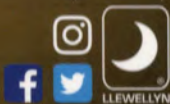


"This is a tarot fairytale rich with symbolism, story, intrigue, and shadowy things." —Theresa Reed, author of *The Tarot Coloring Book*

WELCOME TO THE DARK WOOD... WHERE GETTING LOST HELPS YOU FIND YOURSELF

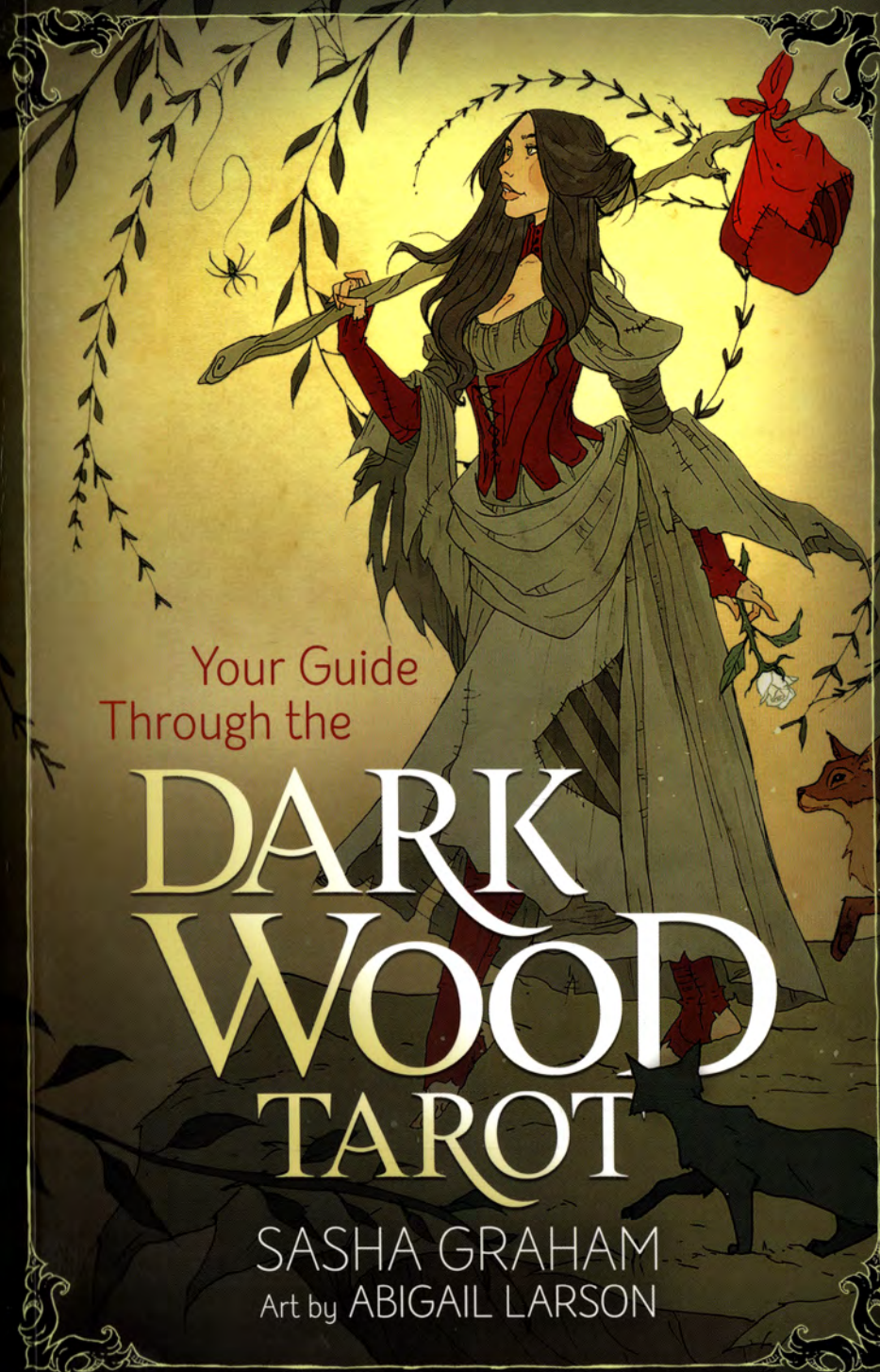
Bestselling author Sasha Graham lights your way through the Dark Wood in this full-color guidebook. Inside is a clear and thorough breakdown of card meanings, tarot basics, spreads, and more.

Dark Wood Tarot is a traditional Rider-Waite-Smith-style deck, but it arrives at your fingertips with an extra dose of delicious darkness. It's a shadow deck that invites you into uncharted territory where your bravery will be rewarded with empowerment and a deeper understanding of yourself. This accessible guidebook shows you how to embrace the gifts in the dark and integrate them into your life.



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Your Guide Through the
DARK WOOD TAROT
GRAHAM



Your Guide
Through the

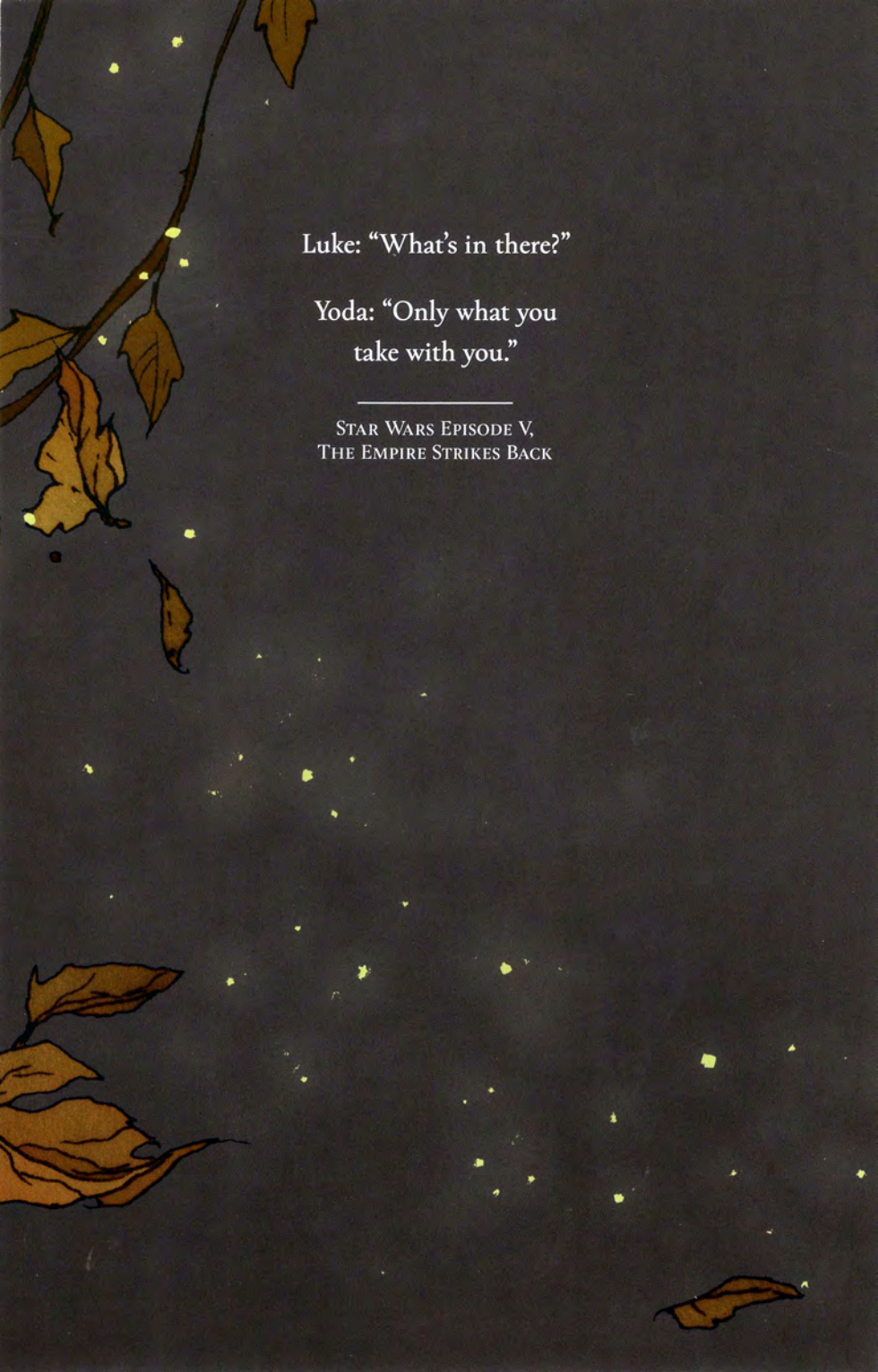
DARK WOOD TAROT

SASHA GRAHAM
Art by ABIGAIL LARSON









Luke: "What's in there?"

Yoda: "Only what you
take with you."

