



Tyldwick Tarot

Art by Neil Lovell

MAJOR ARCANA

0. The Fool

The mirror is reminiscent of "Through the Looking-Glass," the tale of Alice who climbed through the mirror to an alternate reality. Things are not what they seem! The mirror may not be quite a true mirror since it seems to reflect back a landscape....mountains and a lake.... a 'new vista' opening up...

The jester mask is on the inside of the mirror, about to come into our reality. Again the mask underscores the fact that what is on the outside is not necessarily a true reflection of what is. The jester's wisdom may not come across as politically correct, but he has a child's ability to see (and say) the truth.

The butterflies around the mirror represent the transformations the Fool will go through as soon as he steps through the mirror. So many things to learn... They can also symbolize a shift from inaction to action. Even if you have been feeling stuck (cocooned) for a long time, a new beginning is possible... or even inevitable. It is time to emerge and fly!

Greyhounds were historically bred for coursing game and later for racing. The game he will be chasing will be the Fool. It is like the bus line in the U.S. that travels throughout the states, Canada and Mexico. A journey is definitely about to begin here.

There is a metronome on the mantle. It keeps time in a totally different way than a clock. It provides rhythm instead of "time ticking away." The Fool at this point is in the present moment and unconcerned with the passing of time. it's not a clock, that measures time the same way for everyone. A metronome allows you to set your own pace, or march to the beat of a different drummer. The fool may be just a featureless mannequin right now, but even at the very beginning of his trip, he is determined to go on his own terms.

The artist mannequin is featureless and can be moved in different positions. It indicates that the Fool has a fresh start - he can literally become whomever and whatever he would like at this point.

1. The Magician

The puppet theater shows the entertaining and manipulative side of the Magician. He "pulls strings" to get the figures to perform as he would like. It is easy to get lost in the show and forget that someone else is behind the scenes doing the controlling. There could be a connection between the artist mannequin in the Fool and the puppets here, as they both can be manipulated.

The pattern of the floor tiles in the Magician is the same as the 'motley' pattern on the wall in the Fool card, although it's orientated differently, to suggest that we're seeing the same thing from a different perspective.

The wall covering resembles a quilt. Two of the patterns used in it are the "flying geese" and the "Ohio star." Quilting takes a great deal of skill. You must envision a design, figure out how to make the patterns, cut out all the many pieces, sew them together, then add batting and a back. Some of the intricately pieced ones are the pinnacles of creativity and craftsmanship. So here is the positive side of the Magician - envisioning an idea and holding the focus long enough to physically make it real.

On the table lie a wand, a coin/disk, a knife and a cup. Each represents the gifts we are all given to help us in creating what we desire. The wand is our passion and ambition; the coin our bodies, this earth and our finances; the knife is our intellect that allows us to learn, think logically and communicate; and the cup is our ability to make emotional connections as well as the relationships that encourage and support us.

All the tools and the puppet box lie on a simple table with two drawers. Nothing fancy here, but I do wonder what tricks or surprises the Magician might be hiding inside those drawers.

2. The High Priestess

A statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis sits on what appears to be a clock. Perhaps this indicates stopping time or the power over time. Anyone who has ever been deep in meditation has experienced being "beyond" time. Many of Isis's priests and priestesses had a reputation for wisdom and healing, and were said to have other special powers, including dream interpretation. This fits nicely into the traditional meaning of the High Priestess as one who has hidden wisdom and the ability to help us tap into our own intuitive knowledge. She sits because she knows this wisdom is within - there is nowhere to go to seek it but inside oneself.

Isis holds a lotus flower scepter in her left hand. The lotus closes at night and sinks underwater, then re-emerges and blooms again in the morning. For Egyptians, it was a natural symbol of the sun and creation, rebirth and regeneration. Along with the obelisks it could be another representation of the dichotomies between light/darkness, without/within, revealed/concealed that are mediated by the High Priestess.

Obelisks were said to be a petrified ray of a sun-disk (a disk with wings that represented the sun god). A pair usually stood in front of a pylon (a gateway to an Egyptian temple). The High Priestess definitely represents a gateway to the inner self. The obelisk with the darker base might represent a moon ray and the other a sun ray, indicating the two ways of spiritual seeking - without and within.

The arches - on the wall and the two underneath the table - all imply a gateway to someplace special or sacred. The two under the table represent shamanic journeys to other worlds that often begin by entering a place like a cave or under the root of a tree.

3. The Empress

The statue of Artemis/Diana is modeled on one discovered in Ephesus. On the lower part of the figure are rows of animals; beside her were probably two deer before they were broken. Archaeologists argue whether she has eggs, breasts or bull testicles on her chest, but regardless, they all are forms of creation and fertility. Homer refers to her as Artemis Agrotera, Potnia Theron: "Artemis of the wildland, Mistress of Animals". Though she was a protector, she also led the hunt.

The garden the statue is in is filled with flowers including red roses. The flowers represent the sensual; roses speak of the intense emotional side of the Empress. But these emotions aren't the hand-wringing, "poor pitiful me" kind - they are the source of power.

The garden wall might seem to imply there is some control here, but the huge oak trees behind it tell otherwise. Boundaries for her are made to be crossed.

One of the planter urns contains ivy, a plant that is considered invasive in the U.S. It covers garden beds and runs up trees and houses. Here is the downside of the Empress - sometimes her need to nurture goes to the extreme. A day of rain may be welcomed, but a month of it can cause flooding and damage.

4. The Emperor

The Emperor is educated and enjoys learning because it helps him become a better ruler. The neatness of the books are also a hint that he is very organized. He feels more centered inside when his environment isn't chaotic.

The bust on the desk is one of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He was called "the philosopher on the throne" and his appearance is styled after Greek philosophers whom he admired. But at the same time, he was an all-powerful ruler. He was not only a Roman Emperor but also an important Stoic philosopher. As a Stoic his writings were not so concerned with manipulating events through power as with enduring the inevitable pains of life through inner strength. His philosophy epitomizes the domination of rational thought over emotion. "You have power over your mind - not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength." The god the Emperor is most devoted to is Logic.

The armillary sphere on the right was a teaching tool that astronomers used before the invention of the European telescopes. The movable metal rings helped them determine the path of celestial objects. Originally the ball in the middle was the Earth then later the Sun. The sphere represents the Emperor's need for control. He likes advance knowledge before something happens so he can plan for it. The globe on the other side is also for knowledge, plans and strategies. You need to know where your allies and enemies are, and what lies between you.

The black and white checkerboard floor underneath the rug is like a chessboard, and the Emperor rules in the same way he would play a game of chess. Predicting his opponent's next move, trying to outfox him, and looking for a strategy that would help him protect his assets while winning is his game plan. Emotions are kept out of the game, because they might cause him to make a wrong move.

The antique writing desk brings to mind the phrase "put it in writing." Legalities are necessary to this ruler to make everything and everyone function as a whole. The room itself is like a study, one that would belong to the master of the household, where he conducts his important business and directs his affairs, and would be seen as a symbol of his power and control over the house.

5. The Pope

That the pope's statue is made of stone speaks to the importance of tradition. What you get from the Pope is knowledge and doctrine, as well as a sense of belonging (you're a part of the group). But you must "drink the kool-aid" and not question what has been taught. This could apply to more than just religion. Look how close he holds his hand to his chest; most popes when giving a blessing hold their hand high or wide. Not everyone is going to get his blessing; you must fit into his mold first.

The golden throne with the crown on top gives two messages: I have authority/power and the ability to reward (knowledge, belonging, heaven, etc.) or punish.

The basilica-like room is a bit imposing. Its arched ceiling is like the inside of a crown. Catholic Basilicas are pilgrimage sites, implying there is something to honor here. There are no soft cushions or tapestries and no greenery of any kind. It seems to be all metal and stone. This speaks of a knowledge that does not grow or adapt to change, and a dogma that is not meant to comfort but challenge you.

There are two small windows high up in the dome. They are partially boarded up, some panes open, some closed. Religion (or dogma of any kind) can be either a help or hindrance in letting the light shine into one's mind or life. Are the open panes open because of or spite of the imposing, daunting statue in the middle of the room? Are you too in awe of the Pope to try to climb up there and open the others?

6. The Lovers

The painting in the background comes from a sculpture that originally topped a fountain that shows Diana reclining with a stag. Diana was a virgin goddess, and she required the same commitment from those who served her. Once a man stumbled upon her bathing, and Diana turned him into a stag; his own hunting dogs killed him. She is the force that persuades a person to make a choice to stay "pure" and focused on one's calling rather than entangle oneself in the web of love.

Below the painting is a bust of Venus, the goddess of love - definitely the opposite of Diana! She would encourage one to dive wholeheartedly into a relationship, and enjoy the perks of having a lover or spouse.

On either side of the bust is a framed portrait, each with a different woman. If you choose the way of Venus, then you also have to make the choice of which person to whom you will commit yourself.

The table on which the pictures and bust rest has two drawers. You never know exactly what you're going to get when you make a decision (drawer number one or drawer number two). The commitment you make could bring a lot of joy or much grief.

7. The Chariot

A hall tree bench is often found near the entrance of a home; it usually has hooks or storage space under the seat for coats, gloves or boots. Here it has become a chariot, and the charioteer has stored all his personal stuff so he can concentrate on what's in front of him. He'll have to wait to sit on that comfy seat, as he has important things to do.

The charioteer is Apollo, who is associated with the sun; he drove his chariot across the sky, making the sun rise every morning. The sun is associated with the solar plexus chakra (Manipura) which governs personal power. As the statue is missing several limbs, this implies a mental power rather than a physical one.

The medieval tapestry in the background looks like it might be a hunting scene. There is a lot of activity, almost appearing chaotic. The charioteer faces away from the activity and focuses on his objective. We can get distracted from our our goals by the drama going on in other folk's lives, and this is a reminder to keep your mind on what you are aiming toward. On the other hand, it might represent the personal "hunt" of the charioteer.

The Naxian sphinx statues were a gift from the people of Naos and guarded Apollo's temple at Delphi. They were symbols of power, and the Greeks saw them as merciless (if you couldn't answer their riddles you got eaten - no excuses accepted). For the Chariot card, they represent the five senses, emotions and instincts. These are human components that are supposed to be tools to help guide us, but instead they often become our masters. Think of being on a diet, and yet you can't stop thinking about a quart of Ben and Jerry's ice cream. Or, imagine an obnoxious boss you'd really like to give a head slap. The Chariot is about learning to harness the senses, emotions and instincts so they work for us rather than against us.

8. Justice

One item that always seems to be in most Justice card is a set of scales, which imply fairness, equality and balance.

The mirror is a direct indication that before you go try to straighten out the rest of the world, you'd best take a good long look at yourself. Where am you being unfair? What is in your life that is unequal or unbalanced? You need to correct the imbalances in your own life first.

