

# THE CARTOMANCER

2018: JUSTICE  
A YEAR OF DESCENT  
& DISCERNMENT

BY SIOBHAN RENEE

WELLNESS COUNSELING

BY TONI GILBERT, RN (RET), MA, ATC

WYRD  
JOURNEY

BY PARKER TORRENCE

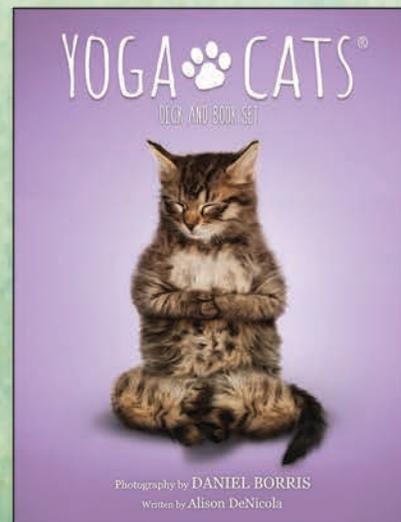
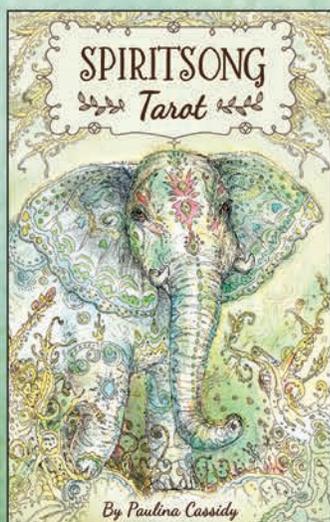
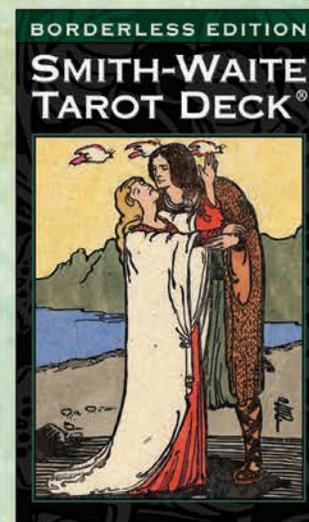
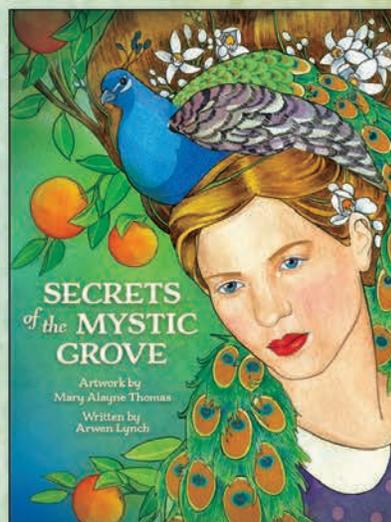
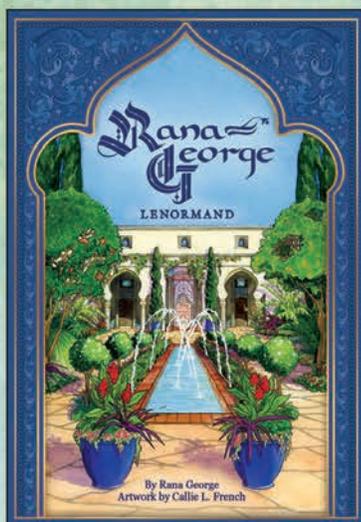
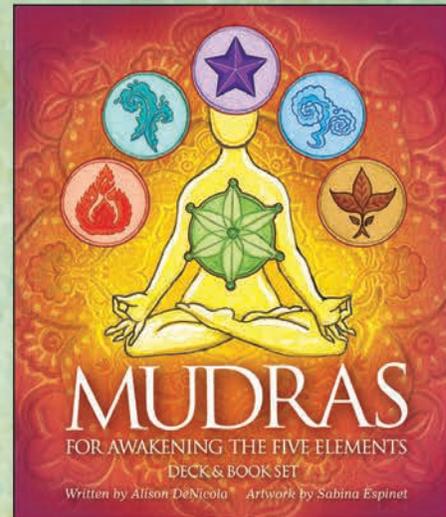
EMPOWERING  
READINGS

BY SERENA FOX

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INTERVIEW WITH  
ELLEN LORENZI-PRINCE

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### Mission Statement

Our primary goal is to support an inclusive and mutually supportive community of Tarot, Lenormand and Oracle card readers worldwide through a quarterly journal that includes:

- Well-written and informative articles by a wide range of experts for cartomancers of all levels, from novice to professional.
- High quality divination inspired art from around the world and full color samples from some of the best recently published and classic decks for readers to explore.
- A Marketplace for authors and artists to publicize and promote their books, decks and other Tarot, Lenormand and Oracle related products and upcoming events of interest to the community.
- Reviews of new and classic decks from major publishing houses as well as independently published, limited editions by our in-house review staff.

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## THE CARTOMANCER

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### MASTHEAD

Publisher/Editor: Arwen Lynch-Poe  
Assistant Editor/Designer: Serena Fox  
Historian: Sherryl Smith  
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

W Welcome to my first issue as editor and publisher. I've had a lot of help from Jadzia to Serena to Arthur to Robert to Chad to Tess to Eric to Cai. And, like most, I'm probably forgetting someone key--like my husband. When I took on this project, I was excited. Then fear took over. What was I thinking? I couldn't possibly create a magazine like Jadzia had.

It took a lot of self-talk plus pep talks from others to realize I was right. I couldn't possibly do what Jadzia had done. Because I'm not Jadzia. For one thing, I'm a lot taller than her. Seriously though, I can't ask an iris to be a rose or a rose to be a violet. I have to let each person, including myself, bloom as they were meant to bloom. It's funny. One of my personal mottos is an Ashleigh Brilliant phrase--Bloom where you are planted. I am firmly planted in The Cartomancer.

This issue is part Jadzia and part me. I guess you can call it a hybrid. I'm excited to share the deck art including Roxi Sim's Deva's Garden of Wisdom. One of the new voices this issue is Siobhan Renee who brings her unique perspective to the pages. Then there is the Wyrd Journey that Parker Torrence takes us on.

I'm eager to see where we will be this time next year. I invite you, yes you, to email me at [editor@thecartomancer.com](mailto:editor@thecartomancer.com). Tell me your favorite article. Tell me what you want to see in upcoming issues. Do join the Cartomancer community on Facebook if you are there. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter. This is your magazine so I am counting on you to shape future issues.

If you celebrate a winter holiday, I hope it is a good one. Check the back cover for a holiday gift option.

Seek joy, y'all.

Pass it on.

*Arwen Lynch*



SHERRYL E. SMITH writes about tarot history, reviews decks and books of historical interest, and offers readings at [www.tarot-heritage.com](http://www.tarot-heritage.com). Her website is a resource for exploring tarot's 550-year history, and for learning to read with the Tarot de Marseille and other historic decks.

Her website is [tarot-heritage.com/](http://tarot-heritage.com/)



CATT FOY introduced *Psycards* to the U.S. in 1988 and is the author of *Psycards—A New Alternative to Tarot*. She teaches classes, seminars, and makes appearances at mind/body/spirit events and bookstores in the western U.S. You can contact her at [psycardsusa@gmail.com](mailto:psycardsusa@gmail.com), or visit [www.psycardsusa.com](http://www.psycardsusa.com).

# CONTRIBUTORS



SIOBHAN is a NYC-born writer and #radicaltarot reader living in central Texas. Her facilitative tarot reading style is the result of over a decade of study of tarot as well as shamanic ritual, sacred sexuality, and alternative relationships. She writes a column at [littleredtarot.com/author/siobhan](http://littleredtarot.com/author/siobhan) and is the creator of *The Scopes*, the first ever

monthly collaborative taroscopes which have featured over 40 professional tarot readers in the last two years. Her website is [www.radicaltarot.com](http://www.radicaltarot.com)



JADZIA DEFOREST has been reading tarot professionally for over ten years in the Portland, Oregon area. She's the owner and editor of *The Cartomancer: A Tarot, Lenormand, and Oracle Journal*, co-director of the Northwest Tarot Symposium, co-owner at Portlandia Fortune Tellers, and co-author of the *Living Magick Learning Cards Series*. In addition to reading tarot, Jazia is a palmist and astrologer. She teaches classes on tarot, astrology, and palmistry. Jazia lives in the forest just outside of Portland with her husband and six spoiled cats. Her website is [www.JaziaDeForest.com](http://www.JaziaDeForest.com)



PARKER TORRENCE a self-titled, "Simple Pagan" lives in Midland, Texas with his wife Gwen Wolfrose. Co-founder of the Draig Sidhe Path tradition, and published author, *Sea, Land, Sky: A Dragon Magick Grimoire* (Three Moons Media, 2002), from 1993 to 1998 he was a professional Tarot reader.



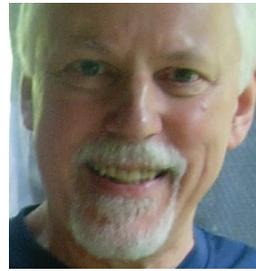
JAYMI ELFORD lives a tarot inspired life. She uses the cards as a tool to explore the world we live in and create meaning. She designed the *Triple Goddess Tarot* and continues to write and create stuff. Her website is [www.innercompasstarot.com](http://www.innercompasstarot.com).





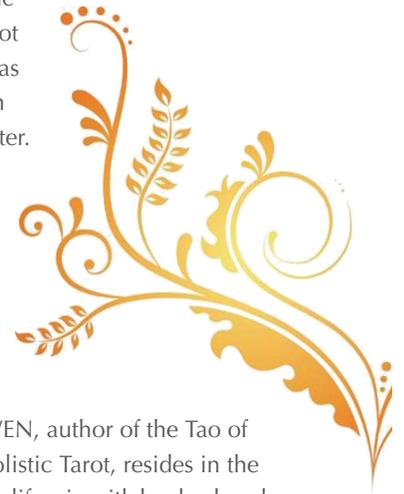
CYNTHIA TEDESCO M.A. worked for many years as an Audiologist and Speech/Language Pathologist for the Lexington School For The Deaf. She is certified as a Kaizen-Muse Creativity Coach using skills as a professional tarot reader to assist clients in their creative work. Tedesco's poems have appeared in many publications including Barrow

Street (and former editor), Black River Review, Caliban, Columbia Poetry Review, Gargoyle, Italian Americana, Montserrat Review, Space and Time, Talisman, Tamarind, and more. She is currently working on her second book, *Chthonic Luminosity* as well as the novel. Tedesco lives in N.Y.C. with her husband and two Havaneese dogs. The Tedesco's are serious collectors of vintage tarot decks. She can be reached at: [intuitiveartsentertainment@gmail.com](mailto:intuitiveartsentertainment@gmail.com)



WAYNE LIMBERGER lives in New Hampshire and reads professionally in the Keene area. He has worked with tarot since 1972, is a member of the Massachusetts Tarot Society and the online Aeclectic Tarot forum, and has recently been

published in the ATA's monthly newsletter. Wayne may be reached at [dubyah48@gmail.com](mailto:dubyah48@gmail.com).



PAMELA STEELE Is a registered massage therapist, professional bar tender, event organizer, horse trainer and has taught tarot reading, art and belly dancing. With over 50+ years art experience and over 35 years reading tarot, Pamela has created the *Steele Wizard Tarot*, the Wizard's Pets Tarot and the currently in-progress Eternal Seeker's Tarot. She

gets bored easily and can be distracted by everything or nothing. Her founding passions are fantasy art and horses which you will see blended into many tarot images. She has shown and sold art internationally for over 30 years and her work has graced graphic novel covers, D&D publications, the German Sci-Fi Annual, coloring books, children's books and new age books and magazines. Her website is [www.SteeleWizard.com](http://www.SteeleWizard.com).



BENEPELL WEN, author of the Tao of Craft, and Holistic Tarot, resides in the Bay area of California with her husband. An avid gardener and cook, many question if Benebell is the current possessor of Hermoine Granger's time-traveling necklace. Wen claims it is simply time-management skills which she shares with others via her

Metaphysician's Day Planner. She's been working with Tarot since she was a tiger cub. Now she shares her knowledge on her blog, YouTube and more. She is currently working on two other books. Her website is [www.benebellwen.com](http://www.benebellwen.com)



SERENA FOX, Bean of the Fieds, is a professional tarot reader, spirited herb worker, and curious magik maker. She runs a small farm and offers workshops and sharing circles throughout the year. Her tarot work is energetic, holistic and alive: involving correspondences and movement to guide, initiate, empower and manifest. She manages a spiritual

website ([MagicOma.com](http://MagicOma.com)) and Bean, Inc. (a company that creates products and decks—and offers collaborative design alchemy). Her mission is to inspire and uplift, ground and center. Create Beauty. Make Magic. Serena is the assistant editor for *The Cartomancer*.



TONI GILBERT, RN (ret), MA, ATC is a transpersonal counselor with a background in holistic nursing. As a professional with a formal education in nursing, art, psychology, and transpersonal studies, she offers clients an array of healing arts techniques to enhance wellness and prevent illness. She is the author of *Messages from*

*the Archetypes: Using Tarot for Healing and Spiritual Growth*, published by White Cloud Press and *Gaining Archetypal Vision: A Guidebook for Using Archetypes in Personal Growth and Healing* by Schiffer Books. She has written for national and local publication. Her website is [www.tonigilbert.com](http://www.tonigilbert.com)



# AN INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN LORENZI-PRINCE CREATOR OF THE DARK GODDESS TAROT

with Arwen Lynch-Poe

I had the pleasure of meeting Ellen at a retreat where she led us in activities such as meeting the Dark Goddesses. Her decks imagery speaks to me. Ellen is a quiet soul who delivers profound messages. I had a chance to catch up with her to find out what she's working on.

**ALP:** Ellen, you've created several decks. Can you tell us a bit about what called you to create the first deck?

**ELP:** My first deck, the Motherpeace Tarot, had been magical in its introduction and solid in its continuing guidance. But it stopped speaking to my life in 1993 when Hekate and I were on the outs, I was working 50 hours a week as a manager of two software development teams, one in the San Francisco Bay Area and one in Mumbai, India, as well as spending my evenings with things like reading *The Hundred Secret Senses* by Amy Tan to my nine year old daughter and tutoring my husband through his most difficult subject: the algebra class he had to pass to continue through radiology technology school.

The few other decks I had (Thoth, Karma, Mythic, Robin Wood) weren't doing it for me either. So I became dissatisfied with Tarot and yet I missed it. After Lou finished school and got a job in Eureka (in redwood country, about a 2 hour drive north to the Oregon border and a 5 or 6 hour drive south to San Francisco), I began remotely contracting for my old employer, had more time, and became more dissatisfied. I began looking at more decks and bought a few I really liked: Rachel Pollack's *Shining Woman*, Arnell Ando's *Transformational*, and Robert Place's *Alchemical*. In 1997, I joined an online tarot community and discovered wonderful people doing creative and interesting things. The earlier dissatisfaction grew to an itch. I wanted to make something too!

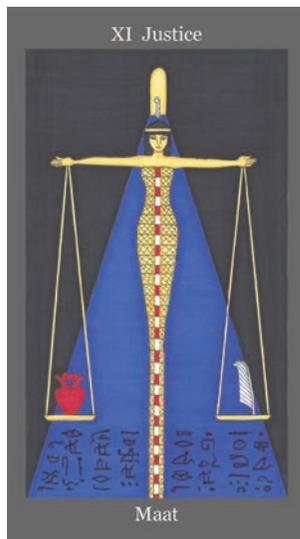
But an idea had to gel. I needed a focus. I needed a purpose. On the tarot list, someone started a discussion about Maiden, Mother, Crone in the Major Arcana. I was dissatisfied with the discussion so I wrote about the neglected Crone, how she could be this and she could be that and concluded brashly with, "I could do a whole deck for the Crone!" To which someone replied, "Let's see it then," and that set off an inner iron bell I could not ignore. Doing it as an offering to Hekate was a path toward repairing that relationship as well. So I had my focus and I had my purpose.

**ALP:** Do you have a card that you typically start with for each deck??

**ELP:** The first card I drew for the Tarot of the Crone was Major XII, Sacrifice. For the Minoan Tarot it was Sky Three, for the Dark Goddess Tarot, the Eight of Water. The first for the Kali Tarot Prayer Cards was the High Priestess. The first card for my in-progress Greek Goddess Tarot was the Nine of Arrows, and the first for my in-progress Celtic Goddess Tarot was the World. So the answer would be no, nothing typical! Each project comes with its own inspiration and process.

**ALP:** 3. Why Dark Goddesses? What inspired you? Was it a book? A quote? An image? A conversation?

**ELP:** I went with a friend to a local ritual honoring Hekate. It was part of the traveling show, "The Masks of the Goddess" by Lauren Raine. Afterward over a version of cakes and ale (for me, a chocolate milkshake and french fries), we talked about various goddesses. I said I loved the dark goddesses the best, that they could take you deeper, that they knew the hidden places, that they could stand by you in your own dark times, that they stood by their knowledge, their sexuality, their appearance, and their



companions. When I said I love the dark goddesses... that inner bell clanged again.

**ALP:** What is your creative ritual? How do you start a painting?.

**ELP:** I don't have a formal ritual. I check in. I might look at the last card I drew and think, what comes next? Or I will pull a card and ask the same question. Or I'll think, what's the easiest thing I could do that might still be useful and good?

If the concept is complex, I do rough sketches until I've worked out a composition that fits within the tarot card frame. I do internet image searches for my models: landscapes, objects, animals, trees, or people.

If relevant, I add searches for ancient art, folk art, myth, music, and folk tales. When I have a plan, I start to sketch.

**ALP:** Have you ever thought about doing another type of deck like a Lenormand or an Oracle?

**ELP:** I have a few Oracles ideas. I think they're cool, but they've not become as compelling to me as the Tarot. No Lenormands. Without being able to re-conceptualize the cards to the extent I like, a Lenormand deck is not interesting enough to me.

**ALP:** Do you ever have artist's or writer's block? If yes, how do you resolve that? Also, which is more challenging for you? Writing or painting?

**ELP:** I get blocked. I get overwhelmed by other matters. It can help to work on something small, like making finger puppets for my granddaughter. It can help to work on something different, even if

part of me would prefer progress on my main project. It can help to be asked to do something. If I promised someone, I do not like to disappoint. I look for the opportunities I can take, for how I might be catalyzed into doing something rather than nothing. But sometimes I just have to wait it out and be okay(ish) with that.

The art is harder for me than the writing. Being more challenging, it's also more rewarding when I do break through and make something I like. It's harder for a simple reason: I haven't had as much practice. In my former life I wrote code, specifications, and manuals so non-fiction writing was something I learned to do whatever my internal weather. Writing something more spiritual and meaningful presents a unique challenge, but shifting inner landscapes for visions and messages is something I've practiced as well.

**ALP:** What kind of research time did the Dark Goddess Tarot take? Was it an easy journey or a challenging one??

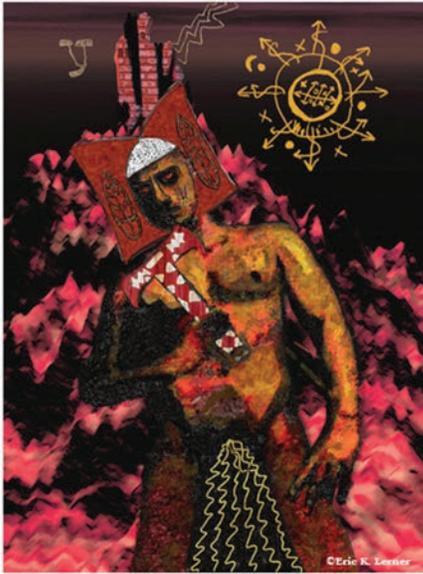
**ELP:** Oh, the research was fun! It did not take me long. I first read the Greek myths when I was nine and just kept reading. Only a few of the goddesses in the DGT were unknown to me. I enjoyed the discovery and the review. I recognized quality resources. Since it was a tarot book, I also didn't fuss with record keeping and footnotes, which kept it an easy process. I took in information and let it settle into tarot card shapes.

I started with the suit of Water and made a list of water related goddesses. I crossed off that list goddesses that I did not feel had a dark aspect. Then I meditated more on the stories and attributes of the remaining goddesses until I found a fit, until I found the proper data for my data structure. (Hmm, should I say here that I have Sun, Mercury, Mars, and Pluto in Virgo? Along with Pisces Rising, Moon in Cancer, and Venus in Scorpio for my goopy parts?)



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**ALP:** Pull a card from your Dark Goddess to answer this question. What is the lesson of the Dark Goddess Tarot for you, the creator?

**ELP:** I Interesting! I got the Four of Fire, Kamui Fuchi. She was one of my discoveries for the deck. She is the goddess of fire for the Ainu people of Northern Japan, and she lives in each home within the central four-cornered hearth. Though she stays within the confines of the hearth, she is the most powerful of spirits, for other gods do her bidding. The hearth is not only where she lives, it is where the spirits of the ancestors live until they are ready to be reborn. Thus its purity and sanctity must be tended and never profaned.

