

Eclectic Tarot

presents

Thirteen's Tarot Card Meanings

**Learn the meaning of Tarot cards,
with Thirteen's basic information
and observations on each of the 78 cards
in a Rider-Waite style Tarot deck.**

3rd Edition, 2011

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Introduction

Not long after I joined the Aeclectic Tarot Forum, I started an informal study group in hopes of going through the Rider-Waite deck and distilling out what most readers felt were good, basic meanings for beginners to learn.

This e-book is the result. Over the years, I have tweaked these meanings. This particular edition, however, has the most changes as I tried to consolidate all I'd learned in the intervening years with the some of the original, Rider-Waite meanings into a comprehensive whole.

I pass this onto you with blessings and a warm welcome onto the Path of the Tarot. It is a never ending, but always fascinating journey.

Bless'd Be
Thirteen

A Brief Note to Beginners about Learning Tarot Cards:

There are many ways to learn the cards. Key words is a popular method, where the student assigns "Key" words to each card and memorizes them like flash cards. So "Fool" is given a key word like "beginnings" and any time it turns up, that is what the reader thinks.

Another popular method is journal writing, where the student creates their own tarot book by writing down either their personal impressions or a combination of book meanings and impressions in a journal.

Some students rely on meditation, going over a card a day, even sleeping with them under their pillows. Some take classes in tarot reading, some use old fashioned memorization.

Most, however, rely on books. Books have their pros and cons. On the pro side, the student gets an overview of agreed on meanings, an idea of the history of the cards and the meaning of the symbols used. However, there is a tendency for books to overwhelm the student with too much information. Also, students have a bad habit of carrying their books around with them, looking up meanings every time they lay down cards. While very common, flipping through a book to remind you what the card is about is not a very good way to learn tarot.

The best way to use books is to take in what seems important to you, personally, about the card as you read the explanation. So when you read about the Fool, you may be struck by the fact that he is about being foolish.

That is certainly enough to start. Some time later, when you're more familiar with the deck, you may re-read this book, and be struck by the "new beginnings" aspect of the Fool. You'll add that to your "foolish" meaning. And still later, you may read over the meaning again and find that the "caution" symbolized by the dog seems important.

In short, you do not have to remember or be reminded of all the possible meanings the book gives you about the Fool. You start with what strikes you and add on, bit by bit. Very soon, you will not only have a very layered view of the Fool to draw on in interpreting him, but find that new insights and ideas are occurring to you, no book required.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the book meanings are not exact meanings, nor the only meanings. They are general and basic so that they can cover any topic from car repair to spiritual crises to internet chat rooms. Think of such books, including this one, like reading primers. The student learns that "A" is for "Apple." But the letter "A" can be used to create many more words than "Apple." Likewise, the student learns that the Fool means "beginnings." So when they get the Fool, they might consider if anything is new or beginning. The Fool, however, can also mean being foolish, or being carefree, or, given the image, taking the dog for a walk.

This book will give you meanings that are generally agreed on, like the sounds of the letters of the alphabet. They will allow you to discuss the cards with other students of the tarot. As you gain a deeper and better understanding of the cards, however, putting together those cards into words and words into sentences, you will see that the cards can express a great range of meaning, and there will be differing views on those meanings. Like differing ideas of how to pronounce words or what words can mean.

This is fine. Part of the trick to Tarot is getting it to tell you what it wants you, in particular, to know. Do not be afraid to trust your intuition, and remember that there is no rush, no one way of learning. Use whatever method or combination of methods help you to hear what the cards have to say.

Rider-Waite:

If a deck is called a "Tarot" deck then it is likely based on one of three decks: **Rider-Waite** (creator Arthur Edward Waite), **Thoth** (creator Alistair Crowley), or **Marseilles** (creator unknown). This book uses the Rider-Waite deck as that is the best known deck and the one that ninety percent of the decks use as their inspiration.

You may have already fallen in love with a deck, and that's all right. Be aware, however, that if you use another deck with this e-book, some of the

images described might not match up to what you see on your cards, as deck creators make changes to the images according to their own artistic inspirations or the theme of the deck.

Most importantly, do not feel that you have to learn all 78 cards at once. Get to know the cards as you would get to know people, go at your own pace learning as many or as few at a time as feels right to you.

Major Arcana

FOOL

Basic symbols

The fool in colorful motley, the pack tied to a staff, a small dog, a cliff.

Basic Story

With all his worldly possessions in one small pack, the Fool travels he knows not where. So filled with visions, questions, wonder and excitement is he, that he doesn't see the cliff he is likely to fall over. At his heel a small dog harries him (or tries to warn him of a possible mis-step). Will the Fool learn to pay attention to where he's going before it's too late?

Basic Meaning

At #0 (or, in some decks, #22, the last card as much as the first of the Majors) the Fool is the card of infinite possibilities. The bag on the staff indicates that he has all he needs to do or be anything he wants, he has only to stop and unpack. He is on his way to a brand new beginning. But the card carries a little bark of warning as well. While it's wonderful to be enthralled with all around you, excited by all life has to offer, you still need to watch your step, lest you fall and end up looking the fool.

Thirteen's Observations

As a card, the Fool ultimately stands for a new beginning often involving a literal move to a new home or job. The querent (meaning the sitter, or the one asking the cards for advice) might be starting to date again, or trying out some new activity. There's more than just change here, there is renewal, movement, and the energy of a fresh start.

In the Tarot, cards like The Magician or The Hermit can often stand for the querent or for someone in the querent's life. The Fool, however, usually stands for the querent, himself. They are back at zero, whether that be in romantic affairs, or career, work or intellectual pursuits. Far from being sad or frustrated by having to start over, however, the querent feels remarkably *free*, light hearted and refreshed, as if being given a second chance. They feel young and energized, as excited as a child who has discovered a new toyshop. Who knows what they will find on the shelves?

In addition, they likely have no idea where they're going or what they're going to do. But that doesn't matter. For the Fool, the most important thing is to just go out and enjoy the world. To see what there is to see and delight in all of it.

Unfortunately, this childlike state can make one overly optimistic or naive. A Fool can be a Fool. That business opportunity might not be so "sure fire" or amazing as it seems, and that new lover might not be so flawless.

Like the Fool, you might be so busy sightseeing and imagining the possibilities that you completely miss the fact that you're about to go right off a cliff! The card advises that one listen to that watchful little dog, which might be a concerned friend, a wise tarot reader, someone harassing you from the sidelines, or just your instincts. However exciting new beginnings may be, you still have to watch your step.

MAGICIAN

Basic Symbols

Red and white coloring, the lemniscate (infinity symbol), a small wand, a table displaying a chalice, a pentacle, a staff (wand) and a sword.

Basic Story

Travelling on his way, the Fool first encounters a Magician. Skilful, self-confident, a powerful magus with the infinite as a halo floating above his head, the Magician mesmerizes the Fool. When asked, the Fool gives over his bundled pack and stick to the Magician. Raising his wand to heaven, pointing his finger to Earth, the Magician calls on all powers. Magically, the cloth of the pack unfolds upon the table, revealing its contents. And to the Fool's eyes it is as if the Magician has created the future with a word. All the possibilities are laid out, all the directions he can take: The cool, airy Sword of intellect and communication, the fiery Wand of passions and ambition, the overflowing Chalice of love and emotions, the solid Pentacle of work, possessions and body.

With these tools, the Fool can create anything, make anything of his life. But here's the question, did the Magician create the tools, or were they already in the pack? Only the Magician knows - and on this mystery, our eloquent mage refuses to say a word.

Basic Meaning

At #1, the Magician is the male power of creation by willpower and desire. The lemniscate (infinity symbol) over his head indicates the energy of thought. Thus, he draws divine power down from the heavens into his white wand, molds it with that energy of thought, and makes it manifest on Earth (his finger pointing to the ground). This is that most ancient magic to make real whatever he imagines in his head merely by saying it aloud. ("And God said 'Let there be Light!' and there was Light").

Reflecting this is the fact that the Magician is often represented by Mercury. Mercury is the planet and god of smooth talkers and salesmen. Also clever with the sleight of hand (Mercury *was* the god of thieves!) and a medicine man - either a real doctor or someone trying to sell you snake oil.

The 4 suits before him remind us of the 4 aces, which in the Tarot symbolize the raw, undeveloped, undirected power of each suit. When the Magician appears, he reveals these to you. The tarot reader might well interpret this card as telling the querent that they will be given a vision, an idea, a magical, mental image of whatever it is they most want: the solution to a problem, an ambitious career, a love life, a job.

Thirteen's Observations

If any card in the Tarot is the Tarot, it is the Magician. He's one of the most recognizable cards, always a favorite. He's also the only card in the major arcana that refers to the minors with the "trumps" displayed upon his table. One way to look at them is as ideas that the Magician is offering you. Thus, the card is about getting an idea and finding a way to verbalize it. This is the first step toward making it a reality. Which is why the Magician can indicate a time when one is eloquent and charismatic, clever, witty, inventive and persuasive.

Keep in mind, however, that the Magician could be a trickster. If this card represents some magnetic person in the querent's life, they need to make sure that he's or she is a genuine magician, not a con man.

The card can also indicate an interest in certain careers or someone who is already in one of those careers: a scientist, inventor or medical professional. The card also relates to careers where speech and writing is of great importance: a salesman, motivational speaker, storyteller, politician, or commentator. This might be the querent himself, something the querent wants to be, or someone who was, is or will be in his life.

Most importantly, the Magician card stands for the "reveal" - as in a magic trick. The handkerchief is draped over an empty box, the Magician waves his wand, *presto!*--now there is a dove in the box. The Magician card does the same for the querent--only what it reveals is not birds or rabbits but NEW

idea: emphasis on NEW. When the Magician card appears, the querent is likely to say: "Now there's an idea! Why didn't I think of that before?" Truth is the querent probably had that idea in his head all along. The Magician merely revealed it to him, allowed him to verbalize it and crystallize that idea. But what will the querent do with this idea? That's a question for the next card....

HIGH PRIESTESS

Basic symbols

Blue, white and black colors, pomegranates, the moon crown of Isis, veil, solar cross, crescent moon. Black & white lotus, pillars (B stands for Boaz, signifying negation, J stands for Jachin, meaning beginning). Scroll with the word Tora on it (either the Jewish Torah or an anagram of "Tarot," where the final letter is left unseen).

Basic Story

Continuing his journey, the Fool comes upon a beautiful and mysterious veiled lady enthroned between two pillars and illuminated by the moon. She is the opposite of the Magician, quiet where he was loquacious, still where he was in motion, sitting while he stood, shrouded in the night where he was out in the bright of day. Sensing that she is a great seer, the Fool lays out his sword, chalice, staff and pentacle before her. "The Magician showed me these, but now I'm in a quandary. There are so many things I could do with them. I can't decide."

The High Priestess doesn't speak. Instead she hands him a pair of ancient scrolls. Seating himself at her feet, the Fool puts his decision-making on hold and reads by the light of her crescent moon.

"I did not know any of this," says the Fool. The scrolls, like a secret manual, have given him insight into his new tools. "This information helps me to narrow things down, but I'm still afraid of making a wrong decision."

The words come to him then, not from without but from within: "*What do your instincts tell you?*" The Fool reflects on that, and that's when he knows what he should do. Decision made, he rises to leave even though he suspects that the High Priestess has more secrets she could reveal to him--like what lies behind the pomegranate curtain. Right now, however, he is focused and ready to be on his way.

Thanking the High Priestess, he heads off. But as he leaves he hears that inner voice, rising like the waters which spring and flow from beneath her throne: "*We'll meet again...when you're ready to travel the most secret path of all.*"

Basic Meaning

Once you have an idea, you also have decisions to make. The High Priestess holds scrolls of arcane information in her arms. In addition, the moon crown on her head as well as the crescent by her foot indicates her willingness to illuminate what you otherwise might not see about a job possibility, an investment, love, career, family, etc. But you need some alone time, some quiet time to meditate and reflect.

This is what the card is all about. Seated between two pillars as between two choices, the High Priestess is not about making a decision so much as holding decision-making at bay while you take time to listen to your inner voice. She wants you to gain knowledge before you act: instinctual knowledge, supernatural knowledge, secret knowledge, or self-knowledge.

The High Priestess, however, goes beyond even that for those who seek more. Behind her throne is the curtain that leads to the deepest, most esoteric knowledge; the pomegranates that decorate it remind us of Persephone, who was taken down into the land of the dead, ate its fruit and became the only goddess allowed to travel to and from that strange land. The High Priestess is our guide to all that is mysterious and mystical.

Thirteen's Observations

If there is a card that symbolizes the tarot reader it is the High Priestess. A woman (or man!) of psychic powers, intuition and secret knowledge. Where the Magician is about revealing, the High Priestess is about keeping things hidden behind the curtain. Where he urges the querent to verbalize what he's thinking, the High Priestess urges him to silently reflect on his feelings. She is not only the compliment to the Magician, however, but to two other majors. She is the counterpoint to the Hierophant, maintaining secret traditions and rites passed from seer to successor, rather than advocating community traditions. And she is the natural moonlight to the Hermit's manmade lantern, equally solitary and of the night, but acting as restful librarian of information rather than restless seeker of it.

If the reader feels the High Priestess stands for the querent then this is a time of solitary investigation for them or perhaps just a time to trust their instincts. Things kept secret will be revealed, either passed on to them by another or coming to them psychically by way of visions or powerful feelings. Insights may be found in crystal balls, tea leaves, dreams or conversations with spirits. Standing for someone other than the querent, the High Priestess is usually read as a spiritual woman or medium, a teacher of archaic knowledge, librarian or just a reclusive relative who knows many family secrets. She may come across as cold, unpredictable and scary, but her instincts and insights will be uncanny.

The High Priestess is often seen as a perpetual maiden, the eternal virgin of an Athena, Diana or Vesta. But some view her as also representing a woman who might be pregnant. In such instances, the High Priestess is NOT viewed as an emblem of fertility, a "mother," but rather as a still, quiet incubator where the "idea" (child) can remain stable and protected.

"I've a new idea," says the querent--thanks to the Magician. But now there are decisions to make. What direction should one take this idea? The High Priestess not only offers illumination, revealing secret paths and hidden dangers, but also a still, quiet place between the pillars of dark and light, existence and negation, wax and wane where one can pause, see, feel and reflect on what one really wants to do with this idea.

Now that you know what you want to do, how do you make it real? The next card will discuss that....

EMPRESS

Basic Symbols

A gown decorated with pomegranates, a crown of stars, a rod, a heart-shaped shield with the symbol for Venus, a field of ripe wheat.

Basic Story

Having decided what he will create with his tools, the Fool strides forward, impatient to make his future a full-grown reality. This is when he comes upon the Empress. Her hair gold as wheat, wearing a crown of stars, and a white gown dotted with pomegranates. She rests back on her throne surrounded by an abundance of grain and a lush garden. It is possible that she is pregnant.*

Kneeling, the Fool relates to her his story. And she, in turn, smiles a motherly smile and gently gives him this advice: "Like newly planted grain or a newborn babe, a new life, a new relationship, a new creation is fragile. It requires patience and nurturing. It needs love and attention. Only this will bring it to fruition." Understanding at last that his creations will take time to develop, the Fool thanks the Empress and continues on his way.

* Pregnant. Well, not in the Rider-Waite deck she isn't. But many other decks go for pregnancy as part of the Empress' iconography.

Basic Meaning

The Empress is a creator, be it creation of life, of romance, of art or business. While the Magician is the primal spark, the idea made real, and the High Priestess is the one who gives the idea time and space to decide on a form, the Empress is either the womb or nursery where it grows till it reaches a certain level of maturity.

This is why the Empress' symbol is Venus, goddess of beautiful things and gardens, as well as sex and love. Venus is the goddess of artists, and helps them painstakingly develop their pieces from clay to statue, from first brushstroke to masterpiece.

Even so, however, the Empress has more in common with Demeter, goddess of abundance, than sensual Venus, as the wheat in the background and the pomegranates on her dress imply. She is the giver of Earthly gifts, the great, fertile mother goddess. Yet at the same time, she can, in anger, withhold as Demeter did when her daughter, Persephone was kidnapped. In fury and grief, she kept the Earth barren till her child was returned to her.

Thirteen's Observations

The Empress card is one of the easier trumps to read. She's the Great Mother, so much so that she's often viewed as one of those cards that can indicate a "positive" answer if a woman is wondering if she can get pregnant. This is the fertile womb where anything can grow and thrive (as compared to the protective "incubator" of the High Priestess). The Empress' ability to mother goes beyond the womb, however. She is patient, loving, giving, generous, devoted: the ultimate nurturer.

If defining her as the querent, you can say that they are currently feeling like a mother hen, worried about their children, new business, new creation, or new romance. Male or female, they want to dote and hover and fret over every little sneeze and problem. They likely also want to talk only about their baby, boasting of its growth and development, sending pictures of it to friends and relatives.

Likewise, the advice a reader might give on getting this card could be similar to that offered to a mother with a young child: either that young things need time to grow, and so require patience and attention, or that while an infant needs a great deal of care, a toddler needs less, and a child even less. A good mother adjusts her care as the child matures and develops, giving them room to crawl and then run and play.

If defining the Empress as someone related to the querent, it is likely the querent's mother or a woman who is very motherly toward them. Of course, the Empress can also be about the not so nice aspects of a mom. She can smother, not know when to let go, be possessive and jealous of those

who would take away her "baby." It is important for the querent to realize that plants can die from over-watering as easily as they can from neglect.

Like any good mother or good gardener, the querent must have patience and the ability to adjust and improvise as their "baby" sprouts and grows.

EMPEROR

Basic Symbols

Throne, ram's heads, orb and scepter. Sometimes an eagle.

Basic Story

The Fool was given options by the Magician, and decided on one with help from the High Priestess. He learned how to develop it thanks to the Empress. Now it has reached a stage where he must find a way to manage it. How to do this? He approaches a great Emperor seated on a stone throne. The Fool is amazed by the way the Emperor is instantly, eagerly obeyed in every particular, at how well his Empire is run and organized. Respectfully, he asks the Emperor how it is he does this. And the Emperor answers: "Strong will and a solid foundation of laws and order. It's all very well," he explains to the Fool, "to be imaginative, creative, instinctual, patient; but to control one must be alert, brave and aggressive."

Ready now to lead and direct rather than be led, the Fool heads out with new purpose.

Basic Meaning

The Emperor, as Aries, the Ram, naturally follows the Empress. On the one hand, he is Mars (the planet that rules Aries) to her Venus, her lover and compliment, father to her mother, civilization to her nature, imposed order to her artful creativity. He is the "All Father" giving his children the structure they need in their lives to help them become responsible adults.

Aries is also, however, the first sign of the Zodiac, metaphorically the "infant." Like an infant he is filled with enthusiasm, energy, aggression. He is direct, guileless and all too often irresistible. Unfortunately, like a baby he can also be a tyrant: impatient, demanding, controlling.

In the worst of circumstances, the Emperor is a despot, imposing his will capriciously on his subjects. In the best of circumstances, he signifies an intelligent, enthusiastic leader that everyone wants to follow, the great monarch of an orderly, lawful, thriving Empire.

Thirteen's Observations

The Emperor card is the "Who's the boss?" card. It is an important question. The meaning of the card includes being in control over your environment, your body, your temper, your instincts, your love life. This card gives the querent permission to be aggressive, brave, bold and in command.

If the card doesn't seem to indicate the querent, it could be emblematic of their father or a father figure who was, is or will be in their lives, a leader, employer, teacher or partner. This could be either type of father-figure, the demanding tyrant, hated and feared, or the charismatic leader, respected and admired.

The Emperor can also be a warning to the querent to think about whether their Empire has become an unwelcome chore. If it has, are they now a bad leader, demanding, unreasonable, unhappy? It might be time to abdicate the throne.

If, however, what the querent is building has merely gotten to a point where it's outgrown the nursery, then the advice is to switch from loving mother to structured, organized father. To set down laws, discipline and rules, to plan out the future and lead the way.