There appears to be four bug-eyed bird like animals and a lion's head at the center. The lion symbolizes that courage will be required of you for this task. The four strange birds might represent the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of your life. Rumer Godden once wrote, "There is an Indian proverb that says that everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, a mental, an emotional, and a spiritual . Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time but unless we go into every room every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person." You can easily get comfortable in one "room" of your life and forget about the others; this card reminds you to do otherwise.

The two vases at first appear very similar, but on closer inspection they are slightly different. This means fairness might not mean giving exactly the same thing to each person or situation. One thing might be appropriate for one situation but not for another. Sending heavy coats and snow boots to needy children in a cold climate would be useful, but not to needy children who live in the tropics.

The fresh flowers are lovely, but in a few days they will wilt and lose their beauty. The cut flowers are a reminder that readjustment is not done just once, but something you must be alert for on a daily basis.

9. The Hermit

The phrase in the black means you are making enough money to pay bills and have some left over. Being in the red means you are operating with a deficit. So the dominance of the color red in this card indicates the need for some spiritual accounting - not to find what is creating a hole in your wallet, but in your soul.

This card appears to be somewhere underground and enclosed, rather than a fountain in a niche. It has that dank, subterranean feel to it, and it looks like a Victorian cellar or church crypt, or even an underground reservoir. The lower brickwork looks damp and stained. Up above the arch is the splay of a vaulted ceiling made from the same red brick, suggesting that this is somewhere very much enclosed – a hidden place where people rarely go.

This statue is Seneca, the philosopher, at the moment of his death. At the base is a really thick, solid foundation stone, but the figure is not standing on it, he's on a small knobbly platform suspended just above it, which looks like it's either made from holey stone or it's something very old and worn. As if he's not quite in contact with the solidity of the ground/real world. He looks upward, almost as if he is seeing the stars for the first time. Now that he is alone and far from the hustle and bustle, there are less distractions and he glimpses things he hasn't noticed before. If this is a fountain, there is no water flowing, indicating the ability to detach and look at what is with objectivity rather than emotion. He is nearly naked (baring his soul), except for some sort of wrap around his waist. He must prepare himself mentally for some difficult work ahead.

The lantern-type lamp obviously represents illumination. The man seeks clarity, and there are some dark places that he's going to have to shine the light on. Like the accountant, he's hoping to discover why he is spiritually overdrawn. Hopefully he'll find some answers, and one day he can hold out the lantern for others on the same quest.

The lantern (portrayed in many decks as being carried by the Hermit but in this case hanging way up out of his reach) is the only source of illumination and yet it doesn't seem to be lit. It has a brightness in its outer shape but the glass and interior is dark. The philosopher-hermit seems to be gazing up towards it anyway. The wisdom and illumination he's seeking is not found in the physical lantern but is to be found within himself. If you view him as Seneca, peering through the veil on the cusp of physical death, this makes a lot of sense. The chamber also conjures an image of the condemned cell where certain Greek philosophers spent their final hours ... not necessarily to be seen in a grim context but as a state which must be passed through prior to spiritual illumination.

10. The Wheel of Fortune

The garden has two types of plants - annuals that die each year (some of the flowers and herbs), perennials that will come back for several years before dying (such as the roses and ivy). In the perennial group there is also evergreens (like the ivy) and deciduous plants that lose their leaves each winter. The garden is a perfect analogy for the changes that occur over time. Some changes seem quick (annuals), some a little slower (perennials), and some we hardly notice (evergreen perennials).

The water drips downward to keep the wheel moving. It follows the flow of gravity and reminds that all change is natural like the seasons; it is neither reward nor punishment.

The four stone faces/figures may represent ancient Assyrian or Egyptian mythological figures:

Eagle - Nisroch was an Assyrian eagle-headed god of agriculture

Assyrian face/Lamassu - Lamassu was a protective Assyrian deity often portrayed with the face of a man and the body of a bull; his function was that of a gatekeeper.

Monkey/Ape - ancient Egyptians believed the ape or monkey was a form their gods might take. The most familiar would probably be Thoth, who in his ape form was known as A'an. A few of his roles were the measurement of time and maintaining equilibrium.

Human face/Water spout - This face has a surprised look, like humans as they tend to look when change comes. But it also hints (since it is the water spout) that some of the changes that occur come not from some outside force, but through our own actions. The mythological figures represent the natural forces that we have no control over (like the changing seasons).

11. Fortitude

The garden itself represents an unprotected place. In the world outside the safety of our cocoons, we find people and situations that we have to deal with, from "pesky mosquitoes" to "poisonous vipers." The lion is the fiery passion and power we have to deal with these things, but it must be tamed to be useful. Its mouth is closed and its razor-sharp claws are hidden behind the garden wall. In this capacity, it provides us with courage (minus the violence) to meet our challenges; it gives us an inner strength (minus the arrogance) to remain steadfast, patient and tolerant. This is a power we must control, otherwise we will be controlled by it.

The wren symbolizes that strength sometimes comes in humble packaging. They remind us that it is okay to speak up (and do it loudly), as long as what you say isn't just used to shred someone out of anger (like the lion's teeth and claws). Justice rather than pride should be the goal. The image of a bird perched on the edge of a green pool with the dry lions fountain head on the other side of the pool is a very calming image, possibly showing the calm control that can be achieved by looking deep within ourselves.

The wren is not frightened or threatened at all, it's standing there in the full awareness that the lion isn't going to harm it. That's where the usual meaning of the Strength card comes in, it's that quiet confidence in being safe and in control, despite the presence of powerful forces. The lion is weighted down by the hefty lintel stone above him, which keeps his power in check.

12. The Hanged Man

The inverted man is the sun god, known among neopagans as the Oak King. The Oak King was associated with spring and summer - active times of the year when new growth, fertility and abundance reigned. But at Midsummer, when the long days began to get shorter and shorter, the Oak King was "sacrificed" by his other half - the Holly King. The Holly King would reign until Yule, after which the days would gradually start to lengthen again and the Oak King would come back into power. This is a perfect image to symbolize the Hanged Man. Just as growth stops and a focus on survival begins at winter, at times we find ourselves suspended, unable to move forward by controlling outer circumstances. We may struggle, but fighting the situation will be useless; we might as well surrender and tell our egos to go on vacation for awhile.

On a side note, in the Fortitude card before the Hanged Man was a wren, the symbol of the Oak King that was often sacrificed at the turn of the seasons.

The oak tree has long been seen as a symbol of strength and endurance. But as was learned in the Fortitude card, the strength needed now comes from an inner place rather than physical power.

Newton's cradle is a toy made of suspended metal balls; when you pull back one on the end and release it, it sends shock waves through those in the middle, but only the ball on the opposite end will react by swinging outward. It illustrates the three physics principles at work: conservation of energy, conservation of momentum and friction. What could be a better symbol of the Hanged Man than something that shows the conservation of these three principles? And just as the balls are suspended, so are we.

The heavy chest (probably made of oak) the Newton's cradle sits on emphasizes the heaviness of this card - things have come to a grinding halt. All that important stuff we were so keen on doing has been put on hold and stuffed into the drawers. We're just going to have to be patient for a bit.

13. Death

Just as the Fool stepped out of the looking glass from one reality to another to begin his life, here something or someone passes back through again to the other side. The skeleton with his sickle becomes a reaper, cutting down what had once been growing and alive.

The clock above the mirror indicates that, at least on this side of the mirror, time eventually comes to an end. As the writer of Ecclesiastes put it, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot..."

The pump organ was an organ popular in small churches and homes in the 19th century. It produces sound when the brass reeds inside are vibrated by escaping air as the bellows is pumped by the foot pedal. The reeds are activated by different stoppers (the knobs), and their function is to add a better sound quality. While the inner workings are fairly simple, learning to play the organ requires some work. In the same way an ending might be sudden and straightforward, but it may take time and work to process it. Whether an actual or metaphorical death, if we lose something we love, we will need to work through Kubler-Ross' stages of grief if we are to move on with our lives: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.

The two urns on the top of the organ are the ashes of past endings. Why keep the past around? If you were in an awful marriage and finally got divorced, you might want to remember what you were attracted to in that person and avoid it in your next relationship. Those ashes can help you not make the same mistakes twice.

14. Temperance

The painting is of the Greek goddess Iris (Golden Winged Goddess of Rainbow) as we see in the arch above her. Like the old alchemists, we have to find the correct proportions for the elements of life to make/find our golden pot. The Color red can symbolize passion (Pathos) and the cold blue (Logos) the reason, like Iris we must find the balance between them, being an intermediate of earth and heaven.

The angel in the painting wears two colors: red and blue. The red color represents the angel Michael, the commander of the celestial forces who brings a sword. The blue color represents the angel Gabriel, herald of the Divine who brings a message. In New Age thought, Michael is linked to the Sun and Gabriel to the Moon. Both angels represent two extremes of dealing with life, but the angel in the painting is a combination of both, representing choosing the middle way of moderation.

The arch surrounding the painting represents the gateway to victory.

Beneath the painting are three figures that appear to be a human flanked by two angels. This reminds me of those cartoons that showed a character with a little devil (fallen angel) and an angel on either shoulder. Whose side will you choose to be on? Or will you choose neither side and remain neutral, holding things in balance?

15. The Devil

The mirror is darkened though there seems to be the shadow of a person's head in it. It is reminiscent of the biblical phrase, "For now we see through a glass darkly," as well as Plato's Allegory of the Cave. It implies a time when a person can see only shadows of reality. He doesn't have the ability to think clearly, even though he might think he can.

The goat head at the top of the mirror is a nod to the Greek god Pan, who is associated with the wildness of nature. He was often depicted with panpipes and another (ahem) instrument, indicating his association with fertility. It is easy to see how the Church would look down on such "natural expressions" as sinful and depraved and link this god to the devil. In this card, the pleasures of Pan/devil have been used to either fill the emptiness inside a person or cover over a person's fears. What normally would just be an occasional bit of fun has become an addiction; the pleasure is no longer a tool but has become the person's master.

The candle sconces are empty, signifying a loss of hope and clarity (no light).

Two figures on the mantel try to flee, but they are chained to the candle sconce. There's a saying that "everywhere you go, there you are," meaning you can't run from a problem that originates inside yourself. When the figures understand that wisdom and begin to work with it, the cords that bind them can be cut.

The cold, dark fireplace symbolizes an emptiness, that "hole in the soul" feeling that makes life seem without meaning. It subverts the idea of a fireplace as a source of warmth and light. It will take digging into the spiritual depths of one's being to get the fire burning again.

16. The Tower

The biblical story of the Tower of Babel tells of how (after the Great Flood) the people got together to build a tower to heaven. God saw what they were up to and zapped them so they spoke different languages. Without being able to communicate, they gave up their effort. Various rabbinic sources offer explanations for the the story. One suggests the people were motivated by wanting to be protected (no more floods) and special: "God has no right to choose the upper world for Himself, and to leave the lower world to us; therefore we will build us a tower." In other words, they wanted to figure out how not to have to deal with the crap that life sometimes throws. Today, humans are just as anxious to protect themselves, and our "towers" of protection come in all shapes and forms. There was once a story of woman whose child died; she came to Buddha and begged him to return him to life. Buddha told her to go find someone in the village whose life death had not touched, and he would do so. Of course there was no one, and in the process of talking to all the villagers, she realized she wasn't being singled out - stuff happens to everyone. The crack in the glass is the shattering of this illusion.

