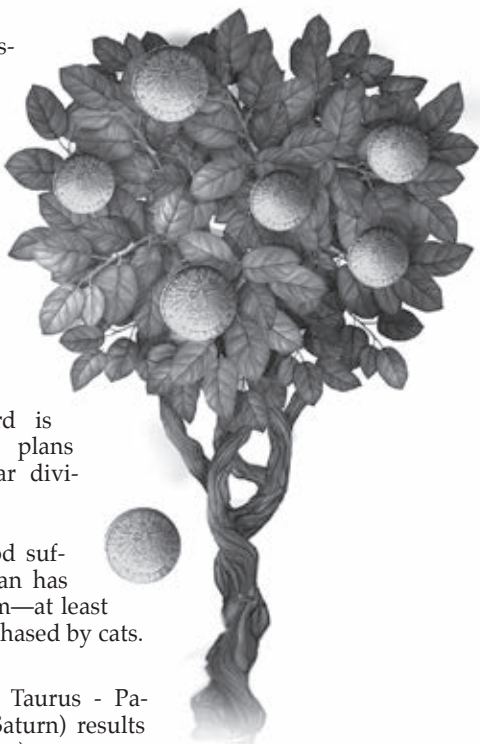
VII OF COINS

In the Ace of Coins, we discussed the coin as a seed planted by a gardener. In the VII, the gardener can rest from her labors; her tree has grown fruit. She communes with an oriole who has alighted on a single coin she has picked from the tree. Surrounding her tree are well-tended flowers, gardening pots and a sleepy house cat.

The meaning of this card is straightforward. Well-laid plans bear fruit. Investments bear dividends. Hard work pays off.

A calm, contemplative mood suffuses the image. The woman has created a peaceable kingdom—at least for now, no birds are being chased by cats.

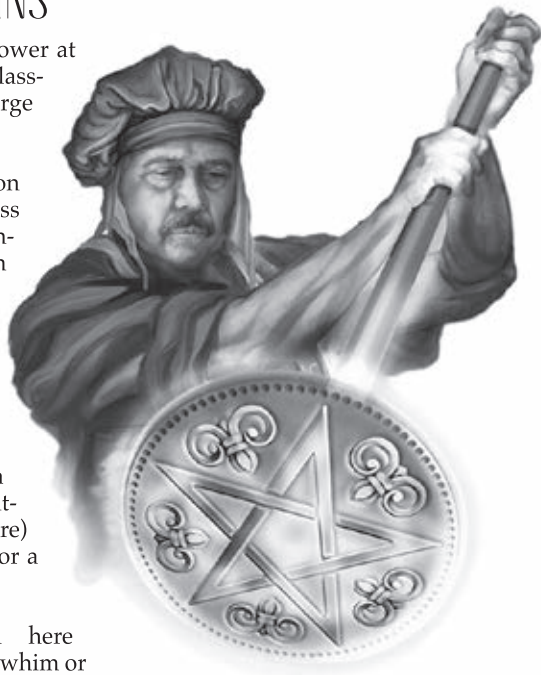
ASTROLOGY - Saturn in Taurus - Patience and self-discipline (Saturn) results in material enjoyment (Taurus).



VIII OF COINS

Here we see a glassblower at work, but instead of glassware, he's making a large gold coin.

The process of creation is illustrated across the suits. Creative inspiration is shown in Cups, and discipline and structure are described in Swords. Wands show us the enterprising spirit necessary to begin a project. In Coins, all of that manifests as a physical object (a painting, a book, a sculpture) or an action (a dance or a piece of music).



The artist pictured here doesn't create art on a whim or only when the mood strikes him.

Instead, he considers himself both an artist and an artisan. His products are proudly displayed in a line across his doorway. He produces because that is his job, and along with purely esthetic matters, he has to concern himself with the mundane realities of making a living with his art, including scheduling and cost of materials. Nevertheless, he's still able to take pleasure in the creative side of his work.

In a reading, the card could refer any job requiring repetitive actions. When positive, the person will take pleasure in a job well-done and will find creative fulfillment. When negative, the work can become tedious and lack fulfillment.

ASTROLOGY - Sun in Virgo - identifying (Sun) with one's work (Virgo).