In the context of the question, the Dark Goddess Tarot has taught me more appreciation of and connection with the ancestors and with my own creative power—which I must use wisely and tenderly in the service of my goddess and my soul.

**ALP:** What's next on your creative plate?

**ELP:** I mentioned the Greek Goddess Tarot and the Celtic Goddess Tarot, both exciting projects. I also want to draw a comic featuring Kali and La Santa Muerte. Sadly, my 2-D creative work is on a back burner while I remake my life after divorcing my husband and saying goodbye to my home. But transitions don't last forever, and I plan on getting back to work soon. Ask me again next spring

**ALP:** Where can readers find out more about your decks and art work?

**ELP:** I have several places.

[www.darkgoddessstarot.com](http://www.darkgoddessstarot.com)

[darkgoddesslodge.com](http://darkgoddesslodge.com)

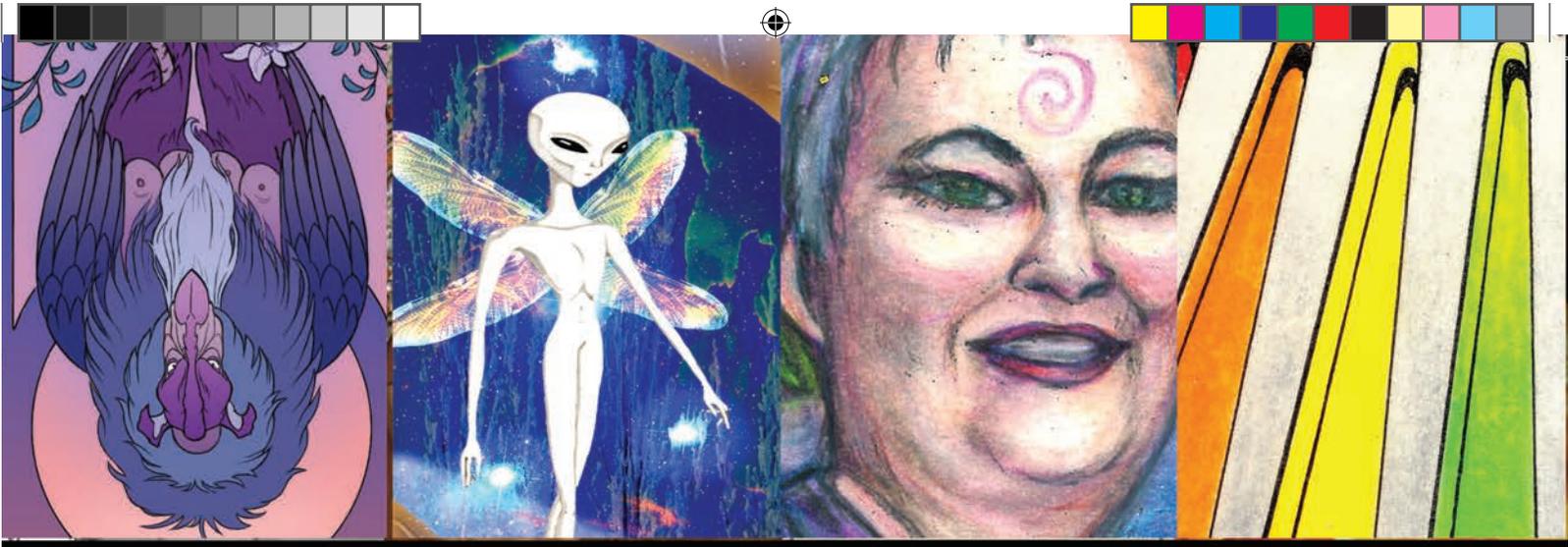
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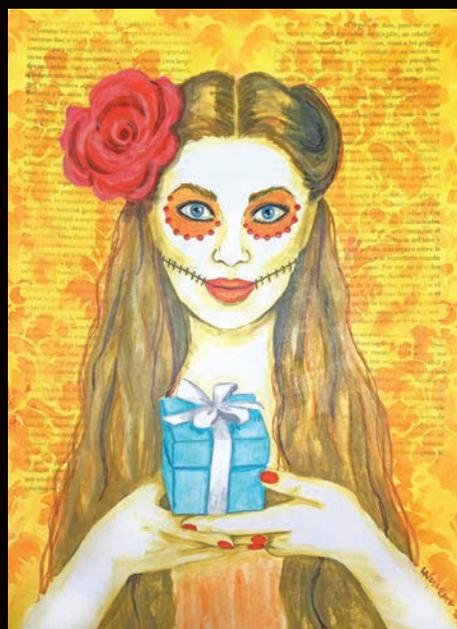
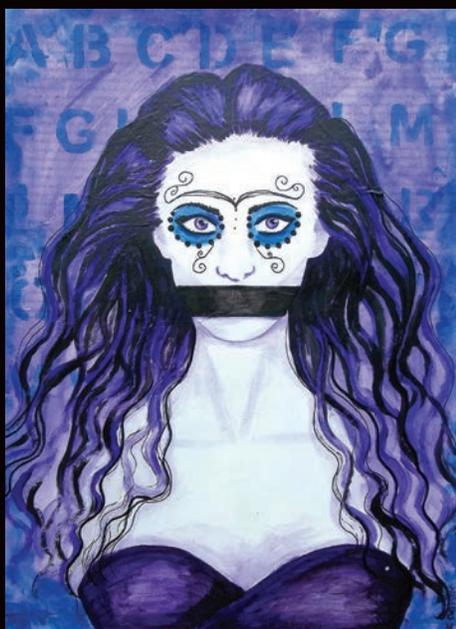
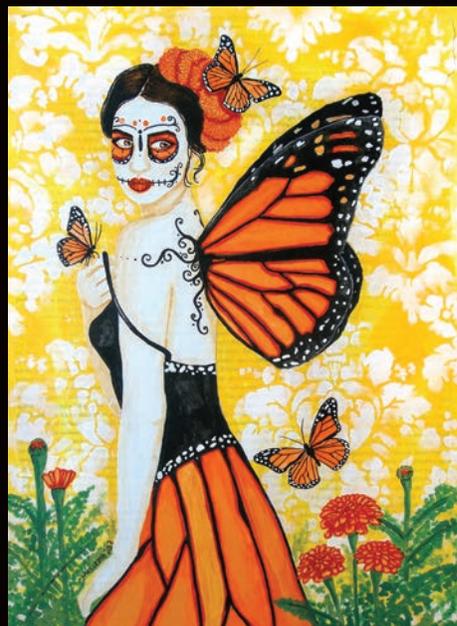
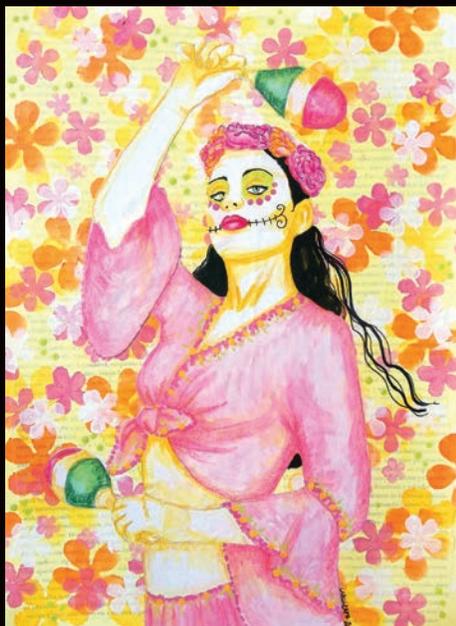


# Tarot Art



# OFRENDA ORACLE

LISA VOLLRATH



Growing up in California, then living in Texas, my work as an artist has been heavily influenced by the Mexican culture. I'm inspired by color, nature, and my garden. My pieces often begin with a line drawing of a face, which is gradually covered in layers of paint, charcoal, pastels, and pen work to reveal the truth I see in the reference image. Guiding this transformation brings me immeasurable joy.

All my designs for the Ofrenda Oracle started out as paintings on canvas, mixed media works on watercolor paper, or art journal pages. 16 pieces were created between 2012 and the first half of 2017. The other 14 were painted specifically for the deck in July and August of 2017.

I paint Dia de los Muertos figures often, so the idea for this deck was sort of a no-brainer for me. The fact that Dia de los Muertos celebrates the connection we have to those who have departed this life, and acknowledges a time of year when we might reconnect with them more easily, made this theme an obvious choice for an oracle deck. This project gave me a reason to do new work in a style I love, and learn a bit about cartomancy.

My web site: [www.lisavollrath.com/](http://www.lisavollrath.com/)  
Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/lisavollrath>



# CRYSTAL CONTACT ORACLE DECK

MARY MUNOZ AND HANNAH THORESEN

Crystal Contact Oracle Deck is designed to bring the natural world in view of the supernatural. It covers crystals, metals, extraterrestrials, symbols, and is based on personal experiences. As you begin to work with the cards you will find patterns begin to emerge for you; everyone is different. The cards are specifically designed to engage your higher-self, allowing you the ability to see beyond a situation. So, when working with the deck you will experience your own journey in the realms of the unknown. Artists Mary Muñoz and Hannah Thoresen are a mother and daughter team in the realm of extraterrestrial experiences. Psychic abilities and energy work intertwines in their artistic endeavors of writing, designing, and healing.  
[www.mysticalsignatures.com](http://www.mysticalsignatures.com)



# THE DEVA'S GARDEN OF WISDOM

ROXI SIM



The Deva's Garden of Wisdom is a 44 card Oracle deck currently in creation by Roxi Sim Hermesen, artist of Pearls of Wisdom Tarot and Joy and Sorrow Oracle deck and App. Feeling that women of her generation are often invisible, Roxi wanted to make the invisible visible.

The concept came about because of a wonderful group of women dubbed "The Dinner Divas". Roxi invited them, as well life-long friends and friends met through Face book, to participate by sharing wisdom in the form of a poem, prose, meditation or write up "what you would tell your younger self if you could?"

Working from their words, photos supplied, or a photo shoot, Roxi portrays the woman, her totem animal, favourite flower and more. Roxi includes images of Earth Devas, Tree spirits and Runes to give the art work a magical and other worldly essence.

Roxi is loving this series, co-creating a truly original card oracle deck to inspire women everywhere. [www.RoxiArtWork.ca](http://www.RoxiArtWork.ca)



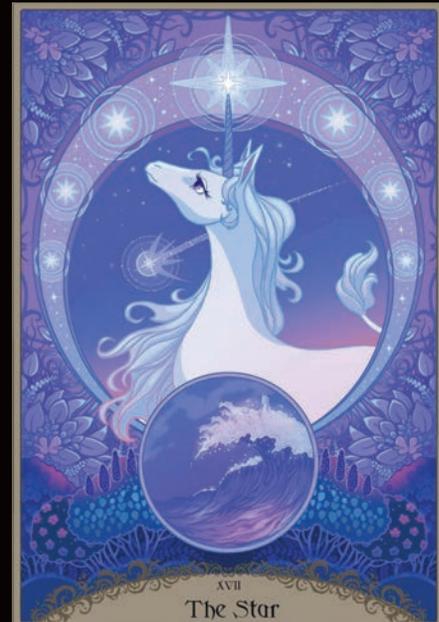
# THE LAST UNICORN TAROT & ORACLE DECK

JOHN TAYLOR, GEEKIFY

We're Geekify, a workshop of creative artists dedicated to breathing new life into the fandoms and universes we all love and celebrate. Part mad scientist laboratory, part hackerspace, and part artist studio, we tackle projects of all shapes and sizes, frequently working with movie studios and game developers to develop props, replicas, and merchandise that feel like they're straight out of the fictional world.

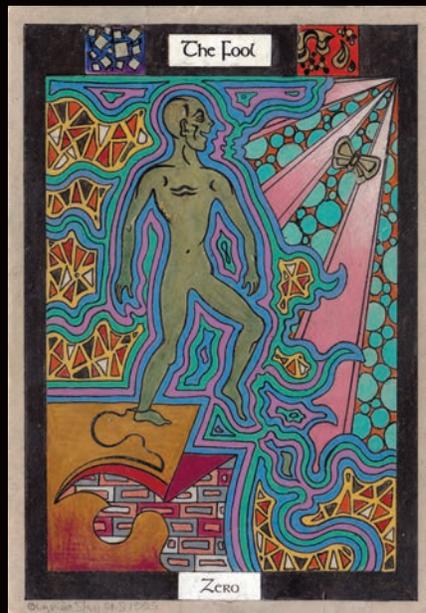
We recently acquired the licensing rights to The Last Unicorn and have a plethora of items lined up, the first of which is a tarot deck. The characters, the themes, and the imagery of The Last Unicorn lend themselves incredibly well to a tarot deck. We ran a Kickstarter that was fully funded in 9 hours and has reached over 1200% funded. We're doing a full 78 card deck (not a pip deck) with stretch goals that included foiled cards, leatherbound guide book, ornate boxes, and a signed card by Peter S. Beagle (the author) himself. They will begin shipping in March 2018, and pre-orders are available on our website.

More of what we do can be found at [www.geekifyinc.com](http://www.geekifyinc.com)



# THE CHALICE TAROT

LYNDA STEVENS



The Chalice Tarot Pack is old in its inception. I began it in the 1980's, when there was no Photoshop or computer technology to call on. It is all hand made, with hand-made labels and drawn entirely by hand, using colour pencils on colour card.

The colour and pattern symbolism is important, so warm colours for Wands and Fire, earthy colours for the coins and cool primrose yellow, and crisp blues for the Swords, which are Air.

The style has been likened a little to Art Deco, I did want the colours, which have been described as jeweled, to sing.

The Chalice Pack is semi-abstract, semi-figurative. But I did not draw the designs purely as an artist, as I used to work at psychic fairs too.

I have redrawn several cards over the years, as older designs can and do fade a little. I have never felt tempted to create another Deck though. One Deck is enough!

<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/the-chalice-tarot-deck>

This Spiritsong deck is a melding of two traditions of divination: one in which animals are seen as guides between our world and the spirit world, and one that uses 78 cards as a tool to connect with our highest self. Each animal was specifically selected based upon Shamanic and Native American symbolism, merging each animal's unique power with classic tarot practices. For example, the Spiritsong animal, Raven, has attributes such as 'creation' that parallels some of the same symbolic tarot attributes of the traditional Magician card, which is why the Raven is the animal representing that card.

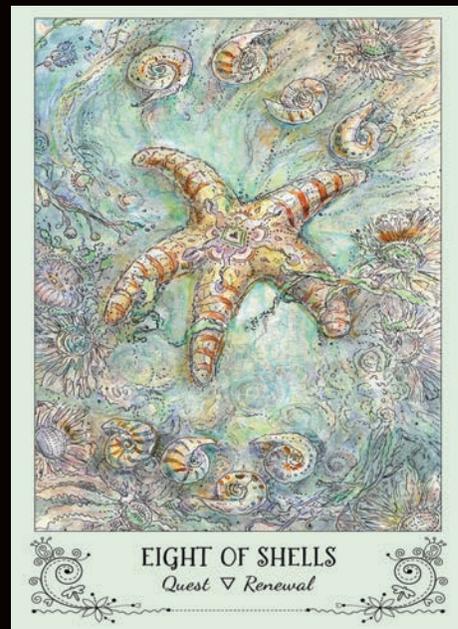
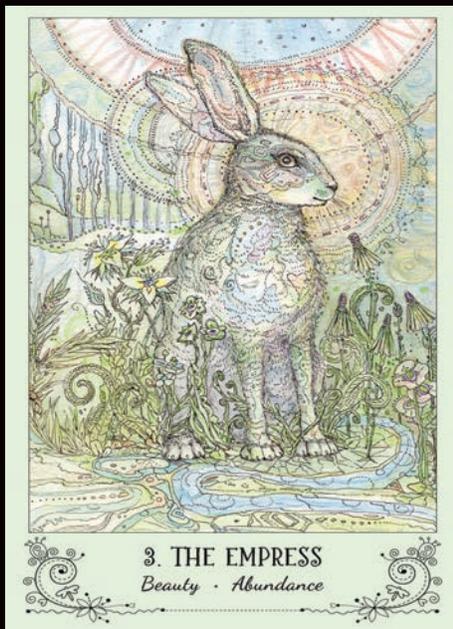
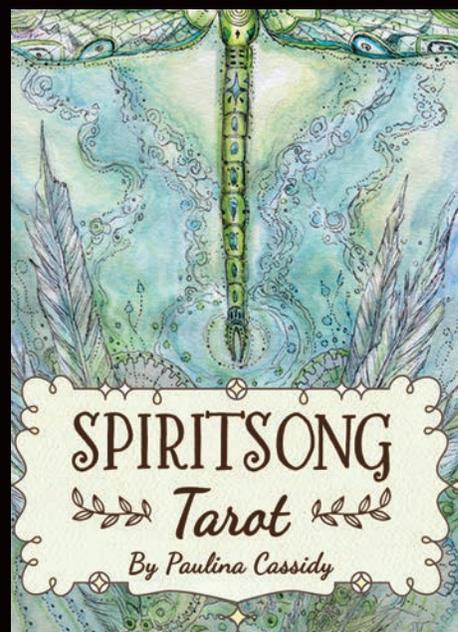
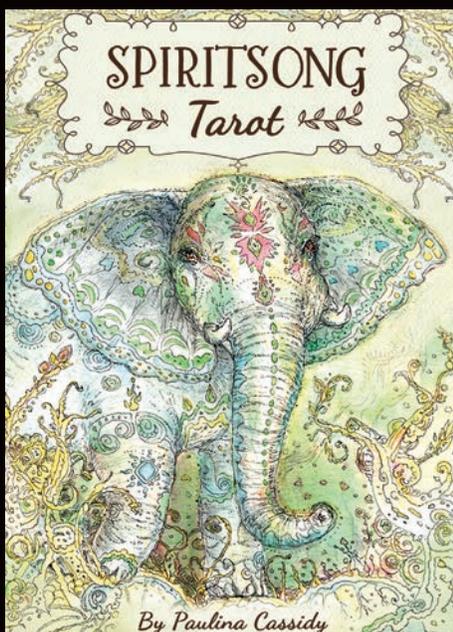
The Spiritsong Tarot structure is based on the traditional tarot, containing the 22 Majors, the 56 Minors, and four suits: Acorns for Wands/Fire; Feathers for Swords/Air; Shells for Cups/Water; and Crystals for Pentacles/Earth.

Connected to the portals of higher worlds, the 78 Spiritsong animals are mentors of divine guidance. Bearing their own Shamanic powers, they're forever open to providing their energy when called upon. They're always available to help you attain your greatest spiritual potential. If you ask, they will provide guidance needed to assist you in finding the best remedy for any situation



# SPIRITSONG TAROT

PAULINA CASSIDY



## Ask the Wizard



Dear Wizard,

*I'm relatively new to tarot and several of the books I'm studying, as well as the tarot reader I'm learning from, tell me I need a Significator card. I have no idea how this works and the other reader says I will instinctively know which card to choose. I'm beginning to think my intuition is broken. So how do I choose one?*

Dear Lost,



The point of a Significator card is to help focus the reading on the Seeker. In this case, the Seeker is you. Its common practice for beginners to choose a card to represent them and place that card in the center of the table before laying out the cards, particularly when learning the Celtic Cross spread. Having appointed a Significator can also come in handy if that card chooses to show up in any other spread or reading thus removing any doubt as to who the heck the cards are referring to.

To further explore your question, the 10 of Pentacles has a few insights. First of all, your intuition isn't broken, bent or in any way malfunctioning. Pentacles are earth-born wisdom which, in this case, suggests you're probably over-thinking the situation. What's needed is a practical, down-to-earth, common sense approach.

With this in mind, no more thinking because now is the time to do something. What works, is to go through the deck one by one pulling out all the court cards. Shuffle them and place them face down in a row in front of you. You can, if it feels right, take out only the Queens to represent mature women. Kings can be men or more grown-up guys. Young men and women can be represented by Knights. Additionally young women and children can be represented by Pages. It's really up to you. It's been my experience for other gender cards to represent a client as often as not. For example, a woman who owns and operates her own business may be heralded as the King of Pentacles. It has nothing to do with her gender, but recognition of her role as a dynamic, solid business person. Anyway, you get the idea, so back to the choosing. Next, spread out your court cards (the ones that feel right to you) in a nice neat row. With your non-dominant hand, start at one end (no, it doesn't matter, pick one). Close your eyes. Now hold your hand above each card without touching it to see if you feel anything. There will be one card that feels warm, cool or you might feel a gentle vibration. These are the most common feelings but it can be any sensation... except sticky. Sticky isn't good when it comes to cards. Probably means there's gum, a spider web or some toxic waste nearby so you need to deal with that instead. But if one of the other sensations has occurred, that is the card that will become your first Significator.

As you grow and evolve, you will find times when a new or different Significator may be in order. Or perhaps no Significator is indicated. You may even branch out to include some of the Major Arcana in the selection as your skills become more honed. Example; a masterful woman of the clergy may be represented by the Hierophant. Or you can scrap the whole idea and just read the cards. Remember, books about tarot are from personal experiences, traditions and historical references. Also the books are printed on paper, not stone. They're more guidelines than anything. Really, you can't do it wrong. Follow your heart, trust your instincts and keep a journal.