The masks come from different cultures (and language groups), recalling the "babble" of humans unable to communicate with one another. On the left, there is a Japanese ivory noh mask, an Aztec turquoise mask, and a wooden, possibly Kwakiutl, mask. On the top right, it looks like the head of a Japanese Shakōki-dogū figurine, the middle one looks like an ancient Greek mask of Dionysius, and the bottom is a golden Inca statuette. These had various uses-in drama, potlatch ceremonies, etc., but the point is that they are false presentations for scripted ceremonial, not spontaneous, use. They are representations we make to ourselves, not reality; yet we risk coming to believe that our masks *are* our own faces. The masks around the frame show the different ways the ego can try to protect itself from the travails of life. There's the gym membership mask that promises if we stay in shape we won't have to worry about health problems. The fat bank account mask whispers we will never be financially insecure. The religion mask tells us if we worship the right deity and have enough faith, we won't have to worry about anything. Then there's the intellectual/higher education mask that assures us we have the brains and logic to figure out a solution to everything. The relationship mask tells us we will never be alone and will always be emotionally supported no matter what. And finally is the civic group mask that promises all those good deeds we do will insure that no karma crud will ever stick to us. There are two empty "shelves" with no masks on them. Are these being presently worn? Or is this room for our next illusion if we don't learn anything from our Tower experience?

The star rug is a nod to the next card in the major arcana. It symbolizes that when our egos get knocked out of the comfy illusions we've built around us, we'll find healing and understanding around the corner.

17. The Star

The water trickling down from the mouth of the fountain represents the cleansing and refreshing properties of water (much needed after the Tower experience). The hexagram symbol around the fountain is an alchemical one. The union of the fire symbol (triangle pointing up) with the water symbol (triangle pointing down) is a combination of opposites representing transmutation. In alchemy, that would translate to changing lead to gold, but in spiritual terms, it might signify enlightenment after experiencing the dark night of the soul. The fusion of the two triangles also creates the alchemical symbols for earth and air (triangles with a line through them). Having all four elements together represents a union of perfect balance - a subtle reminder that we can't run away or hide from a part of life (as in the Tower). As Byron Katie often says, we need to learn to "love what is," accepting the good and bad cards that life deals us. Then we ourselves can be the vessel in which transmutation occurs.

The Greek piece of pottery is a wine jug (entitled by the Metropolitan Museum of Art "Dionysus and Eros in Procession"). Wine is used both to celebrate and relax, a fitting drink for this card. It is time to appreciate making it through our challenge, but also a time to relax and gain our strength before the next one comes along.

The flowers and ivy indicate two things: we can't stay in this idyllic setting forever (the flowers) but there is wisdom we can carry with us (evergreen ivy).

18. The Moon

Those who eat seafood are well aware of the need for nut crackers to open the hard exoskeleton of lobsters to get to the meat inside. Humans aren't much different; we like to appear tough on the outside to hide our vulnerability on the inside. In fact, we do it so well, we sometimes hide and repress our emotions and memories from ourselves.

The two greyhound dog statues remind me of guard dogs. They are the ego's helpers if we chance a peek at what lies in our unconscious. Their "woofs" are translated into fearful ideas about what we might find if we look too deeply. In the Tower card, we use external things to try to protect ourselves from circumstances in the world. The Moon card deals with internal things, beliefs and feelings that make us too uncomfortable to uncover.

The two objects on the mantel remind me of miniature pagoda towers. These Asian towers were built as a shrine or temple. In this card, they act as a gateway to finding something sacred. Yes, I might have to become a hero or heroine and battle the illusory monsters I find, but a spiritual treasure will be unlocked if I'm successful.

The mirror indicates an opening from one reality to another (the unconscious). The full moon has been associated with moods and dreams. The pull of its gravity on the ocean waves symbolize the pull our unconscious can have on our words and actions. All those slips of the tongue and dreams we don't forget are evidence of its power. So too are our hair-trigger reactions that seem to come out of nowhere. Delving into our unconscious is never easy, because the language it uses is that of symbols. Though the moon only reflects the sun's light, its fullness indicates the time is right to do some diving into the depths of our unconscious. The crayfish motif seems to be decorating a fireplace screen, occluding the light of our conscious mind. Unlike some of the other mirrors in the house this one is highly reflective, although the image it displays is not literal. It is like the Mirror of Galadriel from Lord of the Rings that showed "things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be..." and of course a different vision for each individual viewer.

19. The Sun

Surya is a sun god and the chief of the classical planets in Hindu astrology. He is often depicted riding a chariot harnessed by seven horses (or one horse with seven heads) which represent the seven colors of the rainbow or the seven chakras. He is associated with healing: in one Hindu legend, a man with leprosy was inspired to write verses in honor of Surya, and by the time he finished the last verse, he was cured. Surya represents the wholeness and balance that comes after the Fool has gained wisdom (through the previous majors) and been made aware of his assets and flaws. Like a prism that shows the colors inside light, he sees and understands on a new level. He realizes he not separate, but a part of something much greater than his egoic self.

It is a myth that the sunflower turns its head to follow the sun across the sky each day. Once you've seen a truth, you can't "unsee" it, no matter which way you look. The flower head is actually not one flower but numerous small flowers crowded together (just inside the outer petals). Again this reinforces being a part of something greater. Sunflowers can remove some toxic substances from soil and water; they were used at the Chernobyl site and are being considered for use at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. The filtering and cleaning properties of the sunflower are a reminder that just because you've cleaned out your spiritual pantry once, doesn't mean you don't need to continue to keep an eye on things. You need to continue to monitor what goes in.

The sun designs on the wall and the floor symbolize the sun's illumination and energy that provides life for all. It's illumination represents clarity and understanding, and such an understanding creates an energetic passion for life.

20. Judgment

The wallpaper at the top of the card shows busy people going about their day. Like most of us, these people show how goal focused we can be to the extent that we are oblivious to the more subtle spiritual truths around us.

The small altar's angel is probably Gabriel, often connected to the trumpet blowing angel in Revelations 11 declaring the kingdom of God had come. The kingdom of heaven was said to be within, which implies an inner awakening rather than an external event. Gabriel's horn (also called Torricelli's trumpet) is a geometric figure with an infinite surface area but a finite volume, suggesting the infinite divine meeting the finite.

In a traditional Jewish tale, it is said an angel teaches a soul all the secrets of the world before it is born. But at the time of birth, the angel puts its finger to the infant's lips (creating the indentation in the upper lip) and reminds it to keep everything a secret. But in this card, Gabriel calls us to remember what we've forgotten. It is this wisdom that will clear away the confusion and help us make decisions with confidence and purpose.

Most of the small children surprised by a jack-in-the-box cry before they laugh when the puppet pops out. Here's one theory about the origin of these toys: "the name 'Jack' was a reference to the devil, referred to as a 'jack'. There is a legend in England about a medieval ecclesiastic who claimed to have captured the devil by trapping him a boot. This story may have contributed to the toy's invention as well, as illustrations were made of him holding a boot with the devil's head popping out of it." So basically they symbolize a scary surprise that doesn't seriously harm us in any way, but makes a strong impression. In other words, it is a wake-up call.

21. The World

The fixed astrological symbols (Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius and Taurus) in the crown molding represent grounding qualities of stabilization, determination, depth and persistence. Even though things are constantly changing in the physical world, there is a center within where there is peace.

In Hinduism, the Supreme Being is seen as having three tasks: creation, preservation and dissolution and recreation. Shiva (seen in this card) represents the destruction and regeneration stage. In this particular form, he is known as Nataraja, the "Lord of Dancers." This ecstatic dance is called the Dance of Bliss (anandatandava), and though his movements produce the continuous creation-destruction of the universe, inwardly he is calm and absorbed in the void of the Absolute. What outwardly may appear as a duality (life and death) is actually a continuous circle. When we stand on the rim of that circle, we experience a certain view from a certain point (duality). It is only from within the center of the circle that we can understand the wholeness. Shiva indicates we should "follow our bliss." Not the pleasure-seeking kind, but the kind that brings deep tranquility and allows us to see change as natural. Shiva's dissolution and recreation role indicates that although we may see the complete picture, there is more to learn. We will become the Fool once again as we move through the lessons of life.

The plants pictured in the card are flowering dogwood. These blooms symbolize endurance and durability through all the seasons. Indeed, their leaves are changing colors now, then they will produce bright red berries and bare limbs, followed by showy white flowers, and finally a crown of green leaves. For some people, the dogwood flower represents the crucifixion - not just death, but resurrection as well. Here again is the continuous loop that looks like change but is actually part of a whole. The sacrifice it represents is the replacement the ego with the higher self as CEO.

On the table are three geometric solids: a tetrahedron, a sphere and a cube. In Hinduism, there are three types of space: "Bhutakash," the physical body (cube); "Chittakash," thoughts and emotions (tetrahedron); and "Chidakash," the vast, Supreme Consciousness (sphere). In the World card, we have found Chidakash (even if only briefly); the veil of illusion has been removed and we experience the vast infinite inner space without being tied to thoughts, emotions, or the physical. Think of a tiny point that expands outward in all directions, creating a sphere - there are no limitations. But if you try to do this with the tetrahedron or cube, you don't have that freedom.

The primary shapes on the table are open to all kinds of interpretation. "Squaring the circle" (a symbol incorporating all three shapes) is an alchemical glyph relating to the creation of the philosopher's stone. They are also used to illustrate principles of Aikido:

"The body should be triangular, the mind circular. The triangle represents the generation of energy and is the most stable physical posture. The circle symbolizes serenity and perfection, the source of unlimited techniques. The square stands for solidity, the basis of applied control."

-O Sensei

WANDS

Ace of Wands

Here is the beginning of the Wands/Staves suit, whose motto might be "I create, I do." Aces are raw power and show us what is possible. The Tyldwick Ace of Staves is a simple staff with no leaves sprouting or anything attached to it. It looks like a staff one might use in hiking to aid in climbing. And that is indeed what it is - a tool to be USED. The top has a most definite phallic appearance, which represents the creative energy available. The background of the card is a geometric design of squares, indicating a need to bring what we are enthusiastic about into solid reality. Also in the design are 14 smaller red squares - the same number of cards in this suit. The red squares are like 14 red match heads. Time to strike each one in turn and get the bonfire burning.