IX OF COINS

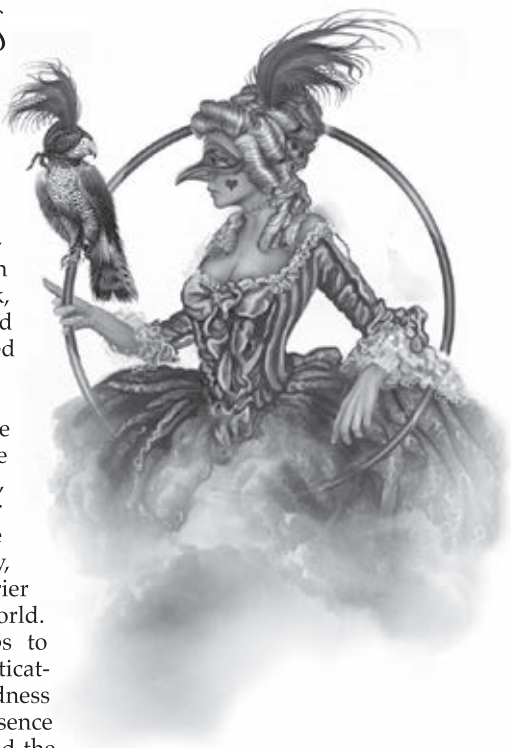
A metal vessel containing a gold-fruited plant indicates abundance and success. Above is an enigmatic image of a woman holding a hoop, upon which sits a hooded hawk. The woman wears a beak-like mask, and both woman and hawk bear decorative red feathers.

While successful, the woman appears to have restricted her options, perhaps as a price for her success. The hoop she holds frames her nicely, but also places a barrier between her and the world. The hawk's hood helps to keep it calm and domesticated, but taming its wildness also diminishes its essence as a hawk. The hawk and the

woman, with her beak-mask, seem to identify with each other. We might compare this card with the VIII of Swords, on which another captor and captive have a complex relationship with each other.

We might call this card "the price of success". Any success we find on a particular road will at some point have us wondering what would have happened on the road not taken. Our successes end up defining us, and, to a certain extent, narrowing our idea of ourselves. Sometimes we need to be reminded that the Fool is always available to widen our horizons again (and provide a kick in the pants when necessary).

ASTROLOGY - Venus in Virgo - Your desires (Venus) are shaped, and sometimes restricted, by a well-ordered environment (Virgo).



X OF COINS

A couple of enterprising toucans are adding to their pile of coins. The flora is appropriately tropical, and in the background is a tree-covered promontory. Vivid butterfly wings echo the vivid toucan bills.

This card shows an advanced stage in a project or investment, when the resources are stable and settled and growing by themselves, with only minimal actions and monitoring necessary to maintain profits. The tree-covered promontory suggests the sky is the limit.

When appearing in a reading, the card straightforwardly describes success. A negative interpretation might be appropriate if someone gets what they want, but finds that the wanting was more enjoyable than the having.

ASTROLOGY - Mercury in Virgo - strategies (Mercury) involving patient work (Virgo) will yield rewards.



PAGE OF COINS

The Page of Coins reacts by demonstrating affection. There are obviously emotions involved, but the emphasis here is on the physical gesture, whether it's a hug, or a touch on a hand, or an arm on a shoulder. The Page's approach is open-hearted, genuine and perhaps a bit naive. As a messenger, she brings news and information about the physical world.

KNIGHT OF COINS

The Knight of Coins reacts by getting to work. His determined gaze shows that he welcomes tedious and unexciting labor if it gets him closer to his goal. To his mind, any situation or problem can be solved by patient effort. His well-worn coin is proof that he's not afraid to get his hands dirty. This knight is not the one to go to if you're looking for a leap of faith or a flash of inspiration. Imagination isn't his strong suit. His thoughts are about the physical world.

QUEEN OF COINS

The Queen of Coins reacts by appreciating the world around her. In a difficult situation, she will either find things to appreciate, or she will withdraw to find solace in the things she loves. She can be a valuable ally because she can usually find something to like in almost any person or situation, but in truly difficult times she may vanish into her own world.

KING OF COINS

The King of Coins reacts by taking care of business. Like the Knight, he's not afraid of hard and painstaking work, but the King also has the breadth of vision to be able to manage a larger enterprise, not just what's in front of him. Long experience as a manager makes him a good person to consult for advice, but his viewpoint may be limited to practical matters; he may have a hard time comprehending emotional or spiritual dilemmas.



PART THREE: THE MYSTIC PALETTE SPREAD



1. Beginnings. The background of the situation, the root causes that lead to the action being proposed.
2. The Action (What if I...). This position either shows the action itself, or an important aspect of the action.
3. Others. Can show the effect that another person or other people in the querent's life will have on the action or as a result of the action, or, if a Court Card, the reaction that person or those people will have to the action.
4. Assumptions/Fears. Assumptions or fears that the querent has about the possible result of the action. The card in this position is always interpreted negatively.
5. Potential Rewards. What reward may come as a result of the action. The card in this position is always interpreted positively.
6. Endings. Not necessarily a "Final Outcome" card, but some aspect or something to consider about the potential result. Note that this potential ending may occur whether or not the contemplated action is taken. Perhaps the mere consideration of the action, even if untaken, is enough to set a thought in motion that may result in the ending shown on the card.
7. Changes. A change that could come about because of the action.

