

# ARCANA OF THE OLD WEST

## Quick-Read Tarot Cheat Sheet

*Rider–Waite foundation, with an Old West voice.*

### Sample Spread

Card 1 – Home    Card 2 – Health    Card 3 – Finances    Card 4 – Family    Card 5 – Love

#### 1 — HOME

How is your home feeling about you, and you about it? Is there anything you need to change? Is it time to move on, settle in, or simply refresh the space you're in?

#### 3 — FINANCES

How is your money situation feeling right now? Are you secure, stretched thin, or stuck? What needs to change, and is it time to save, spend, earn differently, or take a calculated risk?

#### 5 — LOVE

How is your heart feeling about your love life? Are you getting what you need, giving too much, or keeping the door shut? Is it time to deepen something, let something go, or quit entertaining what isn't working?

#### 2 — HEALTH

How is your body feeling about you, and you about it? What has it been trying to tell you? Is something being neglected, overworked, or ignored because you'd rather not deal with it?

#### 4 — FAMILY

How are things with your family, really? Where is there connection, tension, distance, or unfinished business? Does something need attention, a conversation, a boundary, or perhaps a little less of your damn energy?

### About the Deck

**Arcana of the Old West** is a **89-card** tarot deck built on the familiar Rider–Waite foundation, then hauled west and given a little dust, grit, humor, and hard-earned common sense.

The deck contains the traditional **78-card tarot structure**—22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana—along with **12 original expansion cards** created specifically for **Arcana of the Old West**. These additional cards aren't replacements for traditional tarot; they expand the conversation, giving a reading room to wander into territory the original deck doesn't always address.

And then there are **The Lovers**: Unlike a traditional tarot deck, **Arcana of the Old West** includes **three different Lovers cards**. Love has never been a one-size-fits-all proposition, and it certainly wasn't in the Old West. Three Lovers cards allow the deck to explore love from every angle: the Traditional Lovers, the Non-Traditional Lovers, and the Dysfunctional Lovers, because in the Old West, just like everywhere else, love comes in many forms, and everybody gets validated or called out eventually.

Having three **LOVERS** cards makes this deck unusual even among modern expanded tarot decks, and especially distinctive within an Old West setting. The additional cards are interpreted later in this cheat sheet. For now, just know this: **if you pull something you don't recognize from Rider–Waite, you haven't lost your tarot-reading mind, just look it up on the cheat sheet 😊**



*Traditional Lovers*



*Non-Traditional*



*Dysfunctional*

# MAJOR ARCANA

## 0 — THE FOOL | THE DRIFTER (YES)

**Upright:** New beginnings • Leap of faith • Freedom • Adventure • Innocence • Trusting the unknown • Following your gut • *No map, no guarantees, apparently no problem.*

**Reversed:** Recklessness • Poor judgment • Fear of starting • Running away • Avoiding responsibility • Foolish risks • *There's a difference between trusting the universe and jumping off the damn cliff.*

**Quick Read — GO.** You don't need to know exactly where you're headed, but you probably ought to know why you're leaving.

## I — THE MAGICIAN (YES/NO)

**Upright:** Manifestation • Skill • Resourcefulness • Focus • Inspired action • Making things happen • *You've got the tools; now prove you can use them.*

**Reversed:** Manipulation • Untapped talent • Scattered energy • Empty promises • Trickery • *A silver tongue is not the same thing as magic.*

**Quick Read — USE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.** The tools are already on the table. Quit waiting for permission and make the move.

## II — THE HIGH PRIESTESS (YES)

**Upright:** Intuition • Mystery • Inner knowing • Secrets • Stillness • Spiritual insight • *She knows more than she's saying, and so do you.*

**Reversed:** Ignored intuition • Hidden motives • Confusion • Withdrawal • Secrets revealed • *Your gut already testified; you're just cross-examining it.*

**Quick Read — LISTEN.** The answer is quiet, but it is not absent. Stop letting noise overrule what you know.

## III — THE EMPRESS (YES)

**Upright:** Abundance • Nurturing • Creativity • Fertility • Sensuality • Growth • *Good soil, good sense, and room to bloom.*

**Reversed:** Neglect • Creative block • Smothering • Dependence • Scarcity • Self-abandonment • *You can't pour from an empty canteen.*

**Quick Read — LET IT GROW.** Feed what feeds you. Creation needs care, not control.

**Inspired by:** [Ah Yuen, known as "China Mary,"](#) one of the few Chinese women whose life in the Old West was recorded. She survived exploitation and the dangers of Western railroad settlements before operating a successful shop with her husband in 1880s Park City, serving both Chinese and European American customers. She represents the Asian women who worked, nurtured families, built businesses, and helped Western communities survive, even when history rarely bothered to preserve their names.

## IV — THE EMPEROR (NO)

**Upright:** Authority • Structure • Stability • Leadership • Boundaries • Protection • *A steady hand keeps the whole outfit moving.*

**Reversed:** Control • Rigidity • Domination • Stubbornness • Absent leadership • *Being the loudest man in town doesn't make you the sheriff.*

**Quick Read — TAKE COMMAND.** Set the boundary, make the plan, and stand behind your word. *The Emperor may represent genuine leadership, or a narcissist who expects the whole territory to revolve around him. Decide whether you're looking at authority or merely ego wearing an expensive hat.*

**Inspired by:** The wealthy cattle barons of Wyoming's [Cheyenne Club](#), an exclusive retreat where oysters were shucked, wine flowed, and powerful men shaped the territory's cattle industry and politics. They embodied the Emperor's authority, wealth, and organization, but also his shadow: entitlement, unchecked influence, and the belief that owning most of the range meant owning everyone on it.

## V — THE HIEROPHANT (YES/NO)

**Upright:** Tradition • Teaching • Spiritual guidance • Institutions • Shared beliefs • Mentorship • *Some trails are old because they lead somewhere.*

**Reversed:** Rebellion • Dogma • Questioning tradition • Unconventional path • Bad counsel • *Just because Grandpa did it that way doesn't make it holy.*

**Quick Read — CHECK THE RULEBOOK.** Wisdom may live in tradition—but tradition still has to earn your trust.

**Inspired by:** [Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy](#), the French priest appointed to lead the Catholic Church in nineteenth-century New Mexico. He built churches, schools, and a powerful religious institution across the Southwest, but also imposed an outside hierarchy upon long-established local traditions. He represents the Hierophant's wisdom and spiritual guidance, and its shadow: rigid doctrine, institutional control, and the conviction that only one man holds the keys to God. **\*\***Its colonizing shadow was about imposing outside authority upon Native lands and established communities while declaring one institution, one doctrine, and one man's authority superior to the beliefs already there.**\*\***

## VI — THE LOVERS (YES)

**Upright:** Love • Union • Alignment • Choice • Values • Partnership • *Chemistry may light the match; shared values keep the fire.*

**Reversed:** Disharmony • Misalignment • Temptation • Broken trust • Difficult choice • *Wanting it badly doesn't make it right.*

**Quick Read — CHOOSE IN ALIGNMENT.** This is about more than attraction. Pick what matches your values when the dust settles.

**Traditional:** Attraction, love, passion, unity; true partners. A familiar path of commitment, shared values, and building a life together. Choose it because it fits, but it needs to fit, don't chose it because you're settling.