STAR WARS EPISODE V,
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



Your Guide
Through the

DARK
WOOD
TAROT



BILL BRADY

Sasha Graham is the author of *Tarot Diva*, *365 Tarot Spreads*, *365 Tarot Spells*, and *Llewellyn's Complete Book of the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*. She served as editor and writer of Lo Scarabeo's *Tarot Fundamentals* and is a contributing author to *Llewellyn's 2020 Magical Almanac*. Sasha teaches tarot classes and lectures around the globe. She lives in New York City and the Catskills and can be found online at sashagraham.com.



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Your Guide
Through the

DARK
WOOD
TAROT



SASHA GRAHAM

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INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,
Welcome to the Dark Wood Tarot. The forest is ever so happy you have arrived. It sensed your presence, felt an opening, and called to you. Its thickets and thorns were wishing, waiting, and longing for your presence. You've responded to its siren song and now it promises to reward you deeply. Pathways, visions, and delights are prepared for your adventure. Are you ready?

The Dark Wood Tarot is a traditional tarot, but it arrives at your fingertips with an extra dose of delicious darkness. The Dark Wood Tarot is a shadow tarot deck. A shadow deck requires you to examine hidden aspects of the psyche during a reading. It is designed to guide you into uncharted territory you may not have explored in a traditional tarot reading. Shadow work is challenging. It is not for the faint of heart. You'll require a heavy dose of bravery and a commitment to truth if you are to keep reading.

Shadow work is the exploration of the repressed, unconscious, often frightening aspects of our personality.

Illumination into the dark part of our psyche makes way for self-awareness. It can bring clarity and joy while often unleashing a personal power because it takes effort to repress, hide, and ignore elements of the self. Negativity, hatred, and jealousy contain tsunami springs of life force. This energy is called “chi” in Chinese culture, “mana” in Polynesian culture, and “prana” in Sanskrit. Energy is energy. It is neither good nor bad; it just is. Claim your power and use it to enhance all areas of your life.

The Shadow Witch is the embodiment of you, the reader. She travels through the Dark Wood as the Fool. The Fool/Shadow Witch is your key to unlocking this tarot. Follow her through the major arcana like you would a character in a film. To journey as the Shadow Witch does not mean you are a literal sorceress who casts spells or a witch practicing the Wiccan religion, Voodoo, or Hoodoo (although you might be). The word *witch* describes the supernatural part of who you are. She is the invisible you. The Shadow Witch is your intuition and instinct. The Shadow Witch is the awareness behind your eyes looking out and experiencing the world.

The Shadow Witch moves into the woods because the forest symbolizes unknown, forgotten places. We are part of nature, not separate from it. The forest is the outward manifestation of our subconscious life. Forest symbolism is widely used in myth, film, and literature. A forest is the entrance to Hades, the Greek underworld, as described by Virgil in the *Aeneid*. Dante Alighieri finds himself inside a dark forest in his *Divine Comedy*. The Star Wars saga sends

Luke Skywalker to a bog-like forest planet for Jedi training, where he meets his subconscious in a dark cave. Innumerable fairy tales—from Little Red Riding Hood to Hansel and Gretel—send their protagonists inside eerie, dark woods to outwit monsters and learn valuable lessons. The forest is where we become lost so we can find ourselves.

Darkness is a powerful symbol in the Dark Wood. Metaphorical and literal darkness leads to harrowing experiences, but if we examine the darkest moments of our life, we realize that is where we learn great lessons. We discover what we are made of.

We exist between the polarity of light and dark. Dualistic thinking, even New Age sayings such as “love and light,” insinuates light is “good” and dark is “bad.” Mention divine inspiration, angels, and divinity, and people instinctively look up. Speak of demons and death, and people instinctively look down. Our work is to integrate and eventually transcend darkness and light altogether by holding them equally in a state of interconnection.

Fear of the dark stems from our early human survival instincts. Ancient people depended on the light of day to keep them safe. The nightfall held multiple dangers like wild animals, thievery, and pillaging. These days, electricity illuminates the night. Food can be bought anywhere. Many (but not all) of us are fortunate to live under the rule of law and order. Fear of darkness can be discarded. What’s more, the darkness can be integrated, learned, and sourced from.

Universal darkness is infinite, while sunlight contains boundaries. Scientists tell us the cosmos is almost entirely

made of dark matter. Dark matter is an energy making up more than 90 percent of the universe. It does not emit light and cannot be observed directly. Dark matter is identified by its gravitational pull. Our sun is but a pinprick of light in the known universe. We are tiny specks on earth basking in the sun's glow amidst the vastness of deep space. We mistakenly think daytime is the universal norm because it's where most of us spend our waking hours, but darkness is the natural state of the universe.

Shedding our dualistic thought that light is "good" and dark is "bad" heals us. The monsters are not out there. They are not some imagined "other." They are inside us. The more we ignore and repress inner demons, the hungrier, more vicious, and more destructive they become. When we embrace the unknown, confront clinging fears, and meet and greet our shadow side, we uncover glittering treasures of the soul. Hidden talents emerge and latent abilities spring to life. Evolution unfolds. Like seeds sprouting deep inside dark, damp earth, we root. This enables us to reach into the light and manifest something new.

The Shadow Witch experiences each card as a lesson. Every card contains a story. Tarot whispers tales that we can apply in our own life. We find different narratives every time we flip a card because we are always changing. The cards are archetypal and contain the collective conscious of those who have lived before us. The cards can act as medicine. You can use the energy of any tarot card to help you greet a problem, issue, or circumstance. Journey through the deck with the Shadow Witch like you would follow

along with a character in a film or a novel where the protagonist becomes an expression of you.

Shadow meanings replace traditional tarot reversal meanings in the Dark Wood. An upside-down card is considered a reversal. Reversed cards are usually assigned a unique or oppositional meaning. The shadow meanings in the Dark Wood are crafted to bring you in touch with your shadow self. The shadow self is the disowned or hidden part of your personality. You are free to read the cards with or without the shadow meanings.

Abigail Larson illustrated the Dark Wood with a seductive landscape imbued with nature, folklore, and fairy tales. The images and motifs of this deck are grounded in iconic paranormal characters such as witches, creepy clowns, and vampires. Dashing knights, magical beings, and enchantments will appear as you flip the cards. Swords clank, thunder crashes, tender hearts are broken and healed. Queens and their kings rule over elemental kingdoms, and animals bear signs and messages. It is the well-traveled territory of childhood stories and the projection of our collective shared hopes, fears, and desires.

This book is filled with information to prepare you for your journey of reading the cards. In addition to card meanings, you'll find foundational material and basics. Readings and questions are the heart of a tarot practice. Spreads are included to help you integrate what you are learning and provide valuable insight.

You have an opportunity to create a new narrative for yourself every time you flip a card. New stories invite

possibility. Possibility paves the way for evolution. Evolution asks you to utilize everything that makes you unique. You are infinitely powerful, but with power comes great responsibility. How will you wield it? Your entire life has led you to this singular moment. Here is your deck of cards. Cast them wisely.

We stand at the edge of a historic precipice. Technology and globalism connect and empower us while they simultaneously reflect the darkest crevices of the human condition. Racism and sexism heave a dying gasp as a new generation erodes gender barriers and champions inclusivity and human rights. Now is not the time for a fanciful dip into our shadow because it is sexy or fashionable. It is essential, now more than ever before, to bravely gaze into the darkest chambers of our hearts. It is only with an honest appraisal of the seat of our souls that we can mend and repair ourselves individually and collectively. It is imperative to examine and explore our dark sides while embracing the ethos of introspection. The shadow is needed now more than ever. We heal the world when we heal ourselves, and hope shines brightest when it illuminates the dark.

Sasha Graham

CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, NY



PART
1

READING THE
WOOD





Once upon a time." Is there a more potent phrase in storytelling? Our ears perk up and we prepare to dig in to a good story. Stories offer us insight, escapism, options, opinions, ideas. Stories sometimes show us how to live when they gift us with solutions we can apply.

Tarot is the ultimate storytelling device because the cards hold infinite interpretations. You'll encounter different combinations revealing multiple possibilities for all your questions. Over time, you'll discover repeating cards that act like markers for your life, reflecting strong themes. Every card contains useful bits of information you can use to apply to your life journey.

Anyone can read tarot. You don't need special powers to read the cards; you are already a master storyteller. Allow the tarot to become your storytelling tool. We are all narrators who assign meaning to everything that happens to us. We all possess sensitive intuitive abilities; it is what makes us human. Trust yourself and your imagination as you approach the cards. Enjoy the experience without the fear of "getting it wrong."

There are two basic types of stories we all tell: the stories we tell others and the stories we tell ourselves. We tell stories to others via updates, texts, hashtags, emails, art, written words, and conversation. We tell stories when we talk about our childhood or come home and tell someone about our day. Describe someone's scandalous behavior and you've just told a story. We tell the story of what we plan to do when we share our future plans.

We tell stories inside our head constantly with our inner voice. We interpret life events, make value judgments and decisions, and convince ourselves of one thing and talk ourselves out of another, all through storytelling. Dreams are the unconscious stories inside our sleeping mind. Becoming aware of our storytelling offers us a very special gift. Once we observe and recognize the power of storytelling, we can learn to tell new stories about ourselves.