HIEROPHANT

Basic Symbols

Twin pillars, staff, throne, hand raised in blessing, two acolytes.

Basic Story

Having created a solid foundation on which to build his future, the Fool is struck with a sudden fear. What if everything he's worked for is taken away? Is stolen, or lost, or destroyed or vanishes? Or what if what he's created isn't good enough? In a panic, he heads into a temple where he finds the Hierophant, a wise and holy man. Acolytes kneel before the man ready to hear and pass on his teachings. The Fool tells the Hierophant his fears, and asks how he can be free of them.

"There are two ways," says the Hierophant sagely, "Either give up that which you fear to lose so it no longer holds any power over you, or consider what you will still have if your fear comes to pass. After all," the Hierophant continues, "if you did lose all you'd built, you would still keep the experience and knowledge that you've gained up to this point, wouldn't you?"

"That is true," the Fool says. "But what about the community, society and friends I've discovered thanks to what I've created? More than knowledge or experience, I value them. If I lost all, I'd lose them too, wouldn't I?"

"Not necessarily," the Hierophant answers with a warm glow in his compassionate eyes. "If your community has traditions that you all share, ethics and beliefs, then you will never lose that fellowship even if circumstances force you to part. You can even pass such onto your children giving them the same fellowship with each other and with past generations."

Hearing this, the Fool feels his heart ease, as if knots of fear have been loosened. A sense of peace blankets him, and he takes a moment to thank the good Hierophant most profoundly. Stepping out of the sanctuary he makes his way to a meeting with his friends. Tonight they will talk about how they can create lessons and traditions to preserve not only their experience and knowledge, but their community.

Basic Meaning

Taurus the Earthly bull may seem an odd sign for a holy man, but it makes sense if you understand that the Hierophant's purpose is to bring the spiritual down to Earth. Where the High Priestess connects to the esoteric with her secret, solitary rites, the Hierophant (or High Priest) leads his flock in shared, communal rituals.

The Hierophant is well suited to be such a leader as, like all Taureans, he strives to create harmony and peace in the midst of crisis. Such rituals, rites and traditions remind the community of their values, their shared identity and the religious structure that gives their lives order and meaning. No matter how chaotic and frightening the times, this can bring tranquillity.

The Hierophant's only problem is that, like the Bull, he can be stubborn and hidebound. Also, as he is working for the harmony of the community, the Hierophant is not a card that favors individuality. Harmony cannot be achieved if everyone is marching to their own drummer. The Hierophant is about shared feelings, beliefs and ways. It even can be about blending in or surrendering to tradition and community rather than asserting your uniqueness

Thirteen's Observations

The Hierophant card often features religious symbols that elicit strong feelings in both readers and querents. Some find it hard to disassociate the Hierophant from certain organized religions (or branches of a religion), which they view as domineering, irrational, even cruel. And so they tend to interpret the Hierophant only by his potential negatives: as hide-bound, literal and stodgy.

I like to point out that there are decks where the Hierophant is the Oracle at Delphi, a yogi, a pagan high priest or a village elder. If it helps, the reader can try and think of the Hierophant as one of these less conventional spiritual leaders.

It is certainly true, however, that the Hierophant can represent those in the querent's life who preach by the book, or refuse to deviate one iota from old-fashioned ways of doing things. Try to keep in mind, however, that such irascible, orthodox types are usually acting out of fear. They're terrified that any change will weaken the community and its faith. This is ironic as such traditions are meant to erase fear and create peace and harmony, not generate more fear.

Likewise, the Hierophant might well be a warning to the querent, himself, against being too stubborn, too fearful of change, especially in matters of theology, ethics or traditions. The Hierophant could appear as a reminder that the aim of traditions is not to follow them by rote, but to use them to keep alive the spirit and faith of a people.

This is an important message. When things are going very wrong in the world, it is the Hierophant who wades in, quiets the panic, and offers good, practical advice as well as spiritual assurances. He is the teacher, therapist, counselor, advisor, priest or rabbi. He answers questions people would ask of the divine, but also acts as the voice of the community, speaking for the people as well as to them.

The Hierophant symbolizes the community's traditions, ethics and faith, the spirituality that defines and unifies them, generation to generation. "Remember where you came from," this card tells you, "the traditions of your forefathers, the lessons of your faith, and you will know how to survive this crisis." In the direst times of loss and fear, the Hierophant is there to remind you that you are never alone.

LOVERS

Basic Symbols

An angel or cupid, a man and a woman, two trees (in Waite, it is Adam & Eve with one tree having a serpent and apples) - in some decks one tree is flowering, but the other has fruit. Also in some decks there is a man standing between two women.

Basic Story

The Fool comes to a cross-road, filled with energy, confidence and purpose, knowing exactly where he wants to go and what he wants to do. But he comes to a dead stop. A flowering tree marks the path he wants to take, the one he's been planning on taking. But standing before a fruit tree marking the other path is a woman. The Fool has met and had relationships with women before, some far more beautiful and alluring. But she is different. Seeing her, he feels as though he's just been shot in the heart with cupid's arrow.

That's how shocking, how painful is his "recognition" of her. As he speaks with her, the feeling intensifies; like finding a missing part of himself. It is clear that she feels the same about him. They finish each other's sentences, think the same thoughts. It is as if an Angel above had introduced their souls to each other.

Though it was his plan to follow the path of the flowering tree, and though it will cause some trouble for him to bring this woman with him, the Fool knows he dare not leave her behind. Like the fruit tree, she will fulfil him. No matter how divergent from his original intent, she is his future. He chooses her, and together they head down a whole new road.

Basic Meaning

New Readers often ask, "What is the Lovers' card about? Is it about finding love?" Yes, and no. It is possible that the original name of this card was "Love." The oldest decks call it "The amorous one," The Lovers being a mistranslation. So really, it's about one person being "in love" with someone or something.

Many books, however, define the card not as "Love" but as a "choice." And the images that have been used for this card make it even more confusing. The original trump featured a man and a woman with a cupid above them about to shoot his dart (into which? Cupid's arrows only make the one they strike fall in love). Later decks had a man choosing between two women, or a man meeting his true love with the help of a matchmaker. Still later, with Waite, we have an Angel above Adam and Eve. The Angel stands for Raphael, who is emblematic of Mercury and Air, with Adam and Eve related to Gemini (sign of Mercury) in that Eve split from Adam and is, essentially, his twin.

And the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge indicates Adam and Eve choosing to "know" each other in every sense of the word.

This connection to Gemini means that the Lovers card is NOT about "romance" or passion. Romantic emotions are typically related to water. And

blazing passion is associated with fire. Gemini, an air sign, is about messages and making contact. It's about the psyche.

In addition, at #6 the Lover's card is about "harmony." Thus, it is about something that speaks to you, that you "know" and recognize as your other or mirror self (twin), and which makes you feel harmonically balanced or complete.

You may experience this psychic attraction to something small like a pair of shoes you have to have, or a rock band whose music says all you ever wanted to say. Or you might be drawn to something huge, a plot of land you want to own, or someone else's boyfriend/girlfriend who, at first sight, makes you think: "That's my husband/wife."

In interpretation, the card indicates that the querent has come across, or will come across a person, career, challenge or thing (a puppy, a car, a house) that they will fall in love with. They will know instinctively that it was meant for them, even if it means diverging from their chosen path (that is the "Love" part). On the other hand, their common sense must also make a decision on whether or not to go along with this psychic "choice." There is often a measure of hardship or cost that comes with giving into this spiritual attraction.

Thirteen's Observations

The Lovers' card often confuses readers as its most common interpretation is about making a choice. If we examine it closer, we see this does go along with the name (or mis-name of the card). Two choices are involved with the card. First, your soul or psyche is making its choice. It recognizes this other person/thing as being your spiritual twin or as harmonizing with you; you become "amorous" for it.

Now the rest of you, the demands of your life, your emotional heart, passionate soul, can agree or not. That's the other choice. You *will* feel powerfully drawn to this career, challenge, person or thing so much so that, no matter how scary, how difficult, irrational or troublesome, you will be inclined to go for it. This is LOVE. But you will also know that it comes at a cost. Maybe the person you're attracted to isn't a romantic and your dreams of a wine-and-roses love affair can't be. Maybe they don't set you on fire and you can't have the passion you want. Or maybe this thing/person is just inconvenient.

Your friends and family may also weigh in. They may think you're crazy, may argue with you not to get involved. You, yourself, might think its madness to change your life or break with your community in order to have this. Coming after the Emperor with his imperial rules, and after the

Hierophant with his communal faith, The Lovers acknowledges a spiritual power that often defies earthly laws and religious traditions. Obeying this urge can be foolish, dangerous, selfish, thoughtless, or earth-shattering.

Yet you can say "no" to this attraction. You do have that choice. If, however, you don't allow yourself to try and make this person, career, challenge or thing a part of your life, you may regret it, profoundly and forever.

CHARIOT

Basic Symbols

Triumphal "car" (chariot), armored warrior, sun and moon symbols, lingam and yoni symbol (the encircled rod on the winged shield), black and white sphinxes/lions/horses, sometimes at rest. A canopy of stars. Sometimes a throne inside the car.

Basic Story

The Fool is close to completing what he set out to create long ago, back when the Magician revealed those tools to him. But enemies are now standing in his way, devious human enemies, bad circumstances, even confusion in his own mind. There's no more forward momentum; he feels he is fighting just to stay where he is. Walking along the shore, watching the waves come in, he puzzles over how to defeat these enemies and get things moving forward once again.

It is here that he comes across a charioteer, standing in his gold and silver chariot, his black and white steeds at rest. "You seem a victorious warrior," the Fool remarks. "I feel beset by my enemies, unable to move forward. What should I do?"

"First, you must armor yourself," the Charioteer strikes the chariot and then his breastplate with a gauntleted fist, making both ring out. "Next, you must focus on your goal, where do you mean to go, what do you mean to do."

The warrior nods to his beasts. "Your steeds keep the wheels turning, but it is your control and direction of them that gets them to their destination. Dark and light, they must be made to draw in harmony, under your guidance." The Fool nods. That makes sense. "What if someone or something gets in your way?"

The Charioteer coolly meets the Fool's gaze. "You run them down. Your aim is victory, and to be victorious you must have unwavering confidence in your cause. Never question, never doubt what you're trying to achieve. Never lose your focus or your motivation."

The Fool is impressed and inspired. He thinks he now knows how to get past all the distractions and setbacks that have been keeping him trapped in place, like a riptide in the ocean. He thanks the warrior, but before he leaves, the warrior stays the Fool.

"One thing more you should keep in mind," he says, "Victory is not the end, it is the beginning. Remember that before you decide to enter into any contest."

Basic Meaning

The chariot is one of the most complex cards to define. On its most basic level, it's about getting what you want. It implies war, a struggle, and an eventual, hard-won victory over enemies, obstacles, nature, or the uncertainties inside you. But there is a great deal more to it. The charioteer wears emblems of the sun, yet the sign behind this card is Cancer, the moon. The chariot is all about motion, and yet it is often shown as stationary.

What does this all mean? It means a union of opposites, like the black and white steeds. They pull in different directions, but must be (and can be!) made to go together in one direction. That is perhaps the most important message of the Chariot. Separate the driver from the chariot, the chariot from the horses, the horses from each other and from the driver, and nothing gets done. They all do their own thing. Put them all together, with the same goal in mind, and there will be no stopping them.

Confidence as well as unity of purpose and control is needed, and, most especially, motivation. The card can, in fact, indicate new motivation or inspiration, which gets a stagnant situation moving again. It can also imply, on a more pragmatic level, a trip (usually by car).

Thirteen's Observations

The Chariot is a fascinating card, but also frustrating to interpret. Like Cancer, the crab, it is about being armored, self-reliant and in command of one's own destiny. On the battlefield, a chariot is autonomous. It fights alone, not with other troops or cavalry.

Yet the Chariot is also a symbol of unified parts. If any part is missing – chariot, horses, driver – it cannot go.

The crab moves from one plane to the next (water to land and back again) and the Chariot is viewed as moving likewise, from conscious and unconscious, Earthly to spiritual. Also, like chariots, crabs come upon each other from the

side rather than straight on. So there is a tricky element to The Chariot for all that it seems to travel in a straight line.

The Chariot is a card of contradictions. It's about sidewise battles, yet also about full-speed ahead. It's about the hard exterior and the soft interior, the light and dark, the water and the shore, moon and sun. It is the Sphinx, which is also often a symbol of Cancer, the lion and the man united, a mystery. Yet the Chariot says all these *can* be united.

The querent who gets this card is likely dealing with a lot of contradictions in their life. Maybe arguing people, or a variety of different feelings. The card says that they must become the driver of the chariot. They must decide on a goal, take control and get all the contradictions to ignore their wants and go where the querent wants.

How can the querent do this? By being confident. The one who has unwavering faith in their convictions is the one who can make others put aside their differences and do as asked. Likewise, such a person can overcome their doubts and uncertainties and achieve victory.

You must have faith that there is nothing that can stand in your way. Note, however, that this unity and the confidence that creates it will last only till victory is achieved. But then, the Chariot isn't interested in unity for unity's sake. Only in unity for victory's sake.

The Chariot is a marvelous card in that it can assure the querent success no matter the odds. But the card also warns that the drive toward this victory might lead to ruthless, diehard behavior, to a desire to win at any cost. The querent should be reminded that winning isn't everything nor "the only thing." It is, rather, the start of things.

STRENGTH

Basic Symbols

A woman in white with a lemniscate hovering over her head, a lion.

Basic Story

The Fool, victorious over his enemies, is feeling arrogant, powerful, even vengeful. There are hot passions in him, ones he finds himself unable and unwilling to control. It is in this state that he comes across a maiden struggling with a lion. Running to help, he arrives in time to see her gently but firmly shut the lion's mouth! In fact, the beast, which seemed so wild and fierce, is now completely at her command.

Amazed, the Fool asks her, "How did you do that?" One hand on the lion's mane, she answers, "I asked the lion to do it, and it did it."

"But-but-" the Fool stutters, confounded. "Why did it want to obey?"

At that moment, the Maiden meets the Fool's eyes; he sees in her warmth, gentleness, a heart so great that its generosity seems as infinite as its willingness to understand. And that is when the Fool understands exactly why the lion did her bidding.

It wanted to connect to that higher energy.

Yet there is still one thing that confuses the Fool. "But," he says, much softer now, "Why would you, fair maiden, want to keep company with a beast?" "Because he, too, is filled with a wonderful energy," the Maiden says. "It is wild and fierce, but it can be banked, like a fire in a hearth. I knew if he would take direction from me, we could both be warmed."

"So, too," she adds, "are our passions. Let them run wild and they will do damage. But we can, with gentle fortitude, check and direct those passions. In doing so, we can get so much more out of them. And yet, still sate them."

His rage quieted, the enlightened Fool walks away knowing that it wasn't only the lion that was tamed this day by a Maiden's pure and innocent strength.

Basic Meaning

There are many stories that come to mind with this card: Daniel in the lion's den. Aesop's fable of "The Sun and the Wind," where the Sun's warmth, as compared to the Wind's coldness, persuades a man to take off his coat. Also tales of saintly maids who get brutish barbarians to kneel down in prayer. What we see in all these stories is the taming of the beast by way of inner strength and gentleness.

The Maiden represents higher feelings and that we can experience if we bring our wild passions to heel. And so we willingly do so.

This card, however, isn't just about the Maiden's power. Like its ruling sign Leo, this card is also about the hot, roaring energy and enthusiasm of the Lion including passions like "lust" (which is the name it was given by Crowley in his *Thoth* deck). The lion's power may be frightening, but it is also desirable. Much can be achieved if such power is put to use. Some decks, in fact, label this card as "Power."

That energies can be brought under control and used is very close to the message of the Chariot, which might be why, in some decks, it is Justice that is card #8 instead of Strength. There is a difference, however, between Strength and the Chariot. The Chariot is a card about using your impulses to achieve a victory.

Strength is about combining two strengths to overcome weakness. The Maiden is weak of form, but her mastery of herself is powerful. The Lion is strong of form, but weak when it comes to mastering himself. The Maiden's commands overcome the Lion's weakness, and his form overcomes the Maiden's weakness. This is why the Maiden doesn't try to harness the lion to a chariot, nor does she run from it or try to kill it. She meets its eyes, touches it, embraces it. This is a card about understanding our wild natures, accepting them, yet also gentling those passions so that they work *for* us rather than against us. Putting these two strengths together creates perseverance, personal honor, and courage.

The card can also stand for a steadfast friend.

Thirteen's Opinion

The essence of civilization is being able to think beyond primal animal needs like food, survival and sex. The Maiden with her lemniscate (which, we remember from the Magician card, indicates the energy of thought), pure white robes and floral wreath is indicative of loftier aspirations: like honor, compassion and bravery. Thus, the Strength card reminds us that, unlike a beast, we have the fortitude to endure the pain, stay undaunted by fear, and resist our animal desires. We can do more and be greater.

Such aspirations shine out of us, like "inviolable innocence" making even those with more physical strength bow to our will. Crowley, of course, has a different take. He sees the woman with the lion as embracing her power to create lust (and be lustful) and using that to civilize the world. Yet this is not so different from Waite who also argues that the Lion *wants* to obey the Maiden.

Unlike the imperial fiat of the Emperor or the morality and traditions of the Hierophant, the Maiden (civilization) gains control over our animal natures by showing us all the wonderful energies we will gain if we obey her. This is very like wild youths choosing to join the military and obey its restrictions because doing so gives them lofty feelings of pride and glory.

We should not forget, however, that the woman also sees something wonderful in the lion. She doesn't want to erase the lion or make it other than a lion, but she can see that the lion's energy is being wasted. She is moved to tame it so that they can both benefit.

Wang in the Qabbalistic Tarot likens Strength to a Vestal Virgin tending a sacred flame. And this, I think, is one of the best interpretations. Fire is a fearful thing, hot, burning - all too easily able to spark out of control. But somewhere along the way, we lost our fear - but not our respect - for fire. With will and intelligence, we came to understand its nature and make it our tool. Similarly we can direct and make great good use of our passions, but only if we're willing to see them as a natural part of us, sacred even, like the Vestal Virgin's flame.

I think it also worth noting that, as with fire or taming a lion, one might get burned or scratched a few times by that which you're trying to understand, be it a situation, a person, or your own unworthy impulses. The important message of the strength card is to have fortitude. When your gentle strength brings this wild thing under control, you both will be free of weaknesses, and able to command of great power.

HERMIT

Basic Symbols

A robed man or monk carrying a lantern, sometimes in hand, sometimes hanging off a staff. A barren landscape.

Basic Story

After a long and busy lifetime, building, creating, loving, hating, fighting, compromising, failing, succeeding, the Fool feels a profound need to retreat. In a small, rustic home deep in the woods, he hides, reading, cleaning, organizing, resting or just thinking. But every night at dusk he heads out, traveling across the bare, autumnal landscape. He carries only a staff and a lantern.

It is during these restless walks from dusk till dawn, peering at and examining whatever takes his fancy, that he sees things he's missed during his lifetime. His lantern illuminates animals and insects that only come out at night, flowers and plants that only bloom by moon or star light.

As these secret corners of the world are illuminated and explored by him, he feels that he is also illuminating hidden areas of his mind. In a way, he has become the Fool again. As in the beginning, he goes wherever inspiration leads him. Back then, however, his staff rested on his shoulder, carrying unseen his pack. The Fool was like the pack: wrapped up, unknown. The Hermit's staff leans out before him now, not behind. And it carries a lantern,

not a pack. The Hermit is like the lantern, illuminated from within by all he is, capable of penetrating the darkness.

Basic Meaning

Represented by Virgo, the Hermit is a card of introspection, analysis and, well, virginity. This is not a time for socializing; the card indicates, instead, a desire for peace and solitude. Nor is it a time for action, discussion or decisions. It is a time to think, organize, ruminate, and take stock. There may be feelings of frustration and discontent during this time of withdrawal. But such times lead to enlightenment, illumination, clarity.