**Non-Traditional:** Love does not have to resemble anyone else's to be real. You may feel out of place among your peers, but different is not dysfunctional. Build the relationship that fits the people inside it. Non-Traditional means unconventional, not unethical. Dysfunctional gets its own damn card. 😊

**Dysfunctional:** Chemistry cannot redeem control, manipulation, betrayal, or repeated harm. Stop confusing intensity with intimacy. Sometimes the most loving choice is choosing yourself. You are worth being in a relationship of any type without the chaos, without the drama, without the *dysfunction!*

## VII — THE CHARIOT (YES)

**Upright:** Drive • Victory • Determination • Direction • Discipline • Momentum • *Both horses have to agree where the hell you're going.*

**Reversed:** Loss of control • Aggression • Stalled progress • Scattered will • Wrong direction • *Speed is useless when nobody has the reins.*

**Quick Read — TAKE THE REINS.** Choose a direction and make every part of you pull the same way.

**Inspired by:** [Union Pacific No. 119](#), which traveled from Ogden to Promontory Summit, Utah, and met the *Jupiter* at the Golden Spike ceremony on May 10, 1869. Steam locomotives transformed the West by moving people, livestock, mail, and goods farther and faster than ever before, building towns, opening national markets, and accelerating westward expansion. No. 119 represents the Chariot's determination, command, and unstoppable forward motion.

## VIII — STRENGTH (YES)

**Upright:** Courage • Compassion • Patience • Inner power • Self-control • Resilience • *You don't have to break the horse to prove you can ride.*

**Reversed:** Self-doubt • Weak boundaries • Rage • Insecurity • Misused power • *A short fuse is not a show of strength.*

**Quick Read — HOLD STEADY.** Real strength is calm enough to choose its response.

**Inspired by:** [Mary Ann "Molly" Goodnight](#), a Texas cattowoman, educator, healer, and early conservationist. Horrified by the orphaned bison calves left behind by commercial hunters, she persuaded her husband to rescue them and helped establish the herd whose descendants survive today. Molly represents Strength's quiet command: meeting immense power with patience and compassion rather than attempting to conquer it.

## IX — THE HERMIT (YES/NO)

**Upright:** Solitude • Reflection • Wisdom • Inner guidance • Retreat • Soul-searching • *Sometimes the lantern only lights one step at a time, stay in the moment.*

**Reversed:** Isolation • Loneliness • Avoidance • Withdrawal • Refusing guidance • *Solitude heals; hiding festers.*

**Quick Read — STEP BACK.** Get quiet long enough to hear your own truth, but don't build a cabin there forever.

**Inspired by:** The [legend of Jacob Waltz and the Lost Dutchman Mine](#), said to be hidden somewhere in Arizona's Superstition Mountains. Waltz—a German prospector mistakenly called "the Dutchman," supposedly discovered a rich vein of gold and carried its location to his grave. He represents the Hermit as solitary seeker and keeper of hidden knowledge, but also its shadow: wandering so long in pursuit of one answer that the search becomes your entire life/identity.

## X — WHEEL OF FORTUNE (YES)

**Upright:** Change • Cycles • Fate • Turning point • Luck • Movement • *Fortune rides through town without checking your calendar.*

**Reversed:** Bad timing • Resistance to change • Repeating cycles • Setbacks • Feeling powerless • *You can curse the wheel or notice the pattern.*

**Quick Read — THE WHEEL IS TURNING.** Conditions are changing. Work with the turn instead of chaining yourself to yesterday.

**Inspired by:** The enormous gamble of the Old West itself. People wagered their savings, safety, and sometimes their lives on rumored gold strikes, unsettled towns, cattle empires, railroads, and land that might make them rich—or ruin them completely. Gold-rush boomtowns such as [Dyea, Alaska](#) sprang up almost overnight and disappeared just as quickly. The Wheel of Fortune reminds us that some struck gold, many went home broke, and nobody controlled where the wheel stopped.

## XI — JUSTICE (YES/NO)

**Upright:** Truth • Fairness • Accountability • Cause and effect • Law • Clear decisions • *Every deed leaves tracks.*

**Reversed:** Dishonesty • Unfairness • Avoiding consequences • Bias • Denial • *The scales don't care how charming your excuse is.*

**Quick Read — FACE THE FACTS.** Tell the truth, weigh the evidence, and accept what follows.

**Inspired by:** [Esther Hobart Morris](#), appointed justice of the peace in South Pass City, Wyoming Territory, in 1870 after her predecessor resigned in protest over women gaining the right to vote. The first woman in the United States to serve in that office, she heard nearly thirty cases during eight and a half months on the bench. Morris represents Justice as fairness, accountability, and the courage to uphold the law, even when some men would rather abandon the courthouse than accept a woman inside it. Surprisingly, rugged Wyoming Territory became the first in the nation to grant women equal voting rights in 1869, more than fifty years before the Nineteenth Amendment. Wyoming later entered the Union determined to preserve those rights, earning its enduring nickname: the Equality State. WyoHistory's full [Women's Suffrage and Women's Rights collection](#). It showcases Louisa Swain casting a ballot, women serving on juries, Black women voting, the original legislation, and Wyoming's other historic firsts.

**Important Side Note:** Wyoming Territory's 1869 suffrage law granted voting rights to women without restricting them by race, so **Black women legally voted in Wyoming in the 1870 election, which is fifty years before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.**

Wyoming historians describe them as the **first documented Black women in U.S. history to vote under a law providing women full and equal suffrage.** There are reports of Black women voting in South Carolina around the same period by invoking the 14th Amendment, but South Carolina had not legally enfranchised women, and records are murky. Utah women voted earlier in 1870, but historians have found no evidence that Black women participated there. The beautifully complicated full story is here: ["Then I Breathed Freely": Black Women Vote in Wyoming, 1870](#). Rugged, half-frozen, barely populated **Wyoming** looked at the rest of the country and said, "Yes, women, including Black women, are citizens. Keep up."

## XII — THE HANGED MAN (NO)

**Upright:** Pause • Surrender • New perspective • Waiting • Letting go • Sacrifice • *Sometimes the trail appears when you quit kicking dust.*

**Reversed:** Stalling • Martyrdom • Resistance • Needless sacrifice • Indecision • *Hanging around is not the same as surrendering wisely.*

**Quick Read — STOP PUSHING.** The pause is part of the answer. Look at the problem from another angle.

**Inspired by:** [Judge Isaac C. Parker](#), the frontier judge who presided over more than 13,000 cases during twenty-one years at Fort Smith, Arkansas. He sentenced 160 people, including four women, to the gallows, though only 79 men were ultimately executed. Known as the "Hanging Judge," Parker represents the Hanged Man's most literal shadow: judgment rendered, freedom suspended, and possible purgatory.

## XIII — DEATH (NO)

**Upright:** Endings • Transformation • Release • Transition • Rebirth • Necessary change • *Dead things don't need another season.*

**Reversed:** Resistance • Stagnation • Fear of endings • Clinging • Delayed change • *Dragging the corpse behind the wagon won't revive it.*

**Quick Read — LET IT END.** Something has completed its life. Make room for what comes after.

**Inspired by:** The [Dalton Gang's failed double-bank robbery](#) in Coffeyville, Kansas, on October 5, 1892. Armed townspeople confronted the outlaws, leaving four gang members and four citizens dead; Emmett Dalton alone survived, despite being shot twenty-three times. The bullet hole in the hat is a reminder that eight people entered that fight without knowing they'd already seen their last sunrise. Death marks the ending that cannot be bargained with.

## XIV — TEMPERANCE (MAYBE)

**Upright:** Balance • Moderation • Healing • Patience • Integration • Harmony • *A steady pour beats spilling whiskey.*

**Reversed:** Excess • Imbalance • Impatience • Extremes • Poor timing • *All-or-nothing usually leaves you with nothing.*

**Quick Read — FIND THE MIDDLE.** Blend what works, pace yourself, and stop treating every problem like a shootout.

**Inspired by:** [Thomas "Tom" Cook](#), a formerly enslaved man who became a "first-rate" blacksmith, landowner, minister, and civil-rights leader in Bolivar, Texas, along the Chisholm Trail. Cook mastered forge welding, owned his shop, and built a lasting community through discipline and skilled hands. He embodies Temperance: knowing precisely when to apply fire, when to cool the iron, and when one more blow would be one too many.

