

THE
GODDESS
T A R O T



written and illustrated by
KRIS WALDHERR

THE GODDESS TAROT



Written and illustrated by
Kris Waldherr



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INTRODUCTION



The *Goddess Tarot* is a celebration of the Divine Feminine. Drawing inspiration from the many goddesses honored through history, *The Goddess Tarot* uses goddess myths and imagery to update traditional tarot symbolism; it acknowledges women's contemporary needs and mythic past. It is an easy-to-use, alternative deck for tarot readers already familiar with the popular Rider-Waite or Aquarian decks who seek a deeper experience of the Divine Feminine in their readings. For newcomers to the tarot, I hope the inclusion of goddess myths and symbolism will add relevance and depth.

Through my own personal experiences with tarot cards over the past fifteen years, I've come to think of the tarot as a potent archive of what I call "soul pictures"—pictures that reveal what Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung called the "collective unconscious," those subconscious rivers of mythic, archetypal experiences all humans possess within our psyches. To an observant eye, these soul pictures, through the use of symbols and images drawn from many cultures and spiritual traditions, possess layers of stories within stories. While the history of the tarot is unclear and mysterious, the stories told by these images still speak to our condition, addressing our common experiences as humans attempting to make sense of our lives and the world around us.

From the earliest times, humans have used stories and myths to understand the world around us and heal the soul. When we feel overwhelmed by life's sometimes confusing demands, these stories illustrate a larger view of life that is generous, wise, and accepting of the human condition.

As ancient and rich in stories and symbolism as the tarot may be, goddess myths are perhaps even more so—for these myths are *the* original women's stories. They show us the myriad ways women have been portrayed since ancient times. They reveal our collective feminine past, showing what cultures all around the world have revered, valued—and in some cases even feared—about women and our mysterious powers. These goddess stories speak to us through history's veils, telling us of women's innate divinity, dignity, and potency, showing the powers and talents all women possess: our abilities to create life from our bodies, our cycles of fertility that mirror the cycles of the moon, our strengths and beauties, our magic. They connect us to the celestial realm of the mystical as well as to the earthly realm of physical creation.

CREATING *THE GODDESS TAROT* ⇨ ⇨ ⇨

Having been a tarot enthusiast for many years, I'd always dreamed of creating a deck of my own, one that would showcase women and their powers in a new light. Indeed, early in my professional career as an artist, I had created several pencil drawings of major arcana cards, but at that time felt too overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in a tarot deck to continue.

Years later, I was surprised to feel those old aspirations surface again. In a sense, the creation of *The Goddess Tarot* began with the research, writing, and painting of my book *The Book of Goddesses*.

It continued with the work on *The Book of Goddesses'* follow-up volume, *Embracing the Goddess Within: A Creative Guide for Women*. As I worked on these books, I noticed the stories and art I was creating mirrored in many ways the structure of the tarot's major arcana, from a Divinely Feminine perspective. I began to see how the art from *The Book of Goddesses* could lend itself to the creation of a tarot deck that could offer women a uniquely feminist way of examining their lives.

And so *The Goddess Tarot* began. While I worked on the deck, I felt strongly that I wanted to emphasize the values of creative agency and psychological understanding—in other words, personal empowerment—over any divinatory qualities usually associated with the tarot. It was also important to me that my deck be easily understood by those already comfortable with the symbolism of the Rider-Waite deck, which so many other decks use as their touchstone. As I proceeded onto the minor arcana, I looked to the Rider-Waite's imagery for inspiration but added a feminine twist: by recasting many of the figures of power within the minor arcana as women, I hope to have created a sense of psychological identification and empowerment for female tarot readers. For men who choose to work with *The Goddess Tarot*, who are interested in exploring their *anima*, or archetypal feminine side, I hope this rings true as well.

Ultimately, my intention in creating *The Goddess Tarot* was to create a tarot deck that would speak directly to women using *our* stories and archetypes, while incorporating the powerful symbolism of the tarot. Whether you are experiencing your first exposure to the tarot, are enthralled with goddesses, or an experienced tarot reader, I hope you will find *The Goddess Tarot* an essential instrument for your personal growth—as well as the reclamation of the Divine Feminine.