In regards to people, the Hermit can represent a wise, inspirational person, friend, teacher or therapist, someone the querent usually sees alone, someone the rest of the querent's friends and family may not know about. This is a person who can shine a light on things that were previously mysterious and confusing. They will help the querent understand themselves or find what it is they are seeking.

Thirteen's Observations

One of the important things about this card is that the Hermit is almost always shown on the move. He's never hiding away in his cave. Rather, he's out wandering, searching. This is apt for the restless mind of a Virgo, always gathering information, analyzing, making connections. Virgos are also known for being the skeptics of the zodiac. If anyone is going to stick a lantern into a dark place and take a good look at what's going on, it's a Virgo.

Combined with a desire to just "be alone," the Hermit indicates a feeling of impatience with people. The querent might be sensitive to having his/her peace disturbed, or express disdain for those who can't see what they're seeing ("Are you blind?" might be their refrain, or, more typically, "You just don't get it, and I can't explain it to you."). They're likely to be grumpy and anti-social.

For the querent, however, this is a special time. Like an artist who hides away for days then emerges to paint a masterpiece, this quiet time allows all the pieces to fall into place. Their minds are alive, and they can see things they weren't able to see before. So go ahead and encourage them to take late night drives, long walks, hide in their room or go on retreat for a month. When they come back, they'll have a new understanding of the world, of their lives, and of themselves. It'll be the best thing for them, and for everyone else.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Basic Symbols

A wheel turning clockwise with rising/falling figures or beasts on it. Waite also includes a good many Hebrew letters and alchemical symbols. Often there is a sphinx perched atop the wheel.

Basic Story

From out of hiding comes the Fool, into the sunlight, as if being pulled up from some low, dark point on a wheel. It is time for a change. Staff in hand, he heads back out into the world, expecting nothing. But, strangely, things seem to happen to him as the hours go by, good things. Wandering by a water wheel a woman offers him a drink in a golden chalice, and then urges him to keep the cup; as he wanders by a windmill, he stops to watch a young man swinging a sword; when he expresses his admiration of the weapon, the young man presses it into his hand, insisting that he take it.

And finally, when he comes upon a rich merchant sitting in a wagon, right over one of the wheels, the man hands him a bag of money. "I decided to give this to the tenth person who walked past me today," explains the Merchant, "You're the tenth." The Fool hardly thought he could still be surprised, but he is. It is as if everything good that he ever did in his life is being paid back to him, three-fold. All luck this day is his.

Basic Meaning

With Jupiter as its ruling planet, the Wheel of Fortune is all about luck and change. The wheel symbolizes completeness as well as the rise and fall of fortunes and the message that what goes around comes around. Almost every definition of this card indicates abundance, happiness, elevation, or luck; a change that just happens, and brings with it great joy.

Thirteen's Observations

As much as the Tarot is about what a querent can do to change their life or self, there are cards that admit that sometimes you just get lucky. Sometimes things happen to you over which you have no control, and you rise or fall on that turn of the wheel.

This is the card about how we sometimes find ourselves soaring up or down on life's Ferris wheel. The Wheel can mean movement, change or evolution, and in that respect it can be about how we all change positions, some of us rising some of us falling, some dropping to a nadir, some reaching a zenith.

Most of the time, however, this card suggests that such changes will bring with them good fortune. The person you're reading for is going to get that money, that job, that promotion, that marriage proposal, that break they've been waiting for. Call it karmic payback for all the good things they've done in life - destiny or just luck - but whatever lotteries are out there, large or small, they've just won one.

JUSTICE

Basic Symbols

The Justice figure seated or standing between pillars, scales in one hand (usually left), upraised sword in the other hand. Sometimes blindfolded.

Basic Story

The Fool is looking for a new path, a new aspiration and inspiration for his life. Sitting uncertain at a crossroads he notices a blind wise woman listening to two brothers argue over an inheritance. They have come to her for judgment. One brother has the whole inheritance, the other has nothing.

"I ask that all of it be given to me," the poor brother demands, "Not only because I have a better right to it, but because I will not be wasteful with it, as he is!" But the rich brother protests, "It is rightfully mine and that's all that should matter, not what I do with it!"

The woman listens, then awards half of the rich brother's inheritance to the poor brother. The Fool thinks this only fair, but neither brother is happy. The rich one hates losing half his wealth, and the poor one feels he ought to have gotten all.

"You were fair," the Fool remarks to the woman after the brothers have left. "Yes, I was," she answers plainly. "With only half the inheritance, the rich one will stop being so wasteful. And the poor one will have as much as he needs. Even though they cannot see it, this decision was good for both."

The Fool thinks on this and realizes that he has spent his life achieving worldly ambitions and physical goods while leaving his spiritual self to starve. He ought to have given half his time and energy to his spiritual self, but he didn't. It's no wonder that he feels unbalanced. Thanking the woman, he heads out to restore equilibrium to his inner scales.

Basic Meaning

With Libra as its ruling sign, Justice is about cold, objective balance through reason or natural force. This is the card that tells the querent that excesses have consequences. Indulging in drinking and drugs will affect their health, just as excessive exercise can damage muscles and joints and working too much can make one neglect family and friends.

Justice urges the querent to make adjustments, do whatever is necessary to bring things back into balance: physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually. In a more mundane sense, this card may signal a court case, legal documents, adjustments in a marriage or partnership. The outcome of all of these may not be exactly what the querent wants, but it will be what they need. It will also be scrupulously fair. If the card is reversed, it can indicate bias, obstruction of the law, or legal complications.

Thirteen's Observations

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HANGED MAN

Basic Symbols

A man hanging by one foot from a bar or tree. His free leg is always bent to form an inverted "4," his face is always peaceful, never suffering. Sometimes his hands are bound, sometimes they dangle. Sometimes coins fall out of his pockets or hands.

Basic Story

The Fool settles beneath a tree, intent on finding his spiritual self. There he stays for nine days, without eating, barely moving. People pass by him,

animals, clouds, the wind, the rain, the stars, sun and moon. On the ninth day, with no conscious thought of why, he climbs the tree and dangles from a branch upside down like a child. For a moment, he surrenders all that he is, wants, knows or cares about. Coins fall from his pockets and as he gazes down on them - seeing them not as money but only as round bits of metal. It seems to him that his perspective of the world has completely changed, as if his inverted position has allowed him to dangle between the mundane world and the spiritual world, able to see both. It is a dazzling moment, dreamlike yet crystal clear.

Timeless as this moment of clarity seems, he realizes that it will not last. Very soon, he must right himself, but when he does, things will be different. He will have to act on what he's learned. For now, however, he just hangs, weightless as if underwater, observing, absorbing, seeing.

Basic Meaning

With Neptune (or Water) as its planet, the Hanged Man is perhaps the most fascinating card in the deck. At #12, it is the opposite of the World card, #21. With the World card you go infinitely out. With the Hanged Man, you go infinitely in.

Some readers believe the Hanged Man reflects the story of Odin who offered himself as a sacrifice in order to gain knowledge. Hanging from the world tree, wounded by a spear, given no bread or mead, he dangled for nine days. On the last day, he saw on the ground runes that had fallen from the tree, understood their meaning, and, coming down, scooped them up for his own. All knowledge is to be found in these runes.

Other readers like to point out that in older decks the card was known as "The Traitor," referring to the fact that, historically, some countries hung traitors upside down by one foot.

And still other readers like to point out that the Hanged Man is like that moment when a babe in the womb turns upside down so that it may be born, hanging, as it were, from its umbilical cord.

The Hanged Man is similar to all of these: like Odin, he allows himself to be hung so that he can gain wisdom for the world. Like traitors of old, he sacrifices himself for a cause, and sees things from an "inverted" perspective. What is right to him is wrong to others and vice versa. And like the babe in the womb, the Hanged Man hangs suspended between one world (the womb) and the next (outside the womb).

What is important to remember is that this is a card about suspension, not life or death. The querent might well feel that one thing has ended, yet the next

has not begun, and they are stuck in a kind of waiting room. Things will continue on in a moment, but for now, they float, timeless.

Yet this isn't just a position of rest as the querent is inverted. Which means so is his/her view of the world is very different from the rest of us who walk upright. Thus, this waiting becomes a time of trial or meditation, selflessness, sacrifice, prophecy. This new way of seeing things often leads to insights and enlightenment. Answers that eluded the querent become clear, solutions to problems are found. All of which the Hanged Man hoped to buy with his sacrifice.

Thirteen's Observations

The first step into the esoteric, we might well say, is to shed the mundane world and be "reborn." To do this, we must surrender all we thought we knew, all resistance to new ways of thinking. We must make ourselves venerable to visions and psychic energies. We must, if you like, return to "the womb," a spiritual womb this time around. The one belonging to the High Priestess who, remember, sits at that still place between opposites.

This the Hanged Man does when he willingly allows himself to be suspended and dangle inverted from one leg. Neptune is spirituality, dreams and psychic abilities, and the Hanged Man has allowed himself to be lowered into those deep waters, floating there, absorbing all they offer him. He is waiting for that moment when he will be born into a new consciousness.

Thus, this card signifies a time when the querent is feeling sensitive, vulnerable, introverted, suspended even as they also experience insight so deep that for a moment, nothing but that insight exists. This is the card of vision quests but also, very simply, of those times when you put aside your prejudices and open yourself up to different ideas. Or just try something new and strange.

Meaning that the Hanged Man could be as simple as going out with a type of person you never imagined dating, or trying some odd cuisine. It is a time when you change your perspective.

Such moments don't last, and they usually require some kind of sacrifice. Sacrifice of a belief or a wish, dream, hope, money, time or even selfhood. The sacrifice may be made to get into the inverted position, or it may be made to get out of the inverted position. Either way, in order to gain, you must give. Great or small, spiritual or mundane what you gain from making that sacrifice and allowing yourself to see things differently is insights and solutions. These can help you and everyone else you care about. Which is often why one goes through it all in the first place.

One thing is certain, once you have been the Hanged Man you never see things quite as you did before.

DEATH

Basic Symbols

Skeletal Death, black robes or armor, sometimes with a scythe or a flag featuring a white rose on a black field. There is often a rising sun. Sometimes there are other figures, the most common being a child.

Basic Story

Having left the tree from where he hung, the Fool moves carefully through a fallow field, head still clearing from visions. The air is cold and wintry, the trees bare. He knows he has started on his spiritual journey in earnest, but feels strangely empty and profoundly sad, as if he has lost something.

Before him he sees, rising with the sun, a skeleton in black armor mounted on a white horse. He recognizes it as Death. As it stops before him, he humbly asks, "Have I died?" And the Skeleton answers, "Yes, in a way. You sacrificed your old world, your old self. Both are gone, dead."

The Fool cannot keep from weeping. "Forgive me," he says, embarrassed by his tears.

"There is nothing to forgive," Death replies. "Mourning is natural and you must deal with your loss before you can accept anything new. Keep in mind, however, that old leaves must wither and fly away from a tree's branches, leaving them bare, before new green leaves can appear."

As Death rides away, the Fool sees the truth in those words. He, too, feels like a skeleton, all that he was stripped away. This, he understands, is how all great transformations start, by removing everything down to bare bone or soil so that something new has room to grow.

Basic Meaning

Perhaps the most common question asked about Tarot Cards is, "Can the Death card mean a real death?"

Yes, it can. The Death card is about endings, and that includes the ending of a life. What everyone seems to forget, however, is that the Death card is not exclusively about the end of a human life. In fact, it's far more likely that the card is telling you that a goldfish or a houseplant will die. Death can mean the

"end" of anything: The end of an era, the end of a trip, the closing of a restaurant, the breaking up of a band, the conclusion of a very rough week. Any and all of these as well as a million more possible interpretations can be applied to the Death card. So it is foolish to fear it for the fact that, once in a great while, it will let you know that some sick, elderly relative might not be long for this world.

Even more important to remember: *the Death card is less about something dying than about how a person deals with endings.*

We might be delighted that something is finally over and done with, like a terrible job we hated. Or we might be heartbroken, like over the loss of that poor goldfish. Either way, we require time to come to terms with the fact that something we were used to is no longer a part of our lives.

With Scorpio as its sign, the Death card is as much about transformation as about loss. Scorpio has three forms: scorpion, serpent, eagle. The Death card indicates this transition from lower to higher to highest. In addition, Scorpio is also about sex. So even as something is taken from us, something new is created.

That new thing will not be the same as what was lost, but it will step into that empty space and give us reason to carry on.

Thirteen's Observations

The connection of sex and death in Scorpio (the sign stands for both) is a strong indication of what this card is all about. We westerners see "Death" as a frightening card because we often see Death as an end, and we hate for things to come to an end. However, in other traditions, Death is just a natural and important, if sad part of an on-going cycle. In a karmic sense, you die so that you may be reborn. Winter comes so that there can be a spring, and we can only appreciate what we have when we know that there is loss. The Death card signals such things. This is a time of change.

Before or even as this change occurs, however, the querent needs to mourn, cry, and grieve. Wang notes that Death "humbles" all. Which means that we are brought low, feel empty or stripped to the bone. Once we have gone through this low point, however, we will find that there is room for something new, fresh or different to come into our lives. Something that might exult or transform us.

So while a Tarot Reader needs to tell their querent, quite honestly, that they will be going through a time of sorrow and mourning, we can also tell them that this, too, is not forever. Our sadness will end in a sunrise, in a newborn phoenix rising from the ashes of the old.

TEMPERANCE

Basic Symbols

An angel (often female or genderless), a pool or river of water. Two cups or beakers, a fluid flowing between them.

Basic Story

Recovering from feelings of loss at last, the Fool begins to wonder if he will finally find the new spirituality he's after. It occurs to him that so far, he's been dealing with opposites: the two opposing sides of the scales (Justice), the material and spiritual (which he hung between as the Hanged man), death and birth (the one leading into the other in the Death card). Does one always have to be surrendered to get the other? He wonders.

It is at this point that he comes upon a winged figure standing with one foot in a brook, the other on a rock. The radiant creature pours something from one flask into another. Drawing closer, the Fool sees that what is being poured from one flask is fire, while water flows from the other. The two are being blended together into a completely different substance!

"How can you mix fire and water?" the Fool finally whispers. Never pausing, the Angel answers, "You must have the right vessels and use the right proportions."

The Fool watches with wonder. "Can this be done with all opposites?" he asks. "Indeed," the Angel replies, "Any oppositions, fire and water, man and woman, thesis and anti-thesis, can be made into a unified third. It is only a lack of will and a disbelief in the possibility that keeps opposites, opposite." And that is when the Fool begins to understand that he is the one who is keeping his universe in twain, holding life/ death, material world and spiritual world separate. In him the two could merge. All it takes, the Fool realizes, is the right proportions, the right vessel and enough faith that the two can be unified.

Basic Meaning

It is hard, at first, to see where Sagittarius, the ruling sign of this card, fits in. Sagittarius is an expansive sign and we often identify Temperance with abstinence. Temperance, however, really means moderation. Thus, you don't give up wine, but rather cut the wine with water.

There is, however, another angle to the card, that of "tempering" or transforming – thus we continue on from Death, which prepared us for

transformation. With tempering, iron is transformed into steel with heating and cooling, fire and water.

Similarly, Sagittarius, the centaur, is another one of those creatures that merges beast and man into something unique. Yet not so unique, as men and horses have often "merged" together, the one on the back of the other to form a unit. And then there is the bow and arrow, one moving, one stationary, working together to point the way. Temperance may be, at first glance, a warning to "temper" your behavior, but it may also be a reminder that seemingly irreconcilable opposites may not be irreconcilable.

Sagittarius is a sign of optimism, philosophy, and taking risks. This card urges the querent to have faith that they can merge fiery red and watery blue into otherworldly violet. But they will need to experiment, have confidence, and try, try, again.

Thirteen's Observations

In many ways, this card is about the Sagittarian desire to find a unified field theory, a way of blending opposites, achieving synthesis. Crowley calls the card: "Alchemy" and that might well be the best definition for it. In fact, it sometimes works best for me to imagine the Angel wearing a lab coat and very carefully pouring measured amounts of colored liquids into beakers rather than cups.

One thing to remember is that Temperance isn't about surrendering either the water or the wine. It is about mixing things until you get exactly what you want, which is usually a perfect blend of the two.

In a reading, this card often represents a situation where the querent can't get opposites to "blend" together (choices, belief systems, families, friends) and may feel that they have to give up something. Temperance tells the querent that they don't have to do that. It says that a synthesis can be achieved if the querent is willing to keep on trying, experimenting, and adjusting the amounts. The Querent might, for example, be trying to merge two full families when blending has to occur bit by bit with individuals. This is where the "moderation" message comes in. Try to make your ambition more realistic and you might well achieve it.

The card is also a reminder that a bow and arrow are useless apart, but together a formidable weapon. This card tells the querent that they CAN and should put thesis and anti-thesis together to get the even more useful synthesis. But it will take time, care, patience and experimentation. And, yes, moderation.

DEVIL

Basic Symbols

A winged, horned devil, a black pedestal, a naked male and female figure, chains, inverted pentagram.

Basic Story

The Fool comes to the foot of an enormous black mountain where reigns a creature half goat, half god. At his hooves naked people, linked to the god's throne by chains, engage in every indulgence imaginable: sex, drugs, food, drink. The closer the Fool gets, the more he feels his own earthly desires rising in him. Carnal desires, hunger for food and power, greed and selfishness.

"I have given up all such desires!" he roars at the Goat god, resisting the beast's power with all his might. He is sure that this is a test of his new spirituality, one where he must prove that the temptations of the material world cannot sway him.

The creature responds to his defiance with a curious look. "All I am doing is bringing out what is already in you," it responds mildly. "Such feelings are nothing to fear, nothing to be ashamed of, or even to avoid. They are even useful to helping you in your quest for spirituality, though many try to pretend otherwise."

The Fool gestures angrily at the chained men and women, "You say that even though these are clearly enslaved to the material world?"

The Goat-god mimics the Fool's gesture. "Take another look." The Fool does so, and realizes that the chained collars the men and women wear are wide enough for them to easily slip off over their heads. "They can be free if they wish to be," the Goat-god says, "They remain here because they want to be controlled by their base, bestial desires. There are, however, others...."

At this the Goat-god gestures upward, toward the peak of the mountain. "...Others who have used these same impulses to climb to the highest heights. If they had denied their desires they'd never have gotten there."

On hearing this, the Fool sees that he has mistaken the Goat-god. This is not a creature of evil as he thought, but of great power, the lowest and the highest, both of beast and god. Like all power, it is frightening, and dangerous...but it is also a key to freedom and transcendence.

Basic Meaning

Perhaps the most misunderstood card of all the major arcana, the Devil is not really "Satan" at all, but Pan the half-goat nature god and/or Dionysius (Bacchus). These are gods of pleasure and abandon, of wild behavior and unbridled desires. Sometimes, this card says, it is good to dance with Bacchus, surrendering control, or be Bacchus and manipulate. Too much restraint can hold you back and keep you from achieving important things.

In this regard, we might say that this card is about being honest with yourself. What do you desire? What gives you pleasure? What has power over you (and will enslave you if you let it), and what makes you feel powerful (and will help you reach your highest goals)?

With Capricorn as its ruling sign, the Devil is also a card about ambitions, about commitment and resourcefulness. This is the mountain goat that aims to get to the top and does all its needs to do to get there.

As a person, the Devil can stand for a man or woman of money or erotic power, aggressive, controlling, or just persuasive. This is not to say a bad person, but certainly a powerful person who is hard to resist. The querent needs to watch themselves lest they end up needing this powerful person to give them identity. On the other hand, the querent might find themselves in "Devil" mode, egging others on, playing puppet master. This, too, can become their identity.

Thus, the addict and pusher can create a co-dependent relationship that is not healthy for either.