## XV — THE DEVIL (Fuck NO) 😏

**Upright:** Attachment • Temptation • Addiction • Materialism • Shame • Unhealthy bonds • *The saloon door swings both ways—but first admit you're inside.*

**Reversed:** Release • Awareness • Breaking chains • Reclaiming power • Recovery • *The lock may already be open. Walk out.*

**Quick Read — NAME THE CHAIN.** You cannot free yourself from what you keep pretending is harmless.

**Inspired by:** [James Addison Reavis, the self-proclaimed “Baron of Arizona,”](#) who forged an elaborate chain of documents claiming ownership of roughly 18,600 square miles across Arizona and New Mexico. He used that fraudulent claim to frighten settlers, businesses, and railroads into paying him for the right to remain on land he never owned. Reavis embodies the Devil’s favorite bargain: invent the chains, persuade people they are legally bound, and then charge them for the privilege of wearing them.

**Also inspired by:** The company-town system used throughout the Western mining country—especially the Rockefeller-controlled [Colorado Fuel & Iron coal camps](#). Many miners lived in company housing, shopped at company stores, and relied upon company-selected doctors, teachers, and law enforcement. The company provided everything—and therefore could take everything away. That is the Devil’s contract in its purest form: *you are free to leave, provided you can somehow afford to escape*.

## XVI — THE TOWER (NO)

**Upright:** Upheaval • Revelation • Collapse • Sudden change • Truth exposed • Liberation • *Lightning doesn’t negotiate with rotten timber.*

**Reversed:** Avoided disaster • Fear of change • Delayed collapse • Private upheaval • *Patching the roof won’t fix a crooked foundation.*

**Quick Read — GET CLEAR.** What was built on a lie is coming down. Save what is real and let the rest burn.

**Inspired by:** The [Eden train wreck of August 7, 1904](#), one of Colorado’s deadliest disasters. Missouri Pacific Flyer No. 11 was traveling from Denver toward St. Louis, passing south through Colorado Springs and Fountain before approaching Pueblo. The passengers had no idea that a violent storm upstream had sent a flash flood roaring through Steele Hollow—now Porter Draw—near Eden Station, roughly nine miles north of Pueblo.

Engineer Charles Hinman had been warned to watch for storm damage and approached the trestle cautiously. The bridge appeared intact, and the locomotive made it across—but while the passenger cars were still above the arroyo, a wall of water struck, swept away the supports, and pulled the locomotive backward into the torrent. A porter in the rear Pullman, Melville Sales, pulled the emergency brake, preventing the final cars from following. Nearly everyone in the forward section died; cars were torn apart or buried in sand, and bodies were recovered as far as twenty-two miles downstream. Approximately one hundred people were killed or never found.

The Eden wreck embodies the Tower with terrifying precision: the structure looked solid until the instant it wasn’t. Everyone aboard believed they were approaching another ordinary stop. They had already traveled safely through city after city and were only **nine miles from Pueblo**, probably gathering their things, waking children, and thinking about supper. Then, in seconds, the world beneath them was simply gone.

## XVII — THE STAR (YES)

**Upright:** Hope • Renewal • Faith • Healing • Inspiration • Guidance • *Even a distant star can get you home.*

**Reversed:** Discouragement • Lost faith • Disconnection • Despair • Doubting yourself • *Clouds don’t mean the stars quit.*

**Quick Read — KEEP FAITH.** The worst may be behind you. Follow the small, honest light.

**I’d keep her archetypal, but give her a little more historical backbone:**

**Inspired by:** [Pamela Colman Smith’s original Rider-Waite Star](#), reimagined as one of the countless frontier women who carried, collected, and conserved the household’s water. She is not a famous woman or a grand legend, she is the quiet hope that survives after the Tower falls, returning what she can to the earth and trusting that life will flow again.

## XVIII — THE MOON (NO)

**Upright:** Illusion • Intuition • Dreams • Uncertainty • Fear • The subconscious • *Moonlight shows shapes, not details.*

**Reversed:** Clarity emerging • Anxiety easing • Secrets exposed • Self-deception • Confusion • *Fear is a lousy trail guide.*

**Quick Read — DON’T ASSUME.** Something is unclear. Trust your senses, verify the story, and wait for daylight.

**Inspired by:** The vast, unlit nights of the Old West, when a distant howl could be a wolf, a coyote, a warning—or simply fear giving itself a voice.

## XIX — THE SUN (Biggest YES in the deck)

**Upright:** Joy • Success • Vitality • Clarity • Confidence • Celebration • *Nothing hiding in the tall grass here.*

**Reversed:** Temporary clouds • Delayed success • Burnout • Forced optimism • Reduced joy • *The sun is still up; you may just be standing in your own shadow.*

**Quick Read — YES.** This is warmth, truth, and forward motion. Let yourself enjoy the damn thing.

**Inspired by:** The fierce optimism—and sometimes sheer desperation—of pioneers who loaded their lives into wagons and followed promises of abundant, “empty” land. Many discovered the hard way that the West was neither empty nor waiting for them; it was already inhabited, deeply known, and fiercely loved. The overland routes became [“the nation’s longest graveyard,”](#) yet babies were still born along the way—and lived. The Sun does not preserve a comforting illusion; it exposes the fuller truth and asks whether hope can survive after innocence becomes understanding.

## XX — JUDGEMENT (MAYBE, but usually NO)

**Upright:** Awakening • Reckoning • Calling • Renewal • Forgiveness • Life review • *When the bell rings, you'll know whether it's yours.*

**Reversed:** Self-doubt • Refusing the call • Harsh judgment • Avoiding the past • *You can't start over while arguing with the verdict.*

**Quick Read — ANSWER THE CALL.** The past has delivered its lesson. Decide who you are now.

**Inspired by:** [Peter Cartwright](#), the legendary “Backwoods Preacher” who carried Methodism through the Kentucky and Illinois frontier. Calling himself “God’s Plowman,” he was fiery, combative, politically active, and sufficiently certain of his authority to warn even Andrew Jackson about damnation. His courage could confront the powerful, but that same certainty represents Judgement’s shadow: believing your calling gives you the right to pronounce everybody else guilty. The traveling circuit riders and hellfire preachers who followed settlements west, carrying scripture in one hand and everybody else’s damnation in the other. Some offered genuine comfort in isolated communities; others arrived certain that fear, shame, and eternal punishment were God’s preferred teaching tools. They represent Judgement’s shadow: confusing spiritual awakening with public condemnation, and appointing yourself God’s loudest available spokesperson.

## XXI — THE WORLD (YES)

**Upright:** Completion • Achievement • Wholeness • Integration • Travel • Fulfillment • *You rode the whole trail, take in the view.*

**Reversed:** Loose ends • Delay • Incompletion • Lack of closure • Shortcuts • *Almost finished is still unfinished.*

**Quick Read — IT’S COMPLETE.** The cycle has come full circle. Claim what you earned before beginning again.

**Inspired by:** The Rider–Waite World, with its victory wreath turned into a doorway between the past and whatever comes next. He has learned how to survive the Western world behind him, but now he has to take everything it taught him and use it somewhere new. You don’t abandon who you were—you integrate it, make your next move, and walk forward. If you never leave the world where you already know how to survive, you may never find out who else you could have been.