Two of Wands

In this image, two spikes of a red hot poker (aka torch lily) stand against a bare background. This plant is a native of Africa, so it likes lots of sun and heat. Hummingbirds love these flowers. Here, one inflorescence (cluster of flowers) is in full bloom while another is just beginning; hummingbirds could enjoy the fully opened flowers on the one spike, but would have to wait a while for the other spike's flowers to completely open. In the same way, we often find ourselves enjoying some part of life, but wondering, "Is this all there is?" What we have is good, but there might be something even better out there. We begin to feel restless. Should we maintain the status quo or strike out for new territory? It would require some effort on our part if we decide to branch out, and patience and tenacity would be needed as well. If the excitement of doing something more/different grabs us, we're going to have to emerge from our comfy cocoons.

Three of Wands

On top of a chest sits a model of the ship Santa Maria, the flagship of Columbus on his first voyage attempt to discover the New World. People generally don't build historic models of cars, planes or ships that weren't of some importance, so this card indicates reaching an important step toward one's goal. The ship also brings to mind the phrase "my ship has come in." This phrase originated in areas along the coast where families made their money from the sea; mothers and wives often had to run a tab with tradesmen for food, clothing or other supplies. When their husbands or sons returned and were paid, these women could pay off the credit they had been given (their ship - the one the family member was on - had literally come in). The Three of Staves is generally a positive card, showing the first results of a choice made and actions taken. But just as the ladies had to follow through on paying their bills, it also indicates a need to follow through with commitments and obligations.

The wallpaper of roses is like the bouquets of roses often given to athletes and performers to honor them for their excellence and thus indicates a reward for accomplishment. The chest has four drawers, the next number in the staves suit. To reach some lasting stability, more work is going to be required. Time to get busy cleaning out those drawers, and sort out what is important.

Four of Wands

An artist's palette and a jar holding four brushes and cleaning fluid sit on a table. The background is blank, perhaps what will be painted. The palette is used to mix paints, adjusting the colors until the right shade is reached. The array of artist's tools looks well used already. So it's providing all the materials to produce a new painting – all the primary colors, tools to use them and a palette to blend them, and water/turpentine to thin the colors and clean the tools, and an empty space in which anything can be created. But it's also carrying the memory of a previous painting, and the sense of a job well done. Perhaps the artist has just finished work elsewhere and set down her tools to celebrate a job well done. In this context the plainness of the wall makes a different kind of sense... you wouldn't want to accidentally get paint on anything fancy!

Five of Wands

In the "fives" of all the suits is the challenge of being human. In the Staves, it represents a clash of how to get things done. This image includes a shield and five javelins, which might seem dire until you notice the painting on the shield. It shows Greek wrestlers participating as athletes in the ancient Olympic games. Javelin throwing was also part of the games - whoever hurled it further (as long as it landed tip-first) was the winner. The object of these games was not to kill and destroy your opponent, but to best him athletically. In the same way, this card indicates we must prove ourselves by offering the best option or argument for getting something done. The Greek Olympians chose to wear no clothes as they competed; this facet suggests that we should not be motivated by a hidden agenda if we hope to succeed.

The chair with its stack of books brings to mind the argument over knowledge vs. experience. Would you rather have a surgeon just out of med school who knows all the latest procedures but who's never done a surgery on his own, or an older doctor whose done thousands of surgeries but may not be up on all the latest techniques?

Six of Wands

The laurel wreath is a connection to the previous card; an Olympic athlete has bested all his challengers and now is crowned as the victor. What has seemed like chaos - one obstacle after another - has now settled down and become a moment of success.

The Greek/Roman temple in the architectural design is also symbolic of honor, built for the various gods and goddesses. The red columns on the diagram draw the eye, and remind me these were not just added for beauty, but helped support the heavy marble roof. In fact, the columns are some of the last part of the building still standing at these ancient sites. The Romans later figured out that arches could support a dome in the same way. These parts of the building (arches and columns) encourage the "victor" not to forget who has had his back, whether through emotional, mental or physical support. Rarely does anyone conquer a challenge all on his or her own. The circle drawn around the temple design hints at sacred geometry - a philosophy that believed numbers were more than quantities, they were the underlying reality of all things. Irrational numbers like Pi and Phi (where the decimal was infinitely long and non-repeating) could not be expressed as a quantity but as a quality; their qualities resonated in a harmonious cosmic dance that could be seen in nature. The harmony of this card comes when the participants learn to "dance" together to reach a goal.

Seven of Wands

The soldiers are lined up in a very defensive stance, as if they're on guard. The toy box represents our creative ideas and projects that need to be protected from others who might try to represent them as their own. Or, they may need to remain hidden from people who constantly rip our dreams apart, telling us they are impractical or impossible. The circus elephants on the toy box imply another group - people who want us to "perform" in traditional ways instead of following our own path. Sevens represent a choice, and here in this card we are encouraged to stand and defend/protect our ideas instead of giving in to outside pressure.

Eight of Wands

The target in this card has a central red circle surrounded by many smaller brown circles. The brown circles represent trial and errors - the many times the mark has been missed. They may also indicate distractions that took attention away from the goal. The arrows are a variety of sizes with different flight feathers attached, implying a variety of strategies used. They have been placed in a holder, meaning the challenge/game has been already played. Now we must wait to hear the "score." It is interesting that no bow is found in this card. Perhaps the bow is our own self; we take aim at the target (make a plan), supply the tension by pulling back the string (make the effort, do the work), then release the arrow (wait to see the results). The Eight of Staves is a neutral card of sorts; things have been put into motion and the results will be seen soon. The theme of archery suggests a need to FOCUS. On the range we have a single, clear goal, and both success and failure are clearly defined. Draw the string, take aim, and release all of your energy at the target.

Nine of Wands

On an ornate table sits a statue of Atlas struggling to hold up his sphere. Today, most people think what he is holding is the earth, but an investigation of classical art and literature finds it to be a celestial sphere. Zeus gave him the job of standing on the earth and holding up the "sky" to prevent the two from returning to their "primordial embrace." So basically, if you don't want to lose the ground you've made, hang in there. The only way to lose at this point is to give up. Of course with any creative endeavor, there is a time when it feels like you're trying to get to the top of the Empire State Building by walking up the steps wearing ankle weights and a backpack full of rocks. It's easy at this point to feel bloody and bruised, take on the role of the victim and start whining instead of paying attention to the task at hand. The two plants on either side of the table have fiery foliage and are a hint to find some way to keep the fires of passion burning in order to keep going. Perhaps there is another person who can take some of the work load; if not, maybe you need a cheering squad who will remind you that what you are doing is important. But whatever you do, don't let the ball slip and roll to the bottom of the mountain!

Ten of Wands

All those stacked cords of wood look like the Great Wall of China. A lot of work has been done up to this point. But the ten pieces with red ends (indicating what is important) have become buried beneath other things. Just because we get to the "finished product" doesn't mean our project no longer needs our attention; in fact the opposite is true. The red-handled ax is a reminder of the motivating passion that first started us in this direction. It's time to pick it up and whittle away what is unnecessary, so we can nurture and sustain what's been created.

Page of Wands

The Page of Staves (elementally speaking) is Earth of Fire, so it's not surprising to find this setting to be an outdoor patio of some sort (Earth). The Fire part of his personality comes from his suit (Staves) and can be seen represented by the pair of dragons, the fire pit, the floor sun design and the flames on top of the arch. All Pages are learning the basics in life (Earth), but how they learn is very different. The Page of Staves likes excitement and adventure - pretty much everything fits in his comfort zone if it's new and interesting. If he wanted to learn about the pyramids in Egypt, he wouldn't be content to read about them in a book. He'd be yelling "Field trip! Field trip!" at the top of his lungs. Which may explain why there's only a picture on the wall... He's probably happily plodding through the desert sands right now. The arch and the two staffs held by the dragons make a type of gateway and indicate this is an initiation of sorts for this youngster. Once he begins learning, there's no turning back. With his overenthusiastic personality, he's sure to have plenty of skinned knees along the way. Yet his passion will keep him making discoveries and EXPERIENCING life, not just listening about it on the television.

Knight of Wands

In this card is the Knight of Staves (Fire of Fire), represented by the fireplace as well as the dragons and red roses. The dragons are no longer holding the staffs as they were in the Page of Wands card. Instead, the staffs now have a laurel wreath and an eagle on them, indicating the Page has successfully passed into the next stage: knighthood. As Fire of Fire, he symbolizes the excess/extreme of the Stave court cards. It's a good thing there is a fireplace shield here as a protector from the excessive heat and flying embers created by this Knight. See, he's traded in the open mind of the Page (who loved to learn) for OPINIONS (and yes, they're that big). He'll passionately defend them, which can be a good or bad thing, depending on whose side you're on. Like the roses on either side of the hearth, his behavior at times may be beautiful and sweet, but it can be as hurtful as sharp thorns too. Part of his charm is his spontaneity, but his impulsiveness can lead people into risky situations then leave them holding the bag. The clock on the mantel shows him to be consumed with "places to go and people to see." Unfortunately, he won't stick around too long to develop deep commitments or meaningful relationships.

The artwork over the mantle seems to depict Heracles and Iolaus slaying the Lernaean Hydra. Heracles used flaming arrows to draw the Hydra out from its lair then discovered he was unable to defeat it on his own. He was a "shoot first, ask questions later" kind of guy.

Acting impulsively produced results but he needed to re-evaluate his position after the first

step. His nephew Iolaus got the idea to cauterize the neck stumps to prevent re-growth of the Hydra's heads and they defeated it together. The lesson of the Knight of Staves is to take calculated risks bravely, but don't get too far ahead of yourself.

Queen of Wands

The Queen of Staves is Water of Fire elementally; she uses her nurturing skills to get the job done. Her fountain flows down to keep the pool filled below. The flaming burners atop the urns, the red marble, the plants with fiery foliage, and the dragons hidden at the top all speak of her passionate nature. If you need a team leader, she's your gal. Water heated up will become steam - she knows how to get things moving. Yet she has another talent - the ability to attract a posse of people around her who will do what she asks of them. At the pool are a variety of plants (ferns, cattails) and fish that need water to survive. These are her "soldiers;" she knows which ones need pats on the back, words of encouragement, or a charming smile to motivate them. Is she manipulative? Well, yes a bit. These people live off the "water" she supplies them with, so they end up feeling like they're the lucky ones to be in her presence and work with her. But heaven forbid if one of them steps out of line or questions her priorities - one of those dragons will immediately swoop down and rip them out by their roots. She's the best director and cheerleader for any group effort - just make sure you're playing for the right team so you don't wind up with a steam burn.

King of Wands

Here is the King of Staves, elementally known as Air of Fire. The symbols of air can be seen in the window (the sky), the eagles and the French horn. Fire is represented by the red marble, red foliage, and sun design in the flooring. It is interesting to note the two staffs/spears that have been seen in the other three court cards of this suit have now increased to four, suggesting a stability in this fiery suit. The heating of air causes it to rise, as with a hot air balloon, allowing a wide overview (much like the height and perspective the eagle can attain). Such clarity of vision is needed when leading/ruling others. He has to make sure his windows are kept clean with Windex if he's going to be discerning. The French horn is an offshoot of the hunting horn. It was used to signal the hounds and other huntsmen to tell them what to do or what was happening. This king enjoys being the leader of the "hunt" because he can channel his adventuresome spirit into a practical purpose. The fires that burned uncontrollably with the knight now have hot embers with staying power and can cook something through without charring it. In other words, he's learned to rein in his impulsiveness. With his love of challenges, this king won't stick with tradition, especially if it is no longer useful. He likes to be on the cutting edge of whatever is new; for him it is exciting to try a new solution to an old problem. Like the rest of his court, the King of Wands has lots of charisma and charm, which makes it easy for others to follow him. But sometimes he gets stuck in the past, bragging about all his accomplishments and adventures, and then he can be labeled as an old windbag full of hot air. He needs to keep that window cracked so a fresh breeze can blow through.