You're doing just fine.

Sincerely,

The Wizard

# Articles & Stories

## EXPERTS ROUNDTABLE

What if you could sit down with a group of Tarot experts to ask them your questions? When someone asked me a question about a new deck, I asked people I feel are experts. Below are the five responses I got back. If you have a question, please send it to [editor@thecartomancer.com](mailto:editor@thecartomancer.com). We will send it out to the experts or ask the Wizard to answer.

**QUESTION:** For many beginning Tarot enthusiasts, adding a new deck to your collection can be fun. But what about learning how to work with it? Can you offer some advice on ways to work with a new deck so you can begin reading with it? Or should you just leave it on the shelf as a dust bunny breeding ground?

**BARBARA MOORE:** When you get a new deck, before imposing any pre-conceived notions on it, get to know it first. Whether you are most familiar with RWS, Marseilles, or Thoth, do not assume that that is (or those are) the only way a tarot deck should express ideas. Be open to what new ideas and truths a new deck might reveal. RWS, Marseilles, and Thoth are old systems and tarot is always evolving along with human consciousness. The highest truths that Waite held as ideals may fall short of what we would now consider ideal spiritual values. It is always sad to hear readers say things like, "Well, that doesn't look like what I EXPECT the Moon card to look like." Of it shouldn't. So that is my biggest advice: be open to new ideas expressed through the structure of tarot and look for the truths that this new deck may hold for you. To really get to know a deck, examine its structure and find its inherent logic and system. Review all the suits, Ace – King, and find the story. Likewise review all the Aces together, all the 2s, etc. and find their similarities and differences. Play hide and seek with symbols and colors throughout the deck. Get to know the relationships between the cards. Barbara Moore can be found online at [www.tarotshaman.com](http://www.tarotshaman.com)

**BENEBELL WEN:** Since I'm a bona fide nerd, I'd create a study guide for the deck. There would be a section in the guide for each card, with photographs, and I'd begin filling my study guide in with content from any accompanying little white book. Just like the beginner tarot reader who uses a tarot book to look up each card meaning one by one when working with the Celtic Cross for the very first time, I would look up each card meaning for the new deck when doing spreads and in doing so, become accustomed to the deck's tone, point of view, style, imagery, symbolism, and also the deck creator's intents. I'll be super honest though. More often than not, if I haven't connected immediately with the deck, I end up leaving it on the shelf as a dust bunny breeding ground. Benebell Wen can be found online at [www.benebellwen.com](http://www.benebellwen.com)



PAUL NAGY: I've been reading tarot since 1978 and my attitude toward tarot reading and tarot innovation has changed tremendously over my lifetime. I self-taught learning the Waite Smith tarot and reading the pictures. I had some decks; where I began reading the symbols and the actual images as a visual language unique to them. The Conver Marseille, in the restored version of CBD Tarot de Marseille by Yoav Ben-Dov is now my favorite reading deck. Yoav studied with Alejandro Jodorowsky whose Way of the Tarot in something of a rogue classic about the superiority of the Marseille decks.

I believe that classic tarot decks offer much more than new tarot decks. I would encourage a prospective tarot reader to take up with one of the great tradition tarots for serious study, and reflection. If for no other reason than these decks have a tremendous literary heritage of studied inquiry and exposition.

As for the many enticing new tarots available I would choose them as they appeal to me personally but with a few exceptions such as Rachel Pollack's The Shinning Tribe Tarot, or Ed Bury's The William Blake Tarot (who was helped by Mary Greer) or the Hermann Haindl Tarot, or Robert Place's Alchemical Tarot, most do not repay in-depth study, in my opinion. Many new decks seem to offer very little that is new to the deep visual culture of the cards. However, because of the sheer mass of new tarot decks being produced, it is hard to predict the future gravitas of tarot visual culture. My preference is historic. Situated in classic models. My criteria then for new tarots suggest aesthetic and personal preferences as grounds for acquiring them. Objects of art and not objects of craft.

Now anyone may learn to adequately read most decks of tarot, and if one trains oneself to closely read the images of the cards themselves, any deck may offer some unexpected surprises. I would caution new readers away from reading by a memory list of stock associations with the cards and then apply them to whatever deck you happen to be reading. That may work for fortunetellers and

dilettante hobbyists but for the tarot readers I most respect, they seek to read the images themselves as they are present in the cards in situ to let their mysteries be seen anew in the random flow of the cards' juxtaposition. When I read the tarot, I am showing the client how I see the cards and what types of things the images do when in such a constellation. In this way, the client may appropriate these symbolic actions to their situation for themselves. I read the cards and the client adapts that information to their condition and query. Paul Nagy can be found online at [www.tarotthermoneutics.com](http://www.tarotthermoneutics.com)

THERESA REED: The best way to begin getting acquainted with a new deck is to spend time with it each and every day. I recommend doing a "Card for the Day" every morning. It's simple, fun, and effective. Each morning, sit down with your new deck and shuffle. When you feel ready, put the deck face down in front of you. Cut it into three piles, then put the deck back together any way you like. Draw a card from the top of the deck. Take a minute to study the image. What is it saying to you? Which symbols catch your eye? What story is the card trying to tell? Write your findings in a journal, or, if you're feeling bold, put your interpretation online on a platform such as Instagram. This is an uncomplicated but effective method of connecting with your new deck. Theresa Reed can be found online at [www.thetarotlady.com](http://www.thetarotlady.com)

MARY K. GREER: In my 50 years with the tarot, I've done lots of different things with my new decks so here are several options. Usually I'll look through all the cards as they come straight out of the box, seeing what I like or dislike at first glance. I note especially the artistic style, the trump symbolism and how different the suits and sections are, and I make sure the cards are all there. I especially check out a few specific cards that tell me if the creator and I see eye-to-eye regarding card meanings (the Seven of Swords and Queen of Swords are two I always check). I dislike the smell of new decks with their plastic coatings and glued boxes, so I like to do things that will dissipate the odor. I sometimes pass them through cedar needle smoke as I find it very cleansing. I also shuffle or mix the cards to break them in, aerate them and get a feel for how flexible they are (I prefer cardstock I can bridge shuffle). I find shuffling very calming and centering, a perfect time for a short welcoming prayer.

A reading comes next. If something particular is on my mind, then I'll lay a spread for that issue. Alternatively, I interview the deck, not with a fixed spread but with questions that occur to me on the spot. Questions may include: Who are you? What do I need to know about you? What situations are you best for? What are you not so good for? What can you teach me (especially good for decks I'm not drawn to)? What message (or advice) do you have for me now?



I don't always do this, but it is well-worth it when I have the time: Lay out all the cards on the floor grouped, in order, with Majors at the top (1-10, 11-20, 0+21), suits (Wands, Cups, Swords, Pentacles) in rows by number (Ace through 10 under the Majors of the same number) plus Court Cards at either the beginning or end of their suit row. I get a very concrete feel for the overall use of color and imagery. What is the design concept and does it work for me? Can I easily differentiate each suit? Are the trumps, suits, number cards and courts clearly delineated? Do all the cards of the same number reflect their numerical significance? Are the Empress and Emperor or Sun and Moon related or mismatched? Do the Courts represent their suits and levels of development? If warranted, I do a comparison with the Marseilles, Thoth or Rider-Waite-Smith deck.

If it is a radically different deck, I may gather up all the cards, shuffle and separate the cards into different piles based on: 1) cards I like, dislike, feel neutral about, or 2) thematic groupings that the images themselves suggest. I once did the latter with a distasteful erotic deck I was supposed to be reviewing and ended up separating it into all the creator's fetishes. This gave me a sense of control over the themes pictured and allowed me to name exactly what I found so disturbing.

When I finish, I usually put the deck back in order, especially if it is to be stored away.

Finally I find a place to keep my deck. Will it stay out on the table for me to play with or go on an easily accessible shelf with similar decks or, heaven-forbid, in a storage container with decks I won't be referencing any time soon? Mary K. Greer can be found online at [marygreer.wordpress.com](http://marygreer.wordpress.com)

© et al



## Gifts of the Wyrd

Advancing Inclusive Heathenry

Gifts of the Wyrd is an inclusive podcast for those who are interested in or interact within the Teutonic, Saxon, and Norse traditions of Heathenry.

The podcast features guests and discussions on topics relating to divination, modern practices, and interacting with the Divine today.

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# PSYCARDS: WORK

## THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTALS

—by Catt Foy

The Seven Fundamentals are those cards that relate to those elements of our lives that are common to each of us and nearest to our daily existence, reflecting background and environmental influences.

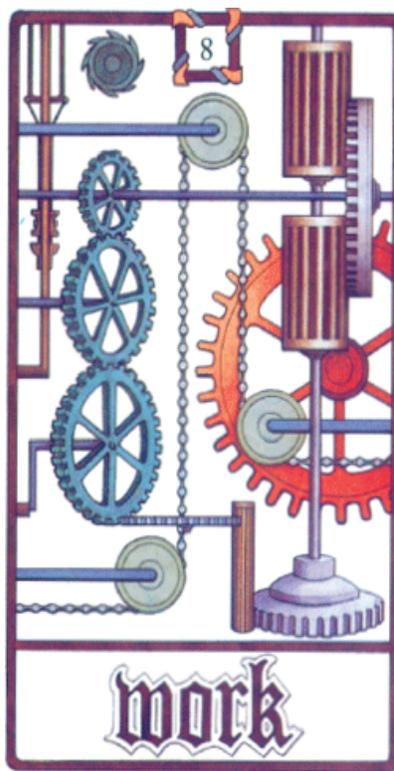
### WORK

Here we see the pulleys, gears and machinery of the workplace. Every time I see this card, I think of that old tune by Raymond Scott, “Powerhouse” written in 1937 for Warner Brothers and used extensively in Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons like Bugs Bunny. (You can listen to it on YouTube, and you’ll see what I mean.)

This card can represent the drudgery of the assembly line or the smooth workings of a job well done. It represents issues of daily work, most often related to one’s career or means of earning a living. But it can also represent that there is work to be done on any issue—look to the surrounding cards for greater clarification.

Here is a task to be done. There is no emotional content inherent in this card so any emotions tied to it will be reflected in the cards near and around it. It represents our jobs and the things we do to keep the wolves from the door. But upright, it can indicate a sense of satisfaction, and reversed a feeling that something isn’t quite working the way it should be.

It can represent real work or metaphorical work, appearing, for example in the readings of women about to give birth (“labor”). If there is worry or strife in the nearby cards, it may indicate an unhappiness with one’s job, or a fear of losing one’s job. Look



for Fortune, Money or Now cards nearby, which indicate prosperity and success. The Prison card nearby can indicate feeling trapped or oppressed at work.

Nick Hobson says this card also asks, “Is there work to be done?” It can represent a responsibility or duty. It may also indicate a sense of identity for the person receiving the reading, as many people define themselves by what they do for a living. Hobson points out “there is a cog in the top left” of the card “which is detached. Maybe you identify with it. Like you, maybe it is self-employed or self-sufficient?” Work at home is still work, whether you are a sole proprietor, freelancer, or part of a larger team.

When it falls reversed, this card may indicate an inability or unwillingness to work, whether at a job per se or at some other task at hand. It may indicate snags or problems at work—machinery breaks down, details are lost, communications unclear. It may also indicate a period of time where work seems especially difficult, or difficult to find. It may also mean that the individual is working very hard to resolve or achieve something, but that nothing seems to work properly.

© Catt Foy





# INTERVIEW: SASHA GRAHAM

—by Cynthia Tedesco



decision to concentrate upon The Tarot?

SG: Bought my first deck in 1982 at 12 years old. Didn't even know about oracles back then.

I was living on a produce farm in New Jersey. I opened the pack in the farmhouse kitchen, pulled out the cards and was completely befuddled. It dawned on me that I couldn't read them and had NO idea what they were. In the midst of this disappointment, my sister's born-again Christian friend saw the cards. She took them from me and set them on fire in a garbage can. She told me Tarot is the work of the Devil.

Of course, this only made Tarot that much more appealing!

CKT: As you crafted your books, 365 Tarot Spreads and 365 Tarot Spells did you have the two texts in mind as an interfacing project or were they crafted as two discrete texts?

CKT: How did you come to understand yourself as being psychic?

SG: I never use the word psychic to describe myself. The word "psychic" is loaded with such variety of meanings for people. Plus, I believe everyone is wired with sensorial gifts that they may or may not be aware of :)

Regarding my love for Tarot, I'm a Halloween baby! Grew up thinking that reading the cards and being a witch was my birthright.

CKT: Of the many Oracles to choose from, what influenced your

SG: I knew the 365 idea was something that could be expanded on. The idea for 365 Spells came rushing in as I finished 365 Spreads with my Llewellyn editor. At this point, my mind knows when one project ends, there will be room for another one and the ideas come rushing in! Plus, I love, love, love Tarot spells.

Here is the spread and spell for Lover's Intimacy I would like to share with THE CARTOMANCER readers:  
(From *365 Tarot Spells* By Sasha Graham)





## AUGUST 6TH LOVERS INTIMACY SPELL

Seeking a revived sense of intimacy? Don Juan, the film with the most recorded onscreen kisses, was released in this day in 1926. This spell may be cast with your partner or alone. In magic, love, and life, you receive what you give. When you seek something from your relationship, freely give what you desire.

### INGREDIENTS

Lovers Card,  
Orange peel, 1 tsp.  
Rose Petals, 1 tsp.  
Rosemary, 1tsp.  
Sheet of paper and envelope  
Champagne or ginger ale

### Method, Visualization and Meditation

The Lovers card reflects the intimacy of amour. Oranges peels are used for love. Rose petals echo erotic love. Rosemary refreshes the memory of a lovers first glance. Bubbly drinks tickle the senses. Place the Lovers card before you. Stand up and slowly take off all of your clothes until you are as naked as the Eve figure on the card. Open your posture like her, feet apart and palms lowered but reaching up. Feel your vulnerability and allow your energy to open completely. Offer yourself to your partner with nothing left hidden.

Write and repeat the words of what you want to experience with your partner. As you do, make a promise to either express this desire to them or tell them what you want. Imagine then doing this for you. Drink your bubbly and imagining the tingles are your lover's fingers tickling you.

Mix your ingredients together on top of the paper. Fold the herbs into the paper a tuck this into an envelope. Tuck this envelope inside your underwear drawer.

### INCANTATION

Rosemary sprigs,  
loyalty true  
My love, my soul,  
I bare to you  
You feel my needs,  
respond in turn  
While Lovers fire  
within me burn.

### CAST YOUR CARDS

Revel in the art of human connection and cast your cards as follows:

- |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
|    | 2. |    | 7. |
| 3. |    | 1. | 8. |
| 6. |    |    |    |
|    | 4. |    | 5. |

### Questions

1. What helps me release unrealistic expectations?
2. How can I nurture myself?
3. How can I focus attention on my partner?
4. What helps me to share and communicate?
5. Am I comfortable showing affection?
6. What simple, sweet thing can I do for them?
7. What helps me own who I am?
8. How can I focus on giving love?

### Interesting Fact

The Four Vedic Sanskrit texts, written in 1500 BC are the first recorded mention of a human kiss.

ckt: You have demonstrated in 356 TAROT SPELLS that you are a serious Occultist. What influenced you to go in this direction?

SG: The nature of the universe, magic, sacred space, manifestation, creativity ... it all fascinates me. It was a very natural and organic path.

I grew up in rural areas. My mother, a Hippie, moved us around and often to farms. We lived in 27 different places, including Colorado, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Iowa. At 17 years of age I moved to NYC. I now live in Manhattan and in the mountains of upstate New York and move between them on a weekly basis. Returning



to nature, wild weather, woods, trees, fields, streams and gardening as an adult was profound. As a child, I saw, observed and met things in nature that would come back to revisit me as an adult.

These things, energies, entities, whatever you want to call them, have become my teachers. And Tarot gave me a lens with which to understand it. My work as an occultist an effort to connecting the dots of my experience of this world. And above all, it is play, isn't it? You explore to discover what works and find out how you are tuned. Magical work is a call and response with the universe. It is sensual because to explore magic, one must use all the senses.

I think in many ways, it is the most intimate relationship we will ever have....

**CKT:** What are the key elements for structuring a Tarot Spell?

**SG:** Archetype is essential. You don't even need a Tarot card if you have a clear relationship to archetype, imagination is key. Passion too. Desire is your rocket fuel. A willingness to jump in and not judge yourself is important in spell casting. Also, staying open to creative inspiration as it strikes.

What is in the inside of you is far more important than anything on the outside in terms of accessories like candles, incense, herbs, etc. Your inner state is of the utmost importance, everything else is secondary. And all the accessories should support and enhance your inner state.

**CKT:** Why is Tarot Spread Structure important? How does it influence the outcome of a reading?

**SG:** Spread structure can be super helpful and sometimes, it doesn't matter at all. It depends on the context, the situation who, what and why of what you are reading. Reading for a stranger or at a party when there is a whole lot of information flying at me, the shape, for example, a stairway spread, will help to ground me. Shape is helpful when you want to include a magical significance.

For instance, a square for stability a circle for holistic, a staircase for where you are heading etc. Shape can work really well to build suspense, especially as you move and flip only one card at a time, reading each one as you go. By the time you get to the last card, you'll be dying to see what it is!!! That being said, often I do not work with spreads ... especially when I am in deep with someone in a private reading. In those situations, a few pulled cards suffice and stand on their own.

It depends :)

**CKT:** What advice do you have for The Cartomancer readership in designing spreads and spells for themselves and others?

**SG:** Everything in your life can be used sensually and symbolically. When you can do this, you can pull apart the pieces of your life and use them in magical ways. Your entire life becomes an enchantment. You see?

It is extremely exciting to craft either spreads and spells for oneself. It also makes the spread/spell more powerful because the creativity used to make a spread/spell acts as a power booster.

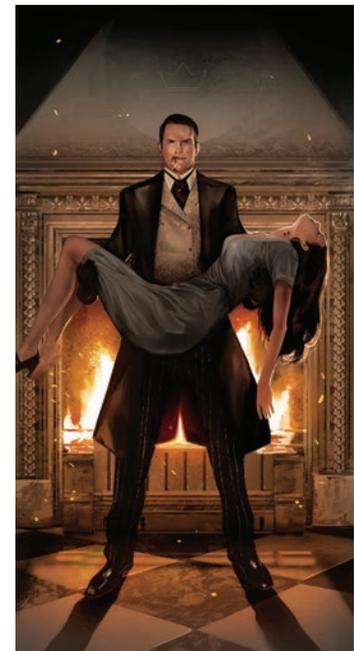
Use your inherent talents and interests when designing spreads and spells. For example, if you are an avid gardener, think about designing a spread the way you design a garden in springtime when you are planting. Think about spells you can craft inside your garden and cast while gardening. Bury things you wish to dispose of, plant the seeds of what you want to manifest, create rocks walls and patterns to place metaphorical boundaries. Integrate tarot symbolism in everything.

If you love to cook and putter about in the kitchen, start designing spreads and spells like a kitchen witch! Craft and cook a Bring Home the Bacon spell to make more money, create a Dinner Party tarot spread. If you are a type A personality who loves to clean and organize, put magical metaphors behind your cleaning and organizing. Cast a Clean Your Closet to Banish Negativity spell or create a Clear the Dust Bunnies spread to weed out and get rid of negativity and blocks.

The clever cartomancer will bring everything they know about tarot and project it onto their lives. There really is no difference between the Tarot, Magic and our lives

**CKT:** What plans do you have going forward?

**SG:** I am working on publication of my HAUNTED HOUSE TAROT illustrated by Mirco Pierfederici to be published by Lo Scaraboro. Here is THE KING OF WANDS... a taste of what is to come!





# NEW AGE SCUFFLE

—by Wayne Limberger

I had just entered high school when the communal visionaries at Findhorn in Scotland launched the modern New Age era. At that time there was nothing more meditative on the horizon for me than the quiet time I spent pursuing the “Zen of fly fishing” on my local trout streams and re-reading *The Lord of the Rings*. But it’s probably fair to say that my life-long love affair with science fiction and fantasy literature softened me up for my inspiring and imaginative leap into astrology and then tarot. My passport into the realm of charts and cards was a random encounter with both while in Germany, via Linda Goodman’s *Sun Signs* and the just-published *Aquarian Tarot*.

But this article isn’t about my reminiscences of a distant past. I’m more interested in examining what has become of the idealistic vanguard of free-thinkers that I encountered when I returned Stateside. This was during the halcyon days of the “counterculture” movement and the doors were wide open to all manner of experimentation. Energy and enthusiasm were running high within the community of astrologers I first connected with, and many soon-to-be famous “names” in psychological astrology were just getting their start. But I was a former graphic arts student, and the less visible resurgence of tarot quickly captured my attention; the only thing holding me back was limited access to kindred spirits and suitable beginner’s literature. So I dove into esoteric studies with the *Book of Thoth* and the *Thoth* deck instead, which at that time of off-line isolation was an entirely solo journey. Shortly after, I effectively took myself out of circulation by moving to rural New Hampshire.