The purpose of this spread is to examine the background, ramifications and feelings around an action proposed to be taken by the querent. The proposed action could be anything, but obviously the more importance and consequence to the querent, the more interesting and satisfying the reading. Note that the final card to be read isn't 6 (Endings) but rather 7 (Changes). The emphasis of the reading isn't on being told what will happen in the future, but rather how the querent exploring how they feel about the changes that the proposed action would set in motion.

For those interested in the origins of the spread, the spread shape is inspired by the design of the *Mystic Palette* Wheel of Fortune card. The position meanings of positions 1 (Beginnings) and 6 (Endings) are inspired by that card's use of the *Tarot de Marseille's* Fool and World cards. The position meaning of card 7 (Changes) was inspired by the Wheel of Fortune's yin-yang symbol in that position. The position meanings of cards 2, 3, 4 and 5 are taken from the pattern of elemental symbols on the backs of the *Mystic Palette* cards (Action = Wands/Fire, Others = Cups/Water, Assumptions/Fears = Swords/Air and Potential Rewards = Coins/Earth).

READING 1



Should I move to another state?

1. Beginnings. The Fool. The story begins, appropriately enough, with the Fool, who represents an irresistible pull toward risk, change and growth. The querent's life may seem perfect just as it is, but however much we think we want stability and security, change and growth are also necessary ingredients.

2. The Action. IX of Wands. ("What if I... moved to another state?") The querent feels weary and at a standstill after some plan they had for their life came undone. The querent is hoping a move may provide some new momentum to their life.

3. Others. King of Cups. Some person or people in the querent's life will react to the proposed move by offering to help manage aspects of the move.

4. Assumptions/Fears. Queen of Cups. This Queen suggests that the querent fears that the move would cause the querent to have to work to manage others' reactions, for example by assuaging hurt feelings of friends and/or family who live nearby.

5. Potential Rewards. King of Swords. The IX of Wands in position 2 indicates the querent is at loose ends and drifting. Moving would provide the querent with the opportunity to strategize, make plans for the near future, and carry them out. Besides being necessary to enable the move, such activities might be healthy in themselves for the querent at this time in their life.

6. Endings. Ace of Cups. Notice the many fishes' eyes on the card. (There is even an eye at the starting point of the whorl of the horn that comprises the goblet). In this position the card suggests a new awareness of emotional possibilities after the malaise shown on the IX of Wands.

7. Changes. VI of Wands. The difference between the VI of Wands and the IX of Wands is clear. Where the figure on the IX is quiescent, the one on the VI is victorious. The querent is shown regaining both momentum and control of their life. The move would entail a lot of work, as shown on the other cards—obtaining advice (King of Cups), managing others' reactions (Queen of Cups) and strategizing (King of Swords), but the work itself would be a positive step to escape the doldrums of the IX of Wands

READING 2



Should I reach out to my aunt to reconcile?

1. Beginnings. III of Coins. This card shows the querent's previous cooperative and collaborative relationship with their aunt. It also shows the querent's belief that people ought to get along, as well as an acknowledgement of deep family ties despite the current estrangement.
2. The Action. Knight of Coins. ("What if I... reached out to my aunt?") The querent is willing to work at the relationship diligently, humbly and with patience.
3. Others. Lovers. The querent can expect a positive response from the aunt to the querent's overture.
4. Assumptions/Fears. X of Swords. The querent fears that if the relationship is reestablished, the result will be the same emotional dead ends and preoccupations that tanked the relationship in the first place.
5. Potential Rewards. VII of Cups. This card suggests that contrary to the fears expressed in position 4, in fact there are a number of ways this could go. We aren't locked into the destructive patterns of the past; if both parties choose a different way, then better results are possible.
6. Endings. Devil. This card serves as a flashing red warning light: tread carefully! There could be something toxic about the aunt's personality, or the querent's, that signals trouble ahead. Or it may simply be that their personalities are a poor match, and together they are worse than the sum of their parts when separate. The apple that the Devil offers the querent may represent the appealing prospect of a new and positive relationship with the aunt, but this new potential relationship may be one the querent will eventually regret. The querent will need to decide if this card represents a prediction that the new relationship will be a negative one, or if it simply serves as a warning as to what to avoid so as to ensure a positive result.
7. Changes. VI of Cups. Reaching out to the aunt may result in nostalgia for the positive qualities of the original relationship (before the estrangement), which may prove out of reach this time around. It could also show that the querent has unrealistic expectations for the new relationship. Specifically, the way the situation has changed is that the querent, contemplating a move toward a new relationship with their aunt, can more clearly see how both their memories of the past and their expectations for the future may be unrealistic.

If the querent decides to plow ahead with a friendly gesture, they should tread gently, keeping in mind the potential for negativity suggested by the Devil and the X of Swords, and to try to be sensitive to the aunt's point of view so that together, they can collaboratively (III of Coins) choose a path (VII of Cups) toward a new relationship (Lovers).