When not indicating a person, the Devil card is synonymous with temptation and addiction, anything that we find hard to resist: be it chocolate, sex or heroin. Readers should ask querents if there's anything they've been having trouble resisting of late. It is important to point out, as the card does, that, often (though not always), we don't resist is because we don't want to. This needs to be recognized and acknowledge as it means that the power to change the situation is with us, not with what tempts us.

Thirteen's Observations

Most cards urge balance, unity, restraint, yin-yang. Not this card. The Devil, to the contrary, is a card that revels in extremity, excess and loss of control. There is a convincing argument that this is the most powerful and dangerous card in the deck. At its absolute worst, it is the card of the addict or the stalker, totally obsessed, enslaved, relentless. At its very best, it is a card about cutting loose, going for the gold, climbing every mountain.

There are, I think, three essential points that a reader must make when this card appears. First, that we have to be honest about our weaknesses and addictions, denial only makes it easier for them to control us. Second, that it is

natural to have self-interest, a desire for pleasure even and, occasionally, to indulge in excesses. Doing so might even be essential to achieving our aims. We didn't fly to the Moon by being moderate, safe or cautious, by resisting temptation.

However, and this is the last point, it is all too easy to become enslaved to the power of such pleasures and excesses. The most powerful person is the one who can consciously decide when to indulge, and when to walk away from indulging without hesitation or regret.

This card is about temptation and control, addictions and manipulation. It asks us a most important question: who or what will we allow to enslave us? And who or what will be under our control? Only by understanding this part of ourselves can we gain power over it and use it to our benefit rather than letting it use us.

TOWER

Basic Symbols

A tower on a rocky outcrop, a powerful bolt of lightning, one or two figures falling from the tower, sometimes waves crashing below.

Basic Story

As the Fool leaves the throne of the Goat God, he comes upon a Tower, fantastic, magnificent, and familiar. In fact, The Fool, himself, helped build this Tower back when the most important thing to him was making his mark on the world and proving himself better than other men. Inside the Tower, at the top, arrogant men still live, convinced of their rightness.

Seeing the Tower again, the Fool feels as if lightning has just flashed across his mind; he thought he'd left that old self behind when he started on this spiritual journey. But he realizes now that he hasn't. He's been seeing himself, like the Tower, like the men inside, as alone and singular and superior, when in fact, he is no such thing.

So captured is he by the shock of this insight, that he opens his mouth and releases a SHOUT! And to his astonishment and terror, a bolt of actual lightning slashes down from the heavens striking the Tower and sending its residents leaping out into the waters below.

In a moment, it is over. The Tower is rubble, only rocks remaining. Stunned and shaken to the core, the Fool experiences profound fear and disbelief. But also, a strange clarity of vision, as if his inner eye has finally opened. He tore

down his resistance to change and sacrifice (Hanged man), then came to terms with Death (Death); he learned about moderation and synthesis (Temperance) and about power (The Devil). But here and now, he has done what was hardest: he destroyed the lies of his life. What's left are the foundations of truth. On this he can rebuild himself.

Basic Meaning

With Mars as its ruling planet, the Tower is a card about war, a war between the structures of lies and the lightning flash of truth. This is a card about anything we believe to be true, but later learn is false. This realization usually comes as a shock, hence, the violent image. It is, quite simply, that moment in any story where someone finds out a shocking truth, one that shatters their perceptions and makes them reassess their beliefs.

When the Querent gets this card, they can expect to be shaken up, blinded by a revelation. It sometimes takes a very bright flash of light to reveal a truth that was so well hidden. And it sometimes takes an earthquake to bring down beliefs that were so cleverly constructed. What's most important to remember is that the tearing down of this structure, however painful, allows us to find out what is true and reliable. What will stand rather than fall apart.

Thirteen's Observations

The Tower is one of the clearest cards when it comes to meaning. False structures, false institutions, false beliefs are going to come (or have already come) tumbling down, suddenly, violently and all at once. This sort of prediction can scare anyone, especially as the one you're reading for likely does not know that something is false. Not yet. To the contrary, they probably believe that their lover is being faithful, that their religious beliefs are true and right, that there are no problems in their family structure, that everything is fine at work...oh, and that they're fine. Just fine, really.

Alas, they're about to get a very rude awakening. Shaken up, torn down, blown asunder. And all a reader can really do to soften the blow is assure the querent that it is for the best. Nothing built on a lie, on falsehoods, can remain standing for long. Better for it to come down so that it can be rebuilt on truth – or not rebuilt at all, if that's what seems best. This rude awakening is not going to be pleasant or painless or easy, but it will be for the best in the end.

STAR

Basic Symbols

Seven or eight stars, a kneeling woman (usually nude), a pool of water, two urns.

Basic Story

On the bleak landscape where the Tower stood, the Fool sits, empty, despairing. He hoped to find direction on this spiritual journey, a path to his spiritual self, but having just learned that most of his life was a lie, he now feels lost. Sitting on the cold stones, he gazes up at the night sky wishing for some kind of guide. And that is when he notices, nearby, a beautiful girl with two water urns. As he watches, she kneels by a pool of water illuminated with reflected starlight. She empties the urns, one into the pool, one onto the thirsty ground.

"What are you doing," he asks her. She looks up at him, her eyes twinkling like stars. "I am refilling this pool, so that those who are thirsty may drink, and I am also watering the earth so that more fruit trees will grow to feed those who are hungry." She nods back to a single fruit tree that stands nearby, a nightingale singing amid its branches.

"Come," she invites. "Sate your hunger and quench your thirst."

The Fool plucks some fruit from the tree, then kneels by her and drinks from the pool. The water tastes wonderful, like liquid starlight, and the fruit is equally delicious. Both help to heal his wounded heart.

Having quenched his thirst and sated his hunger, the Fool lays back to gaze up at the stars. "They're so beautiful," he said, "but so distant."

"Like possible futures," agrees the girl. "Cool and distant. Yet if you keep one in sight, it can guide you to your destination no matter how far away it is." Even as she says this, she began to fade away, like dew, vanishing. All that remains is a gleam that was at the center of her forehead. This rises up and up, until it settles in the night sky as a shining star. "Follow your star," the woman's voice seems to sing from that light, "and have hope."

The Fool takes in a breath and rises. It is a dark night, a desolate land. But for the first time, he has a guiding light to show him the way. Distant as it is, it restores his faith.

Basic Meaning

With Aquarius as its ruling sign, The Star is a card that looks to the future. It does not predict any immediate or powerful change, but it does predict hope and healing, even unexpected help to offer us sustenance in bleak times.

Thus, the card says that there is aid and assistance out there to help us through hard times, like organizations that offer food and shelter in the wake of a terrible flood or fire. This assistance might, to us, be a friend or counselor, an uplifting book or music, anything that appears in our life and heals our wounded spirit. More, the card tells us that we can achieve what we most want to achieve, like flood or fire victims wanting to rebuild. This future, however, won't be growing to full size overnight like Jack's Beanstalk. It will take time and we must not lose sight of it.

This may seem like cold comfort. No one wants to hear that the person they're interested in is not interested in them, but will be in the future. Or that they will not succeed today, but will later on in their life. Still, it is there, a glimmer of light in the darkness. The question is, do we feel it's worth waiting for or not?

That is the question the Star makes us ask ourselves: What do we want bad enough that we will go the distance for it? The answer will tell us as much about what we are as what we could be.

Thirteen's Observations

The Star is one of those cards that almost everyone loves. It is often the most beautiful card in the deck and its image suggests the peace and harmony of its meaning.

While this card offers hope and possibilities, however, the reader must remember that these are in the distance. Only a time of healing and peace, like the oasis of water before the Star, are in the now. Like Aquarius, the card's vision is for tomorrow. This means that if the querent is seeking love, a career, fame, wealth or even spiritual enlightenment, they can only be told that it is a possibility. It is not going to happen anytime soon. But if, like a ship navigating its way, they keep the star in their sights, they will eventually reach that other land they're seeking.

The Star offers no guarantees, of course, that the traveler won't tire and give up or be lured in another direction. And there is no telling what obstacles they'll encounter along the way. All the Star promises is that a particular future *can* exist.

The Star offers peace and healing and a glimpse of the future. It is up to the querent to decide if they are willing to go after that future, no matter how long it may take them to get there.

MOON

Basic Symbols

A full moon (with a crescent within), twin pillars, two dogs/wolves howling, a stream that runs to the ocean, a crayfish emerging out of the water.

Basic Story

Following the star the Fool travels through the night. The full Moon rises, illuminating for him a watery path. And he begins to feel disoriented, as if walking in his sleep. He passes under the moon, between two pillars ancient and strange. Suddenly, he looks around to find himself in another land entirely. When he was in the presence of the High Priestess, he saw hints of this dark land through the sheer veil draped behind her throne. And later, when he hung from the tree, he felt himself between the physical world and this one. Now, he has at last passed behind the veil.

Here are the mysteries he sought, the darkest mysteries, ones that have to do with the most primal and ancient powers. It is a land poets, artists, musicians and madmen know well, a terrifying, alluring place, with very different rules. Wolves run wild across this land, hunting alongside maidens with bow and arrows. Creatures from childhood nightmares and fantasies peer from shadows, eyes glowing.

The path the Fool was walking is now a river, and he stands hip-deep in the powerful pull of its salty waters. There is, on the nearby shore, a small boat, but it has no rudder, no oar. The Fool realizes he has only two choices. He can lose himself in this desolate, primal land of madness and illusion, howl with the wolves, be hunted down, or he can get into the boat and trust himself to the river. The moon will be in control either way, but in the boat his surrender to the powers of the unconscious will at least take him somewhere.

Inspiration, visions and genius are the rewards of such surrender to the Moon's Magic, as artists, poets and seers know. The Fool gets into the boat, and shoves off. As the waters sweep him away, moonbeams light his "path" and he feels the Mistress of this dark land gazing down at him with the High Priestess's approving eyes.

Basic Meaning

With Pisces as its ruling sign, the Moon is all about visions and illusions, madness, genius and poetry. At its darkest this can be a very scary card warning the querent of hidden enemies, mental illness, alcoholic blackouts or a bad drug trip. At its very best, however, the Moon is a card of genius, of mental breakthroughs, astonishing creativity, powerful magic, and intuition.

The querent who gets this card should be warned that they may be going through a time of emotional and mental trial, a time when they'll do things that seem to make sense to them, yet when they come out of it they'll wonder, "Why did I do that? It makes no sense!" Their mind will be playing tricks on them, and so this is not a good time for making decisions that require rational thought and a clear head.

This card can, likewise, signal a crazy time for relationships. Whirlwind romances, powerful and dreamlike, but not trustworthy. For families and friends this is a time of emotional ups and downs.

If the querent has any past mental problems, they must be vigilant in taking their medication and seeing their therapist. They should avoid recreational drugs or alcohol, they will have a bad reaction if they take either. At the same time, the Moon signals great creativity, enhanced psychic powers, visions. The querent's judgment may not be trustworthy, but they will have intuitive flashes that are remarkably accurate.

Thirteen's Observations

This is the card of that scary, dreamy, secret otherworld where lies the most powerful and dark magic and artistic talents. Thus, it is the card for the most extreme types who seem to be straddling that line between artistic genius and psychopath.

Here are the wild, mean, crazy drunks who produce groundbreaking works with pen or paintbrush. Here are the musicians with wicked mood swings, dark, dark, dark depressions and charming manic modes. These men and women have no inhibitions and don't even try to control themselves in polite society. Their crazy behavior is sometimes inspired, sometimes horribly embarrassing, even unbelievable and often dangerous. But the art, poetry, music they produce....it's magic.

This is also where seers, mediums and holy men/women find themselves after weeks of fasting, prayers and meditation, when they finally have that holy vision. Here is the magical forest in fairy tales, the wasteland in myths where heroes meet with spirits, oracles, sphinxes and their own shadow selves. There is no predicting what will happen when we go to this land in dreams or while hallucinating on mushrooms. And there is no predicting how it will change us.

The Moon is the wild card of the Major Arcana.

When I get this card, I let the querent know they're in for an emotional and mental rollercoaster ride. They're going to be moody, sensitive, and a little irrational. They can do two things, either wander through this crazy, lunatic landscape howling at the moon (get drunk, wallow in depression, alienate friends and family with wild, antisocial behavior), or get in a boat and go through it purposefully. Meaning that they should probably take up painting, writing poetry or some other creative endeavor where they can transform all they're seeing and feeling into something beautiful.

SUN

Basic Symbols

The Sun, one or two naked children (a naked little boy, sometimes riding a white pony or a boy & a girl), sunflowers, often a wall, sometimes a red banner.

Basic Story

The Fool wakes at dawn from his long, dark night of the soul to find that the river has deposited him in a serene pool. There is a walled garden around this pond dominated by roses, lilies and splendid, nodding sunflowers. Stepping ashore, he watches the sun rise overhead. The day is clear. A child's laughter attracts his attention and he sees a little boy ride a small white pony into the garden.

"Come!" says the little boy, leaping off the horse and running up to him. "Come see!" And the child proceeds to take the Fool's hand and enthusiastically point out all manner of things, the busy insects in the grass, the seeds and petals on the sunflowers, the way the light sparkles on the pond. He asks questions of the Fool, simple but profound ones, like "Why is the sky blue?" He sings songs, and plays games with the Fool.

At one point the Fool stops, blinking up at the Sun so large and golden overhead, and he finds himself smiling, wider and brighter than he has in a very long time. He has been tested and tried, confused and scared, dismayed and amazed. But this is the first time that he has been simply and purely happy. His mind feels illuminated, his soul light and bright as a sunbeam, and it's all thanks to this child with his simple questions, games and songs. This boy has helped the Fool see the world and himself anew.

"Who are you?" the Fool asks the child at last. The child smiles at this and seems to shine. And then he grows brighter and brighter until he turns into pure sunlight.

"I'm You," the boy's voice says throughout the garden, "The new you." And as the words fill the Fool with warmth and energy, he comes to realize that this garden, the sun above, the child, all exist within him. He has just met his own inner light.

Basic Meaning

The Sun is ruled by...the Sun, of course and as the Moon was your inner darkness, the wild, untamed, unconscious part of you, the Sun is your inner light, civilized and rational, yang to yin, Apollo to Diana.

The Sun promises the querent their day in the sun. Glory, triumph, simple pleasures and truths. As the moon symbolized inspiration from dreams, this card symbolizes discoveries made wide awake. This is science and math, beautifully constructed music, carefully reasoned philosophy. It is a card of intellect and youthful energy.

Like the Sun, the querent will likely come across to others as warm and radiant, and they can be told that this is a good time to make decisions and take tests.

Standing for another person, this card can indicate those in the querent's life who are the most level headed and sunny. Also the most youthful. And, yes, the child/children in this card can be taken literally if other cards in the spread seem to suggest it. Your querent can be informed that a wanted and most welcome babe will soon be on the way. Likely a boy, or twins.

Thirteen's Observations

I actually have predicted children with this card once, and once only. Most of the time, however, this card, to me, is all about the Apollian ideal. Young, healthy, new and fresh. Things that were muddled come clear, everything falls into place, and everything seems to go your way. The money you were waiting for arrives; errors in the math are corrected to give you a bit more than expected. The project you've been working on comes out perfectly and you get all the credit. Traffic lights turn green for you, liars come clean and apologize, the garden blooms, the sky is blue, the weather is warm and sweet.

Is there another side to this? As with all the cards, there can be. Too much sun can leave you sunburned, which is to say that the card can indicate being too rational and factual, or too optimistic. You may see everything as bright and

cheery, ignoring possible shadows. A person can end up fainting from sunstroke because they were too much in the light and heat.

For the most part, however, this card echoes the song: "Here comes the Sun..." and absolutely everything is going to be all right.

JUDGEMENT

Basic Symbols

Angel, trumpets, graves with people rising from them, often water or an ocean.

Basic Story

As the Fool leaves the garden of the Sun, he feels that he is near the end of his journey, ready to take a final step. But something is keeping him from doing this, holding him back. He gazes up, hoping to find guidance from the Sun; instead he sees above him a fiery angel, beautiful and terrible.

"You are right," the Angelic figure confirms, "you have only one last step on your journey, one final step to completion. But you cannot take that step until you lay your past to rest."

The Fool is perturbed. "Lay it to rest? I thought I'd left it behind, all of it!"

"There is no way to leave the past behind," The Angel observes. "Each step wears down the shoe just a bit, and so shapes the next step you take, and the next and the next. Your past is always under your feet. You cannot hide from it, run from it, or rid yourself of it. But you can call it up, and come to terms with it. Are you willing to do that?"

The Angel hands the Fool a small trumpet. The Fool is hesitant, but he knows that the Angel is right. There are certain memories he has a hard time looking back on as they make him feel guilty, ashamed, angry. He knows that he's never come to terms with what happened and he must if he wants to make that final transition.

He blows the trumpet and it cracks open the Earth. From under the Fool's feet, the spirits of his past selves rise up, including those less than admirable past selves that he's tried to forget.

For the first time, he faces them. They are, he sees, nothing to fear. They were him once-upon-a-time, but not now. Even as he realizes this, he finds himself forgiving those past selves for the wrongs they did that left him feeling bad.

He senses, in turn, that they forgive him for ignoring the lessons they had to teach him. As he reaches an understanding with them, they start to rise up and float away, vanishing into the sky. Though they remain as experiences and memories, they no longer have any power over him. He is free of ill-feelings, reborn, and living in the present.

Basic Meaning

With Fire as its ruling element, Judgement is about rebirth and resurrection. The idea of Judgement Day is that the dead rise, their sins are forgiven, and they move onto heaven. The Judgement card is similar in that it asks us to resurrect the past, forgive it, and let it go. There are wounds from the past that we never let heal, sins we've committed that we refuse to forgive, bad habits we haven't the courage to lose. Judgement advises us to finally face these, recognize that the past is past, and put them to rest, absolutely and irrevocably.

The reader can tell the querent that they need to forgive or be forgiven, do something they've been putting off, or have the courage to finally end something that isn't good for them. It is time to move on.

This is also a card of healing, quite literally from an accident or illness. It can indicate a time in the hospital, or a time of significant change.

Thirteen's Observations

Judgement can be a hard card to read; it usually signals a change, one that involves leaving something old completely behind and stepping into something completely new. Like closing the door on an old job, and opening the door to a new and very different career. But it's also about making a final decision, to take that plunge into the new career, to forgive your family, to leave an abusive spouse, to make a new life. To heal and renew.

It's a very hard card to read, in part because it deals with very hard and final decisions. And it means facing something that most querents don't want to face. This is not about Death, something ending whether you want it to or not, this is about deciding to make a change, to stop doing something that isn't working and do something that will work. Which means that it's really a card about courage, and about recognizing that you're holding onto something that needs to be let go.

"You can't hide any longer," this card says, "all the coffins have opened, and all that you thought was buried is out in the open. Face what you have to face and lay it to rest so that you can move on. Make that decision. Change."

WORLD

Basic Symbols

Woman or hermaphrodite dancing, a wreath in the shape of a Yoni (almond shaped circle), two wands, a cherub, an eagle, a lion, a bull.

Basic Story

The Fool turns to take that final step along his final path, and finds, to his bemusement, that he is right back where he started, at the edge of that very same cliff he almost stepped over when he was young and too foolish to look where he was going. But now he sees his position very differently. He thought he could separate body and mind, learn all about one, then leave it to learn about the other. But in the end, it is all about the self: mind and body, past and future, the individual, and the world. All one, including the Fool and the Mystic who are both doorways to the secrets of the universe.

With a knowing smile, the Fool takes that final step right off the cliff...and soars. Higher and higher, until the whole of the world is his to see. And there he dances, surrounded by a yoni of stars, at one with the universe. Ending, in a sense, where he began, beginning again at the end. The world turns, and the Fool's journey is complete.