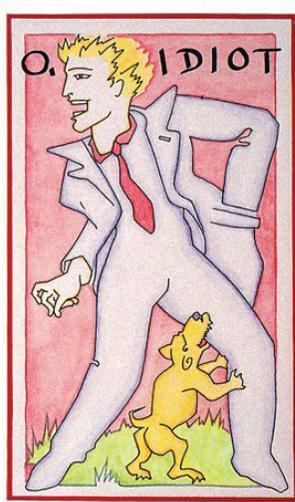
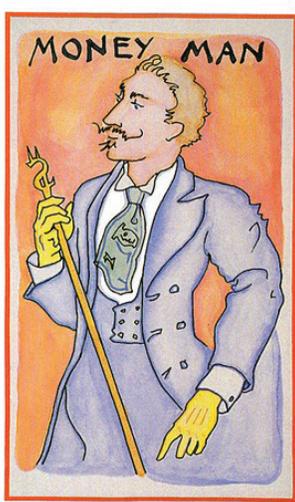
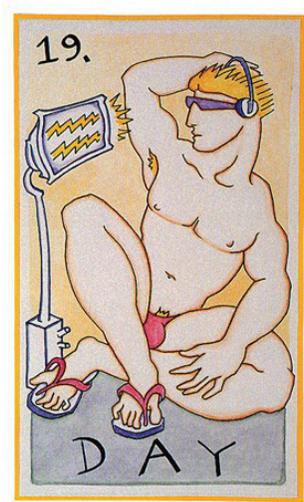
Consequently, I lost track of what the emerging mainstream was up to, beyond recognizing that the mercenary instincts of the “money men” had awakened to the potential for exploiting what was for the most part an impressionable population of relatively affluent Middle Class white kids and week-end hippies. I watched “New-Age-ism” descend the same cynical path down which the entertainment industry had taken the fresh face of the alternative music loosely dubbed “psychedelic rock.” Mel Brooks – in his trademark Brooklyn accent – eventually put a name to it with his memorable line from *Spaceballs*: “the soitch for more money.” Then the internet hit, with its unparalleled networking capability

and its equally unprecedented marketing muscle, which forever changed the landscape of the “cottage industry” that had grown up around the informal clan of New Age practitioners.

As a retired guy I can now sit back and ponder where this phenomenon has led us. The crop of tarot neophytes born in the ‘80s and ‘90s was ripe for entrainment (I stopped just short of saying “entrapment”) in the surge of social populism that accompanied the rise of the web. Tarot writers and deck creators who entered the field during that period knew a ready-made audience of naive seekers when they saw one, and stepped in with Brooksonian verve to fill the store shelves and web pages with a miscellany of “learn tarot in a day” screeds, instructional blogs and generic “clone” decks. Those of us with a deep understanding of the subtleties invested in the archetypes behind the cards were left scratching our heads. Top this scenario with the “instant gratification” mentality instilled in that demographic by a culture of parental permissiveness, rampant consumerism and unbridled greed, and you have a slippery slope ending in “tarot lite.” The Beatles’ song title “I, Me, Mine” was indeed prescient, and tarot was in the cross-hairs of those hoping for easy answers to their problems.

But my intent here is also not about bemoaning lost innocence and “the way we were.” With the economic pinch brought on by shrinking opportunities in the employment arena, many journeyman hobbyists are edging toward trying to make a living from their passion, thus embarking on the “New Age scuffle” of the title. As far as I can tell, there is only a handful of truly successful purveyors of “all things tarot” on the scene. Everyone else on this embryonic career path is scrambling to make a buck wherever and however they can.

Performing on-line readings has an obvious allure, but also some troubling ramifications for the fine art of interpersonal dynamics. Working the telephone “hotlines” is a little better in that regard, but not much. New Age bookstores (now re-imagined as gift shops to double down on the chance to squeeze a few more dollars from the store traffic) offer a convenient outlet for those seeking a reading venue. Renaissance faires (aka “renfaires”) present an even more intermittent opportunity to ply one’s craft, unless you’re



“Those of us with a deep understanding of the subtleties invested in the archetypes behind the cards were left scratching our heads.”

willing to take up the gypsy life. Casual parties are another possibility, assuming your friends and acquaintances don't expect you to work for free. Finally, you can always hang out your shingle at home or in a rented space and receive clients there, the key to success being an effective advertising campaign to promote yourself.

An interesting sidelight to all of these options is how much to charge for your expertise. The conventional wisdom being offered by New Age marketing gurus (yes, there are a few) is to avoid under-pricing yourself, with the goal of making your talents seem appropriately valuable to prospective clients. In on-line discussions, I've seen US prices ranging from \$200 for a “reading-by-appointment” in major urban centers like New York City to \$5 for a 5-minute, walk-up, one-card reading at a street fair. Reports from other countries indicate that \$50-\$70 in local currency is customary for an average-length reading. A good rule of thumb seems to be \$1-per-minute in less upscale settings. Although I only read for pay in a casual sense, mostly for fun and to help my local shop owner remain solvent, in central New England I've been “commanding” (tongue firmly in cheek here) \$40 for a half-hour Celtic Cross reading, and \$30 for a smaller 20-minute session, a percentage of which goes to my employer. Apart from scheduled store events, I'm strictly on-call so my “take” will only fund an occasional new deck or book purchase; it certainly won't buy groceries for a week or send anyone to college.

The point in all of this is that entering the professional “fortune-telling” fray with the intent of routinely paying the rent and feeding the family with your income is not for the faint-of-heart or those lacking a financial safety net of some kind (such as a working spouse or, like me, a pension). Unless a steady stream of paying clients is foreseen, the tempting vision won't be supported by the

harsh reality. For those just entering the workforce, a degree of scuffling is par for the course, but someone contemplating a mid-life career plunge into reading for profit will most likely be struggling to remain afloat. Don't let it stop you if that's your heartfelt aim, just be sure to have a “Plan B” to fall back on.

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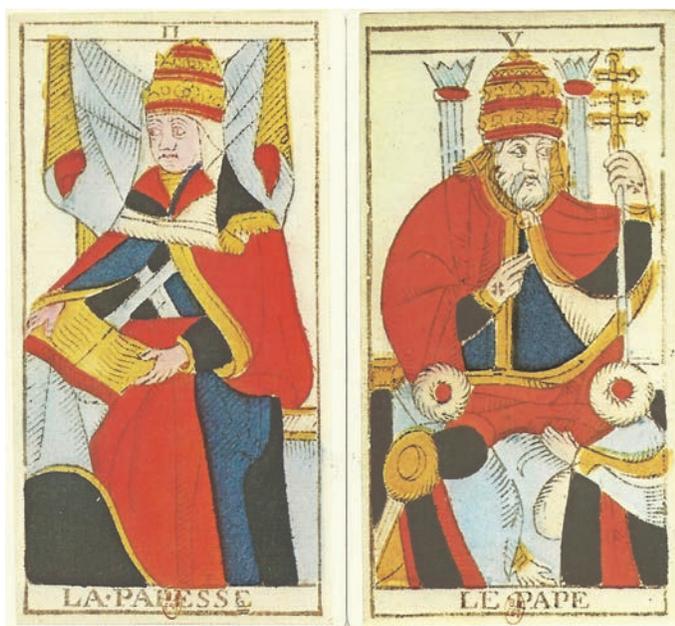
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# MANY FACES OF MAJOR ARCANA II & V

—by Sherryl E. Smith



Most of us in the English-speaking world know major arcana II and V as the High Priestess and Hierophant. But for 450 years the rest of the world has known them as the Pope and Papesse—the embodiment of the Church’s power and his female counterpart, an allegory of faith and wisdom. The Papesse was never meant to represent Pope Joan, the legendary woman who disguised herself as a man and climbed to the pinnacle of the Church hierarchy. Joan outed herself by giving birth during a religious procession and is almost always depicted with a baby tumbling out from under her robes. A very different image than the tarot Papesse.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, in certain areas of Europe, these traditional religious figures were transformed into Egyptian magi, Roman deities and Moorish kings. Let’s see how this happened and take a look at some of the decks available today.

## THE EGYPTIAN TRADITION

In the 18th century, Europe enjoyed one of its periodic outbreaks of Egyptomania. At the same time, occult lodges were adopting tarot as a book of wisdom, mixing it in with kabbalah, astrology and ceremonial magic. It was taken as historical fact that tarot was designed by ancient Egyptian magi who preserved their wisdom for future ages in twenty-two pictures.

The prolific author Antoine Court de Gebelin was the first to write about tarot’s Egyptian origins. In fact, he claimed to be the first person to make the connection, although the idea had probably been floating around esoteric circles for decades. In his 1781 book of pseudo-anthropology, *Le Monde Primitif*, he describes how he was bowled over by the realization, while watching some ladies play the game of tarot, that the deck is actually a book of ancient Egyptian wisdom that has survived through the millennia.





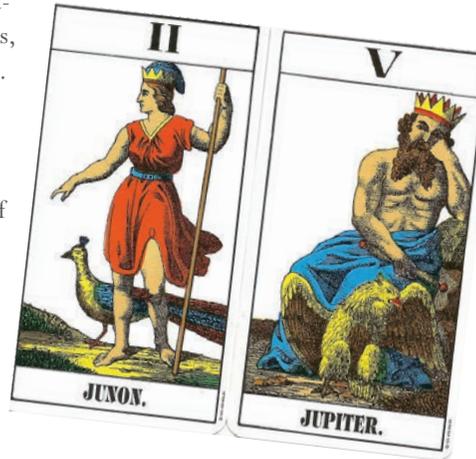
Subsequent authors embroidered the story with a committee of ancient magi, presided over by Hermes Trismegistus, who engraved the first tarot on twenty-two sheets of gold. Another story has a secret ceremonial chamber under the Great Pyramid lined with tarot images. For the first time in writing, De Gebelin's list of major arcana renames arcana II and V the High Priestess and High Priest or Chief Hierophant.

If tarot was originally Egyptian, then Christian and medieval imagery are a later corruption and should be purged from the deck. In the mid to late 19th century, occultists like Eliphas Levi, Paul Christian and R. Falconnier imagined a completely Egyptian deck which became the basis of a unique tradition. The Church of Light founded by C. Z. Zain still uses this Egyptian deck in their correspondence courses, and U.S. Games publishes it as the Egyptian Tarot, shown here.

A. E. Waite had been a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in London, where he absorbed the ideas of Eliphas Levi and the Order's teachings on occult tarot. The deck designed by Waite and Pamela Colman Smith has Egyptian flourishes throughout the major arcana. Although arcana II and V are renamed High Priestess and Hierophant according to de Gebelin, they retain most of their Christian symbolism with a touch of Kabbalah.

### ROMAN GODS

For a period of time in the early 19th century, arcana II and V were depicted as the Roman deities Juno and Jupiter. Conventional wisdom has it that the Church was offended with religious figures ap-



pearing on common playing cards, so they ordered card makers to make a change. On the contrary, this type of card was widely distributed in Protestant areas of eastern France, southwestern Germany and Switzerland, where its publishers were concentrated. Protestants didn't want to see Catholic symbols on their playing cards, so suppliers met the demand for a more secular deck.

Known as the Besançon style after one of the cities where it was printed, this deck was a standard Tarot de Marseille in all other respects. The prototype for this deck was published by J. Jerger of Besançon. A more decorative Juno and Jupiter deck was popular in Switzerland. It's the first tarot deck published by U.S. Games, launching Stuart Kaplan's career as a tarot entrepreneur.

### THE FOUR MOORS

Thanks to a rather silly political-religious kerfuffle in Bologna in 1725, the pope's henchmen ordered not only the Pope and Papesse, but also the Emperor and Empress, to be replaced by four Moorish Kings. Ever since, the four Moors have been a distinguishing hallmark of Bolognese tarot. Shown here are contemporary double-headed cards used in Bologna today for game playing.

### MODERN SUBSTITUTIONS

In today's freewheeling, anything goes tarot scene, deck designers



can follow their muse in any direction they wish. The Robin Wood Tarot, one of the most successful decks in the late 20th century, has a pagan/Celtic flair but retains the sense of spiritual authority. The figures on cards II and V could be presiding over a contemporary coven. Ellen-Lorenzi Prince has radically re-imagined



these cards in her Tarot of the Crone. In card V she depicts the concept of tradition handed down through the generations as Russian nesting dolls, or generations of women handing down traditions and lore intact.

The Priestess is an ancient standing stone rooted in the pre-verbal wisdom of Mother Earth. The William Blake tarot illustrates the same duality with Religion and Mystery: dogmatic teachings vs. intuition and imagination.

No matter what face they present to us, these two cards express the archetypes of spiritual authority and deeply rooted traditional wisdom.

**List of decks illustrated in this article:** Tarot de Marseille 1760 Nicolas Conver, Heron @1980; Egyptian Tarot, U.S. Games Systems, Inc, 1980; Smith-Waite Tarot Centennial Edition, U.S. Games Systems, Inc, 2009; Tarot de Besançon de J. Jerger; Evalyne's Garden Gate, 2016; Tarot 1JJ, AGMuller, 1974 Tarocco Bolognese, Dal Negro; The Robin Wood Tarot, Llewellyn 1991; Tarot of the Crone, Ellen Lorenzi Prince, Dark Goddess Tarot, 2002 & 2017

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# 2018: JUSTICE DESCENT AND DISCERNMENT

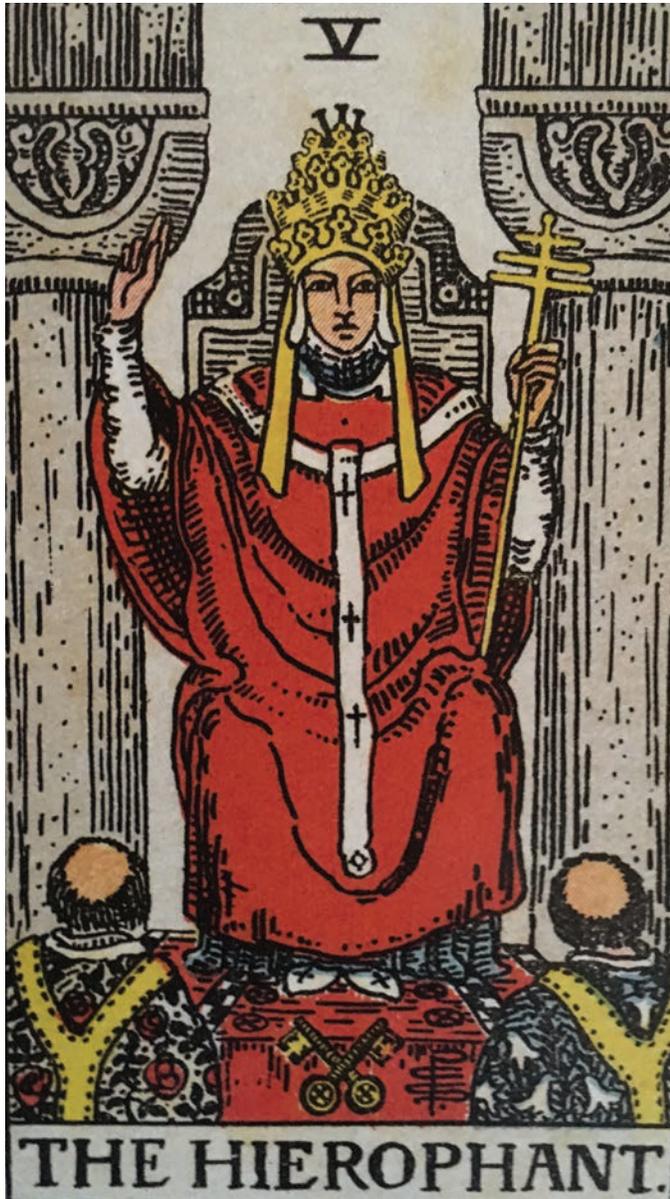
—by Siobhan Renee



From the first world to the third, no one has been spared the effects of unprecedented hacks, hatred, and natural calamities. We have all ridden the precarious lower part of the wheel of fortune in 2017. It was to be expected in a “Wheel Year,” a year that when the digits are added to 10 the number of the Wheel of Fortune card. Still, who could have predicted a descent to this degree? And whether the effects of this year were experienced in the physical world of shelter and food, or in the spiritual realm, of trust and seeking hope, a significant feature of our collective recovery will be discernment.

My first spiritual retreat, summer 2012, included a ritual circle meant to honor Aphrodite. We buzzed, a sea of limbs, a pile of people that had been strangers to one another. After sharing, ritual, and exploration led by an experienced guide, we were beyond our past preconceptions and resistance. We were willing to risk the ridiculous in the pursuit of openness and oxytocin. We buzzed joyfully in Aphrodite’s name, like so many love-drunk bees. I had started the weekend armored, unwilling to allow touch of any kind, still reeling from violent trauma from decades past. I ended with my skin thrumming in a puppy pile, the boundaries between us dissolving. The experience initiated a period of recovery for me.





Recovery came in many forms in the following years, companionship, touch, and trust. Spiritual community was always the answer and antidote to trauma. Rituals, whether pious, as depicted in the Hierophant card, or as unrestrained as a sex magick circle, whether as large as a town festival or as small as a tarot reading, continue to be a viable context for growth and healing for me. Rituals are the ley lines of life. In marking sacred time and space we align with something more massive than our lives and our lifetimes. We make meaning of ourselves by connecting with what lies beyond. Rituals are the places where we are able to hear “spirit.” Language and arts, creative and metaphysical, are the tools with which we build our temples. The authenticity of the bricks may well be irrelevant; it’s the greater

context that we crave: societies, generations, nations, people, systems. They form the launchpad from which we make sense of the world.

Some tarot practitioners add the digits in a year to produce a general year card. 2012 was associated with the Hierophant. And even though my personal Hierophant year had already passed -- “personal year cards” are calculated with the birth date instead of just the year -- looking back I see in that year the essence of this card. I’ve never liked the Hierophant. I’m not alone. With its holy personage decked in affluent ceremonial garb, it conjures memories of compulsory worship, hypocrisy, and judgment. The figure on the card could be the poster child for patriarchy with its symbols of spiritual status and male-led social order. The card seems to implore us to submit while it whispers that “this is how it has always been...”

This is how marriage has always been.  
 This is how gender has always been.  
 This is how the weather has always been.  
 This is how countries have always been.

With all the fatherly pomp in the Hierophant, it’s easy to overlook positive associations of ritual and spiritual wisdom as a vehicle for integration and healing. We often miss the potential for intimacy arising from the union between seekers and those who would shepherd them. In modern times, the flocks aren’t so. With every step deeper into a world dominated by tech, we become more aware of the drawbacks of groupthink. It takes trust to be shepherded. For those of us who are too different, the outliers, the black sheep, the price for social involvement can be steep: trauma or, worse yet, an invisible existence. Not all of us are safe in institutions as they have always been. Not all of us are guaranteed an audience within the Hierophant’s walls. A life spent waiting to be understood enough to be heard, is a life lived on the bottom rung of the wheel. We can get hurt there. Then our hypervigilance can make it hard to let the wheel elevate us, just as privilege, and the comfort it entails, can make us deny that there even is a bottom part of the wheel.

Discernment is  
 a dance on the razor’s  
 edge of reality.



The first time I saw a slackline I mistook it for a tightrope. I stepped on the thin green fabric stretched between two trees with all the confidence of a person ascending a concrete step. It gave a full foot under my weight and bounced back with the force of a trampoline. I landed in the grass just in time, barely finding my feet. I thought of what it would look, feel, and sound like to break a limb in the grass below. I approached the slackline again. The second attempt ended with me balancing on my sternum and legs while my chin ground painfully into the slackline. I perched there, long enough to bruise my chin and for time to stop. Long enough to become balanced.

If it weren't for the magic of lungs, I would have dropped dead on that slackline. There was no breath, no thought, and no plan. There was nothing but a thousand imperceptible motions in my body while I witnessed, marveling at the fact that I even still had a body, it felt so far away. Somehow I got to one knee and crouched there as sweat pooled everywhere that sweat can pool. It was as far as I would get. It was the best that I could do. There, with my heartbeat and ragged breath drowning out everything else in the world, was the closest I'd ever come to the Thoth version of Justice - Adjustment indeed. In the Justice card, it often looks as if the central figure is standing still and the scales are the only moving part of the card. But the Thoth version - with its character balanced meticulously at a single point in the center of the card hints at the truth - that nothing about Justice is still.

And if there's anything to the notion of general year cards heralding the themes of the year, it's a dance we all need to get more comfortable doing. Justice is our card for 2018. On one level we have the scales which teach us to weigh one thing against another. This way of looking at Justice assumes time and neatness, the space to consider things one at a time and the suggestion that what is right or just will always be clear. But on another level, we have what happens when adrenaline kicks in and our safety is at stake: full-bodied discernment, where just action becomes a series of motions, executed before we've had the chance to process or even think.

This past year has been a traumatic apex of sorts. We've seen the culmination of hundreds of years of repressed hatred and global negligence play out in the state of the world, headline by headline, week by week, in the volatile soil and sky, below and above us. We've barely had the time to process, grieve or sometimes even think. It was indeed a Wheel of Fortune year. A year that asked us to expand our ideas and be giants. A year that ground us down. As we were invited to trudge through our newly unearthed collective darkness, we grew, and it hurt. It was a trip to the underworld. It was the pain of consciousness expanding.