CUPS

Ace of Cups

Here is the beginning of the Cups suit, whose motto might be "I feel." Aces are pure potential and show us what is possible, particularly in the realm of emotions for the Cups suit. Most people generally think of relationships with this suit, but it may also include intuition and spirituality. On this image is an urn/cup with a covering over its top. It's like Pandora's box - what kind of relationship will spring out if the top is taken off? There may be a chance for deep love and friendship, but heartache and betrayal is also possible. Do we choose to be vulnerable and see what happens? The design behind the urn looks similar to the sun design used in many of the cards of the Staves suit. But this one doesn't burn as brightly, and is like a twinkling star in the night sky. It offers us the option to be guided by the heart instead of the head. So on the count of three, we'll lift off the lid... 1.... 2....

Two of Cups

In this card is an image of a formal English garden; several yards apart are two huge pots of flowers. Both the pots and flowers are similar, indicating a relationship between people who may enjoy the same hobbies, have the same goals, share the same beliefs, or endorse the same political party. What they have in common is the spark that can create an abiding friendship, partnership or romantic commitment. Likewise, the slim, pyramid-shaped garden ornaments between the pots may represent common friends who introduce the pair to each other. The formality of the garden suggests that this is not a "one off" encounter; this relationship will develop some roots and grow if given a chance by both people. On another note, this card may also tell of a reconciliation between people. In this case, remembering their original common interests and goals may help them set aside their petty grievances and mend the relationship.

Three of Cups

High on a roof top are three urns, one of which has been put to use as a nesting site for storks. These birds have long been seen as symbols of good luck, fertility and abundance. The partnership of the Two of Cups has now produced something of worth and value, and now it is time to celebrate its success. Yet it is not just two people this card represents, but also a group of people ("tribe") who have common interests and use their love of this interest to support, encourage and create. The decorative iron gate is a large part of the image of the card and seems to be a protective measure. It is not meant to exclude so much as it is to provide a sanctuary for the sacredness and importance of celebrating this moment. Their celebration is happening very much "in the open" and is about socializing publicly, not retreating into privacy.

Four of Cups

On a mantel sit four German beer steins with a medieval tapestry behind them. These steins originally had lids to keep out insects. But what is being kept out here? A clue can be found in the tapestry - it is a part of a group of tapestries called "The Hunt of the Unicorn." In this particular tapestry, the unicorn is using its magic to purify the water that had been poisoned by snake venom. The unicorn represents the ideals many of us have when we start

something new. Unfortunately, real life rarely lives up to those ideals. In the Four of Cups, there is a closing off and isolation. There is a danger of becoming self-absorbed and full of self-pity, but there is an equal chance for self-reflection and reassessment. If we choose the latter, we can still use the lids to keep out the "insects" but lift them up for others to keep the love flowing.

Five of Cups

I can't think of a better image for loss than what is used in this card - a mausoleum. The low-hanging limbs of the trees seem to cling to the building, suggesting a difficulty in letting go and moving on. The iron gates on the mausoleum explicitly make it known that what is gone won't be coming back - the lost won't be found, the broken won't be mended. It is located deep in the middle of a swamp. Like those emotions of grief, regret and sorrow, its boggy mud threatens to suck you under with each step. But there is hope... water lilies are blooming in this swamp. The water lily seed begins deep in the darkness of the mud. It sends up a shoot through the murky water, until at last it reaches top of the water and opens its bloom in the sunlight. This plant is a symbol of the process of grief; if we can continue to take one step forward each day, we'll reach the sunlight on the other side.

Six of Cups

This card looks like a vacation picture someone took while at the beach, a fond memory. The inscription on the rail brings to mind memorials, like the Vietnam Veterans Wall or the bronze inscriptions of the 9/11 victims at the twin pools in New York. Many people also plant trees to remember their loved ones as a living memorial, much like the six pots of plants in the card. Such memorials can help integrate the past with the present; it is a way to learn rather than to simply regret. It is not necessary to shut the door on the past, but it is important to appreciate and live in the present moment. The watering can reminds you if you want to heal, you need to be careful what you water. If you constantly remember the pain, that is what you will drag around with you in the present. Yet if you focus on the love and good times, that is what will help you mend emotionally. Sometimes the trauma of the past may seem void of all good, yet the people who helped you walk through the darkness to the light are worth remembering.

Seven of Cups

On an elaborately decorated table sit seven cups; on either side of the row is a vase holding a peacock feather. Behind the cups is a statue of Mahamayuri, one of several Wisdom Kings and Queens in the Buddhist pantheon. As guardians and protectors, these figures were generally depicted with ferocious appearances in order to frighten and destroy evil and ignorance. Mahamayuri however, was generally shown with a peaceful countenance and riding a peacock. In choosing what will fulfill us emotionally, this queen reminds us to look beyond sensual pleasures and the desires of the ego. Wisdom is needed in making this choice, and she warns us not to be impulsive but to think long-term. Her "vehicle," the peacock, was a welcome wild bird in India because it killed and ate small poisonous snakes. It reminds us to be watchful and guarded when it comes to momentary gratifications that may distract us from what will bring true happiness. The two peacock feathers in the vases look like of a pair of eyes, as if this is a display of what is inside my mind. They suggest the only

person responsible for my decision and my subsequent happiness or unhappiness is myself.

The shape under the table (held by two peacock figures) resembles a crystal ball and reminds you how often people desire to know the future, especially if they make a certain choice. What will your life be like if you take this job, marry this person, study in this field, etc.?

The floor and the mural might reference some of the illusion that is associated with this card. On such a floor, even though it might be perfectly smooth, it looks so rough that you would be tripping on its apparent roughness--you know, like tripping on a shadow on the sidewalk! The wall treatment appears to be a faded trompe l'oeil painting, which would have given the impression of non-existent depth, avenues, and horizons.

Eight of Cups

The "sevens" are generally about assessing and evaluating, but in the "eights" things have been put in order, so now it is very clear what is real and what isn't. There can be no more wasting time with denial or fantasies. And what is seen in this Eight of Cups? An old potting shed is filled with broken and neglected tools. What should have been kept in good working order has been discarded in a dark shed. What should have been valued and appreciated is now ignored and neglected. This relationship is obviously lacking in respect. However, the stack of pots do show some order - five on one side and three on the other. The imbalance in the relationship is apparent; one person thinks their needs and desires are more important than the other person's. But the biggest "tell" of all are the empty pots; there is nothing growing at all. The feeling of emptiness is what characterizes this relationship, whether it is with a person or group. Time to move some of those pots into the sunlight and fill them with fresh soil and seeds.

The shelf is broken between the two groups of pots. The left part of the shelf seems to be held up by a pole (staff), and the right part by something sword-like. A wheel or disk hangs off the right shelf, supporting nothing. It could be the wheel belonging to the barrow propped up against the wall, carrying nothing, going nowhere. Bridging the gap between broken shelf halves is a short-handled tool, perhaps a hand cultivator. Some hands-and-knees, get-dirty effort will be required to reconcile the two parts, that implies to me. But nobody's putting their hand to the plough, as it were.

Nine of Cups

Nine lovely decanters of perfume are lined up across a dresser. Smell can flood us with memories, change our mood and even influence our work performance. Our sense of smell is connected to the olfactory bulb, a part of the brain's limbic system that is often called the "emotional brain." Our brains forge a link between a smell and memory; when we encounter the smell again, the memory associated with it is recalled and produces an emotion. Here in these decanters are various moods we can choose from - the woodsy smell of confidence, the spicy smell of sensuality, the citrusy smell of focused energy, the fresh floral smell of an exciting beginning. These fragrances remind me that we do have some choice in the emotions we "apply." Like smell, what we do and concentrate on can flip a switch in the mood department. In this card, there is a sense of contentment and satisfaction because we realize whose hand controls that switch. It is a full, satisfied feeling, like eating a delicious meal that

sates our appetite. But the smell of perfume once applied won't last forever; like that wonderful food that made us feel well-fed, we become hungry once again. While pleasurable, our "feel-good feelings" are only temporary. In addition, we still need to address those secret longings tucked away in the drawers of that dresser... On another note, quality perfumes are *expensive*! To acquire a sizable collection like this suggests that one is living comfortably; all the basic needs for survival have been met, now it is time to satisfy the desire for deeper happiness and enjoy the finer things in life.

Ten of Cups

The cabinet is filled with objects, souvenirs of important events in people's lives. The containers are symbols of acknowledgment of lives well lived. Yet the cabinet is a memorial of a sort, as future guidance for those whose lives or relationships are just beginning. The "treasured items" in the cabinet could be idealized, almost worshiped in a sense--they are beautiful, but they aren't being allowed to actually fulfill their intended function on a regular basis. Instead, they were so precious that they were kept under glass...and yet, there's something profoundly sad about that. Their value was in their beauty alone, but these aren't art objects--they're all tools that were made to be used and should be appreciated for that purpose as much as for some arbitrary, idealized standard of perfect. There's a challenge from this card to consider how you value your physical possessions (or interact with the world in general). Are they merely trophies to be locked away and admired for their nostalgic value, or functional objects to be taken out, touched, and potentially broken? The stark black-and-white checkerboard pattern reinforces the duality of this decision. Sterile and safe or useful and vulnerable? You can't have it both ways!

It is a reminder that the fairy tale "perfect" happy ever after is something to work at and with and towards, not something to be put on a pedestal or behind glass if you're lucky enough to achieve it.

Page of Cups

This young fellow has a heart as pure as the white roses beneath his portrait, and he's as sweet as the fruit (oranges?) growing on either side of the roses. Being elementally Earth of Water, his sweet side often shows up in physical ways. He'll want to kiss any boo-boo to make it better, and he'll bring you a bouquet of dandelion flowers he found while out playing in the yard. He's a bit of a dreamer, but that trait makes it easier for him to connect with his intuition and to take what he learns this way seriously instead of discounting it. The small pool at the bottom indicates how he sees life - everyone is a reflection of their emotions. As a result, this Page can be very empathetic, but he often takes people's moods personally even when not appropriate. The turtles at the top of the garden wall suggest his weakness to over-sensitivity. Turtles frequently climb out of the water on a log or the bank to bask in the sun. The sun not only raises their body temperature, it produces Vitamin D which helps develop stronger shells and helps rid themselves of parasites. The Page of Cups' task is to develop a thicker skin (shell); he also must learn to avoid people who would take advantage of his kind nature (parasites).