Flip a card and tell the story. It is as easy as that. Fear of getting something wrong is the fastest way to shut down a tarot reading. What is happening on the card? What do the characters look like they are doing? Examine the card like a freeze-frame from a film. What happened before this card? What might happen in a moment? If you pull more than one card, place them next to each other and read them like a graphic novel. Fill in the bubbles of what's happening in front of you.

To ease card interpretation or if you feel overwhelmed looking at a card, simply observe the first symbol that catches your attention. Symbols can be nouns: people, places, and things, including characters, animals, and

objects such as towers, crowns, and stars. Nature symbols are bodies of water, plants, flowers, etc. Identify the symbol and interpret its message by discovering what the symbol means to you. If the symbol of a book catches your attention, consider what a book means to you in regular life. Do books make you feel cozy and curious? You may interpret the symbol of the book as an invitation or call to adventure. If you notice a cat, does it make you feel magical? A tarot card with a cat might remind you to look for the magic in life. Fairy tales and tarot operate on a deeply symbolic level.

Tips for Immediate Intuitive Readings

- Go with your first instinct.
- What catches your attention on the card?
- Tell the story you see on the card.
- Choose a single symbol and interpret it as an answer.
- What does the symbol on the card mean to you?
- Read the image like you are telling a story to a child.
- Trust your gut.



Tips for Deeper Readings

- Study card definitions.
- Write your own personal meanings for the cards.
- What song, smell, and emotional quality does the card invoke?
- Look for tarot examples in everyday life.
- Imagine what happens before and after the action in the card.
- If the tarot card could speak to you, what would it say?





THE SHADOW SELF

The shadow self is a term used in analytical psychology. It represents the hidden and repressed parts of the personality. The shadow self is the place we stuff qualities, desires, and squirmy things we would rather not acknowledge about ourselves, such as jealousy, anger, sexual urges, etc. The shadow is the container into which we place the things we want to do but are not socially acceptable. The shadow contains talents we may have hidden away if someone told us we shouldn't be using it or doing it. The shadow is where we stash things we have done that we are not proud of or don't want to admit to ourselves.

The shadow remains hidden because we want to justify our behaviors and decisions. We want to see ourselves as good. We justify our actions even if we suffer from low self-esteem. Have you ever wondered how the craziest person you know can live with themselves? They justify their actions to make themselves "right" the same way you do. We all do it.

Everyone's shadow self holds great power. When you acknowledge the Shadow without acting upon it, you access

this energy. For instance, say you are green with envy over a person who seems to have it all. This person has confidence, an incredible lifestyle, and exciting relationships. Their good fortune and natural talent annoy you. You spend valuable energy getting angry or jealous when you see or think of them instead of recognizing that your envy is pointing you toward your own internal desire. Once envy is acknowledged as an internal compass, you can release it while using it to provide direction in your life and begin working towards the same desired qualities for yourself.

The unacknowledged shadow self can become dangerous because controlled repression creates a fusion of power leading to anger and blame. Your shadow is projected onto other people. The qualities annoying you in others are usually the very things thriving in your shadow. Your “fake” friend drives you crazy because she’s mirroring your own inauthenticity. You see a person pursuing a dream you’ve given up on yet still hold in your shadow and think, “Who does that person think they are?” You blame a “bad” teacher for dismal grades even though you never turned in the homework. We all do it. It exists on every level. At the worst end of the spectrum, cultural shadow instincts lead to atrocious crimes against humanity, including witch burning, holocausts, and genocide.

We don’t want to get rid of our shadow. Our shadow is a useful tool. We want to understand and integrate the shadow so it does not lead us into unconscious behavior. Integrating the shadow helps us take responsibility for our lives. When we own ourselves with integrity, acknowledg-

ing the dark parts of ourselves as well as the good, we act with compassion and consciousness. This blows open new doors of possibility and evolution.

Shadow Meanings in Tarot

The Dark Wood Tarot challenges you to work with the shadow meaning of each card. Shadow meanings take the place of traditional tarot reversals; use them whenever a reversed card appears in a reading. A shadow meaning takes card meanings and moves them to the extreme. It brings the card into its darkest, lowest place to see how you've wielded it against yourself or another person.

A traditional tarot reversal is often interpreted as the opposite of a card's normal meaning. For instance, the Emperor typically means "rule and order." A typical Emperor reversal would then be "chaotic and uncontrollable." A shadow reversal asks you to examine Emperor qualities in a dark and nefarious way. How you have used these qualities to an extreme? Both regular and reversed meanings can be dangerous. How have you taken the Emperor's qualities of rule and order and used them against yourself or another person? Are you so attached to your own internal rules that you wield chaos over someone you love or even yourself?

The Empress's shadow meaning offers a second example. The Empress's typical meaning is "creativity," so its traditional reversal might be "narrow minded." A shadow reversal asks you to consider how you have hurt, disparaged, or damaged the creativity of another person. Have you ever

been critical or cruel when someone shared their creativity with you? You may not have meant it. You may have been tired or distracted. You may have been jealous. You may have been at your wit's end. You may have been having a bad day. But if this was something you did, you can take responsibility for it and move on.

Cultivate personal shadow meanings by imagining the darkest, lowest, cruelest experience of the card. For example, if the highest form of the Ace of Cups is an outpouring of love, then the shadow meaning is restricting someone else's emotional flow. This happens when you are critical or negate another's emotional reaction or truth. Have you ever belittled someone else's emotional state? Have you ever snapped and told someone they were wrong to feel a certain way? If you did and then didn't take responsibility for it, you put it into your shadow. Identifying shadow behavior helps you to look honestly at yourself. None of us are perfect, but when we accept our entire self, not just our shiny, bright parts, we become fuller and more compassionate versions of ourselves. We become less likely to repeat this behavior in the future.



The Upside-Down World of Reversals

There are many ways to interpret a reversed card in addition to a shadow meaning. Get into the habit of flipping your cards left to right, like flipping pages in a book. This way, you will know if a card is truly reversed or not.

Here are additional ways to interpret reversed cards:

TRADITIONAL REVERSAL: The card takes on its opposite meaning. For example, the Ace of Wands marks the spark of desire; therefore, a reversed Ace of Wands is smothered or extinguished desire.

BLOCKAGE: The reversed card reflects an energetic blockage; therefore, the reversed Ace of Wands reflects passion that is closed off.

PATTERNS AND ATTENTION: Reversals sometimes require extra attention and create their own interesting patterns within a spread.

IGNORE: A reversal can always be ignored. Flip the cards right-side up and proceed with your reading. This is the best technique as you first learn tarot. Move at your own pace, and do not overcomplicate your readings as you are getting comfortable with the deck.





A Book of Shadows, or grimoire, is a witch's handwritten book of observations, personal spells, and magical notes. A witch develops her skills and talents over a lifetime, just like a tarotist. Her Book of Shadows is where she records her spells, techniques, and discoveries. These personal texts are highly personal and unique. Everyone weaves magic in different ways. Our personal taste and magical imprint is as unique as our kiss. Everything is objective, including a personal tarot practice. No one else in the world will work with the tarot like you do. This is why personal record keeping is a wildly useful and often enjoyable aspect of an active tarot practice.

To create a Tarot Book of Shadows, decide how you would like to organize the information. You can use a traditional notebook, fancy leather journal, or artfully bound blank book. Binders are useful because the pages can be moved, sectioned, and organized with ease. Electronic programs such as Scrivener or phone apps make electronic filing and photography a cinch.

Ideas and Sections for Your Book of Shadows

ASTROLOGICAL NOTES: Any astrological information connecting to the cards.

CARD-A-DAY PULLS: Record of daily pulls, integrated discoveries, and synchronicities.

CARD OBSERVATIONS: Stream-of-consciousness written observations and thoughts.

DREAM INTERPRETATION: Dreamtime experiences and observations.

ELEMENTAL (TAROT SUIT) MEDITATIONS, THOUGHTS, AND EXPERIENCES: Meditation experience with cards and suits.

JOURNALING: Insightful reflections on your experience with the cards or a day-by-day record.

NUMEROLOGY: Your personal relationship to numerology as it relates to the tarot.

ORIGINAL AND FAVORITE SPREADS: Record and draw your favorite spreads.

PSYCHIC POPS AND INTUITIVE HITS: Record psychic flashes and intuitive moments.

REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE AS

CARDS: A section to align real-life experiences with tarot archetypes, especially who the court cards remind you of.

SHADOW SELF SECTION: A special section of the book dedicated to recording and exploring aspects of the shadow self.

SHORT STORIES OF CARDS: Writing original stories along with the cards.

SYMBOL DICTIONARY: A personal dictionary of recurring real-life and tarot symbols and what they mean to you.

TAROT SKETCHES: Sketching a card is a great way to discover overlooked or hidden elements of the cards.

TAROT SPELLS: A recording of tarot spells and their outcome.