Basic Meaning

The World (or Universe) card pictures a dancer in a Yoni (sometimes made of laurel leaves). The Yoni symbolizes the great Mother, the cervix through which everything is born, and also the doorway to the next life after death. It is indicative of a complete circle. The Dancer has one leg crossed over the other, just like the Hanged man. She is, in a sense, his opposite, the Hanged Man right-side-up. As the Hanged Man saw infinitely inward, the Dancer sees infinitely outward.

The Dancer is also the opposite of the Wheel. The Wheel goes up and down like a Ferris Wheel, which means those on it feel like they get moved to higher or lower positions, are lucky or unlucky. The World, by compare, goes round and round like a carousel. This means that whatever corner of the universe a person gets sent to, it seems equally wonderful and interesting, not like a promotion or demotion. With the World there are no Zeniths or Nadirs; each corner is different, but all are similarly important.

Which brings us to the Lion, Bull, Cherub and Eagle standing for Leo, Taurus, Aquarius and Scorpio, the fixed signs of the Zodiac (also sometimes found on The Wheel of Fortune card). These are symbolic of the four elements (four

suits of the tarot), four compass points, four seasons, and the four corners of the universe. All within the Dancer's sight and power.

Thus, the World card is about, first, completion and competency. The querent may have come to the end of a long-term project or graduated from a field of study. There is the feeling that they have hit all the points of the circle. There will be well-earned praise, celebration and success.

Saturn, the card's ruling planet, reinforces this. Saturn is the "scholar" card, and indicates that the querent is now an expert in their subject. Thus, this is not, like Death, the end of something, but rather a change in frequency. From student to teacher, from apprentice to master. The querent has finished their first go-around and goes right into another spin as a professional.

And, finally, on a more mundane level, the World card indicates travel, not short business trips, but long, fantastic trips. Maybe a lecture tour, book signing, or just a trip around the world. This can be a wonderful card of wholeness, satisfaction and independence.

Thirteen's Observations

There are three possible things I usually see in this card when it comes up, sometimes combined, sometimes not:

(1) Everything finally coming together, successfully and at last. The querent will graduate, marry after a long engagement, finish that huge project, or get their Ph.D. This is a card about completing things, and getting well earned cheers and pats on the back when you do.

(2) The querent is or will become a teacher, a Sensei, a scholar or master of their profession. Meaning they've shifted from being seen as a common worker to being seen as an expert. They may stop working for others and start up their own business. Or it may be that someone will retire and they'll take over.

(3) They are either traveling now or will be traveling. Luckily for them, the World card indicates that they'll feel comfortable and welcome no matter where they go, provided for by those who sent or invited them on this trip. The World card indicates a person who owns little. The whole world is their home and gives them what they need.

Minor Arcana - Suits

The Minors are separated into four suits. These suits represent certain things:

Wands

Also known as staves, spears, rods.

Element: FIRE (though some decks have it as Air). If FIRE then:

Represents passion. As such, in a reading it usually stands for ambition, career, creative endeavors, religion and/or philosophy. Anything a person might put their energy and soul into. This is something you have to do, whether you are recompensed for it or not. It is something that burns inside of you and you need to act on it.

This is the suit of adventurers and inventors, inspirational speakers, and those with religious or patriotic zeal. It is the suit of excitement and impatience, hot pursuits, grand ideals and gestures, and the desire to make one's mark on the world.

Wands also indicate hot tempers, passionate desires, enthusiasm, charisma, competitiveness, athletics, and restlessness that usually translate to travel and movement.

Cups

Also known as chalices, bowls, cauldrons.

Element: WATER

Represents the emotions. Special Note: When readers see that Cups represent "emotions" they erroneously think that the other suits are unemotional. "Emotions" is an imprecise designation for cups because all suits relate to emotions. Wands are passionate emotions, while Swords often indicate anxieties and Pentacles are more practical feelings. What would be more precise is to say that Cups are about romantic or poetic emotions, the ones we identify as relating to "the heart." Sorrow, bliss, nostalgia, melancholy.

These are feelings that you surrender to, that you flow or sink into. Best known for representing our romantic love life, cup cards are often about our feelings toward one another. The warm connections we have with family or friends, our recognition of someone who is sympathetic to us, or regret when we hurt or wrong others, or lose them. Loneliness.

Cups can also stand for emotional extremes such as elation or depression, and the negatives that come with such emotions, like over-indulgence in food, drink, drugs. Likewise the positives we can create from such emotions like poetry, art, music or dance. As compared to the passionate spiritualism of Wands, which tends to want to spread its zeal, Cups relates to more solitary or humble spiritualism. The search for beauty and divine love.

For this reason, Cups are very much linked to psychic powers, visions, illusions. As the sensitive emotions of cups allow us contact with each other, they also open us up to the esoteric.

Swords

Also known as knives, daggers, blades.

Element: AIR. Some decks have it as Fire. If AIR then:

Swords represent the mind and the voice. Here is the suit of sharp ideas and sharp tongues, of thinking things through or thinking/saying too much. Swords are cleverness and a love of facts, they are "swordplay" in the sense of solving problems, performing calculations, discussing and debating.

The suit is also, however, about braggarts and gossips, liars and slanderers. Which, not surprisingly, also makes Swords the suit of anxieties, worries, problems and troubles. A sword is a weapon with a cutting edge and sharp point. Every time we use our mind and express our thoughts we run the risk of getting into a swordfight. And in this day of global communications, there are a great many ways to get into such fights.

In the tarot, the Sword is that mightier "pen" standing for writing, research, television, radio and the internet. It is all forms of information and so the card of science, mathematics and medicine as well as debate, analysis and journalism.

Thoughts breeze into your mind. They are made into words and those words are given breath or are written up. Messages fly through the air, and bring back responses. Sometimes this may result in a swordfight, other times in swords crossing together in unity, an agreement reached.

Pentacles

Also known as disks or coins.

Element: EARTH

This is the suit of health, money, luck and work, the suit of the physical. It relates to our body, our home, our valuables. All that we consider solid, real and of this world. For this reason, Pentacles represent the pragmatic, common sense side of life like the job/work we do to put food on the table and the money we save up to pay the bills. Not surprisingly, however, Pentacles can also indicate indulging in luxuries, those things that money can buy.

Pentacles is the slow-growth, long-term suit, the suit about creating something real rather than seeking excitement like Wands, or theorizing like Swords or dreaming of romance like Cups. Hence, Pentacles stands for the bankers and business owners, the craftsmen, farmers, shopkeepers and laborers. Those who see their worth in something they have built, be it a corporation or a bakery.

This is also a card about social interaction and responsibilities. Which is why, in regards to feelings, it is a suit about greed vs. generosity, about doing what enriches ourselves vs. what enriches others. Also what one has or doesn't have and how that affects how others view us. Thus it is as much a suit about how we respond to being lucky or wealthy as it is about luck and wealth.

ACES

Aces are the root force, the spark or seed of the suit. Relate them to the Magician, who presents the tools to the Fool. They have no purpose yet, but are filled with raw potential. They are the active energy of the suit ready to be used. They can also indicate compass direction or season, but which is which is often debated. Here are the most typical directions and seasons. If, however, they don't feel right to you, the reader, change them to what works.

Ace of Wands

South/Summer

A new spark of energy for a new passion. This usually indicates that the querent has just discovered or wants to discover a new religion, philosophy, cause or career choice, possibly even a new sexual partner. They feel their energy go up, they feel the heat, and they want more of it. They take up the wand and start walking.

Ace of Cups

West/Fall

Emotions rising up for new love. This usually indicates that the querent is feeling a new welling of emotion or beginning to have some vivid dreams.

They're not writing the poetry yet, but they feel the desire to, or they may have caught sight of a figure across a room and felt a tug at their heart, or even passed by some holy place and felt the spirit yearning. They've lifted the cup and they want to drink from it.

Ace of Swords

East/Spring

The mind awakening for new challenges. This usually indicates that the person's mind is feeling sharper, clearer. They want to talk, want to discuss or write. The breeze stirs through the trees and the fledgling thinks of trying out its newly feathered wings. The sword is lifted, and the querent wants to test its edge.

Ace of Pentacles

North/Winter

New luck, health or work for new prosperity. There is no desire to burn, or flow or fly; here is a physical need to be grounded, to make, build and touch. Like a seed in the ground, there is a desire to sprout roots and just become. The pentacle is taken in hand, and, for now, the querent wants only to have it solidly in his pocket.

These are the Aces, the raw or initial passion, feelings, thoughts and needs that can be directed into something more. They represent hope, a possibility, an action to take, a future that you can create.

Choose wisely what you take up from the Magician's table for each has its pitfalls as well as pinnacles.

TWOS

The two are related to the High Priestess. As such they indicate duality, a pause between two choices or an attempt do two thing at once. Most importantly, they indicate instinctual knowledge. Aces are undirected energy; the twos are that point where you find out more about the energy so that you can know which direction to go with it. Thus:

Two of Wands

Picture usually features a man with one wand in hand, the other set aside. Thus, the card is usually about making a choice. Wands are passion, and passion is not something that works when split. It requires a single focus. This

card indicates a choice about where to put your energy and passion. Some readers find this card confusing as compared to the Lovers card, which is also about choice.

The Lovers is usually about an unexpected choice coming into your life. You intended to go one way, but something appeared, you feel connected to it, and now have a choice to make. Often the Lovers carries a feeling that the wrong choice could lead to real regret.

By comparison, the two wands present you with equal directions to go. A fork in the road and either way seems good. Or two ways of doing the same thing. Both look good, but you can only put your energy into doing one. So you make a choice. You'll likely have an instinctive feeling that one is slightly more to your liking than the other. This card signals that moment where you pause, give both walking sticks a feel in the hand and decide on one over the other. You likely will not regret that choice, only that you didn't have energy enough to do both.

Two of Cups

This card of two people looking into each other's eyes is one of the easiest to read - it is recognition of love, of a friend or a sympathetic soul. It might also be that kind of recognition of being drawn to a creative endeavor or spiritual path. Thus, the swelling of emotion within you is toward this person or thing. This happens all the time to us. We're at a party, feeling like we can't talk to anyone, sit down at the bar, meet the eyes of the person next to us and feel that they feel the same way. That we're "simpatico." Maybe we laugh or smile or exchange a few words.

It is a moment of shared feeling, and it could lead to more if we want to invest more emotion into the relationship, if we feel that this might be for us. Or, as the night ends, we might just nod to the other person and go our separate way. A choice must be made of whether we will direct our new emotions toward them or not.

Two of Swords

This is a striking image of a blindfolded lady with two swords. Crossed swords suggest a clash of ideas or words. The blindfolded lady, indicating impartiality, crosses her arms and so holds the swords apart. This is the knowledge of how to keep these two sides from fighting. It is very similar to a Mother who tells her bickering children: "I don't care who started it, go to your rooms!" Thus keeping the children apart and the house at peace.

Each child wants mom to take his/her side, but she'd decided to stay neutral and keep them likewise, which means that her solution is temporary. The

fight between them hasn't been resolved, it's just been put on hold. Sooner or later, this truce will end.

This can indicate the querent feeling like he/she is in the middle of something as a peacekeeper, or in a situation where tensions are running high and the lull in fighting isn't going to last. It's possible that the querent is trying to deny or ignore the fact that they didn't solve the problem and a reader would do well to remind them that they can't put off making a real decision for long. When we are faced with two opposing ideas or decisions with equally valid arguments, we do have a tendency to say, "I can't make up my mind right now, let me be!" But sooner or later, our minds have to go back online and we will have to decide what to do.

Two of Pentacles

Standing before the waves of an ocean, a fellow deftly juggles two pentacles. The meaning is pretty straightforward. This is the juggling finances, jobs, responsibilities card. We pay one bill, and don't pay the other (which is up in the air). When it comes down and we can't put it off any longer, we pay that and let the other one be up in the air. The querent may be doing this because they want to or may need to do this. They may feel they've worked so hard on both that they haven't the heart to put either one aside. And so they switch off put "work" or money into one thing while neglecting the other, keeping both alive, but allowing neither to thrive.

Yet this juggling may be a good idea. Having two jobs or projects also allows there to be a fail-safe, something to fall back on if the other goes wrong. As with the swords, there's no keeping this up forever, but it may suffice while you're waiting for your luck to change or circumstances to help make the decision for you.

THREES

We had *one*, indivisible thing, a stirring. We thought that one was good; then we noticed its other side, the Hyde to Dr. Jekyll, the yin to the yang. We needed to see both sides in order to understand it and know how to develop it.

So we understand this passion, emotion, idea or work that we've taken up. We have decided to put our energy, feelings, brainpower or work into it. Our next move, of course, is for us to do just that and develop it, create a third corner. One that will, balance out the other two, form a triangle and allow for evolution and growth.

Ruling over the threes is the Empress whose card is about newborn things, which must be nursed and babied. As the twos were the fact-finding period, the period of hammering out the details, putting off the decision or making the decision, threes are about using that knowledge to take the first step or get the first results. It is about improvising our way through those early times of fragile development.

Three of Wands

A man with two wands, holding a third, looks out to sea, waiting. Sometimes there are boats on the horizon. This is the card of "waiting for the ships to come in." The person has invested their passion in something - a new career, a big move to a new city (remember wands signify travel as well), maybe they've even thrown their hat into a political ring - and now the energy they sent out is coming back to them. It is a card of progress, of the first hint that the dream can be made real.

This card also indicates that, like a woman holding her new born babe in her arms for the first time, or a politician hearing that the first round of votes are for him/her, the querent might rightly be feeling a little proud, even powerful. They might be warned, however, to not get too excited. Though there is a sense that positive results are coming in, they should wait till the ships have all appeared and docked before celebrating or boasting.

Three of Cups

Three maidens with three overflowing cups celebrate. The creation here, springing from the investment of emotion, is "family" meaning either family members that you're reunited with, or a young friendship with people who are like family.

In the Rider-Waite deck autumnal fruit surrounds our three ladies, suggesting that they are celebrating the abundance of the harvest to sustain them through lean times. Or, perhaps, this relates to the great, Elysian mysteries, which celebrated the return of Persephone from the underworld and, with her, the return of abundant grain and fruit. Either way, they interlock arms as they lift their cups, toasting each other, united in joy and love.

This card can signify parties, weddings, anniversaries, baby showers, birthdays or a holiday dinner. What it signals most strongly, however, is being with those who are emotionally in tune with you and you with them. If this card comes up regarding a question about a new relationship, it usually means that you're either discussing it with friends/family, or introducing this new person to friends/family. You're taking the next step in strengthening your emotional bond with the person. That is to say, you're feeling serious

enough about them to let them meet those who are important to you – and let those who are important to you meet them.

Three of Swords

Ah, the dreaded three of swords. Three swords pierce a heart. Against the background of a storm, it bleeds. This card often relates to love-triangles, but remember this is an air sign, so what wounds the querent is not an action, but something said to them, or read by them. There is a strong possibility that a secret has finally come out.

A reader may wonder how this differs from The Tower, which is about a similar reveal. The Tower reveals that something you were passionate about is false, and that is most important. With the Tower, the querent had no idea, none at all, that what they thought was true was not true. They believed it heart and soul.

With the Three of Swords, the querent usually senses that something is up even if they don't know what. A friend has been avoiding you, perhaps, or making strange excuses. Something is up, but no one will say what. It feels like everyone is keeping something secret from you. And you may even have your suspicions of what.

The Three of Swords indicates that it's going to finally come out. It will be hurtful, the words sharp, piercing. "I don't like you," or, "I want to break up," or "I'm in love with your best friend" (ouch!). But it will not be a bolt out of the blue. It may even be a relief to finally know. No more waiting, obsessing, wondering, worrying about what could be wrong. This cutting truth, however bitter and painful, allows all that tension and uncertainty to finally drain out. The querent knows how things stand, the truth about how they're seen by others. This development allows them to move on.

Three of Pentacles

A craftsman shows off his work of three pentacles to his patrons. This is sometimes known as the "craftsman's card," and it relates to doing a job so well or uniquely that it gains patronage. Some readers find this card confusing as it shows a "master" craftsman at #3, but the card of apprenticeship is at #8. Shouldn't "apprenticeship" come first?

Actually, the Three of Pentacles isn't really about being a master of your craft, and Eight of Pentacles, when it's about apprenticeship, is usually about learning something new and different. So cards are not as out of order as they seem.

We will get to the Eight later, but for right now it's important to understand that the focus of the Three of Pentacles isn't on the craftsman. It's on the investors. We might well be reminded of two young men who created one of the first desktop computers in their garage. They weren't master computer-makers at the time, but their product caught the attention of investors and they were able to put their work and time into making more.

This is what the card is all about. The querent is or will be given the money or opportunity to nurture and develop something. A friend might give them funding, or their boss might give them more time to work on a project. Health wise, this card can also indicate positive results from a new exercise program or therapy. That initial bout of work has paid off.

FOURS

Fours are ruled by the Emperor and, like both the Emperor and his throne, they signify stability. The first stage is complete: the invested passion, emotion, brainpower and work gotten past being young and fragile and is now rooted and strong. Established. This can be positive, a solid foundation on which to build more, or negative, something that has come to a halt and doesn't know how to evolve any further.

Four of Wands

This card, with its four wands holding up garlands, implies that the foundation is finished and ready to be developed. It signifies the successful completion of a first stage or a first draft, first full rehearsal, first election to a small but significant post. It also predicts that the querent will (or has) enjoyed this moment of completion, celebrated it.

Often this card is read as indicating marriage, this because marriage is seen as the "completion" of the first stage of a relationship. The couple cement the foundation they've laid down with a commitment ceremony.

There is a danger when this card comes up, however, of the querent feeling like they've finished the project when, in truth, they've only finished that first part. Many see marriage as the goal of a relationship rather than the completion of a stage. A reader might do well to remind the querent that while a celebration for having completed this first stage is well deserved, they need to also think of ways to re-energize themselves. There is more to do.

Four of Cups

Water is about movement and flow, making the stability of the "fours" contrary to this element. Which is why it's a card about dissatisfaction. A man

sitting under a tree with three cups is offered a fourth by a hand from a cloud. He seems to be staring at the three cups he has, the fourth from the cloud suggesting that he feels unhappy with those three. This is sometimes called the "grass is greener" card. It indicates discontent. What we thought was wonderful when our feelings were new is now taken for granted. We might even start to find fault with it, become irritated by what we imagine is lacking or wrong with it.

The man under the tree is still, comfortably seated even, but it's clear that his feelings are restless. Think of those who stew in their emotions, grumbling and grouching, maybe wasting their time drinking or spending too much time on the internet. He's too locked in habit and routine to move, but habit and routine no longer give him comfort. He is dissatisfied and bored.

The querent might be on either side of this stagnant relationship, the man under the tree or the unappreciated cups. Either way, something must be done to bring these feelings out into the open and change them. There is still time to salvage the relationship, but that time is running out.

Four of Swords

A young man rests on a pallet, three swords above, one under him. Though this card (in the Rider-Waite deck) makes the young man look dead, he is really resting. This is the "meditation" card and it advises the querent that they need to rest, reflect, recuperate and find their way back to themselves. Being that Swords are emblems of fighting, of anxieties and arguments, the stillness of the number four is usually a welcome respite. This is a time for everyone to "put up their swords" and allow wounds inflicted in these mental/verbal battles to heal.

There is a fascinating story behind this image of the young man on the coffin (credit to Mojo for this history lesson): Before knights went off to battle or on crusade they would commission a sarcophagus for themselves in case they died. Those that returned safe and sound, if truly chivalrous, would literally lie down in their coffin in a show of humility and contrition. They would meditate on whether they'd been true to their mission, their king and god. Also on how easily they could have ended up in this coffin as a corpse rather than alive and offering up prayers of thanks for being spared.