Knight of Cups

Here is the Knight of Cups, elementally known as Fire of Water. Two dolphin figurines emphasize his watery nature and the fireplace itself his fire. A clock sits on the mantel, and like some of the other knights, he is driven by a need to get things done before time runs out, leading sometimes to a wonderful spontaneous experience and other times to an impulsive disaster. Yet the white flowers in the vases show his motives are generally pure. The dolphin figures speak to his need to be supportive and encouraging. He likes being the "white knight" that sweeps others off their feet with his kindness and help. The downside to this knight can be seen in the ancient Greek painting displayed in the front of the fireplace. It shows a man mixing water and wine in a krater. In ancient Greece, the water quality wasn't good so alcohol was mixed with it to kill the microbes that might cause sickness. While they enjoyed their wine, it wasn't appropriate for everyone (including children) to drink it all day long to hydrate themselves - they needed water. If they only drank wine, they would be constantly drunk and never get anything accomplished. In the same way, the watery aspect of this knight can put out his fire. He can become "drunk" on emotions, spouting poetry and singing love songs but never actually DOING anything useful. Time to water down his wine cup...

Queen of Cups

The Queen of Cups is elementally Water of Water - enough to float a barge and enough in which to drown. There are multiple images of this element in the card: the head of Poseidon on the wall (the god of water rules her head and heart), the two dolphin-like fountains and the large pool of water. A magpie sits atop the garden wall, a symbol of omen and prophecy, and indicates this woman's intuitive and empathetic gifts. It's not unusual for her to see a coworker and remark, "Your eyes look so sad. Do you want to talk about what is wrong?" She may have a sudden feeling about someone or something, rush to get where they are, and find that funny feeling helped her avoid a bigger problem or be there at someone's moment of need. Others may think of her as a soft, well-loved quilt that wraps around those who are hurting or scared. She is "The Comforter." Her downside can be seen by the white flowering vines that grow up the columns. This queen can get so involved in situations and people's lives, she becomes entangled and forgets where the boundaries are between her life and someone else. What happens to them feels like it is happening to herself; she soon becomes unbalanced by all the extra emotions, often lashing out in anger or dissolving in a puddle of tears. This emotional sponge needs to be constantly wrung out to make sure the only baggage she's carrying is her own.

King of Cups

The King of Cups is elementally Air of Water. The window and eagles (on the vases) show his association with air, and the swans and clouds represent a combination of both elements. His gift is being able to maintain his composure and detachment while in the middle of emotional dramas. Like the swan that floats atop the water instead of sinking down into it, he can see with clarity what is going on in a situation without being blinded by all the emotional muck. On the table by the window is a hurricane lamp, like a lighthouse in a storm. It is his light that can shine through all the chaos and help keep relationships, groups, businesses, etc. intact without being smashed on the rocks, if they'll listen to his suggestions. Yet there are times

when this king becomes more eagle than swan; he rises on the air currents far above his other element of water. Here he may become completely detached with his heart closed, and he may come across as clinical, cold and uncaring. If that's the case, a little rain weighing down his feathers should remind him of his own humanity.

There appear to be bouquets of fresh white lilies on either side of the table. There is indeed a masculine interpretation for them, not just feminine--high eroticism, because of the long pistil suggesting a phallus, and the free-falling pollen, fertility. The King of Cups is supposed to have male and female qualities in balance.

WORDS

Ace of Swords

The suit of swords represents clarity in various guises: the objective truth, sudden creative inspiration or problem solving, effective communication, the light of understanding.

Yet the sword is double-edged; it can be used to help or harm. The spiraling steel basket around the hilt is more than just a decoration. Along with the cross-guard (hand-guard), they keep the hand from sliding down towards the blade during thrusts and protect the hand from blows by an opponent. Care must be taken with our knowledge and words, or we may wind up with unintended injuries. We need the cross-guard to stop us from crossing boundaries that we don't need to cross.

The rounded ball at the end of the sword is known as a pommel, a counter-weight used to balance the sword. If the hilt was too heavy, the sword would be ineffective; if the blade was too heavy, it would be too difficult to wield. This balance suggests a need for objectivity and avoiding extremes.

Swords have what is known as the Center of Percussion - the point that produces the least amount of vibration when struck against a target. If you've ever used one rigid object to hit another (a baseball bat against a post, for instance), and felt like you rattled your teeth with the shock of the hit, then you've experienced what is NOT the CoP. This center is the "sweet-spot," the point that can deliver the most powerful blows. It suggests that we need to develop skills when it comes to our ideas and speech; otherwise they may have vibrations that extend well beyond what were intended.

The Celtic knotwork mandala the sword rests on reminds us of our interconnection. The thoughts and words we release into the world can have dangerous potential. They become woven into our relationships with friends, family, other countries and the earth itself. They touch and affect EVERYTHING. So before we start playing around with that sharp sword, we need to make damn sure we know how to handle it safely.

Two of Swords

A friend recently heard lots of birds making a racket outside and went to see what all the fuss was about. She found a terrified cockatiel, obviously an escaped pet. She got her cat's pet carrier and placed it inside, and immediately it calmed down. She turned it in to the local shelter in hopes it would be reunited with its owner. The dove in this card has been locked out of its comfort zone where it felt protected and secure. Isn't that how it feels when we have to make a hard decision, one that will cause pain no matter what we choose? Though we may want to force the responsibility on someone else, it is a choice that only we can make. It is possible the cage was the problem to begin with – a place far too confining. But now out of the cage, there is a sense of being in limbo - a wobbly, ungrounded feeling that shakes our confidence. The dove itself is a symbol of peace, suggesting the answer will not be found in going backward (back to the cage), but by tapping into the inner resource found within each of ourselves.

Maybe this is the "gilded cage"....the thought of leaving the safety and security it holds to face the bare and empty room is too daunting. How much easier to accept restrictions within a constricted environment rather than spread ones wings and fly into a precarious future! Seems this innocent bird needs to learn self confidence and make the choice....do you free

yourself or remain within the cage and under the control of others. It seems having made the choice to leave there is no way backbut so often we keep returning to the familiar (beating our wings against a closed door) even if we know it is not in our best interests.

Three of Swords

This card reminds me of the saying, "When a door is closed, look for an open window." However this window looks not only firmly shut, but bricked up on the other side. There are times when life is like being in a car that is stuck in neutral; you can't put it in drive or reverse. The decision made in the Two of Swords is a done deal, with no way to return to what was and no option for the future. The only choice is to get out of the car and find some new wheels (ideas, beliefs) that work. Some people might choose to force the issue and get a bulldozer to knock down the bricks, but all that's going to result in is a pile of rubble. Take off that seat belt, because this ride isn't moving an inch as far as progress is concerned.

Four of Swords

The wheelchair is a symbol of being incapacitated, but in this case it is not the body that is the problem but the mind. It is the result of over-thinking, or "analysis paralysis." We've become like a little motorized toy car that has run into the wall and continues to bump into it without going anywhere. What we need to do is stop thinking about the problem and rest our brains. The other symbol in this card is the round window that is like of a porthole in a ship. Part of the vacation our brains need includes shutting off all the advice and suggestions from other people (no matter how well intended it may be). Like recuperating from an illness, this process can't be rushed, so we might as well have a seat in that wheelchair, relax and see if we can nod off...

Five of Swords

The five of swords talks about defeat, the abandoned house is the victim of depredation, the house is already falling apart, yet we see those young rebels throwing stones to it's windows, broken it even more just for fun. There is a sense of getting what you asked for. A decrepit mind creates even more decrepitude, and attracts more decrepitude. It's a vicious cycle. This card is like a warning: don't be nasty, or you'll get what's coming to you. And yes, there is a sense of poverty - mental poverty. Is the building irredeemable? It needs to either be bulldozed, or given a full makeover. Being a 5, it's at the exact tipping point. Something needs to change, and fast.

We can have an idea or opinion and be so sure that it is right, we refuse to even glance at it objectively. We become so emotionally invested in being correct, we forget to use common sense and fail to foresee the inevitable result. We shout "full steam ahead" and ignore all the icebergs in our path. And of course the consequences are dire - we're left feeling like this broken house and overgrown yard. The big question remains: Can we learn from our mistakes?

Six of Swords

It is easy to adopt certain ideas and opinions based on personal life experiences, especially from one's place of origin. It also becomes easy to judge another person's culture (religion, dress, way of living) from one's own perspective rather than stepping into their shoes to understand the "why" behind it all. We can become narrow-minded and prejudicial without even realizing it. A viewpoint is quite simply a view from the point where we are standing. The Six of Swords suggest we move (physically or mentally) so that we can see from a new perspective, a new vantage point. We need to open our minds wider instead of trying to filter everything through the eye of a needle. It will be amazing how much the world seems to change when we do...

Seven of Swords

The paper with its collection of theories and algebraic equations brings to mind of a quote attributed to Albert Einstein: "We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality." And in many cases, it has no ethical or moral compass either. Here is the card of the spin doctors who make a crooked politician look legit, a con man who sells worthless items to an elderly woman or anyone who uses bullshit to impress another person and earn their trust. He has so many facts and figures that it will make your head spin, and he sounds impressive. Forget trying to reason with this person; he has his own brand of logic that seems perfectly fine to him. He'll easily swat aside with smooth talk any pointed questions. But the worst part of it all is his ulterior motives. He may have even convinced himself that he's helping another person, when really he's the one who benefits. He's sure that some subterfuge is necessary for the "greater good" (think of the television evangelists who ask for money). But the bottom line is underscored by the beetle on the paper. A nicely rolled ball of poo is still poo, no matter what name you put on it. The detailed notes and figures suggest that this betrayal is both complicated and premeditated. This is not a crime of convenience or casual lie, but a sophisticated and cunning deception.

Eight of Swords

There's only one reason to put barbed wire on top of a fence or wall – to keep people from climbing over it. The problems of trying often ended with a trip to the doctor for a tetanus shot. But one thing you should keep in mind about those fields enclosed by barbed wire fences. There was always a gate somewhere. So why stay here in this one spot and stare at the wall and wire? It's a good excuse not to have to do anything. You can point and say, "I have no options." Okay, maybe it does look like you are blocked with no way out from where you're standing. But if you move your feet (and your thoughts) instead of pretending you're frozen in this spot (or get past the fear that's keeping you here), you'll eventually find that gate.

Nine of Swords

The truth might set some people free, but for others it strips them bare and leaves them feeling raw and exposed. Curled in an emotional fetal position, they want desperately to shut off their minds. But what we resist will only persist; it needs to be dealt with. The mind may have manipulated things to make them sound good, but now the "writing is on the wall" (as seen by the swords pip) and the unvarnished truth is plain to see. It's excruciating the way the brain can replay over and over the choices made or words said and the consequences that resulted. Simply saying "I'm sorry" is not going to fix what has been broken this time. But is it possible we are taking all the blame for something that is not our burden to bear? Who is really responsible for this mess? The tiny window with bars gives the impression of a cell in solitary confinement. And it does feel that way – as if we have run out of hope and options. All that seems left is regret for the past and anxiety for the future. The window does not let in light (unless that is just the night sky). It is significant that the window is square, with its bars echoing the swords traditionally hanging over the person's head, in this card: a boxy, fixed, rigid shape, with thoughts (bars) firmly fixed in one position, preventing exit from the situation.