Initiation marks the beginning of a process and often indicates entrance to a secret society or magical group. Tarot connects its practitioners in invisible yet profound ways. Tarotists often discover they share a new common language with other practitioners. “Oh,” they will laugh when describing an ex-boyfriend, “he was *such* a Knight of Cups!” Or they might say “it was such a Tower moment” when referring to an experience that felt like the Tower card’s tumultuous upheaval.

Owning a tarot deck or reading tarot does not mean you have to find tarot friends. Technology makes it easy to find other tarotists; however, it is not essential nor required. You may choose to work privately with your cards, never sharing the experience with anyone. You may also choose to ignore and not perform this initiation ritual. Tarot is always in your hands. Tarot works the way you want it to work.

Perform this pleasant ritual to become familiar with the characters and landscapes inside the Dark Wood who will become your advisors and inspiration. You may repeat the ritual whenever you like, as it makes an excellent cleanse

for your cards. It can feel nice to perform yearly or seasonal rituals with your cards.

To initiate yourself into the Dark Wood, carve out at least thirty minutes to work alone with your deck. Rituals prepare the body for spiritual work and create a sensual atmosphere. Light candles, smudge the room with sage, and play music tailored to your senses (the Dark Wood Tarot pairs beautifully with motion picture soundtracks). Use anything that gets you into a meditative and receptive mood. Light a stick or cone of incense and place the deck in front of you.

Clear your mind. Greet the deck as if it is a new friend. Examine it. How does it feel under your fingers? How does it smell? Place the cards in the order found in this book if they are out of order. Begin with the Fool. Move through your tarot deck, card by card. Deeply observe each image and pass the card through the incense smoke to cleanse and clear each one. Leave the deck to charge on a windowsill by the light of the moon.



ALCHEMICAL QUESTIONS

Questions are the root of a tarot reading. The root of the word *question* is “quest.” Alchemy is the magical process of transformation. Alchemical questions are designed to provide results, insights, and card interpretations, moving you further and faster.

How we craft our questions is important. Our brain searches for answers in the cards based on how we ask them. Ask a simple yes or no question and receive a simple yes or no answer. Alchemical questions are designed to blow open the doors of possibility by returning advice that can be immediately acted upon and succinctly followed.

Three Elements of Alchemical Question Construction

- 1: Acknowledge your personal power.
- 2: State your desired outcome.
- 3: Include how you want to feel.

Acknowledge Your Personal Power

You are a powerful creature who has a huge impact on your future. We are not slaves to a predetermined destiny. Avoid “why” or “when” questions because these will box you in. To formulate an alchemical question, first acknowledge your personal power. Start your question with *how*, *what*, or *where* by asking:

- “How can I...?”
- “What can I...?”
- “What can I do...?”
- “Where should I...?”

State Your Desired Outcome

Once you have asserted your personal power, insert your desire. What are you looking for? What do you want: Clarity? Insight? Money? Love? Remember, anything is possible. Place this in the middle of your question.

- “How can I calm myself down...?”
- “What can I focus on to bring the highest romantic relationship...?”
- “What can I do to manifest...?”
- “Where should I look for guidance...?”



Include How You Want to Feel

You've clarified your power and inserted your desire; now state how you will feel upon receiving your desired outcome:

- "How can I calm myself down and find peace with the current situation?"
- "What can I focus on to bring the highest romantic relationship so I will feel valued and loved?"
- "What can I do to manifest the life of my dreams?"
- "Where should I look for guidance so I can fulfill my potential?"

Keep asking your alchemical questions until you reach your desired outcome. Ask it as if your life depends on it because, honestly, it does.







ENCHANTMENTS

Tarot is associated with all sorts of sorcery—and for good reason. Fairy tales are chock full of magical totems like poison apples, enchanted kisses, and fairy godmothers, while tarot contains celestial creatures and magical wands, swords, and cups along with elements of the uncanny. Tarot reveals deep synchronicities, mind-bending psychic pops, and life-affirming messages. Tarot is magic because you are magic. You work with the cards, but they are working you, too.

Tarot can be used for practical magic in simple ways. You can purposefully pull the card you need whenever you like. You can keep the card and the energy of that card with you all day. This is a magical act. You can use a card as the projection of a magical goal. For instance, maybe you seek peace at home. You choose the Ten of Cups and keep it on your phone, your computer, or anywhere you can see it as a reminder of your desire.

Tarot's magic becomes deeper, more evocative when you meditate into a card to work directly with its archetypal energy. No prior meditation experience is needed. Choose a

card and observe it for ten minutes. Note what happens in your Book of Shadows. How you feel? Do you notice new and unusual symbols and nuances inside the card? Are you moving deeper into the arcana? Can you hear sounds, detect smells, or cultivate a sensorial experience inside the card? Does the card or a character have a message for you? Is there a particular song playing? What would you assign as the theme song for the card? You may use guided meditations into particular cards from books or find pre-recorded meditations online.

Tarot is a gateway into the esoteric arts. Its internal numerical structure and the unfolding of the major arcana aligns with Freemasonry, cabala, astrology, Wicca, and many magical and creative systems. Students often begin tarot for fun and insight and are surprised as it develops into a spiritual practice. No matter where the royal road of tarot takes you, step with care and enjoy the journey.



RECURRING PATTERNS

The material world exists because of recurring natural patterns. The seasons, our bodies, mechanics of technology, architecture, science, and the natural world are all based on patterns and repetition. Our existence, the web of our DNA, and our family tree are intricate patterns. We are the present and current consciousness of the hundreds of thousands of people who have come before us.

Fairy tales make use of recurring numerical patterns, especially threes and sevens. Witches chant incantations three times. Popular songs repeat their chorus endlessly. Sacred chants utilize repetition. We are often aware of the recurring patterns of our life as we brush up against the same challenges and issues again and again. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, we find ourselves in similar situations with a new cast of characters. Identical relationship challenges occur with different people. Professional blockages rear their heads repeatedly.

Once we understand the repetition occurs to aid in our evolution, we can embrace it. Those who are awake and conscious change the patterns. The repetition dissipates. It melts

like the wicked witch who is doused with water. The pattern vanishes once and for all and new possibility emerges. We are here to change our inherited patterns and evolve. This is the true nature of life. Tarot helps us detect these patterns.

Tarot numbers provide us with useful information. You'll observe numerical patterns in large spreads and the cycles of your daily draws. Use numerical information to pad your basic understanding of the cards; for example, an ace always suggests beginning a new cycle or idea, while a ten always signifies the end. Recurring patterns in a tarot spread will draw our attention and ask us to pay extra-special attention to their meaning in our current situation or question.

ONE = BEGINNINGS

TWO = PARTNERSHIP

THREE = CREATIVITY

FOUR = STRUCTURE

FIVE = CHALLENGE

SIX = HEART EXPANSION

SEVEN = UNCANNY

EIGHT = INFINITE PERFECTION

NINE = WISH FULFILLMENT

TEN = ENDINGS



THE FOUR SUITS

Myths and fairy tales usually occur in faraway lands where fantastical things are possible. These landscapes become the place where we imagine and test an idea before performing them in the “real” world. Tarot gives us an opportunity to examine all possibilities before enacting them in our life. The four elemental landscapes of tarot are found in the four suits.

Wands:

The Landscape of Elemental Fire

Imagine the feeling of fire, a spark in the night, a flickering flame, the heat of a raging inferno. Wands are passion, drive, and excitement. The kingdom of fire rules erotic sexuality. It reflects our callings and chosen careers. It is the energy waking us in the morning and the flood of sensations overtaking us when caught in the heat of the moment. It is our spirituality, our drive, and our ultimate destiny, as fire propels the energy of our life.

Swords:

The Landscape of Elemental Air

Imagine the feeling of air: a breeze in your hair, the winter wind on your face, air's invisible fingers on the surface of water. Swords are thoughts, ideas, and mental activity. The kingdom of air rules our intellect and the mind. It reflects the stories we tell ourselves, the narratives we create, and all forms of communication: written, verbal, and inferred.

Cups:

The Landscape of Elemental Water

Imagine the feeling of water in all its forms: chilly ice, silky mist, buoyant saltwater, rapid clouds, crystal-clear pools. Cups are art, ideas, and emotions. The kingdom of water rules our feelings. Emotions move and change as quickly as water. It is the transformative world of pain, joy, sorrow, love, and every emotion in between.

Pentacles:

The Landscape of Elemental Earth

Imagine feeling earth at your fingertips: crumbly dirt, smooth rock, freshly plowed fields, and vibrant mountains, trees, animals, and people. Pentacles are all the items inside the material world, everything we can see, touch, smell, and taste. This world reflects all things (people, places, things) and includes money, goods, and resources.



Fairy tales and tarot are full of kings, queens, princes, and princesses. Tarot's royal ones play a unique role. Kings, queens, and courts in tarot operate like modern-day pop culture celebrities. The court cards are like us but different. They live in a parallel universe with special privileges. This construct offers us something to aspire to.

Tarot royalty functions as shades of our own personality or the personalities of others. In a reading they can represent us or other people or inform us on how to approach an issue or situation. Each court card carries core personality traits, which are added to the traits of their elemental suit.