Thus, this card usually indicates that the querent has survived a time of arguments, misunderstandings, mental or verbal abuse, even a nervous breakdown. They could be recuperating from a physical illness or injury as well. The Four of Swords is that time they need to heal, clear their head, just think about what they did and what they need to do differently from now on. The suit of Swords takes a much-needed mental breather in this card. It can signal that the querent has retreated, or should be advised to literally or

figuratively retreat from what they've been thinking far too much about in order to rest their brain and re-evaluate their position.

Four of Pentacles

A man holds tight to his four pentacles in this card. The man in the Three of Pentacles, who got work, money, luck, health is, in this card, holding on tight to what he developed. He is not investing it or spending it or sharing it; he is not trying to get more work or add on a new room to his house. He is just trying to keep things still and unchanging.

This is sometimes called the miser card, but that may be too harsh a judgment on it. There are times when it's good to hold onto what you have and this card can be read as advice that there are currently no good investments, so hold onto your money, or that this is not a time to change jobs or take on new projects. Just keep doing what you're doing. It may even suggest that you don't talk about your work. A non-disclosure agreement.

On the positive side, this tells the querent that they're in a position of status, health, money, even comfort. Business is good and stable, work is steady, money is in the bank. There is, however, a negative to this card in that the querent might be holding on too tight. They might be too afraid of to spend any money, too afraid to take on any new work.

In the most extreme negative, this is the card of hoarders and packrats. Also the card of jealous relationships where one person views the other as their property and won't let them leave the house. This can be the card of the shut-ins and agoraphobics.

So while this card can be good advice to the spendthrift or shopaholic that they need to hold onto their money, or to the workaholic to not take on more jobs, it can also be the opposite, advising the miser to be more generous with good luck and good fortune. It is a card that can be telling the querent to enjoy what they have because holding still leads to stagnation.

FIVES

As fours were about stability and maintaining what you have built up, the fives are about instability and the loss of at least some of what you have. Five is the number of severity and fear but also strength. Hence, it's no surprise that the Fives seem to pose both a severe problem, and a way to escape the fear felt at facing that problem.

Dealing with this upset in the development of our passion, emotion, idea or work humbles, teaches and matures us. It isn't a pleasant experience, and our pride, especially, is likely to suffer, but it does strengthen us.

Five of Wands

Five similar young men with five wands battle among themselves. When you invest energy in a project, you often find that it develops and grows quickly in the early stages, but not in later stages. Like a small company just starting, or someone who runs for mayor of a small town, the lack of serious competition makes success likely. But when that company gets big enough, or the little mayor wants to be a state representative, then winning becomes harder. More competition, or just stronger competition makes it harder.

The Five Wands is about this moment when we find ourselves competing with others who have just as much clout and ambition. It predicts conflict and power struggles, inner doubts and fears. Like an athlete who stands out in high school, yet in college finds that he's not so amazing or special, we can lose our passion and drive to succeed.

This is, as with all the fives, a blow to one's pride. The question: "how can I stand out?" The answer is to overcome your fear of competition and be bold. This is not the time to retreat or play it safe. This is the time to pull out all the stops and do something different.

The querent should be advised that they're looking at some stiff competition. The battle may be playful, a test rather than serious, but their performance could make a difference to their future.

Five of Cups

A young man looks down in despair at three spilled cups of wine, never seeing the two still standing. This is the card of spilled milk. It suggests an obsession over something that has been lost so much so that what remains goes unnoticed. The querent might be feeling disappointed in someone for not living up to their expectations, making them blind to the person's good qualities. Or the querent themselves might have done something they now regret, and they just can't get past it.

Remember the Four of Cups and how much fault and dissatisfaction the man found with his three cups? Now they're gone and he is humbled, crushed. Why didn't he value them as he should have? Two cups remain, but he may not know they're there, or he may fears to look back. What if they, too are gone?

The question: "How do I stop from drowning in these mortifying feelings?"
The answer is to have the strength to stop staring down at what went wrong.
There is no finding redemption if you're too lost in woe and fear to look for it.

The querent is likely going through a time where they feel shame over their bad feelings, regret over something they lost or knocked over. The reader must remind them that all is not as hopeless as it seems. They can redeem themselves.

Five of Swords

A smirking young man gathers up swords won in battle from two, humiliated losers. In arguments and battles of ideas there are going to be times when one just loses or has to surrender. The winner seen in this card has clearly been winning fights. Maybe fairly, maybe not, but it is clear that he has some advantage as well as the confidence that no one can beat him.

Pride can make us blind to our own limits and weaknesses. It can lure us into fights we weren't ready for, or weren't equal to winning. Most of the time, we probably knew it was a bad idea, yet we let ourselves be tricked, lured, or goaded into fighting. And now we are dishonored.

The question: "How can I survive this disgrace?"

The Answer: "By learning from it your weaknesses and limits."

Losses like this teach us to know ourselves and be better prepared for the next time. They teach us how and when to walk away from fights, which can often be harder than giving in, and so save ourselves from the greater damage of failure.

Note that this card in the future position can sometime teach this querent this lesson without making them go through it. A reader can say, "Don't let yourself get into a fight with this person, you will lose," and if the querent listens, they will avoid having to learn the hard way how to be strong and walk away from such fights.

Five of Pentacles

Another famous card. Two poor folk sit outside a church with five pentacles on its stained glass window. This is a card that predicts loss, financial loss, bad luck, a set-back in health. It is a difficult time, as all fives are. The poor folk feel embarrassed by their poverty, but they are too proud to ask for help, preferring to rely on each other rather than begging alms from the rich church.

This card relates as well to the Hierophant's emphasis on community and social norms. In some views of the card those out in the storm have chosen to be out there. The "church" disapproves of them or their relationships and rather than conform to traditional standards, they stay outside. Similar to the other fives, there is, once again, the issue of pride and humility.

The problem, "How can I survive this impoverished time without surrendering my pride?"

The answer: "You have to reconsider your values."

While those in this card may have lost material things, even the respect of society, they still have each other. Such times teach us who our real friends are, who is honestly generous, and what really matters to us.

When times are good again, we will remember what we learned in these hard times and not be fooled by sham friendships or capricious social regard. We will know who and what we can really trust.

SIXES

Sixes are the restoration of balance and harmony after the upsets of the fives. These cards predict an exchange, a give and take that results in a new equilibrium. It may not last, but for that moment, everything is stable. With this card, there is an almost "Ah-HA!" of recognition as if you've found a solution, and more than a little awe at its perfect symmetry.

If you connect the sixes to the Lovers card you'll see how it works. Like Gemini, you recognize your twin, your soul mate, your equal. Maybe you didn't even know how uneven, how lopsided your life was, but now that you've met this person or thing your inner balance is restored. Here is the give and take that the cards say you need to achieve harmony:

Six of Wands

The Victory Card: A victorious man on a horse, carrying a wand with a laurel wreath, is applauded by all. Here is the conclusion to what happened with the Five of Wands. Competition was fierce, the querent was bold and stood out not only as the winner, but as the crowd pleaser. Now he finds a unique equilibrium. The crowd offers the victor applause, which energizes him and makes him eager to keep winning. He, in turn, offers them a champion to adore, giving them energy and inspiration. Both are uplifted: the victor with the adulation, the crowd with a hero to adulate.

We've all seen this sort of exchange of energy with sports or rock heroes who are "pumped up" by the enthusiasm of the crowd and in turn, put on a performance that energizes their fans. Of course, the star must keep putting on good shows if he expects to hold onto his fans, and the crowd must maintain their level of excitement to get their show. Which is why the card also carries a warning not to become too attached or reliant such shows or on such applause. Heroes can have bad days, and fans can drift away.

At this moment, however, the querent gets the victory and recognition they need to feel invincible, and gives back to those cheering him on.

Six of Cups

Two children among six flowering cups. There is a great deal of rich and complex symbolism in this card, but in a nutshell, it is a moment of innocent love, the boy and the girl both touching that one cup with the flower in it. He gets joy from giving it to her, and she gets joy in receiving it from him.

This card is most often viewed as nostalgia, of some old friend or thing coming back into our lives and letting us relive a happy moment from our past. The real meaning, however, is "joy," in particular, a known joy. This is the connection we make with someone (or something) who always makes us feel happy. They, in turn, get an equal measure of joy from making us happy.

The joy we get is familiar and reliable. This might be gained by flipping through old photos and remembering happier times, chatting with a beloved family member, meeting with good friends for a drink, indulging in familiar foods, or enjoying the comfort of a favorite pair of slippers.

As with all the sixes, this remarkable moment of happiness cannot last, no more than the children can stay innocent children. This known joy, like a bowl of chicken soup, can make everything right and better for the moment, but the querent should not rely on it as a miracle cure. This card can also warn that the querent is too attached to the "known," and afraid to experience anything new or unknown. They may be too reliant on old habits or too attached to an old lover.

For this moment, however, the reader can tell the querent that this is what they need to restore emotional equilibrium: to connect with someone or something that they know will make them happy.

Six of Swords

A boat of swords, being ferried across a river with a woman as passenger. The classic Rider-Waite meaning is that one is leaving difficulties behind. A trip or change of scene may be the answer to restoring balance here. But there is

more to it than this. In relation to the mind, ideas and words of the sword suit, this is also about finding a solution to math problems and brain twisters, not just troubles.

The ferryman is part of the give/take here. He has a fare thanks to this passenger, and his passenger has a way across the river. What he symbolizes is help in finding answers or solutions to problems. He might be a reference book or website, or perhaps just someone who will listen while you talk and work things out in your head. He rows you in the right direction, away from confusion and mental turmoil to smooth, thoughtful waters. Waters clear and clam that you can, in fact, see the other shore, the answer, in sight!

There it is, a way to make your idea, your argument, your formula work smoothly, perfectly, beautifully. I sometimes call this the "Eureka" card in that it has that feeling of a scientist catching sight of a solution.

The reader should warn the querent that they haven't arrived at that other shore yet. There may be a good deal to work out, but this is a break-through moment where the mind is working once again. And whomever, or whatever helped you get there also feels mentally rewarded.

Note that this card can also be about trips by boat.

Six of Pentacles

A wealthy man holding scales hands out money to the poor. This is quite a contrast to the Five of Pentacles with a shut door between the poor on the outside and the rich on the inside; also where the poor might have been too proud to take charity, or the rich unwilling to give to those who they deemed unworthy of their generosity.

Here, in the Six of Pentacles, the poor kneel and hold out hands for the money, not too proud to take it, and the merchant freely gives it, not judging them as he does so. Both gain in this exchange.

The question that must be asked when this card appears, however, is which is the querent? Do they have too much and need to restore balance to their lives by giving some of it away? Meaning, perhaps, that it's time to clear out the closet and give old clothes to a local charity, do volunteer work or make a donation? Even, perhaps, help out a friend in need?

Or is it time to accept that gift of money being offered by a generous relative, go to a free clinic, try for a scholarship or seek other types of assistance?

Balanced as this give and take is, it poses a quandary not seen in the other sixes. Which is how to freely give and take. The giver must give freely, not because they want to feel superior or good about themselves. Likewise, the

querent must not let pride, resentment or shame get in the way of taking. We all need assistance now and then.

The message to the querent might well be to accept what you're offered now. It may be that in the future you'll have a chance to restore the balance by helping out another as you were helped.

SEVENS

The fives were about instability and loss, losing momentum, losing love, losing an argument, and losing money. The Sixes restored harmony with their give and take. Now comes the Sevens. Seven is a magic number, a number of creativity and individuality. You might want to stay in the comfort and company of the Sixes, but challenges are a part of life, and we often have to face them on our own.

As with the Chariot, the Sevens require that you take control in a tough situation, manage your responsibilities, and find a way to succeed. One constant is the paradox of the chariot, a card that should be about movement, but is pictured at rest. Likewise, the driver of a chariot never moves. He holds fast to the reins and stands still there in the car. It goes from one point to the other at his command, but he, carried along within, remains steadfast.

In the Sevens, that is the most common way to succeed. Remain steadfast within. Thus these cards offer you a chance to show not only what you've learned and retrained from your trails, but how well you deal with the unexpected.

Seven of Wands

A man defends himself with one wand against six others. This is the "under siege" card. The stakes are high, and the querent is under attack; even worse, the odds are against him. This is where the energy you've been using to create must be used to defend what you've created.

Usually this card indicates a disagreement with how you are directing and managing your career, criticism of a philosophy, or a schism in the religion. Those who you gathered in, who were your supporters are now at odds with you. They think you're in error and that someone else could do better. They want you to step down.

And so you're on the defensive, fighting to regain control. The card urges you to stand your ground. The reader can tell the querent that though his enemies seem stronger, they don't expect resistance, and his fighting spirit will daunt them.

This card tells us to use what we've learned about maintaining our energy, about being bold and stalwart and we will win the battle.

Seven of Cups

A man sees seven cups floating on a cloud, each with something enticing rising out of it. This is the "daydream" card. Cups are the suit of emotions, but also fantasies and illusions. It is card where our own dreams and emotions make the situation difficult. Think of a girl who gets asked out by three different boys. Her strong emotions toward each keep her from saying yes or no; instead, she indulges in fantasies of how the dates might go, which not only puts off the decision, but makes it harder.

This is the Seven of Cups where you, the chooser, are given the challenge of getting past mixed emotions and self-deception. It predicts that the querent is or will be faced with choices that emotionally pull them in several directions. Daydreams of what could be will further muddy the waters. Seven, as mentioned, is a number of creativity, and cups are the suit of creative dreamers. Which makes the challenge of this Seven to rein in that abundance of creativity. To stop it from running wild.

Emotions, too, have to be reined in. The querent needs to concentrate on what they really feel, really want and can realistically imagine getting from each of these choices. The choice must be made not hastily, but soberly and maturely. And definitively.

Once again, the message is to stand fast. Don't let your emotions carry you off into fantasies and daydreams. Stay in reality, focus on making a decision. This card can also indicate a person who is living in dreams, preferring fantasy to reality, or someone lost in "their cups." Meaning using alcohol or drugs to escape reality.

Seven of Swords

A thief sneaks off with five out of seven swords. It's no surprise that when it comes to swords, attacks are sneaky and tricky, not direct like with Wands. Yet this is still an attack that requires creativity and steadfastness. The image also us back to number five (stolen swords) and "loss" along with what remains behind, number two, and choices.

This is the "Thief" card, and though it can be taken literally (protect yourself against theft), it usually means a different type of stealing. Being the intellect and communication, what might be stolen are ideas, something you've written, or even an internet password. The querent should be warned to be on

their guard, especially against those who are trying to extract information from them.

Stand guard over what you value, and try to outwit the thief. In some cases, in fact, this card might be advising the querent that *they* have to be the thief. They need to be tricky, sneaky, even dishonest because, in some situations, honesty is not the best policy. Sometimes flattery, lies, dissembling is necessary to get back what you feel belongs to you.

Seven of Pentacles

A farmer leans on his spade gazing at pentacles that grow on a bush like fruit. He has done all the work, planted, planned, toiled. Now, all he can do is wait. And wait he has, for so long that he's growing impatient. He's beginning to doubt that the fruit on this tree will ever be ready to harvest and sell.

In all four Sevens, the challenge presented cannot be won unless the querent is determined to succeed and will not let himself give up. The challenge in the solid, earthy Pentacles emphasizes this the most. Sometimes called "Failure" this is a card where one's patience is beginning to wear thin. You may be tempted to announce that it's all a failure and walk away. Or, weary of waiting, you could make a mistake, assume that the fruit is ripe when it's not.

This is an especially hard card (and challenge) for someone who has been out of work for a while, or has been trying to get back their health. They have to be told that, hard as it is, they must extend their patience. They must also be careful to recognize real opportunity from false opportunity. It's all too easy to act out of frustration, thinking that doing anything is better than doing nothing.

But acting out of frustration can lead to failure. Real opportunity is on its way. Hang in there and use all you've learned to recognize it when you see it.

EIGHTS

Going with the Rider-Waite deck, we'll relate the Eights to Strength. The Eights are like the Maiden, the will and intelligence to bring our passions to heel. By doing so, the two make the lion's energy more efficient, more powerful and lofty in purpose.

The number eight is, likewise, about limitations but also about transcending them. As with Strength, having rules allow one to achieve something higher, more divine, as wild fire banked in a fireplace creates more heat and light than if it was allowed to burn as it liked.

As Seven was the individual learning to stand his ground and prove his resourcefulness, Eight is the individual bowing to limitations. Rather than defying them, he finds creative ways to get the most out of such rules. The hope being that not only will he learn from such restrictions, but that they will bring out the best in him.

Eight of Wands

Eight wands cut across the sky. When we finally put to use our human intellect to manage our energy, we find that we can really speed things up. This isn't about "taming" the energy, but rather avoiding waste and making the best use of it. This is our example of banking the fire so that we have more heat and light.

Another example would be knowing when to speed up on a highway and when to slow down. If we speed all the time, we may spin out of control on curves and crash. This way we not only get where we're going but often get there faster than those moving at top speed.

This card predicts fast developments, fast travel, things happening quickly and competently. Nothing wasted. Whatever is going on, the querent won't need to worry about it being on time, it should arrive early. Things will get done quickly and will develop in a speedy manner with energy to spare. This will be, in part, because they understand how their energy works, and how to limit it so as to get the most out of it.

Eight of Cups

A man leaves behind eight cups to follow the moon. There are two views on this card. Some view it as a kind of "morning after." In this interpretation, the querent has been indulging, possibly for a while, in luxuries, drink, etc. Or, at least, indulging in what seemed important to him. Now he has "sobered up" and realized that he wasted his feelings on something or someone who, like cheap wine, wasn't worth it. Like the Lion, he leaves the wild where he roamed free, and seeks the Maiden (the Moon) where there he may not feel so freely, but will gain more from those feelings.

This can be taken literally as a card about the querent sobering up from binge drinking or a wild relationship and realizing that it brought him down, made him seem uncivilized and brutal. Now he wants to do better.

The other view of his card is similar, but less harsh. The querent may genuinely care for these familiar cups (things/people) whether or not they lived up to expectations. A crazy new dream, however, is calling to him, maybe has been calling for a while. His instincts are to follow the dream. But good idea or not (an inverted card might suggest that it's a bad idea or an

illusion), he'll need fortitude to do this. It is easy to give your emotions freely to what is known, harder to give them to what is unknown. Yet the unknown is what will likely raise you up to a new level.

In both instances, the card tells the querent that whatever they've been investing their emotions in, it has brought them down, made them less of a human being than they want to be. They need to give their feeling to that which will ennoble them. This something will not be found in any familiar places. They must have the fortitude to search for it elsewhere.

This can be a card of separation or divorce, or perhaps a spiritual calling. It could also imply a literal move or trip, especially from an established home to a new, unknown one in an unknown land.

Eight of Swords

A woman is tied and blindfolded within a cage of swords. This is the "damned if you do, damned if you don't," card. The querent is in a situation where they're afraid to move. If they move, they'll get cut. However, the ropes that bind them, the blindfold over their eyes, are their own fears, keeping them still, immobile. And so the longer they stay, the more they constrain and entrap themselves.

Although the limitation of the eights are meant to transform, there are negatives and drawbacks to this. The Eight of Swords is exactly that. It is what happens when you try to put limitations on words or thought. The motivation behind this may be lofty, to not hurt feelings or keep thoughts on divine rather than base matters. But what ends up happening is that either literally (with censorship) or figuratively the querent ends up feeling like they can't say or think anything.

This is a card about second-guessing every word, maybe even worrying about your own thoughts and what they say about you. In real world terms this could indicate extremes of social or legal censorship, fears of being cut down for offending a person or group, fears of being cut down for disagreeing. This card can also indicate your fears of what others might be saying about you. Fears of gossip, criticism, insults.

Fortitude is the only way to transcend this deadly mix of external and internal limitations. Like the Maiden taking the chance of getting mauled by the Lion, the querent must be prepared to enduring pain and disapproval otherwise they will remain trapped and silenced.

Thus, the card urges you to have the courage to speak up or face down what's being said about you. To move and try to get past the swords. The longer you stay mute and still, the worse it will get.