Ten of Swords

The inkwell, note and red smear on the wall immediately bring to mind a suicide. I can think of no other action that makes such a dramatic statement. But there are other forms of suicide that aren't physical, which is to what this card alludes. In these cases, there is a manifesto drawn up in the mind, an idealistic set of ideas and beliefs that a person is willing to go to bat for no matter what the cost. Suicide can happen in all areas of life - politics, career, family, groups or friends. It's easy to feel like the victim in these cases, but it was actually the "victim" who got the ball rolling in the first place. He might be the one who took the fall, but he stood on the crumbling edge of the cliff when he unveiled his manifesto. Whatever the relationship, the rigid ideas have suffocated the life out of it. It is time to start anew... but hopefully the declaration will be rewritten with a little more thought this time.

There is a straight razor (sometimes referred to as a "cut-throat" razor) on the table as well. Intended for shaving, this tool can certainly be used to kill, as the tableau suggests. But razor blades are also associated with self-harm: deliberate injury without suicidal intent.

This interpretation emphasizes the psychological state of someone using self-inflicted violence as a coping mechanism. It can be less about the crisis represented by the 10 of Swords, and more about the effect it has on the survivor: how one deals with an experience of loss, pain or misfortune. There are healthy and unhealthy methods of coping with trauma but we must move on, one way or another.

Page of Swords

This Page is elementally Earth of Air; the air is symbolized by the peacocks and the flute player, while the earth is symbolized by the statue of Pan (information and knowledge is orgasmic pleasure to this young man). What do you get when you mix lots of air with earth? Sand and dust storms as well as tornadoes that pick up and fling objects at 100 mph. This boy is quite a prodigy as far as intellect goes; the problem is that he hasn't developed tact, respect or sensitivity to the feelings of others when it comes to using that sharp sword. Everything is looked at from a scientific standpoint. Ask him if you should bomb a village

hiding terrorists that would also kill many innocents, and he would look at birth statistics and decide they could easily repopulate in a few years. There is no empathetic filter on what comes out of his mouth; his brain is way ahead of his emotional development. The obelisks symbolize petrified rays of the sun (intellect) and form a gateway leading out into the world. It may take some work, but hopefully this Page will learn how to walk with his scissors and soften his sharp edges when appropriate.

Knight of Swords

The Knight of Swords is elementally Fire of Air, so there are symbols of both fire (fireplace, phoenix statues and illustrations, sun-like frame) and air (peacocks, bellows). This knight is the go-to guy in cases where a quick solution is sought. Unfortunately, don't expect compassion to be factored in the answer. Though extremely knowledgeable, he tends to see things in black and white, right or wrong, with no gray areas. He's all about quick action (notice the clock on the mantel), and most people would consider him impulsive. He is like a red-tailed hawk; in the blink of an eye, they swoop down, tear the head off a dove, then disappear with their food. They don't worry if the doves might have a nest with babies to feed. They just see a solution to their hunger and act. These knights are excellent to have in meetings where people drag in all sorts of irrelevant information to the task at hand. Like the phoenix that is reborn, he can step in and breathe new energy into the group, cut away what's unnecessary, and lead them (or push them) toward the goal. The downside to this knight is sometimes he can pump that bellows a tad too much (diplomacy is not his style). Instead of gently bringing the dying embers back to life, he creates what firefighters call a backdraft. The resulting explosion can create more chaos than what was there to begin with. Intelligence does not always reside in the same container as wisdom.

Queen of Swords

The Queen of Swords is elementally Water of Air; the water is symbolized by the garden pool while both air and water are seen by the flamingos and the harps. She is a nurturer, but not the warm, cuddly, fuzzy kind. She believes the best way to help a person is to be blunt and honest with them (the harp brings to mind the phrase "time to face to music"). And this woman can definitely help "tune you up." The flamingos are interesting birds; their deep, shovel-like bills are used to dredge up mud and water then filter out what is edible and what is not. In the same way, this queen encourages us to filter out the emotions that might be causing us to cloud our judgment (too much water, not enough air). Flamingos are also known for their pinkish-red coloring. Their color comes from the rich sources of carotenoid pigments in the algae and small crustaceans the birds eat. Just as they are affected by what they eat, the Queen of Swords warns that our lives will be influenced dramatically by the ideas and beliefs we allow to reside in our heads. Her harps play sweet music because they tuned properly; likewise our lives make beautiful music when we don't try to hide little lies (loose strings) in with the truth. The Queen has experienced plenty of challenges in life, yet has managed to persevere. Like the bards who told stories by using songs and harps, this queen might share some of her history to help us deal with our own difficulties. But beware... she has a finely tuned BS detector, and if she thinks you're trying to manipulate her in any way, she's liable to impale you on the iron rail at the top of the garden wall and leave you there as a warning to others.

King of Swords

The King of Swords is elementally Air of Air, and objects that symbolize this element abound in this card: butterflies, peacock feathers, a huge fan, and a windmill figure. The King has developed and transformed over the years, as seen by the butterfly. He is no longer tactless like the Page or impulsive like the Knight. The sprays of peacock feathers show him to be an excellent observer. Like a scientist, he will watch carefully and pick up on small details that most folks would miss. Gathering all these observations together, he can make decisions and create solutions that are objective and fair. Just as the wheel of the windmill is turned by the wind, the King of Swords knows how the right words can get things moving in the right direction. He is both articulate and diplomatic, making people feel that they have been heard but also inspiring them to take correct action. His biggest downfall is shown by the over-sized fan on the desk. He loves to find a willing subject to listen to his philosophies of life, but he is quite boring and dry as the desert sands when he pontificates. However if insomnia is a problem, he's the man to go see.

COINS

Ace of Coins

"the sacred hoop of my people was one of the many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all..." ~ Black Elk

The coin on this card resembles a hoop, which brought to mind the quote by Black Elk. Circles are found throughout many cultures, from the medicine wheels of native people to the sand mandalas of Tibetan Buddhists. For Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, they represented wholeness. As humans, we seek the blessings of health and wealth - the kind of wholeness that will allow us to live life more fully. Most wheels and mandalas begin with a dot in the center that radiates outward into a larger circle. Like the saying "a penny saved is a penny earned," this card suggests that we have the opportunity to expand to "wholeness" if we will do our part. So will we settle for one slice or make an effort to win the whole pie?

Two of Coins

On a brick wall, a pulley system is affixed allowing a bucket with a plant to be raised and lowered. This card has a reddish tone to it, and it symbolizes the great amount of energy being expended. We only have a certain amount of time, energy and money to spread over all of our obligations - both those we want to do and those we must do. Like all "twos," this card is about choosing; in this case, deciding how we are going to "spend" our coins (time, energy, money). If we overspend in one area, we may run into a deficit financially or physically. We must figure out a way to spread the weight of our commitments and aspirations to make the load less heavy. A priority list can help us stay on task and not get distracted by every little thing that comes our way. But it is healthy to realize the stress in our lives (like the tautness of the rope) keeps us active, aware and thinking. Life would be pretty boring with absolutely nothing to do.

The rope is taut between the two disks (of which one is sun-colored and the other moon-colored), allowing them to turn freely under tension. What's different here though is that it's not flowing in a continuous loop like the RWS symbol. The rope disappears off the side of the frame so we can't see what it's tethered to or who controls it. It's a system which enables harmonious change AT WILL. It remains static until someone purposely activates it. So it's a slightly different way of looking at this card, and one which does emphasize the element of choice – whether your own or someone else's.

The plant in the bucket looks very healthy and sprightly but it is a young plant which hasn't reached its full size and potential yet. The floral decoration on the bucket gives an idealized image of what it has the potential to become. So it does feel like a positive card with the idea of spreading the load, distributing the burden evenly to make it feel much lighter. Another way of looking at it is to equate the bucket with a goal or aim which can be easily brought within reach thanks to this spreading of the load.

Three of Coins

Anyone who has ever done any gardening knows that keeping one in good shape requires some knowledge and effort. The three "star" coins on the wall above the rose bush suggest the gardener who resides here is a master. Stars have been used to decorate a student's exceptional paper, to designate the rank of a military officer, and to honor the states of a country on its flag. Generally in all its uses, the star represents excellence and attainment. The four-pointed star is often called a "cross star" and indicates sacrifice and perseverance in order to earn recognition. The number three may imply a requirement of knowledge, passion and practical skill to reach this level of achievement. It may also suggest a union of people with different resources: one with the financial backing, one with the ideas or plans, and one with the skill to make the conception a reality. Either way, this kind of impressive mastery is going to require much more than a quickie online class with a print-it-yourself certificate.

Four of Coins

Some people use locks and safes to guard their possessions, and others use magic. In this card, there is a circle made of planetary and alchemical signs. Above it is a stone head of Jupiter and within it is a square filled with numbers. The circle represents the wheel of change - the impermanence of physical life. The Roman god Jupiter (king of gods, sky and thunder) watches over to protect and preserve what is good (I'm sure he's hiding a thunderbolt somewhere). The 4 x 4 square is Jupiter's "magic square" (kamea in Hebrew); these squares were an arrangement of numbers (usually integers) in a square grid, where the numbers in each row, and in each column, and the numbers in the forward and backward main diagonals, all add up to the same number. Dating back to Chinese literature in 650 BCE, philosophers thought these squares were magical and used them as talismans (both to attract good luck and ward off bad luck). Around the 15th century, manuscripts began to pop up in Europe that described how these squares (assigned to the seven classical planets) could be used to attract the influence of a planet and its assigned angel (or demon). Jupiter's magic square was used for success, abundance, money, and growth. There is nothing wrong with being a good steward of what you have, including using good judgment when it comes to our "stuff." But sometimes we forget that it's not just our material possessions and finances we need to take care of, but our bodies too.

Five of Coins

This image appears to be an abandoned building: vines grow up the wall, weeds choke the yard, and old pieces of furniture and other junk litter the area. Yet a set of wind chimes made of five dangling circles hangs intact. In this card, the security and stability of the four has given way to the disturbing, disruptive energy of the five. Health, home and our finances may be affected. It feels so hopeless that we may just want to sit in that old, weathered chair chanting the mantra, "Woe is me." But this situation didn't just drop out of the sky, it has been building for some time. And unfortunately, it seems only pain will motivate us to change our circumstances. Think of it as major surgery - not something to be happy about perhaps, but something that will eventually correct the problem and make things better. The hanging circles are like a ladder; there are steps we must climb to get to the top (find our balance and center again). Perhaps asking for help or guidance is the first rung. If we will set aside our pride and get off the pity chair, we may pry that door open to find a secret garden on the other side.