As we head into 2018, a Justice year, never before have we needed so much to do the dance of discernment. Never to such a degree have we needed the hallowed walls of spiritual community, the sacred spaces with room enough for everyone. Even the ones that had previously been silent and invisible. Even those so far outside our previous knowledge that we haven't yet learned the names for them. No matter how much information assails us or how quickly, we'll need to come back to the ley lines. We'll need to hold on, find our footing, get as far as we can and do the best we can. Such is the dance on the razor's edge. Such is the way to collective recovery.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH ARWEN LYNCH-POE

by Katrina Wynne, M.A.

**INTRODUCTION:** Arwen and I have always resonated with one another...from our deep Texas toes placed firmly on the ground to our love of our expanding Tarot community. I've watched, as many of you have, her smooth and friendly transition into the huge shoes left by Jadzia DeForest (sorry Jadzia, only a metaphor, HaHa) for the consistent and reliable production of the most professional, interesting, and attractive Tarot and oracle magazine available today. It is always such a delight to be with and chat with Arwen, as you will see in our following conversation.

**KATRINA:** Arwen, I was so excited to hear that you decided to step up to be the new editor and publisher of *The Cartomancer* quarterly journal. I know you have a rich history with Tarot and community outreach. Could you share with us some of the stepping stones along your path?

**ARWEN:** Oh Katrina, my path from there to here has been colorful. My very first experience with divination of any type was attempting to make my own Yarrow sticks, based on a twenty-five-cent I Ching book I bought at the grocery store. I was somewhere around eleven years old. My father had died that year so I was doing a lot of searching. I didn't run into Tarot until 1979 when a college pal read my cards. That changed my life. Her reading was incredibly accurate. Even though I didn't connect with the deck she used (and gifted to me), I did remember that reading. It was the Thoth Tarot (Crowley/Harris) deck. My first deck that I really connected with was *The Herbal Tarot* (Tierra/Cantin). I still have that deck in a homemade bag from when I fancied myself a seamstress. From there it was all downhill...errrr, uphill. Well, a zig-zag path that probably best represents a Zen bridge.

The Tarot community has been huge in my life. Back in 2007 I heard that the American Tarot Association (ATA) was going to be done away with. A group had gotten together to create something else. I decided to see if I couldn't affect a "change from within" scenario so I ran for office. Six people ran for five offices, but no

one ran for President. I volunteered to guide the first ATA board meeting via telephone. Someone then nominated me as President. Seven years later I stepped down because I firmly felt that the ATA would benefit from enlisting new blood. During that time, I discovered that the Tarot community is rich with amazing people.

Now I have the helm of *The Cartomancer* which brings me such joy. It's going to be a learning curve, but I have faith that I can handle it. And...I also have faith that I have a deep well of knowledgeable folks to reach out to.

**KATRINA:** I have faith in you as well, knowing what a capable and professional person you are...kind of a "Super Woman" who jumps in when she sees a need she can support. A woman after my own heart...HaHa.

Now that you are Captain of *The Cartomancer* cruise ship (yep, that picture just jumped into my mind, a fun and enriching journey with a *Ship of Fools*)...where are we sailing to and what's the onboard activity and entertainment schedule?

**ARWEN:** Now I'm humming "The Love Boat" in my head. All aboard! We are setting sail for the distant horizon. With our initial course so ably set by Jadzia DeForest, I think we have our work cut out for us. I see the future of *The Cartomancer* delving into more divination methods that aren't necessarily cartomancy. For instance, you will see an article in this issue on Rune Stones. I'm hoping to develop new voices within our community in addition to offering a place for the well-known folks. To me, it's best to ask for what I want, so I have approached quite a few people for articles. Some have said "No" or "Not right now", but others were ready, willing and able (to keep up the nautical talk). I want to say right now that if anyone reading this would like to pitch an idea for an article, a column, or a series, please contact me at [editor@thecartomancer.com](mailto:editor@thecartomancer.com). I am very approachable so don't be shy.





Coming up we will have a series on Lenormand from the head of the World Lenormand Association, Toni Puhle. I've got a TarBro roundtable in the works as well. At the time of writing this, I'm not sure if they will have something to submit, yet. One fun thing I did was send a question off to a group of people I think of as experts in our field. You will see it in this issue as well. Just look for the "Experts Roundtable" section. I hope to make this an on-going thing where many voices answer one question. I'm fond of that method because I think you get a more diverse answer. Speaking of diversity, I'm actively cultivating a wide range of voices for The Cartomancer. So again, don't be reluctant to reach out to me.

**KATRINA:** Your ideas are so exciting I find myself wishing The Cartomancer were a monthly magazine! With the diversity of topics, writers and artists, I imagine your reader base may expand as well. How do you plan to reach out to our growing divination community?

**ARWEN:** I'm the networking queen according to my friends. I have no qualms asking people to contribute their writings, submit artwork, buy an ad. I have a sales background as well that started when I was an eight-year-old selling Girl Scout cookies. True story! I sold them for thirty cents a box (a nickel markup) because the leaders told me the goal was to make money. Had to return a lot of nickels once that got discovered.

We have an amazing assortment and wealth of talent in our community, don't we? I posted a copy of a deck published in 1971 on some of our social media channels (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook). I asked how old folks were when this deck came out and received responses to this survey from the eldest, being 29 years old in 1971 (born in 1942), with the youngest not yet born for another 18 years (1989), a range from 74 to 28 years of age! I want to engage everyone from my generation and before me (I'm a '61 baby) to those who are in the subsequent generations. I want ALL THE VOICES to be heard! We have male readers, queer readers, people of color...all readers and so much more. Did you know that Tarot has a reputation of being only used by a certain demographic (white, female, 45+)? While I fall in that demographic, I know it's not true. We have readers all over the world who cover every demographic possible including non-binary folk. I think past issues of The Cartomancer have done an admirable job of showcasing that diversity. I mean to keep that legacy going.

Hopefully, the readers will tell me what they want to see. I've been blessed with folks like Eric Lerner who is helping me develop a survey for our readership. That will assist us in knowing the demographics as well as many other factors like...what's new to read (book & deck, etc.), reading skills, who is reading, where are

gatherings, and more.

**KATRINA:** ...as well as the amazing visuals we wish to see, such as cards and beautiful illustrations.

I can see that a big part of your vision for The Cartomancer is to expand not only the readership and character of the audience as well as the diversity of the magazine's voices, but also its style in terms of all things divination, from Tarot and Lenormand to other oracles. What about the tone of the articles...beginning knowledge, advanced and scholarly research, wild and crazy unknown tidbits...do tell.

**ARWEN:** I love what's been in The Cartomancer. My own preference is to maintain the balance of scholarly and of beginning knowledge. Knowing myself as I do, wild and crazy will also pop up. I'm a big fan of joy, right? I do want to bring in all types of divination and unusual uses of cards. I love the historical aspect of divination so that will always be a part of this magazine as long as we have folks submitting those articles. Truly the voice of this journal is my writing team. They are the ones who create the quarterly wealth of goodness. Before anyone asks, I am open to receiving submissions from anyone and everyone. My desire is to have a magazine that brings our diverse voices together so we can continue to build and expand as a community.

Speaking of which, I'd love to gather up all the events that are going on. Wouldn't it be great to have a calendar we could access to find ways to meet in real-time? So...if those of you reading this know of physical events like meetups, salons, conferences, etc., please contact me so we can publish these resources for our community. At this time, I'm looking for things happening from Spring 2018 forward, but my eventual goal would be to publish a webpage for easy access and up-to-date information.

**KATRINA:** Well, I can see that The Cartomancer is not only in excellent hands sailing full-speed ahead with all hands being called to the deck...or any divination tools they wish...but the Tarot, Lenormand, and oracle community have a shining star to guide their journey.

Katrina Wynne, M.A. is an international teacher, writer, Tarot Consultant, and Transpersonal Psychotherapist. With 45 years of Tarot, metaphysical, and oracular experience, combined with over 25 years as a professional counselor, Katrina shares her passion for our art in her many articles and her podcast with co-producer, Gina Thies. Katrina's very popular "Professional Tarot Consulting Certificate Course" is offered online, with personal supervision and study partners. For information about scheduling private

“I have no qualms asking people to contribute their writings, submit artwork, buy an ad. I ... started when I was an eight-year-old selling Girl Scout cookies.”

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Arwen Lynch-Poe is an author, joy seeker and Tarot Consultant. Her primary vision is to share her message of “Seek joy, y’all” to the world. Reading professionally since 1985, Arwen believes in using the Tarot for introspection. She resides in New Mexico where she offers readings via video chat. Find her at [www.TarotByArwen.com](http://www.TarotByArwen.com).

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# LORETTA'S SECOND VISIT FROM PCS: A NOVEL

—by Cynthia Tedesco

Loretta, though not James, came to see me at Smallhythe. I was still somewhat enthralled by the precision of my Tarot creation now that it had gone onto the printers. I was to keep my original copy once the printers were through with their need of it. It surprised me that I had come to feel affection for the deck and for the tarot once again, after so much heartache and rush, rush, rush.

Just before the post arrived I knew, intuited, that it would be from Loretta. I was hoping James, 'my James,' would be coming with her but I was to be disappointed yet again. Loretta arrived a week later as per our agreement beautifully dressed in a pale pink crepe blouse with a delicately floral print. Around her shoulders she wore a cashmere shawl that matched. Immediately I realized her outfit cost more than I had ever made in a year. She wore no make-up although I don't think her beauty benefits from lipstick or rouge. I had based my SEVEN OF CUPS upon James- though no one, perhaps, only Loretta herself, might see the resemblance and message. Think 'cars' for the what the Cups contain, except the center Cup... Ah... here I am, ready or not: He's such a dummy!!!!

I took her outside to the tables and chairs where outdoor parties are held. She embraced me like a sister and asked politely of my activities since last seeing each other. Eventually she got to the point over a lovely tea with truly amazing cakes.

"May I have another reading? This time I insist upon paying you. Here's my question: will you join James and I in our efforts to deter further infiltration into England by enemy spies?"

I literally choked on my cake! "I'm sorry, surely I didn't hear you correctly, please explain again?" I recognized 'opportunity' but

not in the form of her question. Now it was my turn to ask what I longed to ask in light of this absurd request... "Why are you here making this illogical and potentially hazardous request of me instead of James?" I let her silence expand in the awkward way a silence does when asked a difficult or revealing question. Strangely my mind and even, yes, even my heart was calm throughout the

quiet as Loretta squirmed and flushed. Her cup began to shake and her forehead beaded though it wasn't a bit warm.

"Please Pamela, he would be here if he could. Our 'Mr. Grimes' wanted to come too but I didn't want him to as I sensed your dislike of the man. He's harmless but also ineffectual. You have no need to concern yourself with him." Still I kept silent. Silence and my disheartened posture revealed my reluctance to entertain Loretta's idea. I continued my silence.

Ultimately Loretta felt she had no choice but to apologize and make ready to leave. She stood, she made to go out to her automobile but turned and sat down on the white wicker chair she had sat in

before, the flowers of her skirt and shawl seemed to grace the green grass we had our feet grounded on and the blue - grey skies above. She was beautiful when pretending to be 'aggrieved' though she lacked that spark that James had. Now, she too, was silent and thus we sat finishing our tea.

When done she opened her purse and took out her calling card and gave it to me. It just held her first name, Loretta, and a post office box address in London. No last name, no home address. Cold. It was a very cold calling card though printed on expensive card stock with a lovely Italian font. I forget the font's name but at that moment I did recognize it though I refused to comment.





We walked in the continuing silence to the drive where her black Rolls awaited her. There was no chauffeur. I realized Loretta had driven here all the way from London by herself. Could she really be asking me to help in such an alarmingly strange way? She had, so, evidently, she could. Loretta must be quite advanced up the chain of command in her Embassy for her to be able to approach a potential asset so casually with such a strange yet interesting request. I was considering my chances of encountering James if I accepted such a scheme. Of course, I'd have to know more. I'd have to know much before taking on her request. I broke our silence. . .

“Loretta this is a very strange request you’ve made of me. I’m an artist not a spy and while it’s flattering to think I could help my country in some way – really? Really do you think I’ve something to offer?”

Suddenly Loretta lit up as if on fire. . . “Pamela, ‘spying’ entails so very much more than lurking in shadows following strangers in foreign countries. Today we utilize people of diverse talents to assist in diplomacy and espionage. Often knowledge of very arcane subjects can be the key to an investigation that could not be solved in any other way. Our Field Office is full of talented people in any area of expertise you can imagine. As an artist and may I add, a psychic, you could be most helpful. Believe it or not most of what I have in mind for you would take place, initially anyway, at The British Museum. The place is crawling with what you would be surprised to know are ‘spies’ of a sort.

That mental image made me laugh. . . a bunch of scholarly looking folks on their hands and knees crawling about under desks and in the narrow stacks. That was rich! Loretta, I could see, was keen for me to say I’d consider her offer, she’d now made clear I’d be paid well. She stood before her vehicle keys in hand looking at me with longing eyes. Could I afford to say ‘no?’ No, financially I could not. Could I afford to let my hopes of renewing my relationship with James continue? No, I really could not leave myself open to inevitable pain. It was decided. Once again, like the Fool of my Tarot, I permitted myself to do exactly what was not in my best interests! Lucre and Love won out.

But who exactly were Loretta & James? Siblings of a sort, about my age, Americans and British Ex Pats or British and American Ex Pats such as myself? However, I recalled the restaurant in Coney Island. The conversation that helped inspire my tarot – something or someone sublime – possibly dangerous and significantly older

than the Bible itself. When confronted with Loretta; as I had felt with James, I believe I was before a sort of species that differed from my own. Yes, I believed then, as I do now, that Loretta and James were the offspring of The Nephilim, the Fallen Angels of Genesis. The very first of The Titans, The Giants I had modeled the Five of Cups upon. Do you not see James as in the Seven of Cups with possibility of recouping his losses that were lost here in The Five of Cups?



I am shivering. I shivered. I have shivered.

I recall The British Museum. I recall Arthur Waite. I recall the Librarian. I recall the photocopy of The Sola Busca Tarot. I think of Loretta. I think of James. I think of the Oriental Garden at the restaurant in Coney Island. I think of the waitress. Most of all I mourn the passing of Gretchen.

I am sure that the obscure tarot: the so – called Sola Busca Tarot is the key to their ‘great use for me’ in the ‘protection of my country.’ Is this their ‘need’ for me? I do think so . . . I think I know so. I taste a slightly metallic taste in my mouth & I am past shivering. I am shaking and quivering. . . . It will pass. It has passed. This is fear. This is who they are. This is who I will serve.

Two days later I got a postcard from Loretta, although she signed James’ name too. Silly of her, but I guess she’s desperate to engage me in their efforts. All the postcard said was ‘WELL?’

I considered my options, refusal or acceptance. Is there a third option I thought to myself, possibly a ‘negotiating advantage’ for me? I couldn’t see any except not to sign anything until I understood more. I wrote back as ‘Return to Sender,’ smack under her ‘WELL?’ my own: ‘IF SO. . . HOW & WHEN SO?’ on her postcard.

There were the obvious problems. Since James was not James, how could I be sure Mrs. Grimes aka Loretta was Loretta? Was Arthur Waite involved in espionage? What was he doing at the American Embassy? Why not the British Embassy? Could they possibly work in tandem? Perhaps are one in the same? I ascertained Loretta had enough authority to attempt to enlist me. Was James’ her superior or inferior? Did the so – called siblings have an identity? Perhaps all was vaporous. . . perhaps they had been adopted – the parents’ unknown? Or raised in an orphanage?

I was so nervous about deciding that I broke a cardinal rule of

The Golden Dawn Society and determined to do a reading for myself although it had been less than year since the cards were read in The Opening of The Key Reading for me by Florence Farr, one of the most esteemed of the Society. My Significator, the tarot card standing in readings for myself, has always been The High Priestess after creating my own tarot... before that I really didn't care and let whoever was doing it pick one for me. However, since creating my own deck I've become very fussy about Her.

Edy posed for me – I consider The High Priestess to be Mother Mary. Perhaps it is more exact to say, 'Mother Mary' as The Divine Feminine... The Shekinah of the Kabbalists. Grandiose of me – I know. As creator of the images I think I can at least pick my favorite?!

What to do? I counted backwards to Nine Months ago when the reading, The Opening of The Key, was done and determined I'd do a Nine card reading for myself. All apologies To the Guardian of The Opening Of The Key!

Tap pack three times to bring it 'home' to me, shuffle, cut in thirds with non-dominant hand, select pack in center and place on top – draw the nine cards... I don't do reversals... I prefer to see my cards just so... I consider the possibility of reversed cards as a slowing of the action... I always consider that – don't need my cards to go upside down for that consideration is made apparent by the surrounding cards:

1/ ACE OF SWORDS 2/ HIGH PRIESTESS  
 ( at least I can proceed w/the reading as She is here... if she were not present I'd have to stop the reading as that would indicate I'm not to know the answer. Much relieved to see her! 3/ CHARIOT  
 4/ TWO OF SWORDS 5/ DEVIL 6/ THREE OF PENTACLES 7/ SEVEN OF CUPS ( AH! JAMES' card... at least to me this is his!) 8/ WHEEL OF FORTUNE 9/ TEN OF WANDS

OK Pamela, now what!!! Wonder what card Loretta might be? High Priestess is here as is Seven of Cups so perhaps Loretta may not be present so won't be as involved as James? Well jolly for



her because The Devil is dead center! Are the shackled imps in The Devil James and Loretta? Or is that James and me? Interesting that the Seven of Cups and Ten of Wands are Left and Right of The Wheel of Fortune. It appears Loretta or myself as female imp are highly influenced by The Two of Swords – I think it's representing my indecision... while James (if he be 'James') is quite the talented artist... Cathedral Builder no less, or 'castles in the air' as in The Seven of Cups? Up top that Ace of Swords indicates intelligence is with this venture as are the intuitive capacities of The High Priestess... the Chariot, no reins has he, is rushing the project along... speed with insight hopefully. Is Arthur anywhere in this reading? I can't believe he's represented by the Ace of Swords but have to admit he's a genius. I get cranky just thinking of that massive mind at work!

Oh, what to do? What have I potentially gotten myself into? I'm overwhelmed. I'm making tea and taking a nap. Perhaps while dreaming something will present all gift wrapped and tied with a bow as I know it will not! At least I can stall the analysis of the reading until evening. Perhaps I should, once again go to London and request that Florence read these cards for me? Oh, but then I'd have to tell her about this scheme. No, I can't do that. Maybe I can practice cat and mouse with her. I'll not reveal anything: these will be 'cards of a friend.' Yes, that's it! I'm most concerned with The Ten of Wands. What a burden this will prove to be! The city ahead will benefit... maybe it's meant to be The Outcome? That Wheel of Fortune can be Karma at work... I must stop obsessing! It's all made me quite hungry... I'm going to seek out Florence. I'll impose yet again on the good graces of Edy to watch Gordon. Or maybe, I'll take Gordon with me? We'll see. Loretta will have to wait while I sort things out at this end.

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# DIVINE INSPIRATION

—by Jaymi Elford

I'm set up outside at one of my favorite coffee shops. My journal rests next to my hot chocolate and I've got a deck shuffled—ready for some readings. A shadow appears above me. I look up to see the outline of a girl staring down. She's in her mid 20s, maybe younger, and she's frowning. A small terrier hovers between her feet. "Do you have time to give me a reading," she asks. "Sure," I say and gesture to the spot next to me. She's wearing a blue dress and ruby red slippers. We start discussing her situation, she wants to know how to get home, and I begin laying down cards.

You may recognize the girl from the story as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*. Doing practice readings for characters from popular media is a great way to learn the reading process. In fact, I believe tarot cards and story go hand in hand. A simple pack of 78 cards, various images and cross-culture symbols painted on them, can help improve your creative endeavors. While the major arcana of 22 cards seek to explain higher powers at work, the minor arcana describe the daily ins and outs of our lives. Despite their popularity for divination, you can totally use them for crafting stories and hosting in-depth conversations with imaginary characters.

Tarot is my number one creativity companion. I use it to generate characters and create situations for them to explore. Tarot triggers lots of creative ideas. In this article we'll explore some of my favorite ways to use any tarot (or oracle deck) to quickly generate a story plot and characters. Pull out your favorite and put it to the test. I recommend you find a deck with pictures on all the cards (I'm not good with reading pip card-style decks) and some way to jot notes. You don't need to be a master of card meanings to understand the techniques we're covering. Anyone, and I mean anyone can do this. I've taught many writers who don't know anything about the cards how to tap into the pictures and symbols, and they've allowed the cards to spur their imagination into weird and wonderful story places.

## PRIME THE WORD COUNT PUMP

Grab a deck and look at the images. What do you see? Unlike

a standard deck of playing cards, every card has a scene on it. Images of colorful fools with dogs yapping at their heels, people partying, towers burning, lovers uniting, and Knights and Kings on horseback appear in the often strange scenes. Let your imagination guide you into the cards and place yourself in the imagery.