It is helpful to think of the court cards as members of a family where the king is the father, the queen is the mother, the knight is the teen son, and the page is the young daughter.

King

- Mature, masculine, firm, commanding, authoritative energy/personality

Queen

- Mature, feminine, nurturing, empathetic, creative energy/personality

Knight

- Teen, expansive, impulsive, experimental energy/personality

Page

- Childlike, curious, attentive, innocent, focused energy/personality





Spreads are how tarot's story unfolds. Tarot spreads assign special meaning to each drawn card. Shuffle the deck completely and clear your mind before drawing your cards. Beginning readers who feel intimidated by seventy-eight cards can make spreads easier to interpret by reading with the Major Arcana cards only. Move on to a full deck when you feel ready.

One Card Spread

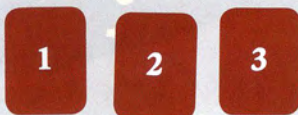
1. What I need to know

Shadow Self Spread

1. My bright side
2. My dark side
3. How I can integrate the two



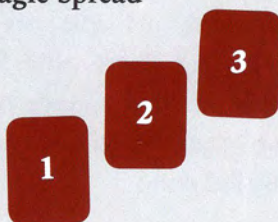
Deadly Problem Spread



1. Situation
2. Deadly problem
3. Solution

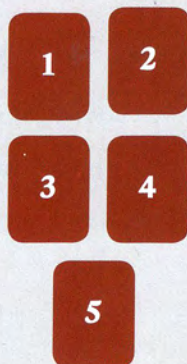
Awaken Inner Magic Spread

1. Current situation
2. Magical gift
3. How I can apply my magical gift to the situation



Soul Mate Spread

1. Soul mate
2. Me
3. What we teach each other
4. What separates us
5. What action to take



Energetic Chakra Spread

This spread should be done as a meditation and visualization along with a card reading. Shuffle and place seven cards before you facedown. Proceed to interpret each card. As you turn each card, imagine that chakra opening and spinning in your body while simultaneously focusing on the card's message.

1. Root/Base of Spine: Your security
2. Sacral: Your sexuality
3. Solar Plexus: Your power
4. Heart: Your empathy
5. Throat: Your speech
6. Third eye: Your intuition
7. Crown: Your highest self

Hindsight/Insight/Foresight Spread

**1****2****3**

1. Hindsight: Why did this event occur?
2. Insight: What do I need to understand right now?
3. Foresight: How can I move forward in my highest and best interest?



An ornate, black, Art Nouveau-style frame surrounds a central oval. The frame features intricate scrollwork, a bat with spread wings at the top center, and a spiderweb on the left side. The background is a dark, textured grey with scattered golden sparkles.

PART
2

CARDS OF THE
DARK WOOD





PROLOGUE

Once upon a time, a girl sat beneath the circular canopy of poplar trees who had always watched over her. She was a Shadow Witch who had grown like a beanstalk, season after season, from a warm bundle in her mother's witching arms into a ravishing young woman. One night the fat full moon was bursting with so much magic that it drew a tall, angular boy from the shadows to the girl's side. The Shadow Witch was everything the boy had searched for in his darkness. She stood before him under the rustling leaves on her tiptoes and tilted her head up to receive her very first kiss.

Their lips met. He opened her up into the deepest part of herself. She felt a thunderous love. It was as if something simultaneously died and was born inside of her. Desire and tenderness poured from her into him and circulated through him and back into her. Their kiss sparked lightning strikes across the county, where no storm clouds were found. Their embrace attracted armies of fireflies who swarmed and danced around them so brightly that the neighbors who'd come out to inspect the charred, smoky lightning strikes

scratched their heads in curiosity at the luminescent glow in the sky.

But if you were to look down upon the girl on this day, as the trees, birds, and bugs always did, you would see chestnut hair spilling across her shoulders and her back heaving violently. You would hear her crying, sobbing, gasping for air. The girl's heart had splintered in two. Pain filled her body. She thought she was dying. She was too young to realize that heart opening always hurts. The boy had vanished without a trace.

Hot tears spilled down her plump, rosy cheeks and slim neck. The harder she cried, the deeper the saltwater pools rose around her. The herbs and flowers she had planted in the grove were drowning in her sorrow. Eventually she became still, and the mint, rosemary, and nasturtium shuddered in relief.

She gazed into her pool of tears and saw her glossy reflection. The air grew thick around her like mud. That's when she heard it: a familiar voice spoke in the silence. It was a language not she or anyone else could name. After all, once something is named, it is set in stone. This voice defied explanation. The voice came from the inside and outside of her at the same time because all opposites are equally true.

"It is time," said the voice.

"For what?" she asked in a whisper, as if the glistening forest glen was eavesdropping on their conversation—which, of course, it was.

"You can stay here no longer," the voice said.

"But this is my home," she said as a hot, scratchy lump grew in her throat. She struggled to hold back a tide of fresh tears. "I haven't the strength to leave."

"You must depart."

"Where am I to go?" she asked, her cocoa eyes growing wide and full lips quivering.

"On a journey," said the voice.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Follow the signs," replied the voice.

"What signs?" asked the girl.

Silence answered her.

She brushed herself off, remembering how her grandmother had taught her to be brave in the face of frightful things. Her grandmother's toffee voice played in her head: "Embrace your fears, little one. Integrate them or *they* will determine your destiny instead of *you*."

The Shadow Witch wiped the dampness from her cheeks and turned her attention toward the grove. She felt clear and hollow in that way a good cry scrubs you clean from the inside out.

A scarlet cloth bag tied to a walking stick lay at her feet. She picked up the stick and was surprised to find it quivering with a vibrancy all its own. The stick flew up, positioned itself across her shoulder, and spun her around so quickly she almost tripped over her own feet.

A path leading to a gnarled gathering of willow trees appeared before her. She had never noticed these trees before. The willows stood like elders, wrinkled, twisted, yet strangely familiar. They pulled to her stomach like a

magnet. As she wondered whether she dared venture forth, a velvety black cat nuzzled against her leg and pattered toward the trees.

"Hello," she called to the cat, who meowed back nonchalantly. She figured she'd better follow along. The moment she did, she noticed a sweet red fox walking by her side.

"Hello, fox," she said. "Are you a sign?"

"Do I look like a sign?" asked the sly fox.

"No," she laughed. "You look like a fox."

"Then that's what I am," he replied with a grin.

It felt good to be moving. She felt safe with her furry companions—optimistic even.

The willow branches grew dense like a web and a quiet spider spun down from above her. A lizard crawled up from the ground and flicked his tongue in her direction. The girl forgot about the boy, her pain, her sadness; adventure was afoot. She didn't see the razor-sharp, jagged cliff before her.

She turned her face toward the sky and walked on, one delicate foot in front of the other. All was as it should be. She trusted the voice implicitly. She knew on some level that even when we are blind to looming pitfalls and hazards around us, it is more dangerous to never take that first step to begin with. After all, we never know when life is about to spring a surprise and transform our lives forever.





The Fool is the archetype
of the child.

*Each step brings you
closer to your destiny.*

The Shadow Witch takes her first step into the Dark Wood. A leap of faith is required. The timid say it is foolish to enter darkness sans light, map, or direction, yet the Fool carries on with equal parts faith and ignorance. She tosses all preconceived judgments aside. The Fool acts in her own best interest. The Fool is a whole and complete agent of herself. She operates outside societal norms. She is not affected by the opinions, judgments, or advice of others. She is blessedly unaware of irrelevant prying eyes and speculation. Her wholeness is sublime. Each step unravels her perfection.

The Fool begins her journey. The end is the beginning. The beginning is the end. Her head tilts toward the sky, reflecting optimism and pleasure in the present moment. Her tattered clothing reflects an individual operating outside the realm of "polite society." She travels free from



convention and obligation. Her bag contains past lives, karma, and experience. The white rose in her hand is purity and love. The black cat reflects feline magic, the fox is cleverness, the spider is the master storyteller, and the creeping lizard is passion and fire. The card is our human connection to the animal and spirit world. The jagged cliff generates with each step; the Fool walks in safety.

MEANING: A leap of faith. Acting impulsively.

Foolishness echoing freedom. Acting in self-interest. A grand adventure. Optimism. Youth. A journey only you can take. The road is yours alone. Acting impulsively. Complete trust. Innocence. The beginning of a new cycle. A door opens. The adventure begins.

SHADOW: Purposefully acting childish. Avoiding reality because you'd rather not face the truth. Feigning ignorance to get out of a sticky situation. Playing dumb on purpose. Running away rather than facing responsibility.



AS ABOVE, SO BELOW



The Magician is the archetype
of magic and sorcery.

*All the magic of the world
resides inside you.*

White flowers, as pale as the moon, blossom and release puffs of sweet, sugary pollen toward the Shadow Witch. She inhales deeply and stops to consider who would cast such a powerful flower spell. The hooting of an owl directs her attention toward an old woman. A crone stands at a ceremonial table. The Shadow Witch wonders if she is looking at a vision of her future self. Everything she meets inside the wood is part of who she is. None of us are actually separate from each other. The Witch is the Magician and the Magician is the Witch, just as you are the Shadow Witch and the Shadow Witch is you.