THE STRUCTURE OF *THE GODDESS TAROT* ☽ ☽ ☽

Like most tarot decks, *The Goddess Tarot* contains seventy-eight cards. These seventy-eight cards are divided into 22 major arcana cards and 56 minor arcana cards. The word "arcana" is related to the word "arcane," meaning containing esoteric information—information available to those knowledgeable enough to understand the secret language of tarot symbolism. So that secret knowledge may become wisdom shared, each card and its imagery are explained in greater depth within this book.

In *The Goddess Tarot*, each major arcana card is related to a goddess and her story as well as a representation of an important aspect of life. Here is an overview of the major arcana:

NUMERAL	MAJOR ARCANA CARD	GODDESS
0	Beginnings	<i>Tara, Tibetan goddess of protection and compassion.</i>
I	Magic	<i>Isis, Egyptian fertility goddess.</i>
II	Wisdom	<i>Sarasvati, Hindu goddess of wisdom, education, and the arts.</i>
III	Fertility	<i>Estsanatlehi, Navajo goddess of the corn.</i>
IV	Power	<i>Freyja, Norse goddess of beauty and creativity.</i>
V	Tradition	<i>Juno, Roman ruling goddess.</i>
VI	Love	<i>Venus, Roman goddess of love.</i>
VII	Movement	<i>Rhiannon, Celtic horse goddess.</i>
VIII	Justice	<i>Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom.</i>

NUMERAL	MAJOR ARCANAS CARD	GODDESS
IX	Contemplation	<i>Chang O, Chinese moon goddess.</i>
X	Fortune	<i>Lakshmi, Hindu goddess of fortune and prosperity.</i>
XI	Strength	<i>Oya, Yoruba goddess of the Niger River and the winds.</i>
XII	Sacrifice	<i>Kuan Yin, Chinese goddess of mercy.</i>
XIII	Transformation	<i>Ukemochi, Japanese food goddess.</i>
XIV	Balance	<i>Yemana, Santeria goddess of the Caribbean Sea.</i>
XV	Temptation	<i>Nyai Loro Kidul, Javanese goddess of the waters.</i>
XVI	Oppression	<i>The Wawalak, sister Australian Aboriginal fertility goddesses.</i>
XVII	The Star	<i>Inanna, Sumerian goddess of the stars and heavens.</i>
XVIII	The Moon	<i>Diana, Roman goddess of the moon.</i>
XIX	The Sun	<i>The Zorya, a trio of Slavic guardian goddesses who attend the sun god.</i>
XX	Judgment	<i>Gwenhwyfar, Celtic sovereign goddess.</i>
XXI	The World	<i>Gaia, the Greek goddess who symbolizes the earth.</i>

The minor arcana of *The Goddess Tarot* is divided into four suits. Each suit is related to one of the four elements —earth, air, water, fire—as well as to a particular goddess and her myth.

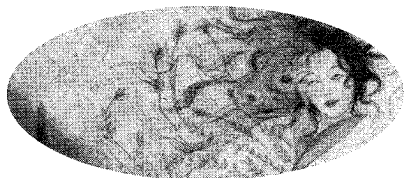
Each suit features a different border depicting the colors and qualities of the element it is associated with. The suit of cups is associated with Venus, the Roman goddess of love; swords, Isis, the great Egyptian goddess who represents the journey of loss and redemption; pentacles, Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity; and staves, Freyja, the Norse goddess of creativity and beauty. Here is an overview of the minor arcana:

SUIT	ELEMENT	QUALITY	GODDESS
CUPS	water, the moon	<i>receptive creativity, fertility, the Divine Feminine, personal relationships, family.</i>	Venus, the Roman goddess of love.
STAVES	fire, the sun	<i>active creativity, the masculine, inspiration, energy, communications, new ventures.</i>	Freyja, the Norse goddess of creativity and beauty.
SWORDS	air, salt	<i>intellect, discernment, cutting back for the sake of growth, introspection.</i>	Isis, the Egyptian fertility goddess.
PENTACLES	earth, gold	<i>material goods, business dealings, prosperity, fertility, results and completion.</i>	Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, fortune and prosperity.

This book is set up in three parts, each one exploring a crucial area of *The Goddess Tarot*. Part One, The Major Arcana, explains each major arcana card and the goddess associated with it in greater depth. Part Two, The Minor Arcana, examines the energies, or paths, offered by every card in the four suits, including the goddess who represents each card. Finally, Part Three, Using The Goddess Tarot, gives the information necessary so you may use this original form of goddess wisdom.

As you work with *The Goddess Tarot*, I hope you find it to be a source of inspiration and empowerment that enables you to honor the divinity within yourself—and within all women throughout history.