Which pictures strike a chord with you? Which ones repulse you? How many images out of the deck inspire you? Pull out a card you're drawn to, or repulsed by, and write about what you see. If you aren't sure what is going on in the picture, use the deck's booklet, or book, to gain insight on the card and its meaning. Then write what you think the card means. What are the swords doing to the person in the 10 of Swords card? How does The Lovers card make you feel? Stare into the card's scene until a feeling or thought emerges. Then pick up your pen and write what you think onto the paper.

When you're working with tarot, there's no right or wrong way to interpret how the images are supposed to make you feel. The little white book is not the ultimate authority on the tarot, you are. You are free to interpret the cards however you want.

Another way to quickly generate plot ideas is to look through the deck and pick a few which seem to tell a complete story. Start with "Once upon a time..." if that helps. Lay down each card in a row, and watch your story unfold. Now write the words to this story down. How do each card connect? How does the scene in the first card get to the scene in the next card and so on? This works especially well. In fact, the 22 Major arcana cards tell the story of The Fool and their journey from knowing nothing to being learned about The World they are apart of. Many tarot books attempt to describe this story in great detail.

As for characters, tarot is full of extravagant and bizarre personalities. Shuffle your deck and draw a card. Who appears on the card? Give them a name. How did they get there? What are they thinking? Be creative as you tell the story of this character. Listen to what they have to tell you. Many of my characters' back stories were put together from drawing various cards.

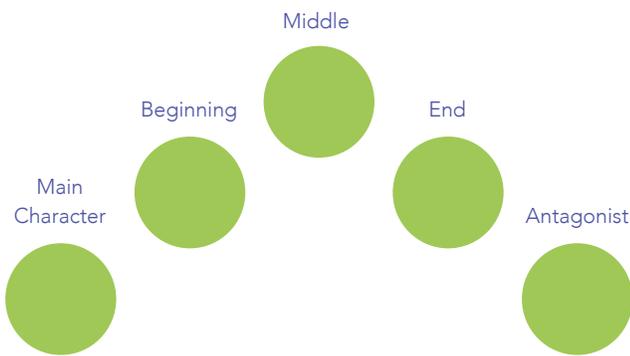


Buy a deck to match your genre. There are so many decks out there, let one become your inspiration while you write. If you're writing fantasy try using the Universal Fantasy Tarot or the Shadowsapes Tarot. Into horror? The Wormweird Tarot is a deliciously dark and spooky for ghost stories. You can use a single card, or many more, to create detailed character descriptions and background information in a matter of minutes.

Tarot and spreads also come together to form harmonious ways to craft fiction. I've used the below spreads to quickly generate aspects of my plot and characters for various projects. And now you can, too!

Reading with tarot isn't as hard as you think. First, shuffle the cards and think about your story's goal or what you want to write about. When you have that idea firmly in your mind, stop shuffling. Then, begin laying out the cards. You'll place one card for each position. After you've laid down the amount of cards for whichever spread you're using, let your imagination interpret the card any way you want. What draws your eye in? What sparks your imagination? Hold off on researching the meaning online or from a book, go with your gut and see where it takes you. Use the book as a last resort.

### QUICK STORY GENERATOR SPREAD



This spread gives you a quick and dirty outline for a 3 part story and two basic characters. Expand this spread to include conflict, or theme, a whole host of other plot attributes.

**Main Character:** this card represents some aspect of your main character.

**Antagonist:** this card represents some aspect of your antagonist.

**Beginning:** this card represents an action, or scene, happening in the beginning of your story.

**Middle:** this card represents an action, or scene, happening in the middle of your story.

**End:** this card represents an action, or scene, happening in the end of the story.

### CHARACTER GENERATION SPREAD

The items in this spread can be modified and changed depending on what info you need for your character. You can draw cards for almost every trait imaginable: eye color, hair, etc. Tarot is great for building well-rounded characters quick.

**Your Character:** This card displays a general character attribute. Male or female? What clothing do they wear? What profession are they?

**Age:** Use this card to gauge the age of your character. I've used the number at the bottom of the card creatively for approximate age. (A four can turn into 14, or 24, or 40). If it's a court card, are they young, motherly, fatherly, elderly?

**Personality quirk:** This card gives a clue to a character's personality quirk. Story characters aren't normal, there's always some trait that draws a reader into, making us care about them. Draw a card to reveal some insight into what makes your character unique.

**Conflict Resolution:** Use this card to describe how your character reacts to stressful situations. Do they boldly charge in, or do they fold under pressure?

I'm constantly using my tarot deck for a source of guidance and inspiration in my creative life. I won 12 NaNoWriMo events, many with the help of tarot for plot and character generation. I'm forever using various decks to help me develop my novels, articles, and other aspects of my writing life. When I get stuck, I turn to a deck to get me unblocked. Tarot is also my coach, giving me guidance on each step of the project's journey to publication.

Give some of the techniques I've shared here a go. Like The Hanged Man, who hangs upside on a tree viewing the world from a new perspective, the tarot can fuel your creative writing with years of new ideas. You'll be amazed at the direction your writings take when you start working with the cards in this fashion. No matter which deck you favor, remember, tarot means whatever you decide it means. Let your imagination run wild. Chase down the weird paths. Write on, and may the cards inspire your imagination.

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# EMPOWERING READINGS

## INTENTION SETTING AND MANIFESTATION

—by Serena Bean Fox

What magic to behold! The spread is laid out before us in the shape of a triangle with “wings,” so to speak. Sprinkled betwixt and between the cards are crystals, herbs, stones and additional oracle cards. It is, simply ... beautiful. More than that, it is powerful, meaningful and purposeful. The read in itself, was insightful and provided clarification and direction: the embellishment supports the opportunity for intention setting. By design, we manifest a particular outcome. I have come across so many amazing teachers, practitioners and enthusiasts—and all with fabulous and unique qualities and gifts. One of the most profound treasures of this has been the witnessing of how we healers and crafters weave our work together—creating a brilliant tapestry of interpretation, suggestion and possibility. The tarot is a very powerful tool, and when combined with and supported by additional modalities and transformational arts, embraces a greater resonance and potential.



from the first. Perspectives might change from day to day. (I have even called a client days later with an optional interpretation that showed up during a walk or drive!) But I DO create intentional spreads to summon and embrace the highest possible energetics that support me toward my best resolution, solution and outcome.

I believe that the practice of executing “artwork” in craft is an excellent one: it is an empowering and spiritual “golden nugget.” It is Tarot Movement: a dance we do with the cards and modalities to encourage and entice: it is alchemy. It is pure spiritual practice.

### PRACTICE IN ACTION

If you were to pull a spread that suggested the Prince of Disks was your path to success and breakthrough, you might increase this vibrational energy and possibility by scattering seeds around the card—and possibly some symbols of earth and water to support growth (M.M. Meleen Rosetta Prince pictured above).

### SAMPLE LAYOUT

Let’s watch this sort of empowerment in action. This reading is supported by:

- Sage (to amplify Hermit wisdom and clarity)
- Anise (to honor and heighten the spiritual nature of the High Priestess—spiritual connection and the potential for Judgment and awakening).
- Labradorite (to support the Anise)
- Black Tourmaline (because the earth element is lacking and enhancement is encouraged—even in ritual)
- Rose Quartz (to encourage the hope and love presented by Cups) and heal the heart.

### EMPOWERING

Many of us choose to work with correspondences in our work. Astrology, Numerology, Alchemy, iChing, Runes, Oracle, Spellcasting, Herbal Remedy and Elements are a few of the many that one might combine in craft. These modalities can add significant layers of meaning, influence interpretation, provide clarity and a richer view of the situation at hand.

### INTENTION SETTING AND MANIFESTING

Personally, I don’t read for myself, and if I do, I will take photographs (or leave readings visible for quite a while if possible) so that I can reflect upon the many possible interpretations ... or subtle suggestions that might not have been obvious or considered





Above, first row, we have the Three of Swords, the High Priestess and the Four of Swords. Next row includes the 8 of Wands and the Three of Cups. At bottom is Judgment—and the supportive card (the key) is the Hermit. The reading responds to a question about a situation of loss and how to move forward and rebuild. The example interpretation indicates that tapping into the High Priestess potential (with a little pause and breath) will allow for new energy and celebration...and finally, the awakening and rejoice that the Judgment card suggests. The key to igniting this lovely transition, is the Hermit (whether it be one's inner Hermit or an "outer" elder of sorts). We'd love to see this reading come true! So, let's empower it.

We surround the Three of Swords with rose quartz (for love, healing, heart and hope) and rose petals. The High Priestess card is adorned with an anise star (see above note on anise) and seraphinite to heighten spiritual connection. The Hermit card is surrounded by sprigs of sage to encourage wisdom.

Elementally, we seek balance: this draw is shy on earth, so we add



black tourmaline, lapis and smoky quartz (grounding). We could also literally add "earth." To support the rise of energy (potential of the Eight of Wands), carnelian and bloodstone could be added...or quartz or more rose quartz.

Numerically, we have two threes' here: a trinity, a spiritual and powerful number of forward movement. I see this as positive, and also empowered by, similar crystals as the Eight of Wands. For herbs, I would supplement with dried Rhodiola and/or Gotu Kola—or maybe Cayenne, Cinnamon Stick, Ginger.

There are literally unlimited ways in which one can support a reading: the above-listed are but a few Aromatherapy and prayer are also powerful! Experiment, see what resonates, and embrace the practice. I think you will find it rewarding and beautiful.

This grouping of gathered images and elements creates a collage—a tapestry—of truth and desire. Like an altar, it stands to represent the situation and supports the best possible outcome for the highest good.

“...But I DO create intentional spreads to summon and embrace the highest possible energetics that support me toward my best resolution, solution and outcome.”

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# A WYRD JOURNEY

—by Parker Torrence

**T**he Journey that follows is a cross between a path-working and a different way of looking at the Tarot Major Arcana. In the mystery tradition that I follow, we provide a set of conditions, and it's the member's interaction and interpretation of these things, that provides for them an insight into the mystery.

The primary mystery, that we deal with, is called the Wyrd. To put this concept in basic terms, the Wyrd is a combination of our past actions, our current actions and the future actions that we are attracting to ourselves based upon the combination of the first two. As with all things, it is much more complex than that, but I felt a small explanation might be required.

## THE JOURNEY

The Void before Time; the Darkness before the VISION! The start of the Journey ...

Listen, do you hear the silence between the beats of your heart?

See the blackness of the Void spread out before you like an ocean of night. A darkness blacker than black but, as you watch within the ripples you can see the stars. One star, brighter than the others catches your eye. Off in the distance you can hear the barking of a dog and your Wyrd draws you forward.

You step off the Edge and become the Fool.

There is pain and screaming and light thus, you enter the World ... the Mother giving Birth to matter made manifest as Self with thoughts. All around you, you see the threads of light that make up the Wyrd of the World. Reaching out you grab hold of a thread, the pain is gone, and as you fill your lungs with air, the screaming stops. The road unrolls before your feet.

Judgment (so called) more like Awakening. The thread throbs in your hand; you see others grasping onto their treads of light thus, begins awareness of more than Self. Below you, you can see the World turning and above you, you can see the No-Thing from which you came.

You watch the Sun rise ... (Enlightenment?) ... a Vision of the Wyrd; you are seeing all of the threads of light being spun into the fabric of Reality. The road rolls forward, and you follow it.

To the Gate of the Moon ... the passageway to the Esoteric Realms. Dare you enter? You move forward, drawn on by your Wyrd. Is the gate open or closed? Cloaked in Shadow, it is hard to know.

Then you see your Guide ... a Star in the shadows shining brighter than the others (for everyone it is different) leading to the Heart of the Threads of Light. They seem to glow brighter as you draw nearer.

You reach out to touch Reality (so named) and it crumbles away revealing the Inner Light of Truth; you call it [occult] Knowledge. Now two threads of your Wyrd throb with life within your grasp.

Bondage to your past beliefs is holding you in place. Forward progress will be impossible until you can break free of your own chains, to which you hold the Key, but will you use it? The road rolls forward, calling to you.

No-Thing is coming for you ... you hold two threads of your Wyrd, can you blend them together? Can you find the balance point between their separate pulls, and thus find the third thread of your Wyrd?

Death and then Rebirth; but not like the first birth imbued with pain, but calmly with Joy! ... the Key has set you Free, but to what end? The Void calls your name ... the road rolls forward ... your Wyrd pulls at you to continue.

Water; cool, sparkling, refreshing ... the kiss of the Mother; the kiss of Wisdom, thus the kiss of Knowledge that has been purified by Death. For a time you float, and time slows down as once again you hear the silence between your heart beats.

The Goddess is weighing your Heart against a Feather! Can you



“...But, your Wyrd draws you forward.  
For once, the Key has been turned and the  
chains unlocked, only No-Thing  
can stop you!”

pass the Test? Can you learn to walk on Air? The shimmering Threads of Light that make up the world are all around you. Blindly you move forward. Walking on Air ... that is the only way you can reach the center of the Wheel that is spinning the Threads of Light into Reality! Do you control the wheel? Or does the wheel control you? Standing at the center of the wheel, you grab hold of the third thread of your Wyrd!

Thus your Wyrd draws you into the Cave of your mind ... the Guiding Star, you see it now only as a Flickering Flame of Truth, warming you with oneness. Now at Peace, you seek not to move ...



But, your Wyrd draws you forward. For once the Key has been turned and the chains unlocked, only No-Thing can stop you! Thus is the Way of the Wyrd ... feel the power of the Wyrd. Are you still in control? It, is like riding a great beast. You reach out seeking to become one with the beast so that it will do your Will.

With a rush of sound, Reality Returns from ALL sides at once! The seeds of your deeds have once again made all things Manifest. You have tamed the beast only to find it is many. You have found the balance point! Reality is reborn in the image you envision it to be.

So, do you go Forward? Do you finish the Journey? Or turn back and return to the Peace of your Cave? The threads of your Wyrd call to you to seek out your destiny, and the No-Thing whispers to you from the shadows, “You have remade reality, what more is there to do?”

With the skill of speaking to the Shadows of the Darkness and the Light, you are no longer the student, you are now the Teacher ... as you take in the depth of this epiphany; the Akashic library opens its doors before you.

Your Wyrd has now become the Guiding Light! To it are attracted People of wealth. These masses raise you up to new heights of worldly power. Yet each of those seeking to align themselves with you, are doing so for their own agenda.

The Fruits of your worldly choices have now given birth to new ripples upon the Water of the Void. Your Wyrd flows out and blends with the ripples as they reach unseen shores and interact with the dreams of other dreamers.

You sleep, and the Void calls out your name in Dreams! You wake, and the pillars of the Gate are standing once again before you, and this time, the Gate stands Open. ... Dare you enter?

The No-Thing is all around you, you enter through the Gate and Reality spins around you! You hold tight to your tools, and as you do, all Time Stops; you have become One with your own Wyrd! A silence falls all around you, and ...

Once again ... you stand at the edge of the Void!

Was it only a dream, born from the silence between Heart Beats? A star brighter than others, catches your eye, off in the distance you hear the barking of a dog, and your Wyrd (once again) draws you over the edge and into the Void!

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# COUNSELING WITH TAROT

—by Toni Gilbert, RN, MA, ATC

*Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. Wellness is more than being free from illness; it is a dynamic process of change and growth. "...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (The World Health Organization) and / or "a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential" (The National Wellness Institute).*

Wellness of the mind, body and spirit matters because every emotion we feel and every thought we think relates to our wellbeing. Likewise, our wellbeing directly affects our actions and emotions. Furthermore it is important for us to achieve optimal wellness in order to deal with stress and reduce the risk of illness and ensure positive relations with others.

As a wellness counselor, I understand what it takes to achieve optimum states in the mind, body and the spiritual. This knowledge helps me guide my clients to their higher psychological and spiritual potential. Towards this end, I rely upon the archetypes to give me information about the client and their current challenge.

After many years of experience with Tarot cards, I know the archetypes because I have studied their expressions through my own challenges. I realize that I cannot teach something I don't understand and haven't experienced. Therefore, during my assessment, I can tune into the archetypes being expressed through the client's body language, through their voice intonations, the way they dress and my intuitive impressions.

## CLIENT ASSESSMENT

During the initial assessment and client history I determine who will be a candidate for Tarot counseling. This decision is intuitively and intellectually based upon the client's physical appearance and my assessment of their ego strength, cognitive abilities and emotional state.

With a background in psychology and psychiatry I identify people who have a weak sense of the self or ego. The potential danger

of any therapy that reaches beyond the ego is that of undoing the ego's defense mechanism and unleashing traumatic memories. This can cause a regression to a more primitive state of development.

Part of my assessment is based upon my observations of the client's choice of clothes. In a nutshell, their prominent archetypal energy is dressing them. For instance, one day a new client came to my office dressed in jeans, white tee shirt with the sleeves rolled up over his biceps. A large sharp animal tooth hung around his neck. On his head he wore a hat like the movie actor John Wayne, a rough and tumble masculine type. Since this man was over sixty, I initially saw this as an attempt to hold onto his fading youthful strength. I suspected that he was compensating for something. As it turned out he was sexually impotent.

When working with Tarot, clients must be able to follow a train of thought and have the capacity for insight. The clients' ability for symbolic thought won't become apparent until counseling begins. This entails making associations between images on the cards and specific events in their lives.

It is easier to counsel people who are capable of symbolic thinking, but not essential. When clients have difficulty thinking symbolically, I explain the metaphors and images at a level they can understand, and then ask them to apply it to their concerns. Difficulty thinking symbolically may be because they are concrete in their thinking; they look outward at the real world while the inner world remains unrecognized. This type of person isn't aware of communication with their inner worlds. To these individuals, the cards look foreign. However, it may be just the kind of exploration therapy they need.



Healing can be greatly aided by beginning a rapport between a person's conscious material worldview and their unconscious symbolic worldview. For instance, a young woman, we'll call Ann, was in a difficult relationship and had just gone through a dark time with many trials. During this session, I didn't use a layout but simply drew cards from the Tarot deck as needed. Ann drew the first card which was the Queen of Pentacles. She didn't relate to the images and so I described the Queen as someone who was strong and capable of making choices based upon what she knew of the world. I also told her, "This queen can do anything she makes up her mind to do and she can do it well." I asked her, "Are you like the woman on the card?"

Ann agreed that she had those traits. The second card was the two of swords and the image on the card showed an image of a blindfolded woman sitting before two paths through a wooded forest. This card image led to a discussion of choices. I told her, "One choice will lead down a dark path, which you have just experienced, or you may select a higher ethical path that leads to a much better outcome." As we continued the discussion, she indicated that she related to the image and spoke of insights on how to proceed with her challenge. Even though her abilities for symbolic thought were not developed, I knew she understood the symbolic message of the card.

### COUNSELING WITH THE CARDS

Several minutes are spent in prayer and meditation before I see each client. I close my eyes, find a place of centered calm, and wait. In this meditative state, I access the higher levels of my consciousness. Sometimes imagery or thoughts come, which give me information and inspiration. Sometimes it is simply a restful silence before the session.

When using Tarot cards, assessment of the client's ego is important. The ego's purpose is to keep overpowering and destructive emotions within safe boundaries. The ego needs to

be strong so it can integrate and use the emerging unconscious information. I distinguish between clients with psychological limitations and those individuals of a more normal constitution. Those who have a normal constitution have a healthy ego structure, emotional flexibility, and a somewhat positive self-image. These clients benefit greatly from the symbolic exploration that Tarot provides.

An example of a weak ego is Erma, a client who requested a Tarot reading. During the session I could tell by her facial expressions that she was receiving profound information regarding her question. Instead of telling me about the insights she skirted the issue by talking about superficial aspects of the cards. As far as I could tell, she guarded her fragile ego by denying most of the surfacing messages.

In the therapeutic context, the Tarot spread allows the counselor to aid an individual in bringing repressed unconscious material to consciousness. Because of their education and experience, the counselor will be able to evaluate when and how to aid the individual in this process. A reading could cause a release of emotions which are locked in the unconscious and which might

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overwhelm the weak ego with too much information, too fast. This could cause confusion and a scattering of the client's defenses.

After discussing the client's current challenge, I have the client chose from a variety of decks. Aside from the symbology inherent in Tarot, most of my decks have everyday imagery, quiet scenes, a few shadowy views, and little or no nudity. I offer mild imagery decks so as not to bewilder the client with symbols that distract from the issue at hand.

During the session, I shift my consciousness so that I am an empty vessel, freely associating to the information that comes to me. This shift allows a higher level of consciousness to work through me for the well-being of the client. I trust my intuition and higher psychic faculties. Because the information must come through my ego with its projections, I accept a margin of error. I never insist upon being right and frequently check my perceptions with the client to verify accuracy.