The Magician stands in a posture of enchantment, breathing life and energy into the wood. She points her right arm to the sky, the spirit world, the place of inspiration and ideas. It represents your highest potential. With her left hand she channels acute energy through her like a lightning rod

grounding the electricity to the earth. She could direct this power anywhere. She is the conduit and literal embodiment of the three worlds we live in: upper (spiritual), middle (material), and lower (subconscious). Each of us is an energetic channel.

Her flowing gray hair symbolizes the Magician's life experience and wisdom. She never blocks, disrupts, or disparages the natural flow of energy with harmful self-hate, negativity, or feelings of unworthiness. She focuses on the present and never looks to the past or the future, like a flower or bird who never stops to think about what it did yesterday or what it will do tomorrow. Her presence keeps her in step with natural magic. She is the energetic filter of the creative life force who ignites all things by the power of her attention.

True magic is not the manipulation of other people, places, or events but the ability to master the self. Real magic teaches you to control your inner experience. If you allow it to, the outer world will rearrange itself in ways you couldn't even imagine.

The Magician separates herself from her thoughts (swords), emotions (cups), desires (wands), and the trick of the material world (pentacles) by becoming a silent, active observer. She follows the path of least resistance. The Magician pays attention and stays open to signs, omens, and messages. She knows when to apply pressure and when to back off. She does not fear the unknown; she embraces it. She knows she is who creates her reality. She seeks what is seeking her.

The owl is a magical omen, a symbol of clairvoyance and astral projection. Owls are nocturnal creatures who see what others do not. Tarot cards are spread across the Magician's table because tarot is a gateway into the esoteric arts. The table is carved with the Magician's axiom "As above, so below." What is true for the world is true for us, and what is true for us is true for the world. We exist between shifting polarities, but all is actually one. The world is not outside of you; it is inside. Two triple-spiraled pre-Celtic triskelion symbols are engraved on her table, reflecting the creative principle of the universe.

A lemniscate floats above her head. It is the symbiotic flow of life energy and dynamism that makes life possible. Her dress is cinched at the waist by a snake eating its own tail. It is an alchemical symbol reminding us of life's energetic circle. Nothing ever disappears; it simply changes form.

MEANING: Charisma. Dynamic personality.

Working wonders. Ability to take action.

Purposeful magic. Asserting one's will over the self. Supreme self-governance. The ability to realize one's full potential. Activity and intention. Clear and concise goals.

SHADOW: The maniacal need to control all things.

Interfering with other people's business.

Manipulation of others for a false sense of power and for personal entertainment.

Showing off to inflate a sense of personal value. Purposefully pushing someone's buttons and seeking reactions and chaos.





The High Priestess is the archetype of the authentic self.

*You are the divine whisper
of the universe.*

The Shadow Witch feels water tickle her toes. She wonders if she's wandered into a puddle or a stream. Silky liquid floods the path. Gaping trees groan as they teepee in toward each other, their branches reaching high for a full moon they will never touch. Lunar sparkles glisten across the deluge. Out of the mist and moisture a figure takes shape: the luminous presence of the High Priestess rises before the Shadow Witch.

The High Priestess holds a scroll and silently unrolls it. The word *tarot* appears. This is the book of your life, containing every possibility, every imaginable outcome. It is ever changing and all encompassing. The High Priestess is the blueprint of your soul and the pure authenticity of the self. She is everything you were, are, and will be. She is your container of soul knowledge. She is inner wisdom waiting

to be revealed. She is your ebb and flow, the cyclical energy of your life.

Two trees enclose the High Priestess from either side, reflecting the dual polarities we move between in the material world. This is dark and light, awake and asleep, highs and lows and all shades in between. The Dark Wood's initials are carved into the bark, marking the threshold into the wood's innermost secrets. What treasure is locked away inside of you?

The High Priestess's secret is silence. Silence is the space of manifestation. Silence is the space of infinite possibility. It is the expansiveness containing all four elements. Silence is the space between the cards in a tarot reading. Sort out what is meaningful to you and sow your intentions inside silence like seeds in a garden.

The High Priestess's dress dissolves into water because she is the font of all waters found within the tarot deck. She is lunar tides, rushing rivers, the lady of the lake. She is the amniotic fluid that sustained you. The High Priestess is your special details, your likes and dislikes, your talents and fascinations.

The full moon rises above her head while a waxing moon is strung around her neck, reflecting her lunar connection to the cyclical nature of the seasons and your life. Who you are spills out naturally when you are true to yourself. She is the subtle self who becomes stronger while acting in alignment with universal forces. She is the space beyond word, image, and sound. She is the knowing that extends outward into the ever-expanding, ever-unfolding you.

MEANING: Silence. Secrets. Darkness. Evolution of the soul. The blueprint of your personality, talents, and traits. A deep knowledge and third eye vision. Activated intuition. Lunar cycles. Inner knowledge. Personal authenticity.

SHADOW: Self-indulgent and self-centered. Narcissistic. Obsessed with the self. An exaggerated sense of importance. Excessive need for admiration. Lack of empathy. Distrust and the inability to follow one's own inner voice.





The Empress is the archetype
of the mother.

*Your passion is the
blueprint to your magic.*

A baby's cry echoes through the silent wood. This haunting sound tempts the Shadow Witch to peer around a mammoth tree and lock eyes with a reclining figure dressed in a red gown with a hand resting on her belly.

The Empress expresses every creative urge bursting forth inside of you. The Empress guides you in creating and inventing your life. She is the expression of your talents. Her urge to expand and unfold is as primal as sex. This is why she is also the most sensual card of the deck.

The Empress reflects activity and brilliance. She is a pulsating, breathing world of energetic expansion and beatific connection. She is the pure creative expression of the ever-expanding universe in human form. The Empress contains the passion and energy to create and destroy life. She is the insanity driving an artist to the brink of madness. As the

mother archetype, she bears the burden of societal fantasy, for mothers are expected to be all things to all creatures.

The Empress's pregnancy is metaphorical. It conveys birthing an idea, project, or person into the world. She rests upon a witch's hand, a tree trunk with finger branches. A witch's hand is a powerful gathering point of magic and energy. Hands are the creative portal of the body, fashioning all things—from food to invention, love and gesture, contact and caress. Bats hang upside down as representations of dormant potential soon to awaken within you.

The Empress's red dress aligns with menstruation, the membrane of life. She is a doorway, the threshold through which the birth waters of the High Priestess flow. The Empress takes the High Priestess's blueprint into the reality of the physical world. The Empress siphons the inner sanctum of the High Priestess out into the macrocosm of sensual formation. The sign of Venus is inside the heart of love. She is sex appeal, ambition, and, above all things, unbounded passion.

The Empress appears in a reading to remind you of your powers of invention and imagination. Your passions and intuitions are the clues to the unfolding mystery of you. The universe supports all creative action. Manifest your visions and make the world a more beautiful place while living the life of your dreams.

MEANING: Mother figure. Creation. Artistic ability. Soft, gentle, nurturing touch. Reinvention and expression. Confidence and the abundance of the soul. Fertility and birth. Sensorial pleasure and earthly delights. Stepping in tune with seasonal change, displaying natural abundance in all things. The nurturing of self-expression and potential.

SHADOW: Destroying the hopes and dreams of another. Unsupportive attitude. Thoughtless words. Jealousy over another's success. Hating on other's good fortune because you do not believe in your own power. Abusing motherly power.





The Emperor is the archetype of the father.

Define the boundaries of your life to create a kingdom.

The Shadow Witch moves through a rocky, craggy landscape as vegetation becomes scarce and the air grows humid. She hears the crackling of a bonfire. She stops to catch her breath while the eerie feeling of being watched creeps across her skin like a spider. She looks up to discover a pair of glowing eyes peering down.

The Emperor is the male consort and partner of the Empress. He is the energy of boundaries and restrictions. He takes the expansiveness of the Empress and gives her shape and form. He is the builder and protector. The Emperor and the Empress court and dance with each other but never consummate their attraction. Their mutual flirtation is what gives shape and form to the world.

The Emperor is numbered four and reflects ultimate stability. He is the master of his domain. This is where habits are formed, order is created, and results are seen. He is the

underlying structure of the tarot deck, as solid as the foundations of a house and with a sheer force of will that cannot be broken. He is you on top of your game, laying down the law, and showing up and getting things done.

The ram is the symbol of Aries and the embodiment of strength, initiative, determination, rules, and order. This is a card of power. The cliff reflects his boundaries. He would destroy them at a moment's notice when they no longer serve his purpose. The symbol of an Egyptian ankh is carved into the cliff beneath him, suggesting everlasting life. His compact, muscular body denotes strength. His horns are used to batter through opposable forces.

MEANING: Father figure. Habits and strategies creating success and results. Authority and domination. Defense and protection. Established rules. Asserting boundaries when needed and moving them when necessity calls for it. Self-possession and, above all things, self-control.