Part One:
THE MAJOR ARCANA

Many consider the major arcana to tell a great story: the journey of humankind as they struggle to master various life lessons. In The Goddess Tarot, this story starts with the appropriately named card, Beginnings—affiliated with the Tibetan goddess Tara—and ends with the cumulative vision of The World, with twenty cards and goddesses in between.

Some consider the tarot to hold all the world's wisdom distilled into 78 potent images, as concentrated in symbolism as any dream. But, as with a dream, the meanings ascribed to these cards should be made pertinent to your life experiences; look upon these descriptions as a guide to spark your imagination and feelings.

Often when major arcana cards show up in tarot readings, they represent recurrent themes or important changes in a person's life, promising more to a situation than meets the eye. Also included are descriptions for reversed, or upside-down cards. These can be used according to your judgment; I personally prefer to think of cards as being strong or weak by taking into consideration the question being asked, their relative position in a spread (as explained in Part Three of this book), and the cards surrounding it.





0-BEGINNINGS-Tara

Traditional card: The Fool

Keywords: New ventures, innocence, trust

The most important deity for Tibetan Buddhists is the compassionate mother goddess, Tara. Endowed with the power to heal all sorrows and grant all wishes, Tara often appears in many forms and colors, each one a different aspect of her divinity.

Tara is honored as the protectress against the many fears that block men and women from living in harmony. Stories about Tara reveal the kind of fears that concerned the people of ancient Tibet. She is reputed to protect her followers from the fear of elephants and poisonous snakes. But the most dangerous fears are often insidiously masked. These are also the ones that wreak the most damage—to our hopes, self-confidence, peace of mind—and keep us from meeting our full potential as human beings. Tara, whose sacred name translates as “she who causes one to cross,” will help her devotees to cross safely to the other side of these fears to greater wisdom.

Meanings: Time for the start of a great journey. Innocence that allows one to be open to blessings. New beginnings. Optimism and trust. Feeling protected by divine forces.

Reversed or weakly aspected: A need to look deeper into an opportunity before proceeding. Folly or naivety. Overconfidence—leaping before looking.



I-MAGIC-Isis

Traditional card: The Magician

Keywords: Self-empowerment, mastery

Associated with the Suit of Swords, page 123

The great Egyptian fertility goddess Isis is a potent symbol of the alchemic transformation this card suggests. For over 3000 years—from before 3000 B.C. to the second century A.D.—Isis was worshiped in Egypt as the Great Mother Goddess of the universe. She alone was the possessor of the secret name of Ra, the Egyptian

ruling god, which gave her unlimited magical powers. Using these powers as well as the strength of her love, Isis was able to bring Osiris, her husband and brother, back to life for a short time after he was murdered. Horus, the child she conceived of him during this time, grew to become one of the most powerful of the Egyptian gods.

Meanings: A growing awareness of the magic within yourself. A yearning to grow beyond perceived limitations. The ability to transform your life through the strength of originality and personal power. Renewed creativity and vigor. A new awareness of your power as you become in touch with your higher purpose. Experiencing the Divine Feminine as a power within yourself.

Reversed or weakly aspected: Blocked power, creativity. Manipulating others. A need to control situations from behind the scenes. Secrecy.



II—WISDOM—Sarasvati

Traditional card: The High Priestess

Keywords: Spirituality, education, enlightenment

Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and culture, is the divinely feminine embodiment of true wisdom, symbolizing spiritual knowledge as well as the refinement of the arts. Especially honored by scholars and musicians, Sarasvati is credited in India

with creating the fruits of civilization: the first alphabet, the arts, mathematics, and music.

Extraordinarily beautiful and graceful, Sarasvati is easily recognizable by her dazzling white skin and brilliant clothing. Her brightness is said to represent the powerful, pure light of wisdom that destroys the danger of ignorance. Her four arms symbolize how her influence extends over the four directions of the earth and, by extension, all areas of life. The book she holds in one of her hands represents education. The beads she holds in another indicate spiritual knowledge. With her other hands she holds and plays the *vina*, an Indian lute, representing the art of music, which has the power to soothe with its beauty.

Meanings: An interest in spiritual knowledge. A teacher who will share with you what you are seeking—or perhaps you are that teacher. Wisdom gained in a graceful manner. Honoring the powers of intuition, dreams, the Divine Feminine.