Eight of Pentacles

An apprentice or craftsman works on the last of eight pentacles that he has created, the other hanging completed. To understand this card, we might well go all the way back to the Three of Pentacles and the story that developed from there. We saw the craftsman gaining patronage, which led to an abundance of funds to hold tight to in the Four of Pentacles. Alas, the craftsman lost it all in the Five of Pentacles, but generosity saved him in the Six of Pentacles. In the Seven of Pentacles he stood his ground, waiting and watching for a fresh opportunity.

Now that opportunity has come in the Eight of Pentacles. This card could, in fact, indicate a new job or new training. A new investment or new workout program. In some interpretations, the querent might be at a lower level than he was, going through an apprenticeship. This might be a little demoralizing, but there is still gratitude for the employment. Either way, there are clearly no patrons this time to finance him; he is working hard to prove something to himself and his new employer, not to impress rich backers.

Seeing it from another angle, it is working out at a local gym rather than at a expensive fitness center, and working out for your own good not in hopes of impressing anyone. This card is about diligence and limiting your work to a particular project. It is doing your best not to show off what you can do or in the hopes of something more (as in the Three of Pentacles for patronage), but because you want to take pride in your work.

To this end, whether learning this skill or already a master at it, the querent will (or should) pay attention to details, research, train, and do whatever else is needed to feel that their work goes above and beyond. Even if no one else notices, they will know that they have taken themselves to a higher level.

NINES

Nine is a number of completion (so is Ten, but we'll get to that). It is the number when everything that's been learned or accomplished is integrated, and we can see it all as one, as the truth.

Like the Hermit, who connects to the nines, these are cards where we return to ourselves, as only we, ourselves, have more to teach us. We look at what we've done, earned, gained, and we think about what more we might do to

make our lives (or the suit) complete. We shine a light on all we've accomplished to discover what might still be missing.

Nines are among the most powerful cards, usually granting the querent what it is they, like the Hermit, are seeking.

Nine of Wands

A wounded man holding a wand stands guard over the other eight wands. This is the "failure-is-not-an-option," card. Think of climbing flight after flight of stairs to get to the top; you finally stop, panting, and wonder "Will I ever get to the top?" Unlike the Seven of Pentacles, however, there is no giving up, no going back after all you've done to get this high. You dig deep, find some reserve of energy and keep going.

Likewise, our soldier, wounded and tired as he is, is not going to stop protecting those wands.

Thus, the energy of the wands is invested back into ourselves for that final push. Though we may not know it, this will be our last investment, completing what we set out to create. The card predicts that the querent will get what they seek from the wands, a career goal, leadership position, whatever they've invested their energy into making real. They will, however, feel guarded and wary till it's done. And, like climbing flight after flight of stairs, they might be a little paranoid at this point. They might not believe that all they've invested is about to pay off. Or, like the soldier, they may not be willing to let someone else guard their wands even if they could use a rest.

Which means that this card often comes up for querents who are unable to delegate, worn-out mothers who won't let anyone else, not even dad, care for their baby, directors who won't let anyone else rehearse the actors, etc. The results of this will be seen in 10/Wands. In 9/Wands, however, the querent only needs to be assured that they do have reserves of energy and strength for that final push. Completion of all they've worked for is right there, all they need do is go for it!

Nine of Cups

An innkeeper sits before nine cups set out for guests. This is considered one of the best cards of the minors, the "wish" card. Keep in mind, however, that this card is not Aladdin's magic lantern granting you that new car or winning lottery number. It is about our wish for emotional fulfillment.

In some mystical systems it's thought that what you put out will return back to you threefold. Or, as Shakespeare put it, the more love you give to others,

the more you have, for "both are infinite." (Romeo & Juliet, II,ii). This is something of the meaning of this card. The more love and good emotions that you put out into the universe, the more come back to you until you have a feast of good wishes. Think of it like walking into an inn and finding that the innkeeper has already filled his chalices with the best wine for you and your friends.

The reader can predict for the querent satisfaction in family, friends and relationships, joy and camaraderie. They will feel creative and happy. In addition, this card could be a prediction of a great dinner, an amazing party or just a wonderful night at the local pub.

Nine of Swords

A woman wakes from a nightmare, nine swords on the wall. It can be a good thing to find what you seek, except when it comes to ideas, words or problems. Find too many of them and they will overwhelm you especially, as with all the nines, you focus them on yourself.

We all know this card, it is the one where we wake up at night and go over our troubles, problems, worries, thoughts, our failings, problems we haven't yet solved, ideas that went wrong, things we should not have said that we did.

The querent is at the height of their anxiety, far too focused and far too critical of themselves. There is a positive aspect, however, to this waking from nightmares, which is that the querent may be seeing things out of proportion. If they "wake-up," as this card suggests they can or will, they might see that things aren't so bad or unmanageable.

This card could also be literal in predicting insomnia, or far too many sleepless nights alone and awake going over and over whatever worry or problem is gnawing at you. The querent's life may seem like a bad dream to them, one they wish they could wake up from. One thing is sure, however, this despair and anxiety only makes the situation worse, and offers no solutions. The querent must find a way to get out of their heads.

Nine of Pentacles

A woman walks among nine "blossoming" pentacles while delighting in a bird that has alighted on her hand. Like the Hermit, the woman here has retreated from the world, but unlike him it is into a private garden of beauty and pleasure. This is a card about being able to spend money on yourself, work for yourself, etc. What the pentacle suit seeks--health, luck, money, solid work -- is achieved in this card. It is important to understand, however, that it

is achieved on an intimate rather than grand scale, one of comfort for the self, not opulence that extends beyond the self.

This is not obscene wealth for yachts and mansions, but rather money enough for a cozy home in the right neighborhood or a small sailboat to take out on weekends. Health-wise, you may not be in shape for the Olympics, but you look good and feel good.

This card can signify a lucky windfall or payment for work well done. It could indicate a healthy bank account or making a final payment on something and knowing that you own it outright. It can also indicate a retreat to a spa or one of those beautiful bed & breakfast inns where you're pampered and waited on hand and foot. It might, as well, indicate finally getting your own office at work, or a job position that suits you.

Or, perhaps, it is just being able to afford an apartment where you can live on your own. This card may predict only a very small paradise, but it will be private and it will be all yours.

TENS

As the aces were the pure, elemental spark of the suit, the tens are the element of the suit complete, both physical and spiritual.

This card is about what completes that turn of the wheel, getting it back to "1" and yet carrying with it all that it has experienced through those other numbers on its way round the circle.

Ten of Wands

A man carries ten heavy wands, trying to keep them together, bowed over by their weight. The image on this card implies that the Querent has complete control of all the many things he wanted control over. He is the leader, the boss. But this means that all the burdens are his as well.

The qualities of Wands--passions, temper, creativity, energy, spirit, ambition – need some restrictions, as in the eight of wands, to make them faster and more efficient. When they become too restricted, however, or given so many tasks that the energy is parceled out into many portions, then nothing can thrive. All the energy can do, at best, is maintain itself.

We often see this in life. Someone comes up with a great idea and starts a movement. The movement has energy, drive and creativity. It grows and thrives. Then it becomes hugely popular, which we might think is a good thing, but turns out to be the ruin of it. It gets weighed down by bureaucracy,

rules, legalities. Likewise with a small business that gets too corporate, or a family where mom, dad and kids sign themselves up for too many activities. All energy goes into maintaining a status quo rather than allowing or fostering change and innovation.

This, alas, is where Wands comes to if it goes all the way around to that final turn. The message of the card is rather like that old saying, "it used to be about the music!" Too much success or achievement can make you lose sight of your passion for something. Especially if that success requires you to manage a cumbersome music empire rather than just playing the music.

When this card shows up, it's time to let the querent know that they're weighed down by too many responsibilities. This is the Nine of Pentacles plus one. They've not only weighed down their body, but their spirit. They need to scale back or delegate authority. Most of all, they need to remember why they wanted to do this in the first place. They need to rediscover their passion for the thing rather than be burdened by it.

Ten of Cups

A family delights in a rainbow of cups. This card indicates that the querent has risen above petty emotions, like anger or resentment, to mature emotions. Meaning that they are able to feel what others feel, and know how to respond to them and create an emotional connection. This, in turn, allows them to create the sort of family, friendships and neighborhoods we all dream of having. Ones that know how to offer emotional support, understanding and comfort.

Thus, the card predicts that the querent has the instincts, control and maturity to get out of emotional difficulties and misunderstanding; they know how to restore emotional harmony between family members, friends and neighbors. As advice, it urges the querent to be empathetic, also to smile, be kind, be warm, be emotionally generous, and to trust their emotional wisdom. It also predicts good times with those we love – reunions, holidays, special occasions. If any such are coming up, the querent can be told that they'll go better than expected.

As for relationships, the querent can be told to remember the love that brought them and their partner together and ought to be holding them together still. Put aside the disagreements over money or work or politics and delight in the rainbow.

Ten of Swords

A man dead with ten swords in his back. There are cards in the tarot that can scare querents and this is one of those. Readers should remind their sitters, however, that Swords refer to the mind and communication, not murder.

When, like the Wheel, thoughts come back around to the top carrying with them all past discussions, arguments, analysis and attempts to solve problems, they also come to an end. There is no more left to know about the subject or say about it. Dramatic and frightening as this image is, it essentially says that any path your mind could go down has been gone down; any discussion you could have on this topic has been discussed.

Of course, the image doesn't just portray a death, but a murder and a brutal one at that. Stabbed in the back. The words and thoughts of others can stab you in the back, murdering your theory, idea, reputation. Any of these may be the victim portrayed in this image, but there is a positive. The worst has been done. And new theories, ideas and even reputations can be found.

When the querent gets this card the advice is that it is time to end whatever has been on their mind, or whatever issue they've been arguing or discussing. They have gone as far as they can with these thoughts or argument. Even if they could argue more or differently, everyone is tired of listening to them. It is also likely that dwelling on this issue has left the querent's mind weary, dull, dead. It is time for a new topic that will enliven the mind rather than keeping it pinned to the ground.

Ten of Pentacles

A man, woman and child are stepping through the portal to the grounds of a castle. Outside sits an elder in rich robes patterned with grapes, petting one of two dogs. The old man, it appears, is passing on his wealth to the next generation – the man and woman – and, through them, to the generation after that in the form of the child. Thus we see both the mundane use of the Pentacles (a beautiful home) and the spiritual use (providing for others).

Crowley calls this card "The Lord of Wealth." This is a card about having an abundance of something, so much so that you view it differently than when it was a rarity. Note how the elder sits outside while the couple and child are on their way in. The castle is nothing new or special to him. He values, instead, his time outdoors with the dogs, and takes enjoyment from how the castle delights the young couple and the child. The elder is also the living version of the castle, as rich and regal, and the card seeks to remind the viewer that as there is value in the grand old castle, so there is value in the grand old man.

In meaning, this card is about a pinnacle in prosperity: a family home bought and paid for, a business that can be passed onto one's children. It can indicate someone's retirement, dealings with elderly relatives, genealogy, or inheritances – large or small. It can be about antiques and other old, valued things passed down through the generations.

On a simpler level, the card can indicate passing things on, like removing all those old clothes cluttering up the closet and giving them to the homeless, surrendering that collection of stuffed animals to a children's hospital or clearing out books from the overflowing bookshelves and handing them over to a local library. Though similar to the Six of Pentacles, this is not so much about generosity as it is about using your abundance (wealth) to leave a legacy. "You have too much to enjoy," the card says. "Give it to those who can enjoy it."

This could also indicate volunteer work if you find yourself with too much time on your hands.

The Ten of Pentacles is the Nine of Pentacles plus one. In the Nine of Pentacles you had enough to indulge yourself. In the Ten of Pentacles you have enough to indulge others, and so you complete the suit spiritually as well as physically.

Court Cards

It is generally agreed by readers that courts are the most troublesome cards in the deck. They are difficult to read for a variety of reasons. For example, the "Magician" indicates the figure's profession. But a "Knight" is not so specific in what he does, and there are four of them. Do they all do the same thing? In addition, Courts can be difficult to read in the context of a spread. If you get the Queen of Cups in the "Health" position in a spread, what does that mean? (How would I read this? Alternative medicine, likely dispensed by a new, female healer that the querent is going to or should go to).

Court cards, however, can be very useful. They are among the best cards to signify people in the querent's life, or the querent him/herself. And once you get to know the significance of their positions better, they can quite clear in meaning no matter the position.

Let us try to demystify the court cards.

Four Courts

Rider-Waite style the courts are Pages, Knights, Queens, Kings. Crowley style the courts are Princesses, Princes, Queens, Knights. There are pros and cons to each. We, however, will be discussing the Rider-Waite's court system.

Ways to make reading Court Cards easier:

1) **Court cards frequently indicate people**, someone in the querent's life (past or present), or someone about to come into the querent's life or the querent, themselves. So when a court card appears, consider whether it might represent the querent or someone the querent knows.

Gender usually goes along with the cards, but doesn't have to. Sometimes a woman will find herself the "King of Pentacles" in a relationship with the man as the "Queen of Wands." Meaning that she is concerned with managing the home, job and finances while he is interested in passion and romance. Typically, however, Kings represent adult males, Queens adult females, Knights youths of either gender, Pages children of either gender.

Sometimes a Court will appeal so strongly to the querent that it will become *their* card representing them at all times. It doesn't matter if it matches their birth sign (see #3) or not. If they feel that they are the Queen of Wands then that is what they are. It is less about having the sun sign of Leo than it is about being a dramatic, passionate, artistic woman.

Most times, however, the Court representing the querent or others will change. They may be a Knight of Pentacles (male or female) at work, but a King of Wands (male or female) at home. If the question being asked is about how they are in a relationship, they may get the Knight of Cups as representing them, whereas if the question is about career, they may get the Queen of Swords. This tells them what matters to them in this situation, and why it may or may not be giving them difficulties.

2) **Court Cards have particular, symbolic meanings.** If it seems clear that the Court Card is not a person, then the reader might consider the most common, symbolic meanings of the Court Cards. Pages, for example, can indicate "messages," Knights "movement" or a "trips" (as they ride on horseback). Queens are "creators" like the Empress, building the nest of that suit, and Kings are "managers" like the Emperor, organizing and directing the suit.

3) **Zodiac symbols** (designations) can often help decipher Court Cards. Most deck creators assign the Kings, Queens and Knights a sign of the Zodiac. Wands are usually the Fire signs, Cups the Water signs, Swords the Air signs, and Pentacles the Earth signs. However, which card is which Zodiac symbol can differ from deck to deck. So examine images carefully to see which card is which Zodiac sign in your particular deck. The pentacle court card that has a bull in it (for example) is undoubtedly Taurus, whether it is King, Queen or Knight.

You can, of course, ignore such emblems and make your own assignments if you like. If you feel that the Queen of Swords is an Aquarius, then she is an Aquarius and it doesn't matter if the deck creator has given her Libra's scales or if another reader has her as Gemini. Whatever works for you is fine. However, it will cause problems if you insist that the Queen of Swords must be a Virgo as now you've a Pentacle Court card with no Zodiac sign, and an Air Sign with no Court Card!

Keep the suits in line with their elements and Zodiac (Wands to Fire [Air] signs, Cups to Water signs, Swords to Air [Fire] signs, Pentacles to Earth signs). This will avoid confusion. The job of Zodiac signs is to help find out who the card might represent. So if you get a Queen of Cups, you might ask the querent, "Do you know a Scorpio?" and that might help you discover who the Queen of Cups represents in the spread.

What the Zodiac is not intended to do is limit the Courts. Meaning that if your querent, a Leo, feels like a Queen of Swords, then there is no reason to insist that she can't be represented by that card. We are more than just our Sun Signs. Which is why we can be represented by a Knight of Pentacles in a spread even if we're not a Virgo.

The Zodiac signs are, in short, simply a way of narrowing down who the card might represent when it's not otherwise clear.

PAGES

The first court cards are the Pages (or Princesses). It is always best to imagine them as young, and with a letter or scroll in hand. The element of the pages is "Earth" indicating something young, growing, a seed planted. So the Page of Wands would be "Earth of Fire" - the seed of fire, so to speak. Pages most often stand for children, though they can also be said to be the "Fool's" alter ego, meaning that they are very new to their "element," a student or apprentice.

Thus, when no children seem to be involved (the person you're reading for is childless, has no friends with kids, etc.), then the Pages can indicate that the querent is about to receive a message, or that the querent's (or someone in the querent's life) is at a new stage. They feel new and excited about it, but also are likely to make mistakes. They are immature.

Page of Wands

As a message: Wands often signify travel as well as passion, religion, temper and career. This card can signify a message from far away about a trip, career move, leadership position or something spiritual/philosophical.

As Time/Environment: This card can relate to a time of new learning, new discoveries, new inventions. There is child-like excitement and energy to get things started.

As a Child or "child-like" Person: The Page of Wands is the sort of child (or child-like adult) who is full of energy. Manic, we might call him/her. They always want to go outside and play and are always getting into strange places, climbing trees, wanting to go to distant places, like to amusement parks or on camping trips. He/she is never home for dinner on time, and can be frustrating. However, he/she is also so charismatic and optimistic that they're often forgiven. He/she is but happy, fun-loving, enjoys being the center of attention and the leader.

Warn the querent, however, that being "immature" this person might tend to bully others or throw temper tantrums.

Page of Cups

A message: Usually the Page of Cups signifies a message of family matters or a matter of the heart. It might be an artistic message, a story or poem, or a message confessing deep feelings.

As Time and Environment: This is a time of fresh emotions, feeling them purely and wondering at them. Romance is at the stage of puppy love and crushes.

As a Child or "child-like" Person: This is the daydreamer, head in the clouds, rarely paying attention, which makes it difficult to get them to focus on homework or chores.

The Page of Cups has got a great imagination, an artistic bent, and a love of story-telling which is both wonderful, but problematic, as they may let their imaginations run away with them. They will believe that there are elves in the garden and monsters under the bed. Adult-wise, they may not be taken serious as they're viewed as too "airy-fairy."

Very kind and sweet, they'll bring you fresh picked flower, make you a card, write you a song; they'll try to rescue sick birds or abandoned kittens, and take very seriously the death of a goldfish. When sad, they're the saddest kid you ever saw. When happy, they're positively blissful.

Warn the querent, however, that being "immature" this person will be overly sensitive. One has to be clear with them or they will misunderstand, but one also has to be prepared for very emotional reactions.

Page of Swords

A message: Page of Swords signals messages relating to information or problems. It is sometimes about illness and often rumor or gossip. When the querent gets the Page of Swords, they should be warned to check it out. They should not pass on the message until they're sure it's true. Swords are words and thoughts, and neither may have any validity behind them.

As Time and Environment: This is a time of new ideas and thoughts. They not only seem new, but unique, special, and there is a great deal of chatter, talk, and discussion. It may not be very mature, but it is rapid and developing fast.

As a Child or "child-like" Person: You can't shut up the Page of Swords. They want to know everything, be told everything, and, even more alarming, anything they hear, they'll repeat. This is the child that will go up to Aunt Hazel and say, "Are you carrying a baby? Mommy says it looks like you

are...." This card could warn the querent that they or someone else might blurts out something they heard that they shouldn't be blurting.

On the positive side, this child or child-like person could be quite a prodigy, good at puzzles, quick to learn. The card can signal absorbing new information quickly, or solving problems fast, also using a computer.

Warn the querent, however, that being "immature" this person will be prone to argue. Not only is there a risk of this Page of Swords being a tattletale, but they tend to think they know-it-all when they don't. This can be a card about boasting, gossip and lying, either knowingly or unknowingly.

Page of Pentacles

A message: Messages about money, a good, unexpected turn in health, a lucky happenstance or work.

Time and Environment: The Page's element of Earth works in favor of this time. There is new growth, steady development. Everything from the economy to the body seems youthful and healthy.