SHADOW: Controlling others rather than exerting control over the self. Not thinking of how your actions affect other people. Bullheaded and forceful, even when the situation does not call for such an approach. Having a “my way or the highway” attitude. Refusing to listen. Refusal to budge.



5 • HIEROPHANT



The Hierophant is the archetype of the teacher.

*The answers you seek
stand before you.*

The Shadow Witch departs from the valley of fire. She spies a book upon her path. She picks up the tome and flips through its sweet, musky pages. Another strewn book catches her attention. This book leads to another book. Before she knows it, like a trail of breadcrumbs, the books lead her to an animated anthropomorphic tree. Trees are wise teachers to those who stop, look, and listen.

The Hierophant tree stands as the external symbol, form, and doorway to religion and assorted dogmas. All religious and spiritual teachings come from the Hierophant. The Hierophant is the shaman, medicine woman, priest, guru, and yogi who passes on esoteric information to students and disciples. This card reflects the relationship between mentor and student. It is giving and taking, the pursuit of knowledge, and a systematic course of study.

Crossed keys bearing the Dark Wood's initials reflect the unlocking of knowledge. A teacher encourages the student



to uncover what they have always known deep inside. The two turtles in the water are the connection to natural history. The snake is kundalini power.

The Hierophant makes the sign of benediction and blessing with her right hand. Her left hand holds a scroll of ancient symbols, the esoteric gateway to a knowledge transcending language. Symbols speak directly to our unconscious. She is our attempt to explain and explore the ineffable.

The Emperor provides order for the world. The Hierophant gives us a hint and indication of the secrets and mysteries that exist behind the structure of daily life.

MEANING: The passing on of a lineage and holy teachings. Religious, esoteric texts and ritualistic implements. External spirituality, religious structures, and institutions. Belief systems that are instilled rather than experienced. Societal norms and expectations. Teachers and students. Mentorship. The sharing of information. What lesson are you learning?

SHADOW: Groupthink. Crowd mentality. The expectation that you will go along with the status quo. Signing up for a system of beliefs that don't make sense to you. Teachers obsessed with exercising authority instead of empowering students. Thinking your way is the only way. Speaking when you should listen. Using personal spirituality as an excuse to degrade others.





The Lovers are the
archetype of love.

*Love is the unifying, expansive,
and binding force of the universe.*

The Shadow Witch finds her body growing weary. She sits down upon a soft, mossy enclosure and rests her eyes. Her black cat companion curls at her feet. Visions of the boy and his kiss return to her as she drifts off into sleep.

Love is the last wild, unknown frontier. It is the metaphysical, occult, and transcendental nature of attraction and desire. The biological urge to reproduce and our impulse toward romantic love is one of the most powerful forces known to humankind. Love, like universal breath, causes our bodies to contract and expand like the universe.

Romantic desire has begun and ended wars, raised kingdoms, and transformed the world. Stories of romance, love, and loss define our life. The Lovers card is the drug-like high, the erotic passion, showing us what is possible, not what is sustainable.

A naked man and woman are joined in the intimate, sensual lotus blossom position. The unfolding lotus flower is a symbol of transformation. It speaks to the evolutionary aspects of ecstatic love. The lovers' nudity reflects trust and vulnerability. The body expresses what language cannot. Sex is emotion in motion.

A dark angel, robed and hooded, sanctifies the couple—or are they an extension of his imagination? Spiritual ecstasy radiates through the card. Erotic love heals all sense of loss and fosters a complete spiritual union. Two become one and rise to transcend duality.

The male focuses on the female. He sends all of his energy into her. She accepts the energy with her whole body and casts her eyes above to the dark angel. This graphic triangle of energy echoes the creative principle of the entire universe. The Hierophant's lessons become experiential in the Lovers as we taste the nectar of divine love for ourselves.

MEANING: Love and romantic attraction.

Flirtation. Deep bonds. Profound and emotional connection. Sensuality and pleasure. Spiritual ecstasy. Rapture. The unfolding of the mind, body, and spirit. Deep gratitude and sense of aliveness. Soul mates. Twin flames. Quantum entanglement.

SHADOW: Obsession and compulsion over a romantic object of desire. Attachment to the point of mania. Desperation. Refusal to let a relationship end. Sex addict. Repeated abusive patterns in romantic entanglements.



The Chariot is the archetype
of the hero/heroine.

Spread your wings and take flight.

The Shadow Witch wakes from her Lovers dream, her head groggy and her body heavy with sleep. A loud screech electrifies her. She looks up. A bald eagle is descending out of the sky, heading straight for her.

This is the moment where you step behind the wheel and head toward your destination with perfect clarity to claim the prize and win your heart's desire. The eagle's precision and razor-sharp ability to succeed in conquest provides strength and assurance. The eagle teaches us to broaden our sense of self and expand the horizon of what is known. The terrain may be unfamiliar, but you can move freely without fearing the unknown.

The Shadow Witch shapeshifts into the eagle and sets off into the sky. The entirety of the Dark Wood is spread out beneath her watchful eyes. Have you ever attempted to look at the world with eagle eyes? She peers past the horizon, examines all possibilities, and narrows in specifically on



what she desires. The eagle's wings are extended and ready for action. The line between the Chariot's mind and heart's desire is thin, razor sharp, and direct. It is the shortest line between two points. The Lovers have experienced ecstasy and transcendence. Now it is time for you to move forward and claim your ultimate goal.

MEANING: Your goal is a person, place, thing, state of mind, or a manner of being. It will be yours. You are moving in alignment with the nature of your soul. You will reach your destination. Ascend to new heights. Success, drive, and attainment.

SHADOW: The inability to sit still. Distraction caused by confusion in the mind. Scatterbrained and unfocused. Allowing thoughts to disturb and distract you. A need for energetic balance and calmness. It's time to breathe and transform anxiety into useful, purposeful energy. Obsessing over forward progress and achievement to prove your worth. Slow down.





8 • STRENGTH



Strength is the archetype
of the warrior.

Universal power lies within you.

The Shadow Witch returns to the earth and finds herself inside a stone-walled garden. She hears the hissing of a snake and the slow beating of a heartbeat drum. The garden protects a woman who hypnotizes a snake as a rose blossoms above her head in a stone wall.

Strength simmers with constant power to illuminate everything. It is causality itself. Strength is the inner reserves of power wielded in profound gestures. It is intellectual, physical, and emotional fortitude. It is exuding tenacity of character, personal responsibility, and inner confidence, no matter the external circumstance.

A yogi sits in padmasana position and gazes at the nature of her inner strength as exemplified by the kundalini snake appearing before her. Yoga is the alignment and movement of the physical body in the material world. Yoga poses are like tarot archetypes. They kindle inner and outer strength and spiritual prowess. Strength applies to how we

use our deep inner reserves of power. Each of us is a font of energy. Do we give it away to others, do we save enough for ourselves? Can we nurture and stoke the strength of fire within us? Can we transform and transcend who we are and what we are capable of? True strength engages our ability to be flexible in the face of events and people's needs, wants, and moods. It gives us the power to react out of who we are rather than reacting out of the given situation. Strength determines how we approach each day, challenge, and blessing.

The yogini's upper chakras—the energetic centers of the body—are awakened, active, and pulsating with power. Her crown chakra, located above her head, is the energetic point connecting her to the universe at large; it is portrayed as a flower budding through a concrete stone wall. Softness pushes through a seemingly impenetrable stone barrier. Her third eye chakra, located between the brows, sparkles with bindi jewelry, marking the strength of her intuition. Her throat chakra, place of strong communication, is marked with a jewel. A gem rests upon her heart chakra, where she allows her broken heart to mend, thus becoming even more pliable. The solar plexus, located on the belly, is marked with her moon belt. It glows with power and self-esteem. The snake is her own creation. Her radiant energy will do her bidding exactly as she directs it.

MEANING: Gentle control. Inner wells of power.

Stable body. Sound mind. Fortitude and unwavering sense of self. Knowing when to apply pressure and when to release it. Character and resiliency. Effortless action. Recognizing one's power. Your energetic birthright. Stoking your inner fire and transforming your reality.

SHADOW: Holding tightly to a person, place, or thing. Addicted to habits that control your life. Using strength over adversity to define the ego and create drama. Forcing others to do things they do not want to do. Bending another's will.





The Hermit is the archetype
of the sage.

The wisdom of silence is deafening.

The Shadow Witch moves onward and sees a light shining in the darkness through the trees. The Hermit holds a lantern at the mouth of a cave. The cave walls contain scribbling, signs, and symbols. The Hermit invites the Shadow Witch inside her cave.

The Hermit sequesters herself in order to hear the divine whispers of the universe. Recorded knowledge provides groundwork, but only each individual can experience a unique relationship with the unseen. This is why hermits, esoteric masters, and soul seekers sequester themselves into seclusion and vows of silence. It is the profound fecundity of silence and darkness where one becomes an active observer responding to the living universe. Away from noise, sound, and distraction, the innermost trembling of the soul may be heard. This is why hermits seek vastness and seclusion deep in the desert or high in the mountains, far and away from the psychic energy of others.