# WANDS

*Fire • Action • Ambition • Creativity • Spirit*

## ACE OF WANDS

**Upright:** Inspiration • Creative spark • New venture • Desire • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** False start • Delay • Lack of direction • Burnout • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — LIGHT THE MATCH.** The spark is real. Give it fuel before enthusiasm cools.

## TWO OF WANDS

**Upright:** Planning • Future vision • Personal power • Choice • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Fear of the unknown • Poor planning • Playing small • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — PICK THE HORIZON.** You’ve outgrown the porch. Decide how far you mean to ride.

**Inspired by:** The Indigenous women who knew these lands long before outsiders called them unexplored. They understood the waterways, seasons, food sources, neighboring nations, and consequences attached to every direction. She stands at the edge of familiar territory, studying the route before making her move. The Two of Wands is a travel card: a vacation, journey, relocation, or new stretch of country is ahead. Start planning—you’re going somewhere.

## THREE OF WANDS

**Upright:** Expansion • Foresight • Progress • Opportunity • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Delays • Obstacles • Limited vision • Frustration • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — LOOK AHEAD.** Your effort is moving outward. Prepare for what is coming back.

**Inspired by:** [Dr. Matthew Oliver Ricketts](#), born to formerly enslaved parents in Kentucky, who moved west, worked his way through medical school, and became Nebraska’s first Black physician and state legislator. Ricketts did not simply seek a larger future for himself, he widened the trail for everyone coming behind him. The Three of Wands says the groundwork is finished. Look farther, move forward, and give your plans room to become something bigger.

## FOUR OF WANDS

**Upright:** Celebration • Homecoming • Community • Stability • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Tension at home • Delayed celebration • Instability • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CELEBRATE.** You reached solid ground. Let the people who helped you share the moment.

**Inspired by:** [María Josefa Zozaya](#), who carried food, water, supplies, and encouragement to those defending Monterrey during the 1846 battle. She represents the Four of Wands because community is more than gathering beneath the same roof—it is showing up, keeping hope alive, and caring for one another when that roof is under fire. She is the person who keeps the lanterns lit and reminds everyone what they are fighting to come home to.

## FIVE OF WANDS

**Upright:** Competition • Conflict • Clashing egos • Tension • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Avoiding conflict • Escalation • Inner conflict • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — SORT THE SCRAP.** Not every fight is fatal, but somebody needs to stop swinging long enough to learn something.

## SIX OF WANDS “The Victory Card”

**Upright:** Victory • Recognition • Confidence • Public success • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Ego • Fall from grace • Lack of recognition • Self-doubt • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — TAKE THE WIN.** Recognition is earned. Accept it without believing your own wanted poster.

**Inspired by:** The [Buffalo Soldiers](#), the Black cavalymen and infantrymen who served across the Western frontier after the Civil War. They protected travelers, built roads and military posts, fought in brutal campaigns, and earned twenty-three Medals of Honor while serving a country that still denied them equal treatment. The Six of Wands is their homecoming: victory is not merely winning the battle—it is returning alive, riding through the people who know what your service cost, and finally receiving the recognition you earned.

## SEVEN OF WANDS “Pick your battles”

**Upright:** Defense • Courage • Conviction • Perseverance • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Overwhelmed • Defensive • Giving up • Poor boundaries • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — STAND FIRM.** You have the high ground. Defend what matters and ignore cheap shots.

## EIGHT OF WANDS (Often my “bisexuality” card, usually for men but can apply to both)

**Upright:** Speed • News • Momentum • Travel • Alignment • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Delays • Miscommunication • Chaos • Impulsiveness • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — MOVE NOW.** Things are moving fast. Aim before you fire, then don’t dawdle.

**Inspired by:** The [Great Leonid Meteor Storm of 1833](#), when falling stars flooded the North American sky so spectacularly that the event was preserved in numerous Lakota and other Plains winter counts as “The Year the Stars Fell.” Some saw prophecy, some feared the end of the world, and others simply watched in awe as the heavens appeared to move all at once. The Eight of Wands carries that same momentum: events are accelerating, messages are arriving, and the sky has already started falling. Steady yourself and move—you won’t be stopping it.

## NINE OF WANDS

**Upright:** Resilience • Persistence • Boundaries • Last stand • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Exhaustion • Paranoia • Defensiveness • Giving up • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — ONE MORE ROUND.** You’re tired, not defeated. Guard the gate without mistaking everyone for an enemy.

**Inspired by:** [Dr. Susan “Doc Susie” Anderson](#), the frontier physician who treated Colorado’s lumberjacks, ranchers, railroad workers, mothers, and children for nearly fifty years. Without a horse or automobile of her own, she traveled by train, borrowed sleigh, and snowshoe—including one eight-mile winter trek to reach an expectant mother. She embodies the Nine of Wands: bruised, exhausted, and entitled to rest—but still standing because somebody needs her. This is not fearlessness. It is the hard-earned resolve of someone who has survived enough to know exactly what she can withstand—and what boundaries she must now defend.

## TEN OF WANDS

**Upright:** Burden • Responsibility • Hard work • Overload • *The spark of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Release • Delegation • Collapse • Avoiding duty • *When the spark goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — DROP SOME WEIGHT.** You can carry it all, perhaps. The better question is why the hell you are.

**Inspired by:** [Mary “Stagecoach Mary” Fields](#), born enslaved and later the first African American woman to carry mail on a U.S. Star Route. Beginning in her sixties, she hauled mail and supplies through the brutal Montana wilderness, armed and determined to finish the route. She embodies the Ten of Wands: strong enough to carry the whole damn load—and the warning that being capable doesn’t mean everything should become your burden.

## PAGE OF WANDS

**Upright:** Curiosity • Message • Learning • Fresh energy • Action • *A new voice rides in; hear it before judging the saddle.*

**Reversed:** Immaturity • Bad news • Inexperience • All talk • *Enthusiasm without sense can spook the whole herd.*

**Quick Read — PAY ATTENTION.** A message or beginner's opportunity has arrived. Stay curious and check the facts.

## KNIGHT OF WANDS

**Upright:** Pursuit • Action • Mission • Momentum • Action • *Once this rider chooses a trail, dust will fly.*

**Reversed:** Recklessness • Delay • Obsession • Unreliable action • *Charging ahead is not a personality substitute.*

**Quick Read — PURSUE IT.** Movement is the message. Know whether you're riding toward something or merely fleeing.

## QUEEN OF WANDS

**Upright:** Maturity • Influence • Inner mastery • Receptivity • Action • *Quiet authority still owns the room.*

**Reversed:** Insecurity • Overcontrol • Withdrawal • Misused influence • *Power turned inward can become poison.*

**Quick Read — OWN YOUR POWER.** Lead from lived wisdom. You don't need to shout to run the room.

**Inspired by:** [Eleanor Dumont, better known as "Madame Moustache,"](#) whose origins remain mysterious but whose command of the gambling table is well documented. In 1854, she arrived in Nevada City, California, and built a successful gambling establishment where she demanded manners, dealt honestly, and allowed no one else to shuffle her deck—or run her life. Elegant, magnetic, and repeatedly self-reinvented, Dumont embodies the Queen of Wands: warm when respected, scorching when crossed, and entirely uninterested in making herself smaller for the comfort of men.

## KING OF WANDS

**Upright:** Authority • Mastery • Leadership • Responsibility • Action • *Authority earns respect by carrying responsibility.*

**Reversed:** Domination • Rigidity • Abuse of power • Poor leadership • *A crown—or a hat—doesn't cure bad character.*

**Quick Read — LEAD.** Use authority with discipline and accept responsibility for the outcome.

**Inspired by:** [William "Big Bill" Haywood,](#) the Utah-born miner who became a commanding leader of the Western Federation of Miners. Haywood organized working men across the mining West to confront dangerous conditions, corporate power, and wages that kept families desperate. Charismatic, fearless, and undeniably controversial, he embodies the King of Wands: the man who can turn shared anger into a movement—and whose own fire can become either a rallying flame or one hell of a red flag.