As a Child or "child-like" Person: The Page of Pentacles is a hands-on sort of child or child-like adult. They enjoy hammering together birdhouses, helping build a tree house, cooking, cleaning. If a child-like adult, they likely want to fix things around the house be it a leaky faucet or creaky floorboards. They are into home repair and/or handmade gifts.

They are also industrious when it comes to chores, taking on extra in order to earn extra money. They'll water lawns, walk pets. They're very frugal with that money, keeping it in the piggy bank and counting it out often to see how much they've got. Similarly, they're very health conscious, seeing exercise not as a competition (as a Page of Wands might) but as self-improvement. They're more interested in beating their own record rather than someone else's.

As a child, they may seem too serious and adult-like. As an adult, they may seem to be stuck doing more "child-like" work, like being a dog-walker, rather than employed in a more adult job.

Though they can be generous and good hearted, the querent should be warned that being "immature" this person will rarely do anything for free, not if they can get someone to pay them to do it. Meaning if the querent goes out on a date with this child-like person, they'll be eating somewhere cheap or going Dutch. There is an element of "what's in it for me?" in the Page of Pentacles.

KNIGHTS

Knights or princes are the spirit of the teenager, all about changes, movement, action. Knights are never still; as the pages/princesses suggest messages, the knights/princes suggest travel and spreading what they know.

They are also, as Knights, about engaging in battle.

Elementally, they are Air moving and flowing. As a person, they're likely to stand for a young adult or someone who acts very like a teen. Their beliefs are purer than of an adult, less cynical, more fierce. And like their element, they are prone to argue and fight for what they believe. In this they are most knight like: powerfully, almost unquestioning loyal to a kingdom or cause.

Knight of Wands

As travel: An exciting trip, and likely a long one to an exotic place by motorcycle, car, bus or train.

As Changes/Movement: Like the teen years, Knights are about maturing, changes, movement and the Knight of Wands would suggest things switching, moving, or changing rapidly. Energy, in particular, might go up or down dramatically. In the negative, there is a fighting atmosphere to this Knight, the time or environment may be electric with an almost sports-like desire to do battle, even when it might not be wise to do so. Changes won't be frightening, but they may seem wild and unexpected.

As a Teen or Teen-Like Person: The Knight of Wands is the "tilting at windmills" Knight. The kind of youth who always goes for grand, dramatic gestures. This is the restless teen or teen-like adult who loves his car and seems to live in it, driving everywhere, picking up his friends as he goes. And there is usually no telling where he'll drive to or end up.

He's popular, the center of attention, the leader who comes up with crazy ideas. He'll be voted class president or Prom King, and is likely an aggressive player on the football team, but don't expect him to be all that serious or serious minded. He's at an age where he wants to have fun and party. On the negative side, this teen can be headstrong, bossy or a bully – and a risk-taker, meaning he could do dangerous things and convince others to do dangerous things. A little narcissistic, he's not always sensitive to others feelings.

Don't expect him to be reliable or on time, but he can be fiercely loyal to his friends, and his religion whether that is sports, a philosophy or church.

Knight of Cups

As travel: Travel to lake, river or sea, or by water.

As Change/Movement: As with the Teen years, this card can indicate changes that involve emotional ups and down. The mood in the querent's environment, with friends or family, might switch rapidly from elation to depression, from sorrow to optimism. Especially in regards to a relationship this card can indicate a time of emotional flux, of fights about feelings.

As a Teen or Teen-Like Person: A knight in the truest sense, this is the knight of love, the "emo" teen: dreamy, sensitive, moody, "deep." He plays music, spends long hours alone in his room with the shades drawn, he writes dark, meaningful poetry. He or she will fall in love, profoundly and romantically, and believe that theirs is the truest, the most intense and spiritual love ever.

They can, likewise, see themselves as more spiritual, artistic or "deep" than others. They have a tendency to believe that others just "don't understand" and can't understand the power of their feelings.

The Knight of Cups should be watched for depression, which can be very real and serious. This teen or teen-like person may be so lost in emotions that they are inclined toward suicide. They are also in danger of experimenting with drugs and alcohol, not to have fun, but to escape from their intense feelings. Though moody, the Knight of Cups is fiercely loyal to anyone and anything he loves, including family.

Knight of Swords

As Travel: Travel by air.

As Change/Movement: This is a card that indicates a time and environment of rapid changes. In the positive, there are rapid thoughts; ideas fly, problems and challenges quickly appear and are quickly solved. In the negative, there might be too much thinking. This is the most "Knight" of the Knights, meaning things will feel restlessness, will change direction in a blink, or go from zero-to-sixty in a second. There will be an inclination to argue. It could be frightening and worrying, but also mentally stimulating.

As a Teen or Teen-Like Person: Too smart for his own good, the Knight of Swords is also too talkative. He/she is the sort to get into a dozen flame wars on a dozen internet chat sites. This is the sort of teen/teen-like person who will question his teachers (bosses), likes to play devil's advocate, and argue with his friends and family just for the sake of arguing.

Cool and logical, he can be very smart and amazing at problem-solving. This, however, can make him arrogant, cold, even cruel to those he views as not so bright. This sharp mind and sharp tongue can also lead him to spread gossip or nasty rumors just to see what will happen. He may be an internet troll or hacker and likely to cause serious trouble or get into serious trouble because of it. He fails to consider the consequences of his words, and can be uncaring about others feelings.

He is, however, a good Knight to have on your side, as he will find clever ways to win in battle. If there's anything this knight will fight and die for, it is for freedom of information and speech.

Knight of Pentacles

As Travel: Travel on foot, hiking, walking, cycling.

As Changes/Movement: The Knight of Pentacles is the most opposite to the Air element of the Knights. This means that he is the least Knight-like. Not inclined to move or fight. On the positive, movement and changes will feel steady, as this Knight is very consistent. But Knights are supposed to be fast, and this Knight is plodding. It will seem like things are moving/changing at a crawl, and that those who should defend their positions and put up a fight are taking too long to do so.

As a Teen or Teen-Like Person: The Knight of Pentacles has all kinds of projects going, jobs on the side, and extra-curricular activities. He takes his work (or studies) very seriously, and is always looking ahead to the future. He likely has, in fact, long term plans, including what he wants to be, what he wants to do, down to getting married and having children. While this seems very positive, it can cause him problems when it comes to handling the unexpected or improvising. If he didn't plan for it, he doesn't know what to do about it.

Similarly, this Knight is uncomfortable standing out. While he wants to have the best that money can buy, he also wants to fit in. Thus, if every one of his peers must have a certain cell phone, he must have it as well. If he can afford the best of these, he will buy the best. If he can't afford it, he will work at part-time jobs till he can afford it. While this gives him an amazing work ethic, it also makes him too reliant on material things to give him status, and may make him embarrassed if he doesn't have enough.

This teen or teen-like person needs to have his own room or secret place, and woe to anyone who goes into that room or changes it in any way. The Knight of Pentacles has his own organization system for everything, and a routine for keeping healthy. Not surprisingly, this teen can be far too solitary, too

concerned with perfection, or earning a place of respect. Fear of failure or standing out may keep him from leaving his room. He needs to "lighten up." He values and protects beautiful things and is a loyal employee if treated right.

QUEENS

The element of Queens is water and, not surprisingly, they are a reflection of the Empress. In this they signify the creative force. That which nurtures, slakes thirst and helps things to grow.

When Queens appear they signal a time of growth and development, a time when the querent is making things real.

Queen of Wands

As a development: Developing a trip or making real a career, or creating a movement.

As an adult woman: They light up a room when they enter, radiating warmth and energy, humor and spirit. Very often this queen is in entertainment, an actress or pop star. The Queen of Wands can also be a leader and activist.

Like other Wands, the Queen of Wands signals having charisma, drawing others to you like moths to a flame. Her energy can certainly burn others as she is hot, passionate, and restless. On the other hand, the Queen of Wands can be gentle; she loves children and is an enthusiastic participant in their lives: making costumes for plays, coaching teams, etc. Which is good, but the querent should be warned that this woman might be in danger of being a soccer mom – too involved with her children's lives.

The Queen of Wands is a very creative woman with boundless energy to make, do, travel, entertain. The problem, of course, is that this queen has trouble keeping out of the spotlight. She can overwhelm or intimidate, be bossy and overbearing. At her best, however, she is an inspiration to family and friends, and often to admiring strangers as well. No matter the situation, this woman will get things done and done well.

Queen of Cups

As a development: Developing a romance, psychic powers, or the growth of a family.

As an adult woman: Often a healer, counselor or psychic, this is a woman who seems to know what's wrong even before you open your mouth. Call her

the emotional fix-it woman or the ultimate “mom,” but she seems to have exactly the right solution to problems relating to family, friends, love. Sometimes she is so shy and self-effacing you might not even notice her; other times she can be a little scary, dreamy, mysterious, possessing otherworldly powers or a spiritual connection. She can be a creative storyteller or artist. Also, devoutly spiritual in her own way.

Affectionate and loving, she hugs, heals, and bakes cookies for her children. Her intuition is uncanny and her temper...well, it runs very deep and you don't ever want it turned against you. Talk about scary.

Unfortunately, this is also a queen who can suffer from hormonal imbalances, depression, moodiness, alcoholism, delusions and drug addiction. She is not above emotional manipulation, playing the fragile female who needs protecting, the invalid who needs tending, or the sensitive who can't be told bad news. At her best, however, she has is a well of emotional support and empathy that never runs dry. She will always be there for you.

Queen of Swords

As a development: Developing a speech, a scientific theory, a dissertation, working on a debate, or just spreading news.

As an adult woman: She's a walking encyclopedia. Anything you want to know, this woman knows it, and as such she can mingle with almost anyone. She can talk science with the scientists, history with the historians, literature with the poets. She knows obscure facts, strange tit-bits, and she seems to love nothing better than to pour it all out, give it away like gifts to help people. In fact this woman is likely to be involved in a job that includes talking: psychology, politics, radio, or research. She might be a scientist, doctor or lawyer. Far-sighted, she is usually ahead of the game when it comes to new developments and will do many things – from cooking new cuisines, to using unconventional child rearing techniques – long before it's in vogue. All of which tends to make her appear eccentric.

It's no surprise that men and women find themselves either threatened by her or fascinated. Her cool demeanor enhances her allure, making her the most “queen-like” of the queens, and her talent with words can be used to either lead one gently and persuasively over to her side, or tear an argument (and a person's self-worth) to pieces.

Obviously, her style of parenting can seem “un-motherly” as she believes in offering up facts to solve problems rather than hugs and kisses. No one is better at intellectually stimulating her children, keeping them curious, helping them with homework or dealing coolly and effectively with emergencies. But

she is lacking when it comes to providing emotional understanding and support.

The Queen of Swords also likes to know everything, and she is likely to listen in on conversations, read e-mails, etc. Worse, she might well tell others what she's learned thinking it will do good. She means well, but her need to know and solve problems often outweighs other considerations. At her best, however, she is the queen of strategy. If there is a problem that needs to be solved, a puzzle worked out, the Queen of Swords is the one you want.

Queen of Pentacles

As a development: Making real a business, altering a work situation, or developing an exercise or health plan.

As an adult woman: This is the practical, down-to-earth woman. She might, in fact, be an Earth Mother type going for organic living, home gardens, and making her own home improvements, or a farmer's wife, tending chickens, knitting sweaters and canning jams. But she could also be one of the rich and famous.

Rich or not, it is likely that she also owns her own successful business, be it cookies she bakes at home and sells at local coffee houses, a small shop or a multi-national corporation. Her accounting is scrupulous, but that doesn't mean she's afraid to spend. She loves beautiful things and, if she is on the wealthy side, will spare no expense to decorate her homes with the perfect paintings, furniture, and trinkets. Her wealth and taste will be evident in her dress, jewelry and make-up as well.

An enthusiastic outdoors woman, she's always encouraging friends and family to exercise, and she loves her outdoor gardens as much as her indoor home.

As in work, nothing less than giving her all to her family will do for the Queen of Pentacles. She wants them to have the best so they can succeed. Her children may not have the best, but they will never want; they will appreciate that their mother works hard to make sure they get what they need, and that their family is steeped in good values and traditions. The Queen of Pentacles expectations may put a lot of pressure her children, more than she realizes.

Also, this Queen's pragmatism, her dislike of anything strange or distasteful, may exclude anything unique or imaginative - solutions as well as people. Even as an unconventional Earth Mother type, the Queen of Pentacles will want her children to fit in with her community, its values and traditions. Her children or partner may feel that they can't be themselves and still be loved.

At her best, however, this is the Queen of success. She has the patience, good sense and determination to make things happen. She knows how to make dreams a reality.

KINGS

Kings. Although they come last, they really should come first, as Kings are where the Court Cards start. They are the fire - their element - the passion, the driving force. This is why Crowley has them as Knights riding on horseback, rather than sitting passively on a throne. Kings are filled with energy, moving, leading, generating.

The thing to remember with the Kings, however, is that while they are powerful motivators, they are still "in the crown" - in the head. They can move mountains with their enthusiasm and energy and light a fire under almost anything. But they can't make it real all by themselves.

What they can do, like the Emperor is motivate, plan and command. The Queen is the one who will make it real, and the Knight will take it beyond the castle walls. But without the King, it won't happen at all.

Thus, Kings in a spread can indicate motivation, a beginning or start of something.

As actual people, Kings stand for men (or women) who are leaders, planners or have high aspirations; they dream of having the best "kingdom" in the land. And they expect loyalty, especially from family and friends. They are men (women) of influence and power; others come to them for advice and, being Kings, they're usually stubbornly sure that they're right.

King of Wands

As Motivation: The planning of a great trip, the idea for some grand new career, being motivated to go into politics or take charge. Depending where it is in the spread, it can indicate that the querent has decided to take command, to overthrow the old with his new, bold ideas.

As an Adult Male: Call him "The Preacher." He fills a room when he walks in, expansive, full of energy, charisma, fun. You know this man; he's the motivational speaker, the charismatic church leader, the great innovator who can turn a company around, with employees working overtime to please him. He is the warm politician, the idea man, the bullying coach who transforms losers into winners. He loves danger, adventure, challenges.

This is Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Henry V. He always has to lead the charge and he hasn't friends so much as worshippers; people either love him or hate him, and the same goes for his family. Not that he doesn't love his family; he fell in love with his wife at first sight and wooed her till she loved him back; and he's great with kids. No dad was ever so inventive or fun. But he fully expects his family to come with him, wherever he goes – be it on African Safari or to the President's mansion. They must support whatever he does. If they don't, his other side can come to the surface, one that is jealous, impatient, tyrannical. It is not surprising that sometimes his wife or children will rebel against him, or leave him altogether. At his best, however, he is as adored by his off-spring as he is by his people. His praise and approval is worth more to them than fame or fortunes, and they will go above and beyond the call of duty to please him.

King of Cups

As Motivation: The motivation to start a family, which could include a proposal or suggestion to the wife to have children. Motivation to be a new and better provider, father and husband, or be more emotionally mature.

As an Adult Male: Call him "The Godfather." A kinder, gentler, more loving man you'll never meet. His "kingdom" is his family, and his one dream is to be sitting at the head of a huge table filled with kin, kids, grandkids, serving up food to them all. He is paterfamilias, the father as capable of rocking babies to sleep, bandaging hurts and telling bedtime stories as he is at coaching a sports team or offering fatherly advice. His family always comes first; for them he'll work, sacrifice, do just about anything; and, yes, like the "Godfather" he will consider doing terrible things to anyone who causes them grief.

This King understands emotions and is a master of his own emotions. As such, his ambition is to have a Kingdom where everyone is emotionally mature, meaning courtly and civil. Hence, he motivates his family, friends and community to be more neighborly and polite and responsible for each other's well being. To be, if you will, conscious of each other's feelings. This is why he's sometimes seen in the occupation of a judge, as he is very sensitive to fairness and knows how to put himself in another's shoes, to understand why they did what they did.

Very like the Queen of Cups, however, he can be too soft and sentimental. No matter how prodigal the son, this father will always bail the kid out. It is almost impossible to make him see reason when it comes to his family. And there is another problem: like his queen, he's not above manipulating emotions to get what he wants, especially if he's trying to keep those he loves close to him.

He also, like all the Cup Courts, may tend toward depression or alcoholism. At his best, however, this is the man the whole neighborhood thinks of as "Dad." Whether he really is their father or just a surrogate, he is the one who settles disputes, the one they go to when they're in need of guidance. He is the father figure that every father aspires to be.

King of Swords

As Motivation: Motivated to come up with ideas or argue points. Motivated to find solutions, solve problems or find better ways of doing things.

As an Adult Male: Call him "The Judge". His kingdom is the kingdom of high ideals. Loving, friendly, but distant, the one thing everyone says about this man is "He's Fair." Likely a lawyer, judge, musician, politician or architect, he is a patient, careful man, with very high ideals. Though he's objective and smart enough to see both sides of an argument, he has strong beliefs, which he expects his family and friends to follow.

Not that he isn't a good father; he can be kind, playful, a loving and faithful husband. He engages his children in stimulating dinner conversations, urging them to think for themselves, debate and research. But though he treats his wife and kids fairly, acknowledging when they are right, he does not put family first like the King of Cups. Ideals come first, and he can be unforgiving of the family member who is weaker or more "human" than he. If his own son or daughter committed a crime, he'd judge them the same as any other criminal, and sentence them the same as any other criminal.

Thus, his own fairness leaves his family feeling less than special to him and, at the same time, less able to make mistakes.

This King has the most brilliant mind, one that, like a master chess player, can see many moves ahead, and take into account a dozen different factors and elements. This puts him above and sometime beyond his subjects. They may not always understand why he decides as he decides, but he does so with the highest ideals and best intent. Which is why he will not budge when it comes to upholding his decisions, not even for his nearest and dearest.

Though he can be viewed as cold, distant, harsh, even cruel, he is, at his best, able to see very clearly how his judgments will affect everyone in the present and future. He is the one that everyone, even the other Kings, go to when they need someone to make the hardest and most far-reaching decisions.

King of Pentacles

As Motivation: Motivation to start a new business, motivation to craft or build something, to save money or restore health.

As an Adult Male: Call him the "Old Farmer" and his Kingdom is his "business" or farm. Proud and self-reliant, this esteemed gentleman is likely a civil servant, executive, engineer, manager, farmer, health guru or, surprisingly, entertainer. Wherever he is, he worked hard to be in charge and in charge he intends to stay.

He knows he ought to be in charge because he has common sense, a meticulous nature, and the ability to motivate others to work hard. It's important to him that the job be done right. And, in fact, whatever he is in charge of will grow steadily, reliably, and abundantly.

No risks or chances will be taken, however. And there likely will be no innovations or changes.

Because he is spare with words, he can seem cold and aloof, but those who get to know him find him surprisingly charming and funny. When he's relaxed he can tell the most amusing tales at the dinner table. And he is, underneath it all, kind and loyal. If you need help, he will help and never ask for repayment. But if you help him, he'll repay you as soon as he can; he doesn't like being beholden to anyone.

He will always provide for his family even sacrifice for them, and he expects them to be equally responsible, hardworking and disciplined. If they are, he'll stick by them through thick and thin. If they aren't, however, they may be deemed lazy and could be disowned, especially if they're odd or different enough to embarrass the King of Pentacles.

Much like his queen, the King of Pentacles wants to be respected by his community, and so is conservative in upholding its values and traditions. He is not impulsive, experimental or artistic – his motto most likely is "if it ain't broke don't fix it." But while he's not against others being experimental or artistic, he dislikes anything or anyone who makes *him* stand out. Anyone who causes him embarrassment, be they family, friends or enemies, will not be forgiven.

In addition to this stubborn nature, the King of Pentacles can be an odd mix of cheap and spend-thrift, cutting corners and refusing to pay for things he believes should be cheaper like milk, yet spending a great deal on things he believes give him status, like clothes or a new car.

At his best, however, he generates such respect for his hard work, his care, and his innate generosity that those who love him value his approval of their work more than the gold he pays them for it.