Six of Coins

In the Six of Coins, the disturbances of the Five have settled back into balance once again. Lessons have been learned though, as seen by the fenced area with two griffin statues guarding the gates. Griffins were mythical animals who were part lion and part eagle. The lion was seen as king of the beasts and the eagle king of the birds, so this beast was considered especially powerful and used to guard what was considered priceless and dear. The disks that make up the gate show four that look alike and two others that look the same. So what was had at the beginning (in the Four of Coins) has been replaced along with a bit extra (shown by the two disks). We can handle the things that bring us security and stability in three ways:

- 1) bury it to keep it safe (think of china that is never used or a doll collection never touched)
- 2) risk it all for unrestrained pleasure or get-rich-quick schemes (effects seen in the Five of Coins)
- 3) or use it wisely by saving some and investing some

Hopefully by the time the Six rolls around, we've learned how quickly circumstances can change, but hopefully we also learn of the natural flow of the world (we lose some things but will gain others). And though we do need to use our health, wealth, time and energy wisely, we don't need to be anal about it. The monster-like face in the middle of the disks suggests a small lingering fear that might take us back to the mindset of the Four. While we should be discerning in the use of our resources, we don't want to dam the flow. If we do, we'll wind up right back where we were when all this craziness started...

Seven of Coins

A rake leans against a garden wall from which a Bacchus water spout flows. All around are fall colors, and weeds seem to have gotten the upper hand as the season progressed. Yet the frame containing seven gold coins (in the shape of the alchemical symbol for the sun) suggest there has been a return on my investment. The Bacchus head that decorates the fountain is a callback to a Liber, an ancient Italian god of fertility and growth who later became equated with Bacchus. Sevens allow us a chance to analyze and evaluate. They give us a chance to make different choices that could bring change. What obstacles or challenges did you run across, and how did you handle them? What areas show positive growth? Were you able to keep up with this expansion? How was your timing? Do you want to continue what you're doing, or is it time for a complete overhaul? Before you become more deeply involved and invest more time, energy and money, you need to "pause for the cause."

Eight of Coins

"I need solitude for my writing; not 'like a hermit' - that wouldn't be enough - but like a dead man."

— Franz Kafka

The image on this card resembles being inside a room looking out a peephole. The eight faceted jewels suggest we are perfecting a craft or in the process of some sort of development. And as Kafka states, we need the solitude to do so. The distractions of other people, social dramas or happenings, and the "shoulds" can keep us from concentrating on what is at hand. We must manage our resources carefully, which includes our time. The painting in the peephole is from "The Très Riches Heures," a medieval book of hours

commissioned by the Duke of Berry. A book of hours is a prayer book containing appropriate prayers for specific hours of the day, days of the week, months, and seasons. It seems harsh to strictly set aside portions of the day for certain undertakings, but it is such discipline that can help us complete a course of study or achieve a level of mastery. We learn the value of consistency and perseverance rather than just making sporadic efforts. The only downside to this card is that we may come to enjoy our isolation so much, we don't want to be around others at all. But then, what would be the purpose of our developing our skills?

Nine of Coins

Trunks like these bring to mind two things: treasure and travel. The Nine of Coins shows a person who has finally learned to manage their resources wisely. Hard work, discipline and perseverance has paid off handsomely. Not only is there a nice little "nest egg" to show for all that effort, there is leisure time for trips, artistic exploration, intellectual pursuits or just enjoying life in general. Something else has happened as well - the follower has become a leader, confident and independent with plenty of experience under their belt. On each of the door panels are nine pentacles arranged in the 3 x 3 shape of a square, denoting stability and security. The lock on the door suggests that this person has become a good steward, a person very aware of what resources go in and out that door. But there is a bit of loneliness in this room; there are no family, pet or group pictures anywhere. It feels quite impersonal. Although this person may be cultured and well-traveled, with an attic full of souvenirs and goodies, they lack a close friend or like-minded group with whom to share this success.

Ten of Coins

Ten gold coins are arranged on latticework with a Bacchus mask in the middle. The design imprinted on the coins mimics the design on the Ace of Coins card. The arrangement is in the shape of the Tree of Life found in Kabbalah. In Judaism, the Tree of Life was a symbol of the life-giving source that sustains and nourishes all. The grape vines and mask indicate not just sustenance, but an abundance of resources. The wooden kegs have had their bungs (cork-like plugs) removed and are obviously empty. It brings to mind the phrase "tapped out," meaning something has been depleted or used up. This expression also refers to wrestlers who "tap out" when they want to quit the match. The Ten of Coins is an end that leads to a new beginning (Ace). The person who has accumulated and created so much is now ready to move on to other things. It doesn't mean they have lost their drive and are ready to sit in a rocking chair, but they are ready to explore new avenues. As an example, a recently retired person might go back to school to learn how to write or paint. This is also a legacy card; there has been a trail blazed up to this point, but now the torch is being passed. Will those who receive the torch keep it burning, or being self-centered, not worry about it burning out?

The bunches of grapes, Bacchus, and the empty barrels are very interesting. The harvest was enjoyed. There is such stability in this card, and yet there's an excitement and energy surrounding it. Grapes are still abundant, but the barrels are empty. What to fill them with next? More wine, or something else altogether?

Page of Coins

This "earth of earth" Page has plenty of plants in his garden. The design on the coin symbol above his portrait looks like the model of an atom - something he would be most curious about. He is often called a student, not because he loves knowledge for knowledge's sake, but because it can be used to create, build and do things with a purpose. This Page would agree with the Zen saying, "Before Enlightenment, chop wood, carry water; after Enlightenment, chop wood, carry water." Except he would explain that his new knowledge enables him to chop and carry much more efficiently. Such a mindset shows his practical nature; he doesn't have much patience for information that can't be applied in the real world. This Page is good with details - if you send him to the store for milk, he's going to want to know what size, what brand, and if you want skim, whole or low-fat. But beware if you tell him something is true without the facts to back it up. Any statement made to him will be met with, "Where's the evidence?" And even if you can't prove it, he might build a model or do some research to discover the truth for himself. The Page of Coins is the most diligent and reliable of all the Pages, but his scientific way of looking at everything can make him a bit odd. Like the checkerboard pattern on the garden wall, things can be black or white, useful or useless to him based on whether they are true, effective and have a valid reason for existing. He would not want to waste much time hearing about your emotional troubles, your religious philosophy, or looking at a new painting. He prefers to be a "fixer." Instead, he would probably suggest an herb for your depression, allow you to borrow his book "The Burden of Proof" and offer to hang that painting so it would be level.

It's interesting that this Page, of all the Page cards in this deck, has the most humble appearance. All the other pages have an ornate, decorative flair to them: large flower arrangements, for one, and a general manicured symmetry. The other Pages also seem to have a setting within the gardens they occupy, almost like a small shrine.

But the Page of Coins seems to occupy an almost hidden corner, one you'd stumble upon by accident. There's a sense of seclusion and modesty. He doesn't have any flower arrangements or vases; the red rose bush seems 'wild'. There's the worn wheelbarrow, and the tall grass just doing its thing.

Knight of Coins

In this card is a representation of the Knight of Coins, elementally "fire of earth." I am reminded of a seed that sprouts because the soil begins to warm. The Fire element can be seen in the fireplace and the salamanders (Paracelsus - 1493 to 1541- suggested that the salamander was the elemental of fire). The Earth element is expressed in the landscape painting behind the portrait and the tortoises on the base of the vases. Two other animals are evident in this card: dragons and horses. Dragons symbolize a primordial power and are known for guarding treasures. These traits are seen in the knight as he guards and takes care of his resources. This is a guy who would never miss an oil change or postpone a checkup at the doctor. The horses also symbolize power, but because they have been domesticated, they represent the ability to harness and use such strength. This Knight knows how to have staying power because he keeps himself in check and focuses on the task at hand. Like the other knights, the Knight of Coins has a clock on the mantel too, but unlike the others, his clock shows day/night phases. Here is where he takes a sharp turn away from his fellow knights. He isn't impulsive because he moves with the seasons and cycles instead of minutes

and hours. He knows there is a proper procedure and order of doing things, and these can't be rushed. He is infinitely more patient and precise than the other knights, and he measures progress not by time but by steps taken toward the goal. You can bet this guy will finish the job (slow but steady like the tortoise), but don't expect any spontaneity out of him.

Queen of Coins

Being "Water of Earth," it is not surprising to find this queen's portrait in a water garden. The two toads that sit beside the pool are suitable symbols, beginning life as tadpoles then continuing as adults on land. The combination of these two elements brings to mind the wet clay on a potter's wheel. The Queen of Coins is a very tactile, sensuous woman, and she knows how to use these talents to shape and form what she wants to create. She is well aware of how smell, taste, sound, touch and sight can influence a person's thoughts, energy and emotions. Feeling dull with no "get up and go?" She'll be glad to give you some of the rosemary essential oil distilled from the plants in her garden. Feeling overwhelmed and stressed? She'll suggest you sit and listen to the sound of water trickling into the pool while appreciating the beauty of the water lilies. Confused about a decision? She'll make sure you're well fed and give you some chamomile tea to help you sleep. She believes the answers will come when the belly is full and the mind is rested. This woman is the epitome of hospitality; her home always feels comfortable to all who enter. In her presence, you will feel pampered and cared for. But because she is a such a talented potter, you may not realize at times she can be manipulative. The Queen of Coins is a proponent of "quid pro quo." If she gives you something, you better be aware that she expects some sort of goods or service in return. She is after all, a resourceful and successful business woman.

King of Coins

The King of Coins is elementally "Air of Earth." What do you get when you add air (think space) to something solid? Imagine digging a hole in the soil that allows a tree to be planted, or shaping a bowl from clay that can be used to hold food. Likewise, this King likes for things to be useful and have a purpose. But he's not a practical prude - check out that salt shaker and pepper grinder on the desk. He loves what is beautiful, comfortable and sensual. Like the spices, these things have a purpose for him in that they bring pleasure and enjoyment to life. He's a generous soul, but he believes in the saying: "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." He'd much rather help you start a business instead of just handing you the money. The two large pots of bamboo are full of symbolism, the most immediate being their lush growth and the material/financial success of this man. Yet bamboo is hollow inside, indicating the airy nature of the King of Coins. He is very resourceful, and he likes to stay open to developing new resources and using the others in new, innovative ways. He is a thinker as much as a builder, which explains how he has accomplished so much. The black and white tiles on the floor show him to be as much a strategist as a chess master. On the floor are three balls or spheres; perhaps they represent dominion over the earth or are like cells that split and reproduce. But what about the chimp on the chest? These primates have way more strength than humans, but we have finer motor skills and a more advanced brain. Researchers at Cornell believe we evolved in these areas because of a change in eating (probably due to climate change). So it is possible man's appetite set him on the road to dominance of this planet. Let's just hope the King of Coins' appetite doesn't turn out to be as destructive as we humans have been.