To begin a session, I have the client write their question down on a tablet that I provide for them to take notes. I then ask the questioner to shuffle and cut the cards, in any way that feels right to them. I understand that the body is a temple for the energy of the archetypes and in the chaos of the shuffle, the cards react to the energy of the shuffler's archetype of the moment. As I understand it, when the client shuffles the cards, the energy of the heart chakra with all its archetypal energetic information affects the sequence of the cards. They magically fall in line with a synchronicity that is part of the mystery of the cards. The resulting segmented pictorial layout is a portrait of the client's psychological state or their inner worldview. Because of this, the layout is most affected by the heart chakra energy and emotional issues take precedence over more cognitive or linear types of questions. For instance, the cards may hint at current issues with an ex-boyfriend even though the question asked was whether one should look for another job. I either lay the cards out on the table or hand them to the client one at a time and wait for a response. If they don't respond right away, I might ask, "What's happening in the card?" or "What symbol stands out for you in regard to your question?" In my experience, readings are more effective when clients hold the card and examine it closely. Keeping their question in mind, I refer back to it often during the session, saying, "How does that relate to your question?"

The archetypal images on the cards reflect a truth that is buried in the preconscious and unconscious mind. Through a process of projection, questioners come to see their challenges mirrored by the symbols of the cards.

Many times during a session, I ask, "How does this image make you feel?" Because clients possess the archetypal energy symbolized in the cards, they can connect at an emotional level using projection. I ask them to describe what they see and feel and how it relates to the question.

Like the Rorschach Projective test, relating to the archetypal images on the cards bring forth seeds of information buried in the unconscious mind. I teach clients to understand the symbology of the card and relate it to their feelings and to their life situation. Only when this unconscious symbolic material becomes conscious can they take the appropriate action, which may also be mirrored in the cards.

There is no right way to practice Tarot Counseling. However, it is best to remember that the wellness counselor is not the authority over the client's situation. Rather, you are there to empower the client by letting his or her ideas lead you. Keep in mind that because a Tarot layout reflects the inner profile of the person shuffling, only the questioner can say how the interpretation feels and if it is true. Since there are always multiple levels of meaning in Tarot's archetypal images, the counselor can help the client to integrate those meanings that seem most useful to the issue at hand.

Don't try to predict what will happen in the client's future. This would be fortune telling, filled with presumptions and possible inaccuracies. The counselor may, however, discuss possibilities and opportunities that may affect the future.

The goal of this type of therapeutic session is client self-development and self-healing. In the process, counseling in this way clarifies the nature of the current challenge. Clients should be free to explore only those issues that they feel ready to deal with, at their own pace, for they are the only ones who can bring this awareness into their consciousness. Working with Tarot's images in wellness counseling is a gentle, sacred act and those who endeavor to work with the cards in healing, have learned to set aside the ego and channel a higher wisdom.

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# POSTCARD TAROT: CREATING A FUN AND PERSONAL DECK

—by S. Johanna Hill

Postcard Tarot: Seven Easy Steps to Creating a Personal Deck from Common Materials

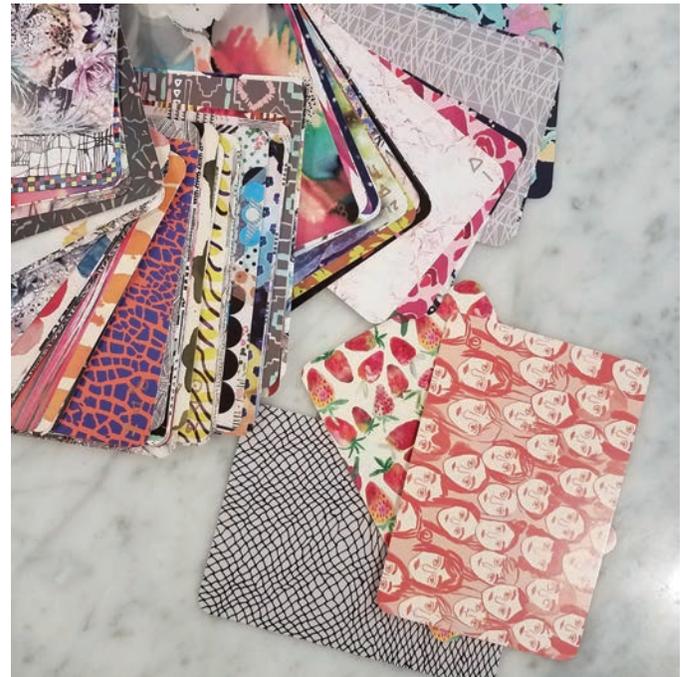
I made my own tarot deck, for under 40 bucks, and you can too! I assure you it's possible - no artistic skill required. I'm certainly not an artist. Also, I have a day job that keeps me comfortable, but I am in no position to commission 78 images full of beauty, meaning, and symbolism. Likely this is true for you, too, but we both still might want a handmade tarot deck that speaks to us. The good news is we can work with the art of others - picking, choosing, and altering until it's just right.

This had not occurred to me until I saw a box of 100 beautiful postcards for sale. It was a revelation. I altered those cards to create a powerful divination tool with my own two hands. My readings with my DIY deck were so spot on it made me wonder if I'd ever use another deck again. I also found my reading skills with other decks improved immensely. I'd stumbled on a great way to learn, and deepen my learning, of the tarot. I've written up my process and I'll walk you through seven easy steps. You'll choose images for each of the cards in the deck, make important choices to prepare your cards for actual use, and build your own Little White Book. Ready to get started?

## STEP ONE: ACQUIRE CARD MATERIALS

You need 78 images for a tarot deck – even if only 22 of those images are detailed and the rest are minimally illustrated pips. You need to shuffle this thing, so you need 78 bits of paper that are the same size and are stiff enough. Beyond that, not much else is required. So liberating! So cheap!

I prefer pre-boxed selections of postcards for this (easily ordered online or found at your local stationery store) but you can make a deck out of anything: unlined index cards with hand-inked images; 3 X 5 photos with symbols scratched into the top; 78 pieces of cardstock and colored pencils; playing cards (2 decks) with the



centers covered in White-Out and your own illustrations Sharpie. I'd recommend that you get enough index cards or playing cards or postcards to have a few extras - you will make mistakes.

## STEP TWO: ACQUIRE A NOTEBOOK

You'll be making a lot of notes on what symbols, numbers, and associations work for each card. It's best to have one place to keep this information. It doesn't matter what format it is - computer file, spiral notebook, scrapbook - as long as it works for you. If you already keep a tarot journal, you are all set. If not, get one! Your notes can turn into the Little White Book to go with your deck.

## STEP THREE: CHOOSE POSTCARDS

This step takes longer than you think it will, and is the most important. I recommend commandeering the dining room table, a



coffee table, or the largest bed in the house. You need a flat surface to see all of 78 or 80 cards together at once.

(80 cards? Yes! My first DIY deck had a signifier card so I didn't have to use a Court Card. I also made a Happy Squirrel card called Strawberries for all the wonderful mysteries of life, after seeing a similar one in the Prisma Visions deck. Then I made a card called The Veil, for all the unknowable things in life. I love them and wish all decks had similar cards. I also appreciate it when a deck comes with a few versions of the often overly gendered and heteronormative cards so you can choose a version that works for you and your client.)

If you are obsessed with tarot, you won't need a lot of preparation to start choosing cards. You are familiar with the unique energy each card needs to have in order to be effective for you. If you are new to your tarot studies, this might be more daunting. Seasoned or newbie, keep your favorite book (or books) of tarot meanings on hand for this step.

Go through the entire pack of postcards and look at each card. Does an image immediately speak to you of a particular card? It doesn't matter if the image is 'correct' or 'traditional.' If you look at an image and immediately know that this is THE card, then you are done. The only person who needs to be sure is you. You are the one who will turn these cards over and need to have the flash of insight. As you make decisions, start to lay them out in order. You might have several candidates in your collection for one card. Put them in a little pile to sift through and keep going - don't get bogged down this early!

If you are stuck, another way to start is to see if you can group your cards. Some of the most successful tarot decks I own have suits that clearly represent a season or mood. Do particular cards share a color palette? A type of illustration? Perhaps all the yellow cards seem to share enough in common that you can make the wands suit out of them. Perhaps your deck is of animals, and all the cats will be wands and all the fish will be cups.

If you have used a Thoth deck, you've seen the astrological connections between the majors and the minors. There is great deal to learn from a deck that makes explicit connections like this - being able to turn over a card and think 'well, that's a mini X card.' (For example, my King of Coins needs to always seem a bit like a younger brother to The Emperor.) If you have a few cards that are in the pile for a major, and you can't decide - don't despair! Think a bit about what minors would be their mini-me, and group accordingly to see if that adds any clarity.



Confused yet? You have no doubt laid out the cards, looked at them through one lens and then another, shuffled them up and laid them all out again. That's all good work, although it might feel like you are just pushing paper around. You have gotten familiar with the images, and have started to see that a particular postcard seems to be a particular tarot card for you over and over again. You are starting to make permanent choices.

So, lay them all out again in order. And then walk away. Seriously. Leave them on that table. Or, put them all back in order and leave them in a stack. You want to sleep on this, and return to it again. You might change your mind tomorrow. If you have not, then you know you are ready for the next step.

#### STEP FOUR: DECIDE ON LABELS

You'll want to think about what numbers, words, symbols etc... you'll put on each card. I recommend not marking the cards at first, and instead recording everything in a notebook. If you keep a tarot journal, you can add these notes to what you already have. If you don't keep a journal, this is a great time to start because you have the building blocks for one in this exercise. Bottom line? I highly recommend you write all of those things down somewhere besides your postcards first.

So, numbers and titles. You don't have to number anything. You could just title cards. If you are someone who relies heavily on the numerology of the tarot in a reading you might want to push yourself and create a deck that's numberless. It will be



uncomfortable, but it will build your skills. On the other hand, you can only number, and not title anything. Or you could get really crazy and do without numbers and titles.

Next, words. For the same reason you want to stop and think about the numbers (or lack thereof) on your deck, you want to stop and think about the words on your deck. Words have power. Don't be flippant or thoughtless about the words you put on your very own handcrafted deck. For many people, they make a point to turn over the card and say the name. Do you feel more comfortable saying "You have draw The Death Card" or "You have drawn the card of Transformation" to a client? Take the time to practice saying, out loud, all the things you might say about each card. See what feels best. (This is a great opportunity to think about how the titles of many cards are gendered and hierarchical. If I had my druthers I'd name Empress 'The Gardener' and Emperor 'The Navigator.' I also really like decks that take the gender out of the court cards by calling Pages children, Knights students or youths, etc...)

Just to muddy the waters, let's also take a second to think about changing up those suit titles completely. I like to call each suit by its elemental assignment, so I prefer a 2 of Water to a 2 of Cups. You might feel strongly that a suit has a correlation to a time of year, and use that association a lot in your readings. So then why not call it a 2 of Summer instead of a 2 of Wands? Again, take the time to practice those words out loud. What feels best?

Does the title you've settled on completely capture everything about that card for you, or do want to list 3 or so keywords at the bottom? If you already have a tarot journal, those words might be right there just waiting to be added to your cards. The titles for your cards might be enough. You might not want any other symbols on those cards. But if you use astrological associations or Kabbalistic associations, it can be incredibly useful to have those symbols on the cards from the get go. You might have decided to make a deck for the explicit purpose of learning the associations, and so this layer is the whole point.

Lastly, I'll add one more suggestion - dates and names and quotes! It's likely you have a personal association with a few of the cards. You might have a quote, or a passage from a sacred text that works for you. The Tower is linked to a date for me - a specific anniversary that will be familiar to most Americans. The 3 of Cups reminds me of a particular group of people, and I could write a few initials on that card as easily as a title. I didn't do this with my deck, but I thought seriously about it. My hesitation? I don't yet have a strong association like that for every card. If you do, it could add a unique layer of meaning to your handmade deck.

Now that you are almost done with the decision about the symbols, words, etc... on the cards, I'm going to suggest you lay them out one more time before you start to actually make marks. Make sure your choices still seem right on the micro and macro level. When I laid out my first DIY deck, I realized all my favorite cards were blue. It really stood out when I looked at everything together on my dining room table. I made some changes ASAP and it was much more balanced. So step back a moment and take one last look.

#### STEP FIVE: PREPARE CARDS

You will want a deck that feels good in your hands, so you'll want to round the corners. If you've used a mismatched collection of cards instead of a pre-sold set, take the time to 'true' the cards and make sure they are all the same size and shape as the smallest card. I have done this to a lot of decks, and have some tips:

- A small paper trimmer/cutter is worth it but not absolutely necessary.
- The cutter doesn't get everything, so have scissors on hand.
- Get a corner rounder. They are not expensive. You'll use them again.
- Good lighting is key. Sunlight is best.
- Go Slow. Don't plan on doing it all in one sitting.
- Line cards up in a little stack as you go so you can be consistent.
- Take the completed deck and rub each edge on an old towel to smooth the edges.



### STEP SIX: MARK THE CARDS

Finally! It's time to put all those symbols, stories, numbers on your deck. You want to take this slow, and if you can, make it a special time. Yes, you are just making some marks on a stack of paper, but it can be more than that. Your own tarot deck is more than a stack of paper. Light a candle. Put on some nice, non-distracting music. Silence the phone. You want to do a test mark on a card you've decided not to use. I suggest a Sharpie pen as it dries quickly and is permanent. I ended up going with a metallic one that did not distract from the image. You don't have to, but if you choose something else, just make sure you know how long it takes for that ink to dry!

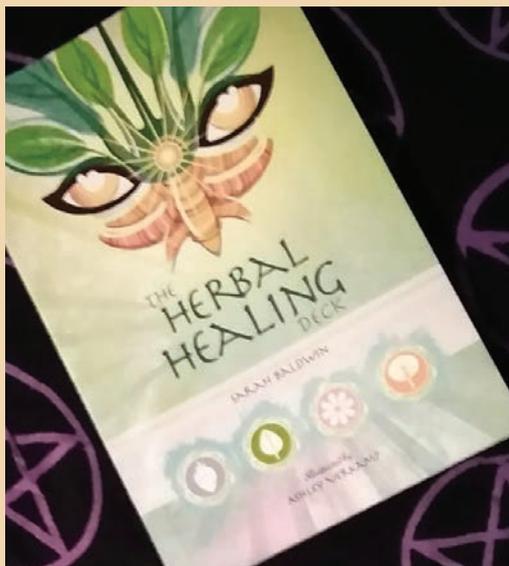
Now that deck is all done (and dry) put the deck all in a stack. Shuffle it and cleanse it. I'm also the sort to let that deck rest on my meditation altar, wrapped in silk and tied with a big ol' crystal, under the light of a full moon, but that's just me. Once that beautiful new baby is all marked, shuffled, and cleansed however you choose, it's time to use your very own deck. Even though you know every inch of your deck from spending so much time making it, I'd still suggest the first spread be a Deck Interview. Each time I've done this with a DIY deck it's been surprising and educational.

### STEP SEVEN: YOUR VERY OWN LITTLE WHITE BOOK

This is the bonus step. Entirely optional, but worthwhile. Take the notes and edits you made as you decided what words, symbols and numbers to put on each card and tidy that up. If it's a document on your computer, print it out and keep it with your deck. I have a large notebook where I keep an ever-growing collection of associations for each card, and my notes from DIY decks are marked down in a succession of rainbow colors. Now go work with your new deck.



# Reviews

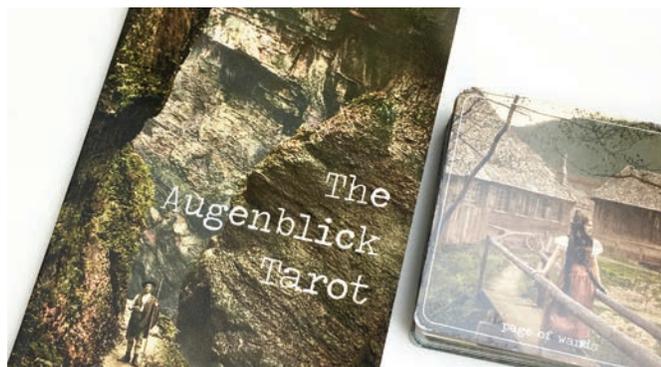


## AUGENBLICK TAROT

By Shannon Loftis

Review by Madhavi Ghare

Augenblick : At first I thought this was the name of an unheard and obscure European city. Ha! Imagine my surprise when I discovered that while the word does originate from German, it isn't the name of a city. Quite simply, the word means 'a quick glance', where Auge = Eye, and Blick = Glance.



This deck was born when deck creator Shannon Loftis stumbled upon a collection of photolithographs amongst the digitized files of the Library of Congress online. She was looking for something else altogether, and stumbled upon these images — isn't that how these things usually come about! I suppose, that's why she called the deck 'Augenblick' — love at first sight is exactly what it was for her!

What was at once a deeply inspiring thought took on its final, firm stance when she saw the image which is now the 6 of Pentacles card in the deck.

With breathtaking images from locations across the globe, the Augenblick Tarot conveys the energy of each Tarot Card in a way that is expansive and empathically alive. The images invite you to take in the entire scene at once (Augenblick = a quick glance, remember?). They invite you to come in and dwell in the deeply evocative imagery, experiencing the feelings that create an impression within your deepest self. This is a deck that invites you to feel the scenes rather than intellectually examine the imagery. And what a wonderful experience it is!

### Cards

It is a square deck! Yes, it is quite unusual in its shape, but this shape now gives rise to an interesting angle to the ways you could interpret these cards.



Traditionally, Tarot Cards are read upright or reversed. But with this deck, two more angles, left and right, can be added to the interpretation. Cards turned towards the left can be seen variously as moving towards the unconscious, or going towards the past, while cards turned towards the right can be seen as movement towards the conscious, or towards the future.

The cards measure 8.9 cm or 3.5 inches square, and have rounded corners. While Shannon suggests using a wash shuffle to mix the cards up, I found myself shuffling the cards quite easily. It did feel a bit weird though, because of the shape of the cards. But, one can get used to it. The card back design does give away the direction of the card, so if it bothers you, try closing your eyes while you draw the cards.

### LWB +/- Book

The deck comes with a full-color book that covers a lot of ground. Not only does it include the interesting origin story, but it also discuss the various methods of interpreting the cards using the directions. There are plenty of examples that will help you figure out how to use this unique interpretation method in your readings with this deck. A PDF version of the book is also likely to be made available for the digitally-minded.

The book also shows you how to read using the signature Augenblick Square spread. The various aspects of the spread are discussed with an example spread as well, that will truly get you going. After a brief bit about the Structure of Tarot, the book then dives right into the card images and their meanings.

Each card image is accompanied by information about the location where the photograph was taken. After a short but comprehensive description of how the image connects with the energy of that Tarot Card, you will see an interesting section titled 'Prompt, questions, and things to consider'. I felt that this was the best section of the entire description. And this format has been followed for all the cards, majors, minors, and courts. However, there aren't any specific keywords for the upright,



at first (mostly because of the shape of the cards), but it wasn't difficult to do. As I did a few readings with this deck, I realized that the images enthralled and captured me as I read them. It was super easy to do an intuitive reading with these cards.

The cards I liked have truly captured the essence of the expansiveness of the imagery that I've encountered as the main draw of this deck. Each card opens you to the vastness of the meanings it holds.

I loved it, and am super glad to have it. I'm sure, I will be reading with it more, exploring the various directions that the cards take with respect to the information that the readings give.

## TARNISHED TAROT

By Stewart Bender

Review by Robert Scott

Self-Published

[www.thegamecrafter.com/games/tarnished-tarot](http://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/tarnished-tarot)

The Tarnished Tarot is the first tarot deck effort of Stewart A., professional photographer and digital designer. He has adapted the Major Arcana drawing heavily from The Rider-Waite symbolism, while returning the Pip cards to simple symbolism. The deck is standard "tarot" size, that is to say, what you typically see in mass market. There are some Major departures in Fool, Strength, Hermit, Hanged Man, Death, and the High Priestess, Magician, Wheel somewhat departs slightly for example. In my opinion, the departures that were done give the reader some new perspective and shade of meaning. These are not only new images, but new ways to look at the images, and new meaning to consider. I don't want to spoil, but there are some nice twists amongst them. Stewart says "I attempted to modernize a few of the Major Arcana, while still staying close to the imagery of Coleman.

reversed, and even left and right side meanings.

This isn't a deck recommended for total newbies / beginners to Tarot. You will need to be familiar with basic Tarot concepts before you can dive into these images.

### Majors, Minors, Suits, and Court Cards

The cards follow the standard nomenclature — nothing unusual there.

However, to my complete surprise, my deck came with alternate Strength, Justice, and Temperance cards. So if I preferred to use the Thoth system rather than the Rider-Waite-Smith system, I totally could!

Along with those cards, the deck came with an extra card depicting the image of the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress. To me, that was a fitting tribute to the source of inspiration for this deck.

### Reading With This Deck

As I've mentioned before, shuffling these cards did feel weird





For example, the Tower is a silhouette of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building at the time that the deck was created. I also made an attempt to remove Christian specific imagery, as seen in the World, and the Wheel of Fortune. There are some solid compositional choices, such as the clear relationship between the Devil and the Lovers. When I see the Hierophant, rather than children at the front, I see adults whose looks remarkably like Aleister Crowley to me, by coincidence or design? The Death card meets muster, yep not doubt it's death, and no sugar coating here. The Fool appears that he might be a "break-dancer". The Hanged Man is one of the most unique takes that I've seen.