# CUPS

*Water • Emotion • Love • Intuition • Relationships*

## ACE OF CUPS (YES)

**Upright:** New love • Emotional opening • Compassion • Intuition • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Emotional block • Emptiness • Repressed feelings • Self-neglect • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — OPEN YOUR HEART.** A genuine feeling wants room. Let it flow without handing it the ranch.

## TWO OF CUPS

**Upright:** Partnership • Mutual attraction • Connection • Agreement • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Imbalance • Breakup • Miscommunication • Distrust • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — MEET HALFWAY.** This works when both people show up honestly. One-sided devotion is not partnership.

## THREE OF CUPS

**Upright:** Friendship • Celebration • Community • Reunion • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Gossip • Overindulgence • Third-party trouble • Isolation • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — GATHER YOUR PEOPLE.** Joy grows in good company. Mind who is pouring and who is talking afterward.

**Extra Read:** Third-party involvement • An affair or infidelity • Someone else has entered the relationship (business, love, children). *(Usually supported by surrounding cards.)*

**Inspired by:** The ["soiled doves" of the Western frontier](#)—women of many races, nationalities, and circumstances who lived beyond the protection of respectable society. Behind the music and raised cups were dangerous work, crushing loneliness, and lives often spent searching for security wherever it might be found. The Three of Cups honors the friendships they formed between customers and hard nights: stolen moments when they could laugh together, look after one another, and remember they were never merely what men paid them to be.

## FOUR OF CUPS

**Upright:** Apathy • Contemplation • Discontent • Reevaluation • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Renewed interest • Awareness • Restlessness • Acceptance • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — LOOK AGAIN.** You may be bored, bruised, or blind to what is being offered.

**Extra Read:** Depression • Emotional numbness • Dissatisfaction after getting what you wanted • Missing an opportunity because you cannot see beyond your present misery.

**Inspired by:** [Crawford Goldsby, known as “Cherokee Bill,”](#) the mixed-race outlaw who joined the Cook Gang while still a teenager and participated in bank thefts, train robberies, and deadly holdups across Indian and Oklahoma territories. The stolen money beside him cannot answer the question posed by the crossroads. He embodies the Four of Cups at its darkest: having choices, rejecting every better road, and discovering that taking what you wanted does not guarantee you will feel a damned thing once it is yours.

## FIVE OF CUPS “Chaos, conflict, competition”

**Upright:** Grief • Loss • Regret • Disappointment • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Healing • Acceptance • Moving on • Forgiveness • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — GRIEVE, THEN TURN.** What spilled matters, but it is not everything you still have.

**Extra Read:** Bereavement • Death or profound loss • Grieving a child • Miscarriage or pregnancy loss • A relationship mourning separately instead of together • Depression that may require support.

## SIX OF CUPS

**Upright:** Nostalgia • Childhood • Reunion • Innocence • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Living in the past • Naivety • Unresolved childhood • Moving on • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — REMEMBER WISELY.** The past may bring comfort or a clue. It is a place to visit, not homestead.

## SEVEN OF CUPS

**Upright:** Choices • Fantasy • Illusion • Temptation • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Clarity • Decision • Reality check • Overwhelm • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — PICK WHAT’S REAL.** Many cups sparkle; some hold snake oil. Desire needs discernment.

## EIGHT OF CUPS

**Upright:** Walking away • Seeking meaning • Disappointment • Release • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Fear of leaving • Aimlessness • Returning • Avoidance • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — LEAVE WHAT’S EMPTY.** You can appreciate what it was and still know it cannot feed you now.

## NINE OF CUPS “wishes fulfilled”

**Upright:** Satisfaction • Pleasure • Wish fulfilled • Gratitude • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Dissatisfaction • Excess • Smugness • Hollow pleasure • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — ENJOY IT.** A wish may be landing. Gratitude keeps pleasure from turning greedy.

**Extra Read:** Wish fulfilled • Getting exactly what you requested • Temporary success • Satisfaction with strings attached • *You got your wish; now read the damn fine print.*

**Inspired by:** The more than ten thousand [Chinese laborers who built the western portion of the Transcontinental Railroad](#). They blasted through mountains, laid hundreds of miles of track, and endured brutal conditions to complete one of America’s greatest engineering achievements. When the final spike was driven in 1869, their wish for steady work had technically been fulfilled—and abruptly ended. Many were left searching for new employment in a country that relied upon their labor while increasingly resenting their presence. The Nine of Cups promises satisfaction, but their story carries its warning: be careful what you wish for, especially when your place in someone else’s dream lasts only until the job is finished.

## TEN OF CUPS

**Upright:** Emotional fulfillment • Family • Harmony • Lasting joy • *The heart of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Family conflict • Broken bonds • Unrealistic expectations • Disconnection • *When the heart goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — THIS IS THE HEART OF IT.** Real wealth is belonging where love is mutual and peace is not performative.

## PAGE OF CUPS

**Upright:** Curiosity • Message • Learning • Fresh energy • Emotion • *A new voice rides in; hear it before judging the saddle.*

**Reversed:** Immaturity • Bad news • Inexperience • All talk • *Enthusiasm without sense can spook the whole herd.*

**Quick Read — PAY ATTENTION.** A message or beginner's opportunity has arrived. Stay curious and check the facts.

## KNIGHT OF CUPS

**Upright:** Pursuit • Action • Mission • Momentum • Emotion • *Once this rider chooses a trail, dust will fly.*

**Reversed:** Recklessness • Delay • Obsession • Unreliable action • *Charging ahead is not a personality substitute.*

**Quick Read — PURSUE IT.** Movement is the message. Know whether you're riding toward something or merely fleeing.

## QUEEN OF CUPS

**Upright:** Maturity • Influence • Inner mastery • Receptivity • Emotion • *Quiet authority still owns the room.*

**Reversed:** Insecurity • Overcontrol • Withdrawal • Misused influence • *Power turned inward can become poison.*

**Quick Read — OWN YOUR POWER.** Lead from lived wisdom. You don't need to shout to run the room.

**Inspired by:** The Indigenous women and elders of California's Central Coast—particularly the Northern Chumash and Salinan peoples whose ancestral lands and waters surround Morro Bay. She is not based on one documented historical woman. She represents the coastal elder: emotionally perceptive, quietly influential and deeply connected to water, community and inherited wisdom. Morro Bay (I grew up 15 minutes away and spent many days on this beach) sits within the ancestral homelands of both the yak tit'yu tit'yu yak tithini Northern Chumash and the Salinan people. Both have deep relationships with the Central Coast and regard Morro Rock as sacred: Lisamu in Chumash tradition and Le'samo' in Salinan tradition. Their communities lived through fishing, gathering, trade and generations of relationship with the ocean—not merely beside it. [Northern Chumash Tribal Council](#), [Salinan Tribe](#)

Additionally, there were two Native students who met through a mediumship reading I was doing on a live on TikTok and it turns out they didn't know each other – but they did both know reservation and the passed over loved one! What are the chances. They met through that reading, later took one of my mediumship courses, and became friends! Thank you Kandi and Crystal.