Reversed or weakly aspected: Lack of trust in intuition. Over reliance on the intellect. Superficial knowledge. Fear of searching within oneself for answers.



III – FERTILITY – Estsanatlehi

Traditional card: The Empress

Keywords: Fecundity, abundance, growth

Perhaps better known as Changing Woman, this benevolent Navajo corn goddess symbolizes the ever-changing, ever-fertile earth. Like the earth itself, Estsanatlehi appears as a young maiden during the spring and summer months. As the wheel of the year

changes to fall and winter, she also changes, taking on the features of an old crone.

Estsanatlehi is honored as the creator of the "Blessingway," a series of Navajo fertility rituals. The chants and ceremonies which make up the Blessingway are used for weddings, childbirth rites, and other happy occasions in the life of the Navajo. Each Blessingway takes place over several days. In addition to the many songs, rituals, and prayers that are part of this beautiful ceremony, pulverized flower blossoms, cornmeal, and pollen are spread upon the earth to fertilize it—and to incur the blessing of Estsanatlehi.

Meanings: Feelings of fertility and abundance. A new marriage or special relationship which celebrates one's growth as a woman. Creativity which manifests as physical product, whether that be children, artistic endeavors, or wealth. A pregnancy, either of yourself or someone close to you.

Reversed or weakly aspected: The opportunity to work through the manure of the past to better fertilize your life. Deprivation or sterility. Feeling the lack of material resources.



IV – POWER – Freyja

Traditional card: The Emperor

Keywords: Leadership, wisdom, authority

Associated with the Suit of Staves, page 93

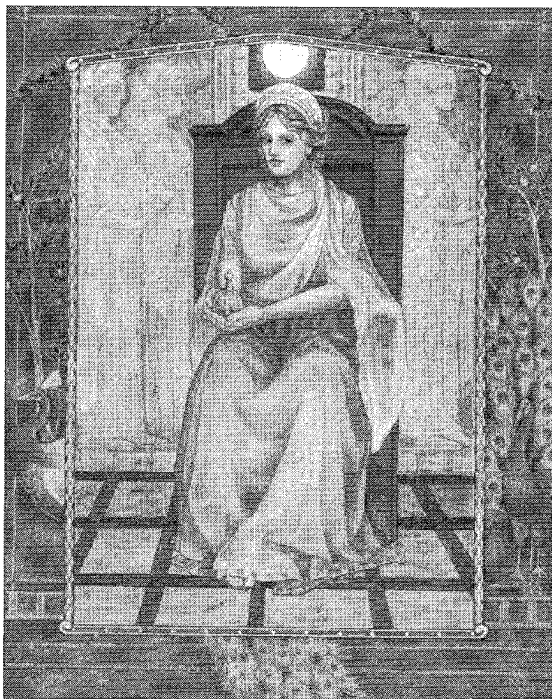
Freyja, the Norse goddess of creativity, love, and beauty, expresses her power through her connection between the warring Aesir and the agriculturally peace-oriented Vanir—in this way she is a mediator between war and peace.

The Norse divided their gods and goddesses into two groups, the Vanir and the Aesir. Worshipped during the agricultural Bronze Age, the peaceful Vanir lived as one with the earth as they coaxed food from its fertile soil. Unfortunately the Iron Age brought not only the first development of hunting tools and weapons; it also brought with it the combative Aesir, who declared war upon the Vanir. For the sake of peace, the Vanir agreed to give the Aesir their beloved goddess of beauty, Freyja.

In this way, Freyja became the link between the old world—before iron tools—and the new, where power was often expressed in violence instead of through diplomacy and tolerance. She shows that true power lies in the ability to discriminate between aggression and passivity—and the ability to choose between them at the correct time.

Meanings: The ability to use power wisely. The awareness of one's power. Meeting an authority figure or teacher who can help. The ability to lead and inspire others. Knowledge of how to "work the system" without giving up important values or resorting to violence or deception.

Reversed or weakly aspected: Oppressed by another's power and authority. Insecurity. Loss of personal power. Passive aggression. Manipulating others.



V-TRADITION-Juno

Traditional card: The Hierophant

Keywords: Structure, conformity, ritual

The ancient Romans worshiped a powerful supreme goddess they called Juno. Honored as the patroness of marriage and other traditional rites of passages, the goddess was said to watch over and protect all women—from their first to last breath. For this reason Roman women called their souls “juno” in honor of the goddess.