All the cards are very recognizable, and the imagery is crisp, clear, and not muddy. These cards are very readable in so far as identifying each card and being distinct.

I can very much appreciate the color palette. They are not very colorful, but they are not strictly black and white. The word tarnished matches perfectly. The backs are one directional, but only upon very close examination, and could easily be read reversed, if that is already part of your practice. It has a dark color palette without going to the extreme of exceptionally foreboding. It seems quite objective and neutral to me thus far. I find it a deck that's direct without playing "where's the hidden symbols."

There are borders, which don't make or break this deck to me, but some readers may prefer it borderless. The silhouettes of the human type figures, to me, makes them more identifiable as "everyman" or "everywoman" and showing universal human experience without relying on race, or flesh and blood. The reader does not have to look for 'hidden' or obscured symbols with this deck. The symbol is either there, or it is not.

This deck seems to read well with the Waite Coleman Smith system for the most part, but I can see it also being read in either



a combined or transition to Marseilles or Pip decks. About the pips, the background scenes clearly reference the element and suit. The swords and wands are clearly distinguishable in shape and by pattern. I appreciate the lack of title banner or naming on the pip cards. The majors and the court cards do have title banners, but they do not detract from the art. Per Stewart "Many of the pips were close to the layouts in the Coleman deck, some were pure intuition, drawing on my formal design background." My wife doesn't care for pip style decks, but she liked these better than most.

The court cards do well to not simply replicate the same page, knight, queen, and king models on each suit. Bravo on that! It seems as if you read the courts as actual and specific people, based on age, family position, and gender in a fortune telling style you could do so, not just the 'qualities' of the person.

The Tarnished tarot I think could be used by a beginner or long-time practitioner. I would recommend that a true beginner be armed with a Waite Coleman Smith little white book, there's plenty room in the tuck box for it, or basic Waite Coleman Smith reference (such as Pictorial Key to the Tarot, etc.).

I could very much see this deck as an on the go deck for public readings, and much of a feeling of a "working" deck.

## ASIAN AMERICAN TAROT

Review by Benebell Wen

The Asian American Literary Review

Asian American Tarot: A Mental Health Project - 2017

A dear friend gifted me with the Asian American Tarot thinking I'd love it and she should be right. I really wanted to love this deck. I would say that I am biased in favor of loving this deck for more reasons than I can list, from being Asian American myself to knowing most of the names of the artists and writers who worked on this project and knowing the literary journal that ran it. I want to shower this deck with praise and be ever so proud that this, this is the very first Asian American tarot deck. Instead, for me, it fell flat and, worse yet, this isn't tarot. I'm not entirely clear what part of this deck is tarot other than a few shallow references interspersed throughout the cards and literally printing the word TAROT on the box.

What I do praise about the endeavor is it was never about creating a tarot deck in the first place. It's about fundraising for an arts-based self-care package to address mental health issues in the Asian American community. The money raised through





this tarot deck went toward a non-profit for addressing mental health. Since I'm not reviewing the non-profit's mission and am here to review the tarot deck on its merits, I can only talk about the deck. Otherwise, for its non-profit mission, it gets an immediate A+.

The packaging is adorable. I love the "Open in Emergency" stamp on the back of the box. The artwork holds strong visual interest and as a collaborative deck, where each card was drawn by a different artist from the Asian American arts community, you're going to get an eclectic collection of art styles, which works for me. I love that this is a hand-held portfolio of Asian American art.

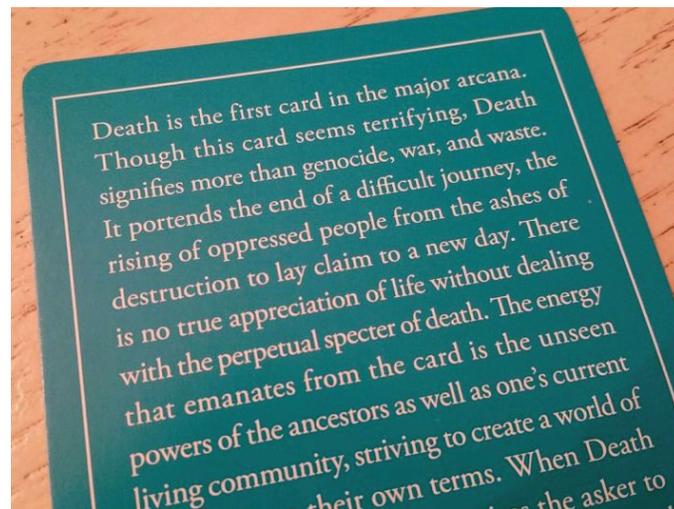
We begin with an unnumbered card, The Ghost. Oh! I think to myself, That's The Fool card. Nope. Wait this out. Then Key I is... Death? Key II as The Scholar could work, I see that, okay. Key III is The Migrant. I'm getting confused now, but still trying to stick it out despite Key I being Death. And then Key IV is The Lovers. Key VI is The Patient. The Fool card itself is now Key VIII. The card that should be The Tower is The Model Minority with artwork that reminds you of the Wheel of Fortune card, and the card that should be The Sun is the Desecrated Temple, which reminds me of The Tower.

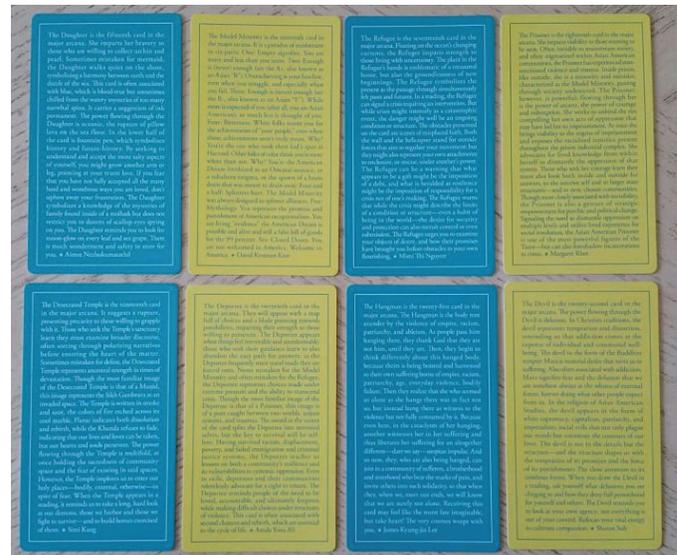
Okay. You've lost me. Plenty of tarot deck creators change up the card titles to fit a defined theme. Not as many of them change up the card numbering arrangement beyond Keys 8 and 11 (a tarot reference that anyone setting out to create a tarot deck should get). My initial hunch was that the deck creators decided to overturn the tarot system on its head, and create a new paradigm, as if to say we fight the hegemony. So I went searching for product description and marketing copy to that effect. I didn't find any.

There is an interview on Little Red Tarot with one of the editors of

the literary journal that organized the project. The interviewer asks about numbering Death as Key I. The response was, "because we wanted to highlight the impact of structural violence... the point of racism is to exploit vulnerabilities to the point of premature death," which just... I gotta confess, I didn't really follow. If you want to bring in strong Asian cultural references, at least make the Death card Key IV or something, to highlight Chinese superstitions around the number 4 and death.

The deck creator went on to say, "Death is always there; we live in its shadow and in its wake. And still, in the face of that, we have to figure out how to be." Yeah okay, even if I were to buy that premise, that still doesn't explain why Key I: The Magician got replaced by Death. My speculation is that the folks who put the project together didn't really know anything about the tarot, didn't do their homework (kind of a stereotype joke here...), and then maybe after-the-fact, realized they messed up and now have to make up interesting reasons for why the crazy re-numbering.





Key V: The Mother, you would think, would have been a perfectly fine Key III: The Empress replacement, so I'm not entirely sure why the restructuring here. And at no point is there any explanation for why the energies of these 23 (yes, 23) cards don't align in any way with the classical tarot archetypes. It would have in fact been really easy to line up these Asian American archetypes with tarot archetypes and still fit the traditional system.

Also, if you'll notice, some of the cards are numbered with Roman numerals, such as Keys V, VII, and VIII, etc. and while some are with Arabic, such as Key 6, Key 12, Key 13, etc. Again, not entirely sure if there was a carefully thought-through strategic reason for that or if it was just an oversight.

The cards themselves are not designed in a typical manner for divination. They are two-sided. One side has the art and the other side has text to explain the tarot archetype. Sort of. As you can see in the second image, according to the text, The Fool card is the eighth card in the Major Arcana [no capitalization is offered for "Major Arcana," which to me, further reveals the lack of an "insider" from the tarot community]. No other explanation is provided as to why The Fool card is now the eighth card rather than Key 0 or even the old school unnumbered card. Everything else in that block of text is very "Key 0: The Fool"-ish, so it just blows my mind why it's Key 8.

In terms of what I appreciate about the deck, the Asian American archetypes featured are compelling, a diverse representation of the Asian American community, from East Asia through South Asia and Southeast Asia, and the sense of community the energy of these cards exude is inspiring. The text on the card backs are well-written, provocative, and highly relevant to the Asian American experience. Reading through the cards in this deck will give

anyone a more three-dimensional and nuanced understanding of the Asian American experience. I don't fully understand how the cards help with mental health, but overall, I love the messaging, the artistry, and the spirit of the Asian American Tarot.

This Majors only deck consists of 23 cards in total. The unnumbered card is Ghost, though it does not correspond with The Fool. Then there is a card numbered Key XXII, something you don't see that often in the tarot world, and it is The Devil. The text on the back of the card for The Devil cards reads classically like The Devil card in tarot, except it isn't Key XV.

I read in an interview with Biddu Tarot that a recommended use for the Majors only deck is to replace it with the Majors in another tarot deck and then to do readings with the combined deck. So, I did. I went with a 15-card spread with the Majors mixed in with the Rider-Waite-Smith and asked the question, "What do I most need to know about my identity as an Asian American and how it affects my mental health?"

The three Majors I pulled are: The Ghost, The Daughter, and Death. I'm not sure whether to read The Ghost as The Fool, Key XV: The Daughter as... The Devil maybe? Key 1 is The Magician or just keep it as Death? And is this Death as in cessation and transformation per classical attributions or is it Death as in genocide, war, and waste, plus structural violence and racism leading to death (what one of the deck creators said was the meaning of the Death card)? That just seems like a peculiarly strong message to send in a tarot card crafted for readings on mental health.

However, as facets of the Asian American experience, The Ghost, The Daughter, and Death are prevalent facets in my life. These



three facets best explain my ancestral connections and also, a lot of the work I do now as a metaphysician of Asian American descent. So as an Asian American, this is a powerful deck to work with. It speaks to me in a guttural root chakra kind of way.

Yet the Asian American Tarot disappointed me, because I expected more. Maybe that's because I'm a tiger mom, I don't know. The lack of knowledge in the realm of tarot was painfully evident throughout. How difficult would it have been to get an Asian American tarot reader on board for consultation?

I am totally okay with a restructuring of the tarot system and inventing a new one, but then it has to be explained. If it isn't explained, then it needs to be self-explanatory. I pride myself in being rather astute at spotting patterns. I tried really hard and put in all of my effort to spot the pattern here and I just couldn't. The reinvented system makes no sense to me, even from an Asian American perspective. Having familiarity in various Eastern and Western mystery traditions, divinatory practices, and occult studies, I hypothesized that maybe it was following an Eastern esoteric school of thought. If it was, I didn't catch it.

The deck gets an E for Effort. I'm happy to see Asian American artists, poets, and writers venture out of their comfort zones to collaborate on a creative endeavor that pays homage to the tarot, something I love dearly and am passionate about. I just wish there was more... tarot... in the Asian American Tarot. Perhaps a better name would have been the Asian American Oracle Deck. Then every gripe I made in this review would have been for naught.

When all is said and done, I'm deeply grateful to have this deck. I've been wanting to get my hands on this deck and add it to my collection, a collection that would have been forever incomplete had I not acquired the Asian American Tarot. As an artifact of the Diasporic Asian consciousness, these cards are superb. Used as a form of cartomancy, also superb. But if you're going to call it a tarot deck, then as a tarot deck reviewer, I am obligated to point out that, well, this isn't a tarot deck.

### HERBAL HEALING ORACLE

By Sarah Baldwin, Ashley Verkamp  
 Review by Parker Torrence  
 Schiffer Book, 2017

The author Sarah Baldwin has written a unique book filled to the brim with useful information, presented in an engaging style. The card illustrations created by Ashley Verkamp are beautiful



and very much in tune with the plant spirits they symbolize. For anyone who studies or works with herbs, as well as anyone on a druid or shamanic path, this Oracle Deck will make a great addition to your collection.

The Herbal Healing Deck by Sarah Baldwin (illustrated by Ashley Verkamp) is a boxed set, and the first thing that impressed me was the box itself. Echoing the satiny pastel green and spot gloss





highlights of the cover art of the guidebook, the solid cardboard box is designed to last. Magnetic clasps hold the lid closed, and a pale green ribbon loop and matching ribbon hinges make it easy to open. The author recommends wrapping the deck in a piece of fabric between uses. Besides all the normal reasons for doing this with a divination deck, I found this very helpful in getting the cards back out of their recess in the box, once you have begun using the cards.

There are 48 cards in the deck divided into four suits, Roots, Herbs, Flowers and Trees of 12 cards each. The cards are 3½ x 5¼ inches (90 x 133 mm) a standard size for an Oracle deck. Sturdy card stock with a gloss finish making them flexible and easy to shuffle. The face of each card has a symbol denoting its suit and the back of the cards has a reversible flower of life design with leaves, even though there are no reverse interpretations for the cards.

The 144-page guidebook begins with an overview About the Deck, wherein the author defines the expectations of using this Oracle as a divination tool "... as a means of facilitating communication between us and the plants." She also covers the resources that were used to create a balanced personality for each plant card. The second chapter Dancing with the Plant Spirits gives us a glimpse into the ways in which the illustrator and author each achieved their connection and understanding of the plant spirits. For anyone who follows a path with shamanic leanings, this chapter contains a wealth of unique insight into the plant spirit realm.

The third chapter of The Herbal Healing Deck is titled How to Use This Deck. Special attention should be paid to the section "Uses and Limitations" for it clearly helps you to establish your expectations of the type of oracle that this deck is designed to be. This chapter also presents five Spreads designed for use with this deck: "Four Directions Spread" (four cards), "Past, Present, and Future Spread" (three cards), "Plant Wisdom Spread" (three cards), "Healing Spread" (four cards), and the "Illumination Spread" (six cards). The "Four Directions Spread" requires you to separate the deck into the four suits, the other four spreads allow you to shuffle the suits together and draw cards from the entire deck. My only issue was the use of small white fonts in the colored blocks in the book illustrations for the spreads. For anyone over the age of 40 this might create a minor challenge. It is only a major issue for the "Four Directions Spread" as all the others spread illustrations repeat the text in the instructions. I had one of my daughters use the "Four Directions Spread" to get a second opinion on the oracle aspect of the cards. She was very impressed by the outcome in relationship to the question.

The rest of the book is broken down by suit, with an introduction to the qualities of the suit, and two pages devoted to each card, with a color illustration of that card, and a delightful relevant quote. The cards within each suit are listed in alphabetical order. Each card's writeup, for the most part gives you some botanical data, information from the herbal medicine's doctrine of signatures, and folklore about the plant before covering the oracle aspect of that card. As the text does not separate background data from oracle meaning, you might want to highlight or underline the sections in the latter paragraphs for quick future reference. Each suit corresponds to a season and cardinal point, giving you the option of adding an element of timing or direction to your oracle reading.

- Roots | Winter
- Herbs | Spring-East
- Flowers | Summer-South
- Trees | Autumn-West

The print quality of the 3½" x 5¼" cards are excellent, all the images are clear with well-defined lines, no blurring, misprints or bleeding colors. Each card has a colored border and a thin white border around the central image. The name of the herb and keynote meaning along with a graphic for the suit, is positioned at the bottom of the card upon a lighter version of the border color. The colored borders are in colors that complement the central image, running in shades in the range of light greens, soft mauves, pale yellows and gentle blues. The spirit plant images are of a slightly geometric aspect, with other worldly qualities. All the images have eyes, some more subtle than others. I have randomly selected a card from each suit to explore in more detail.

Dream Root, from the suit of Roots, keynote meaning Dreams. The spirit plant background sky is in shades of indigo to a dark mauve, with a ground plane of dark turquoise green. A full moon floats in the sky, but my eyes are drawn to the white and gray spirit eyes above a flowing root that suggests an old man's beard. From the book (pages 45-46) I've learned that the plant is small perennial from South Africa, it has a connection to the crown chakra, and I should pay closer attention to my dreams. In the author's words, "Dream Root is here to connect to you with your divine nature, and your higher sense of knowing."

Boneset, from the suit of Herbs, keynote meaning Structure. The background of this spirit plant has a sky of soft blueish turquoise fading almost to white at the yellow-green ground plane. The plant itself runs from a root with a small red orb at its' heart, surrounded by thin red wavy lines, up a ladder of leaves to the fluffy white flowers at the top of each stem. The spirit eyes of this card are clear orbs just below a trinity of flowers at the top. From the book (pages 64-65), this plant has a connection to the root chakra, and has been used as a remedy for the flue. The focus of

the message is in strengthening the foundation of my health, and my long-term goals.

St. John's Wort, from the suit of Flowers, keynote Illumination. The sky in this card is a gray green with rays of white, bring to my mind a dawn sky, the ground plane is in the range of grass green the day after it has rained. The large five petal yellow flower sits atop a stem of green that runs down to a group of leaves at the bottom that recalls a green man image. From the book (pages 108-109) I discover that this plant, before it was named after John the Baptist had an ancient connection to the green man. Acting upon the solar plexus chakra, it can boost digestion, and aid your gut-level instincts. In the author's words, "Areas that have been shrouded by darkness may now come to light, giving you the information needed to make changes."

Willow, from the suit of Trees, keynote Interconnection. Pale green willow leaves fill the top of the background of this card with a ground plane in a light blue-slate color palette. The tree is in soft browns, with violet iris eyes. At the center of the tree is a geometric shape of spirals surrounded by six small green orbs, and a pink orb at the center. Lines of pale yellow energy flow through the central orb. From the book (pages 140-141) I learned about willow bark and its' relationship to aspirin. How our feelings and health are related, and the importance of keeping our words, thoughts and actions positive. Like our feelings and our health, we are all connected. I found the quote the author used from Alan Watts most insightful, "I'll tell you what hermits realize. If you go off into a far, far forest and get very quiet, you'll come to understand that you're connected with everything."

Title: The Herbal Healing Deck

Deck Type: Oracle

Author: Sarah Baldwin

Illustrator: Ashley Verkamp

Packaging: Boxed set

Book: 6" x 9" x 1 1/2" | 144 pages

Deck: 3 1/2" x 5 1/4" | 48 cards

Publisher: Schiffer Publishing, 2016

ISBN number: 978-0-7643-5213-3

Website: schifferbooks.com



## VIBRATIONAL EARTH CHILDREN ORACLE DECK

By Debbie A. Anderson & illustrated by Kim Dreyer

Reviewed by Louise Underhill, Priestess Tarot

*The Vibrational Earth Children Oracle Deck* is a deck of 52 cards which creator Debbie A. Anderson says she created for working with children. She designed the deck to help children express their feelings. Being a mum of three, I know kids can get emotional, irrational, angry, and elated – all in the space it takes for a single breath. Often, they can express themselves, but sometimes they can't. Could these cards help them be expressive during those challenging times, when their emotions are overwhelming them?

First of all, I'm going to go through the boring bits. I'm loving the calming purple colour of the card backs. There is a whole Chalky's Children-like design on the back, which draws the eye.

(If you never saw that show, search it out on YouTube.)

The cards themselves are of a good quality, glossy but not bulky. They're a decent size, too, slightly bigger than a U.S. Games Systems standard tarot deck, but not overly so. If you have really small hands, you might struggle a bit.

The cards are not numbered; however, there is a decent LWB (or purple book, in this case) to go with them in which the cards are listed in alphabetical order. This will help you look up what Debbie says each card means.

There's also a small play on words throughout the deck, obvious from the card titled "Bee Respectful." This aspect helps make the deck useful for older kids who get puns.

Daily draws may be a good way to start using this deck with your children. You can let your child draw a card for their day and have them interpret what it means from the image. You can add to their insights from your own views, or read them the very well-written paragraph from the guidebook. The deck is designed to be a conversation starter, a way for children to express their feelings

by choosing cards and discussing them.

The idea that you only draw one card, though, is not enforced. There are several different ways you can use this deck with your children. In the guidebook Debbie offers a three-card spread for the older kids as well as some suggestions that you can use with a 3-year old on page 17. The whole emphasis is on having fun and actually playing with the deck.

*The Vibrational Earth Children Oracle Deck* is one I'll start using with my kids when the school holidays are upon us; though, I'll be using a range of tactics, as my kids are quite different in age/ education groups.

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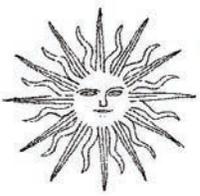
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