## KING OF CUPS

**Upright:** Authority • Mastery • Leadership • Responsibility • Emotion • *Authority earns respect by carrying responsibility.*

**Reversed:** Domination • Rigidity • Abuse of power • Poor leadership • *A crown—or a hat—doesn't cure bad character.*

**Quick Read — LEAD.** Use authority with discipline and accept responsibility for the outcome.

**Inspired by:** [the Mexican and Californio abuelos of the Old West](#), the steady family patriarchs who watched borders, governments, and fortunes change while holding their families together through it all. The newborn in his arms represents more than a new baby—it is continuity, hope, and proof that the family's story will outlive every hardship behind them. He embodies the King of Cups: emotionally grounded, quietly affectionate, and strong enough to be gentle. His authority does not come from intimidation or noise. It comes from experience, restraint, devotion, and the profound responsibility of protecting what comes next.

# SWORDS

*Air • Thought • Truth • Conflict • Communication*

## ACE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Truth • Clarity • Breakthrough • New idea • Decision • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Confusion • Misinformation • Cruel words • Clouded judgment • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CUT CLEAN.** The truth is sharp enough. Use it for clarity, not cruelty.

## TWO OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Stalemate • Difficult choice • Avoidance • Truce • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Information revealed • Indecision • Overwhelm • Forced choice • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — DECIDE.** The blindfold is not protecting you anymore. Get the facts and choose.

## THREE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Heartbreak • Sorrow • Betrayal • Painful truth • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Recovery • Forgiveness • Releasing pain • Lingering grief • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — LET IT HURT.** Pain acknowledged can move. Pain denied starts running the whole ranch.

## FOUR OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Rest • Recovery • Retreat • Mental pause • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Burnout • Restlessness • Rejoining life • Forced rest • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — STAND DOWN.** Your mind needs quiet before it starts inventing enemies.

## FIVE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Conflict • Hollow victory • Hostility • Self-interest • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Reconciliation • Remorse • Lingering conflict • Accountability • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — COUNT THE COST.** You can win the fight and lose every person worth riding with.

## SIX OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Transition • Moving on • Necessary journey • Recovery • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Stuck in the past • Delayed departure • Emotional baggage • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CROSS OVER.** The water may be rough, but staying ashore is no longer safer.

## SEVEN OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Strategy • Secrecy • Deception • Acting alone • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Confession • Exposure • Self-deception • Rethinking strategy • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — WATCH THE ANGLES.** Someone is avoiding the straight road. It may be clever—or it may be crooked.

## EIGHT OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Restriction • Fear • Powerlessness • Mental trap • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Release • New perspective • Reclaiming power • Survival • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — TEST THE BARS.** The trap is real, but it may not be locked. One honest move changes the picture.

**Extra Read:** Severe anxiety • Intrusive or distorted thinking • Feeling mentally trapped • Possible mental-health crisis. *This card can show psychological distress, but it cannot diagnose mental illness.*

## NINE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Anxiety • Nightmares • Guilt • Mental anguish • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Hope • Recovery • Facing fear • Deepening distress • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CHECK THE STORY.** The mind is holding court at three in the morning. Fear is evidence of pain, not proof of disaster.

## TEN OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Painful ending • Betrayal • Rock bottom • Finality • *The truth of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Recovery • Survival • Resisting the end • Lingering wounds • *When the truth goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — IT'S OVER.** The ending is brutal, but it is an ending. Dawn does not need your permission.

## PAGE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Curiosity • Message • Learning • Fresh energy • Thought • *A new voice rides in; hear it before judging the saddle.*

**Reversed:** Immaturity • Bad news • Inexperience • All talk • *Enthusiasm without sense can spook the whole herd.*

**Quick Read — PAY ATTENTION.** A message or beginner's opportunity has arrived. Stay curious and check the facts.

## KNIGHT OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Pursuit • Action • Mission • Momentum • Thought • *Once this rider chooses a trail, dust will fly.*

**Reversed:** Recklessness • Delay • Obsession • Unreliable action • *Charging ahead is not a personality substitute.*

**Quick Read — PURSUE IT.** Movement is the message. Know whether you're riding toward something or merely fleeing.

## QUEEN OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Maturity • Influence • Inner mastery • Receptivity • Thought • *Quiet authority still owns the room.*

**Reversed:** Insecurity • Overcontrol • Withdrawal • Misused influence • *Power turned inward can become poison.*

**Quick Read — OWN YOUR POWER.** Lead from lived wisdom. You don't need to shout to run the room.

## KING OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Authority • Mastery • Leadership • Responsibility • Thought • *Authority earns respect by carrying responsibility.*

**Reversed:** Domination • Rigidity • Abuse of power • Poor leadership • *A crown—or a hat—doesn't cure bad character.*

**Quick Read — LEAD.** Use authority with discipline and accept responsibility for the outcome.

## PENTACLES

*Earth • Work • Money • Health • Practical life*

### ACE OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** New job • Money opportunity • Health • Manifestation • Solid beginning • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Missed opportunity • Poor planning • Scarcity thinking • Instability • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — PLANT IT.** This opportunity has weight in the real world. Put it in good soil.

### TWO OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Juggling • Adaptability • Priorities • Financial balance • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Overload • Disorganization • Poor priorities • Financial strain • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — BALANCE THE LOAD.** You can keep both plates spinning, but not forever without a plan.

### THREE OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Teamwork • Craftsmanship • Learning • Recognition • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Poor workmanship • Lack of cooperation • Ego • Misalignment • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — DO GOOD WORK.** Skill matters, and so does working with people who respect the craft.

### FOUR OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Security • Saving • Control • Possession • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Greed • Financial fear • Letting go • Overspending • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CHECK YOUR GRIP.** Protecting resources is wise until fear turns the lock from the inside.

### FIVE OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Hardship • Poverty • Illness • Exclusion • Worry • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Recovery • Help arriving • Improvement • Spiritual poverty • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — SEEK SHELTER.** You are not required to freeze outside just because pride won't knock.

### SIX OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Generosity • Support • Fair exchange • Charity • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Strings attached • Debt • Inequality • Exploitation • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — BALANCE THE EXCHANGE.** Give and receive with dignity. Help that buys control is not generosity.

### SEVEN OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Patience • Investment • Assessment • Long-term growth • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Poor return • Impatience • Wasted effort • Giving up • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — WAIT AND ASSESS.** The crop is growing, but check whether this field still deserves your labor.

### EIGHT OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Skill • Apprenticeship • Dedication • Repetition • Quality • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Perfectionism • Boredom • Sloppy work • Lack of focus • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — MASTER THE CRAFT.** Repetition becomes mastery when attention stays in the room.

### NINE OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Independence • Comfort • Self-sufficiency • Reward • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Dependence • Overspending • Isolation • False success • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — CLAIM YOUR HARVEST.** You built this. Enjoy it without confusing independence with exile.

## TEN OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Legacy • Wealth • Family stability • Long-term success • *The ground of the matter is showing itself.*

**Reversed:** Family conflict • Financial loss • Unstable foundation • Broken tradition • *When the ground goes sideways, slow down and check the trail.*

**Quick Read — BUILD FOR BEYOND YOU.** This is about what lasts—money, values, family, and the name left on the gate.

## PAGE OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Curiosity • Message • Learning • Fresh energy • Work • *A new voice rides in; hear it before judging the saddle.*

**Reversed:** Immaturity • Bad news • Inexperience • All talk • *Enthusiasm without sense can spook the whole herd.*

**Quick Read — PAY ATTENTION.** A message or beginner's opportunity has arrived. Stay curious and check the facts.

## KNIGHT OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Pursuit • Action • Mission • Momentum • Work • *Once this rider chooses a trail, dust will fly.*

**Reversed:** Recklessness • Delay • Obsession • Unreliable action • *Charging ahead is not a personality substitute.*

**Quick Read — PURSUE IT.** Movement is the message. Know whether you're riding toward something or merely fleeing.

## QUEEN OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Maturity • Influence • Inner mastery • Receptivity • Work • *Quiet authority still owns the room.*

**Reversed:** Insecurity • Overcontrol • Withdrawal • Misused influence • *Power turned inward can become poison.*

**Quick Read — OWN YOUR POWER.** Lead from lived wisdom. You don't need to shout to run the room.

## KING OF PENTACLES

**Upright:** Authority • Mastery • Leadership • Responsibility • Work • *Authority earns respect by carrying responsibility.*

**Reversed:** Domination • Rigidity • Abuse of power • Poor leadership • *A crown—or a hat—doesn't cure bad character.*

**Quick Read — LEAD.** Use authority with discipline and accept responsibility for the outcome.

# NINE EXPANSION CARDS

Reserved for the deck's twelve original cards. Their exact printed titles and meanings will be inserted here once the final master list is supplied. These are intentionally not invented or treated as Rider–Waite cards.

## EXPANSION CARD 01 — The Outlaw

**Upright:** Radical independence • Survival instinct • Defiance • Self-rule • Resourcefulness • Living outside convention • Refusing to be controlled • *A feral human with no interest in becoming house-trained.*

**Reversed:** Destructive rebellion • Criminal behavior • Self-sabotage • Recklessness • Refusing help • Breaking rules without purpose • Running from consequences • *There's freedom, and then there's setting fire to your own hideout.*

**Quick Read — LET THEM RUN.** The Outlaw survives by answering to no one. They may have fallen into a life outside the rules or chosen it deliberately, but either way, they will do things their way. You can understand them, bargain with them, or get out of their path, but trying to wrangle an Outlaw is about as sensible as jumping into a volcano and expecting the volcano to compromise.

**Inspired by:** [Butch Cassidy](#) and the [Sundance Kid](#), the most famous members of the Wild Bunch. Cassidy was known for his charm, strategic mind, generosity, and preference for avoiding unnecessary violence, while Sundance earned his name after being jailed for horse theft and returned to the outlaw trail after his release. Together, they robbed banks and trains, relied on remote hideouts, fled across borders, and became nearly impossible to separate from their own legend. They represent the Outlaw as both survivor and self-made fugitive: loyal to their own code, unwilling to live by anyone else's rules, and considerably easier to chase than to catch.

## EXPANSION CARD 02 — The Witness

**Upright:** Observation • Documentation • Truth-telling • Advocacy • Preservation • Bearing witness • Seeing what others overlook • *Some Old West realities only survived only because somebody cared enough to record them.*

**Reversed:** Looking away • Passive observation • Biased storytelling • Exploitation • Voyeurism • Silence • Distorting or controlling the narrative • *If you witness harm and protect only your own comfort, you weren't neutral, you were useful to the wrong side.*

**Quick Read — SEE IT. RECORD IT. SPEAK.** The Witness goes where history is happening and pays attention. They may document through paint, photographs, journals, testimony, or simply an accurate memory. But witnessing carries responsibility: What did you see? Whose story are you telling? And when does observation need to become assistance or advocacy? History remembers what was recorded—and conveniently forgets what everyone agreed not to mention.

**Inspired by:** [Artist George Catlin](#), who traveled extensively through the West during the 1830s and created hundreds of paintings documenting Native people and lifeways; and [Grace Carpenter Hudson](#), a California artist known for hundreds of portraits of Pomo people, whom she had known since childhood. Their work preserved an enormous visual record, while also reminding us that every witness records a story through their own perspective.

### EXPANSION CARD 03 — Grandmother

**Upright:** Ancestral wisdom • Protection • Family memory • Healing • Tradition • Practical guidance • Unconditional love • Legacy • Knowing what must be preserved • *She knows you and even more important, she loves you. Who is she in your life? Honor her.*

**Reversed:** Controlling matriarch • Smothering • Family guilt • Inherited trauma • Outdated beliefs • Martyrdom • Unwanted advice • Repeating harmful traditions • Estrangement from your roots • *Stubbornness is not wisdom.*

**Quick Read —** LISTEN TO WHAT ENDURES. The Grandmother carries the knowledge that kept people alive: what heals, what harms, when to wait, when to leave, and which stories must never be forgotten. She may be a biological grandmother, an elder, an ancestor, or anyone who protects and teaches the next generation. Take the wisdom that strengthens you, pass it forward, and have the courage to end whatever should not survive another generation.

**Inspired by:** [Pretty Shield](#), an Apsáalooke medicine woman, healer, storyteller, and grandmother born in 1856. She survived the disappearance of the buffalo, the loss of loved ones, and the forced transformation of Crow life, then helped raise her grandchildren and taught them traditional foods, medicinal plants, spiritual practices, and the skills required to survive a changing world. Through her recorded life story and the knowledge she passed to her granddaughter Alma Hogan Snell, Pretty Shield became an enduring example of the grandmother as healer, teacher, cultural memory, and bridge between generations.

### EXPANSION CARD 04 — Horse Spirit

**Upright:** Freedom • Partnership • Instinct • Movement • Strength • Loyalty • Animal communication • Mutual trust • Carrying one another • Knowing without words • *A horse will lend you its strength, but never confuse partnership with ownership.*

**Reversed:** Broken trust • Domination • Loss of freedom • Exhaustion • Ignoring instinct • Carrying too much • Fear of moving forward • Forcing what will not be forced • *Pull harder on the reins if you want, but don't act surprised if you lose the only grip you had on the situation (person, job, money).*

**Quick Read —** LISTEN BEFORE YOU PULL THE REINS. Horse Spirit arrives when movement depends upon trust. Pay attention to what your body, instincts, and animal companions are telling you without words. You may be carrying someone, asking to be carried, or trying to control a force that was never meant to be conquered. Strength will take you farther when it is joined with respect. Decide where you are going, loosen your grip, and let the relationship become the guide.

**Inspired by:** My stallion Star, who I called Blackjack. He was gifted to me by an older Black horseman whose lifelong dream had been to own a black stallion. By the time Star came to me, his owner was elderly and living with dementia, so I gave the horse a resting place before his permanent home (they had trained him for the man, years before, and were happy to take him in!). Star carried remarkable breeding, with American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame stallion Easy Jet still appearing on his papers, but his greatest gift had nothing to do with pedigree. He was a softy for a stallion and became instrumental in my animal-communication classes, teaching people to listen beyond spoken language. Horse Spirit also honors the countless horses who carried, worked beside, protected, and sustained the people of the Old West, day after day, mile after mile, usually receiving far less credit than they earned.

### EXPANSION CARD 05 — Buffalo Spirit

**Upright:** Endurance • Provision • Abundance • Community • Sacred strength • Facing hardship • Seasonal wisdom • Conservation • Gratitude • Survival through adaptation • *Not every storm can be avoided. Some must be met with your head down and your feet planted.*

**Reversed:** Depletion • Scarcity • Overconsumption • Isolation • Wasted resources • Refusing support • Stubborn resistance • Disconnection from nature • Taking more than can be restored • *Strength becomes foolishness when you keep charging after the lesson has already knocked you flat.*

**Quick Read —** FACE THE SEASON YOU'RE IN. Buffalo Spirit does not waste energy wishing winter were summer. It survives by respecting the season, staying with the herd, conserving its strength, and facing the weather instead of being driven by it. Something difficult may be approaching, but running could keep you trapped inside it longer. Turn toward what must be faced, protect what sustains you, and trust that no season—mercifully or otherwise—lasts forever.

**Inspired by:** The American bison—commonly called buffalo—and particularly the herds of [Yellowstone National Park](#), where bison move with the seasons, shape the grasslands through their grazing, migrate between winter and summer ranges, and bring forth new calves with the return of spring. During severe winter weather, bison are known to [turn toward the storm, hunker down, and wait it out](#). Their dense coats, powerful bodies, deliberate conservation of energy, and ability to uncover forage beneath deep snow allow them to survive conditions that can kill domestic livestock. Buffalo Spirit honors the wisdom of meeting hardship without becoming hardship: stand together, use only what is needed, and remember that survival is also a relationship with the land.

## EXPANSION CARD 06 — Fox Spirit

**Upright:** Cleverness • Adaptability • Strategy • Curiosity • Playfulness • Independence • Reading the room • Moving unseen • Knowing when to reveal yourself • *You don't need to overpower the situation if you can outthink it.*

**Reversed:** Deception exposed • The mask slipping • Manipulation • Outsmarting yourself • Hidden motives • Losing yourself in another person • Codependency • Clever excuses • *Eventually the trickster forgets which face was real.*

**Quick Read — KNOW WHEN TO SHOW YOUR FACE.** Fox Spirit survives through observation, timing, adaptability, and a little well-placed mischief. You may need to move quietly, study the situation, or take the less obvious path. But cleverness becomes a cage when every interaction requires a disguise. Ask yourself whether the mask is protecting you, manipulating others, or simply hiding a truth that is ready to come out. You can be strategic without becoming dishonest—and connected without surrendering yourself.

**Inspired by:** My oldest daughter. Their intelligence, beauty, mischief, secrecy, and masked faces have always reminded me of her. Fox Spirit is also inspired by the [Sierra Nevada red fox](#), one of the rarest mammals in North America. Adapted to the remote, snowy elevations of California's Sierra Nevada, this elusive fox survived unnoticed in places where it was once believed to have disappeared. Only an estimated 18 to 39 remain in that population, making its ability to stay hidden both its gift and a reminder that what escapes our notice can still be dangerously close to vanishing. Fox Spirit also honors the [Kit Fox Society of the Blackfoot Confederacy](#), one of the Confederacy's original societies. The fox's alertness, agility, and strategic intelligence reflected qualities essential to protection and survival on the Plains. Long before frontier stories reduced the fox to a sneaky little chicken thief, Indigenous people recognized it as an observant, adaptable being whose strength came from knowing when to advance, when to disappear, and how to survive without relying on brute force.

## EXPANSION CARD 07 — Raven Spirit

**Upright:** Intelligence • Wisdom • Quick wit • Communication • Pattern recognition • Resourcefulness • Adaptability • Observation • Problem-solving • Knowing what others miss • *The smartest creature in the room rarely needs to announce it.*

**Reversed:** Arrogance • Manipulation • Cruel humor • Gossip • Misinformation • Overthinking • Intellectualizing emotions • Opportunism • Using intelligence as a weapon • Intelligence without humility is just a faster horse carrying bad judgment.

**Quick Read — NOTICE THE PATTERN.** Raven Spirit watches, remembers, experiments, and learns. It recognizes relationships between events that others dismiss as coincidence. Pay attention to what keeps appearing, what changes when you enter the room, and what people reveal when they think no one is watching. Your intelligence is an advantage, but wisdom requires more than being right. Use what you know to understand, communicate, and create—not merely to prove that you were three steps ahead.

**Inspired by:** My son, whose intelligence, quick wit, and natural wisdom have always reminded me of the raven. He notices patterns quickly, thinks beyond the obvious answer, and can use humor as both insight and survival. Raven Spirit also honors the ravens that inhabited the West long before fences, wagon roads, ranches, and mining camps—and then promptly learned how to survive all of those too. Ravens followed bison herds, predators, hunters, and human settlements because they understood where opportunity would appear. In [Yellowstone National Park](#), ravens have learned to open packs and study human behavior, while many now live near wolves instead of relying primarily on people. They arrive almost immediately at wolf kills, using the work of a stronger animal without needing to become one themselves. Raven Spirit is the intelligence that survives every version of the West by observing first, learning quickly, and never wasting a useful piece of information.

## EXPANSION CARD 08 — Wolf Spirit

**Upright:** Independence • Instinct • Self-reliance • Courage • Solitude with purpose • Leaving the familiar • Searching for belonging • Protecting your boundaries • Finding your own territory • *Sometimes you must leave the pack to discover where you belong.*

**Reversed:** Isolation • Exile • Loneliness • Hyper-independence • Refusing help • Severed bonds • Wandering without purpose • Fear of belonging • Making solitude your identity • *Being able to survive alone doesn't mean you're meant to stay there.*

**Quick Read — KNOW WHY YOU LEFT THE PACK.** Wolf Spirit appears when independence is necessary, but it refuses to romanticize isolation. A lone wolf is often a dispersing wolf: one that has left its birth pack to search for territory, a mate, and perhaps a new pack of its own. You may need space to hear your instincts and choose your own direction. But ask yourself whether your solitude still has a purpose or has become a place to hide. Leaving can be an act of courage. So can allowing yourself to belong again.

**Inspired by:** My middle daughter, whose fierce independence and determination to follow her own path have always reminded me of the lone wolf. Wolf Spirit is also inspired by the real lives of [dispersing wolves](#), which may travel hundreds of miles after leaving their birth packs in search of territory, a mate, and a future of their own. Wolves were driven out of Yellowstone during the settlement and predator-control campaigns of the American West, but between 1995 and 1997, [41 wolves were released into Yellowstone](#), restoring a presence that had been missing for decades. Their return reminds us that separation is not always the end of the story, and that finding your own way does not mean you must walk alone forever.

**EXPANSION CARD 09 — Raccoon Spirit**

**Upright:** Boundary violations • Enabling • Being taken advantage of • Excusing repeated behavior • Giving too many chances • Charm overriding judgment • Protecting others from consequences • Knowing exactly what they're doing—and letting them do it anyway • *They aren't sneaking past you anymore. If there's a way in, Raccoon Spirit will find it, and probably make eye contact while doing it.*

**Reversed:** Firm boundaries • Closing access • Consequences enforced • Recognizing manipulation • Ending the rescue cycle • Protecting your resources • Choosing self-respect over guilt • Refusing to reward bad behavior • The pantry is locked, and those precious little hands are no longer your problem.

**Quick Read — LOCK THE DAMN PANTRY.** Someone is getting away with behavior you would never tolerate if they weren't charming, familiar, vulnerable, or so damn good at making you feel guilty. Raccoon Spirit appears when compassion has become permission and forgiveness has become a revolving door. You already see what they're doing—the question is why you keep allowing it. You don't have to stop loving them, but you do have to stop sacrificing your peace, money, energy, or self-respect to protect them from consequences. Close the opening. Secure what matters. Let the adorable little bandit figure it out.

**Inspired by:** Me, and every softhearted person who has watched a raccoon commit a felony directly in front of them and thought, *Well, look at those precious little hands.* Raccoon Spirit reflects my instinct to understand, forgive, rescue, and give another chance, but also the expensive lesson that zero self-preservation comes at the cost of your soul, spirit, and in some cases, your life. Raccoons were connected to the broader American frontier through trapping, hunting, and their pelts, while the coonskin cap eventually became one of the frontier's most recognizable symbols. That image was heavily romanticized through Davy Crockett, so it belongs more to American frontier mythology than exclusively to the cattle-driving Old West. The [Smithsonian's history of Davy Crockett's coonskin cap](#) shows how thoroughly the masked little opportunist became stitched into our idea of the wilderness. Meanwhile, the National Park Service notes that even nature gave the raccoon a face resembling a [bandit's mask](#). Frankly, that feels less like camouflage and more like truth in advertising.