The Hermit moves outside of her cave once her relationship to mystery is cultivated. She lets her inner light of knowledge and guidance lead the way so that others may do the same for themselves.

The Hermit's cave, like a dark forest or the underworld, reflects hidden knowledge and a journey. Her cloak and hood express protection. The glowing lamp is a beacon for others to follow. Esoteric markings inside the cave reflect the active work of the Hermit. She is not passive in her exploration of her inner and outer landscapes but alive, observant, and completely aware.

MEANING: Silence. Space. Thought. Sequester.

Meditation. Curiosity. Questioning. Removing yourself from the noise of everyday life. Inner knowledge cultivated by personal investigation. Acute listening to the universe inside of you. Sharing wisdom with others. Leading by example.

SHADOW: Hiding from the outer world. Social anxiety. Sticking one's head in the sand. The inability to express oneself to the outer world. Losing your grip on reality. Thinking you are a master with nothing left to learn. Spiritual snobbery.



The Wheel of Fortune is the archetype of fate, fortune, and destiny.

The symphony of life is a perpetual wheel of motion.

The Shadow Witch fell out of time as she visited the Hermit. Time is an illusion, after all. The Hermit gave the Witch specific instructions: “Find the wheel. Make it spin.” It didn’t take long for the witch to discover an old spindle spinning wheel covered in curious creatures. She feels the Dark Wood spring to life as she becomes the activating principle of the universe.

The Wheel of Fortune reflects the motion of the universe and the ebb and flow of time. It is cyclical rhythms—morning, noon, and night. It is the rotation of the earth as it travels around the sun. The wheel reflects ups and downs and life cycles. The secret to ultimate equilibrium is to find your center point. Can you focus on the center of the wheel? Can you place yourself in the stillness? If you do, no matter how fast or slow the wheel spins, no matter if you are moving up into pleasure or moving down into anxiety, you



can access steadiness. This unshakable quality is a response from the truth of who you are.

The snake plummets down while the fairy rises. Each corner direction holds an elemental of earth, air, fire, and water. The wheel marks the halfway point between the Fool and World cards. The four corner fairies foreshadow the World card to come, and their books hold the secrets of the elementals.

MEANING: Life's ups and downs. The rhythm and flow of existence. Expansion and movement. The Wheel of Fortune turns in your favor. The ability to ride with challenges and blessings. Accepting help from the unseen.

SHADOW: The inability to be happy and present in the present moment. A preoccupation with an imagined future outcome. Clinging to a magical fairy-tale ending where life will be perfect "when" and "if only."





11 • JUSTICE



Justice is the archetype
of the law.

*What you do to others,
you do to yourself.*

The Shadow Witch set the Wheel of Fortune spinning and now moves through the wood with crystal-clear intention. The Hermit has explained karma to the witch. The Hermit revealed that karma is the infused magic of responsibility, that which keeps universal order. What we put out in the world is what comes back to us. This is how each of us determines our fate and sets the course for our destiny.

The Shadow Witch was told to find Justice, and she recognizes the scales of balance. Justice traditionally reflects the glue of law and order with social moral, ethical, and safety codes. Justice takes on a deeper meaning inside the Dark Wood. It is the moment of personal truth. The work and effort you put into a project or situation is what is returned to you. Justice allows no shortcuts, lies, or decep-

tions. She holds the sword of truth. It will see the heart of the matter and the tenor of all souls.

Two kneeling maidens are blindfolded. They can remove their blindfolds once they claim their role and responsibility for the actions, thoughts, and choices bringing them to Justice's feet.

Those who integrate Justice's lessons will act with integrity and become free. We show up for ourselves, our desires, and for other people. The universe responds by greeting us with new possibilities and hidden delights.

MEANING: Work and effort. Karma. The witch's rule of three. The energy you put out returns to you three times over. Taking responsibility. Doing the right thing even if it is a tough, scary choice. Showing up when you would rather avoid the situation. Doing right by yourself. Facing the truth. Owning up.

SHADOW: Considering yourself above people, places, and things. Using your story to become a martyr. Judging yourself harshly and shaming others to feel better about yourself. Speaking ill of others and spreading malicious gossip. Pleasure in humiliation.



12 • HANGED MAN



The Hanged Man is the archetype of the mystic.

*The deeper you look,
the more is revealed.*

The Shadow Witch moves on as she contemplates all she's seen and learned. She can't help but wonder what will come next. She doesn't walk far before hearing violin strings slicing through the forest with an eerie and uncanny tune. She arrives at a T-shaped fork in the path. A stunning, immortal creature, a vampire, hangs before her like a signpost. The witch thinks the vampire is sleeping until this queen of the dead opens her eyes, which are as red as a bloody October sunset, and hypnotizes the witch.

A vampire woman is the Hanged Man. The Hanged Man is a mystic who sees everything from a different point of view. The inversion is the ability to see your situation and surroundings in a new way. This is why the Hanged Man hangs like a traitor at the crossroads. Your personal crossroad, a choice, is implied by the T-shaped cross she hangs from. Crossroads are the gathering point of multiple



possibilities and realities. They echo union and separation and are a place of convergence. Crossroads are an entrance to the underworld, guarded by Hecate, goddess and guardian of the underworld, who—like vampires—brings humans into dark netherworlds. On a simple level, the crossroad offers an opportunity to choose and foreshadow a meeting with the Devil.

The hanging spider, the weaver of stories, reminds us of the narratives we create. Perhaps it is time to plot a new story for our reversed perspective? The vampire hangs upside down, reflecting all that is supernatural. The vampire is the inversion of all things seemingly human and the essence of life amidst death. Vampires and mystics each possess supernatural abilities such as levitating, mind reading, longevity, and immortality. The mystic does not swap day for night, good for bad, or right for wrong, like the myth of the vampire, but instead accepts the wholeness and interconnectedness of all things.

The Hanged Man asks you to examine your current situation from a new point of view. It is a moment of stasis offering the opportunity of a new vantage point. It is space for you to gather the strength, insight, and resources you need. The Hanged Man appears like a signpost: hold tight; things are about to get interesting.

MEANING: A moment's pause. Stillness. A sacrifice is made for the greater good of all involved. The world seen through a new set of eyes. Revelations beheld. Keep looking. Excitement is afoot. Deep mystical tendencies. Contemplation. Seeing the situation at hand from an entirely new point of view. Cultivating depth in the present moment.

SHADOW: Hiding from the world. Refusal to participate. Inability to make choices. Staying stuck out of fear. Wanting others to do the work for you.



13 • DEATH



Death is the archetype of death.

Let death teach you how to live.

The Hanged Man falls to the ground. Her red gown turns silky white and her back sprouts white feather wings. Her chestnut hair turns ashy gray. The vampire transforms into a weeping angel.

Death moves through the woods with a scythe, collecting souls just as feudal farmers collected wheat. The season ends. It's harvest time. Death holds an hourglass. Time has run out. A small child looks up with wonder. Children accept all things at face value until experience and education lead them to question and fear.

Death exists in the shadow areas of our psyche until we are forced to deal with it. Death is not the opposite of life. Life is infinite. Death is the opposite of birth, a construct of the material world. Life's infinity resides behind the dance of birth and death. Consciousness awakens in the Fool and resolves in complete integration at the World. Death arrives at number thirteen, the uncanny number of strangeness and occult significance. Death is the energy keeping the material world fresh and new.



Esoterically, Death occurs during initiation into a magical or secret society. The old self drops away and the new soul emerges. Death inhabits shavasana, the final resting pose of yoga, where the practitioner is transformed by her practice. Death inhabits the shadows, forests, and thickets of gothic literature, film, and horror.

How do we integrate Death's lessons? How can Death teach us how to live? Death teaches us all things change constantly from the molecular level to the mundane life. Death is ongoing like the weather. Death is the energy allowing emotions to appear, be felt, and slip away, only to be replaced by new ones.

Western cultures traditionally reflect the human spirit either rising to heaven or descending into hell after death. This is a dualistic version of the cosmos ignoring a complexity, which holds all options simultaneously. The Dark Wood teaches us to befriend the darkness, look Death in the eyes, and make peace with all aspects of human existence. Death is the impermanence of the world.

MEANING: Terminus. The end of a way of being. Clearing the path. The ascent to higher understanding. The beginning of true integration. A new beginning with a deeper understanding unfolds. Let go.

SHADOW: Forcing your hand. Using aggressive power to deal with a situation. Pushing people around as in a dictatorship or abusive relationship. The need to pull things apart. Destruction for destruction's sake. Pleasure in upheaval.





14 • TEMPERANCE



Temperance is the archetype
of complexity.

*Transcend duality to
embrace entirety.*

The Shadow Witch leaves Death behind while understanding all her lessons. She moves out to a great plain and walks toward an endless horizon for what feels like hours. Her animal companions are true and stay by her side. Her throat becomes dry and she stops at a glistening pool to take a drink with her hands.

A dark angel with a horned headdress rises from the depths of the water connecting to emotions, the subconscious, and eternal flow. The liquid she fuses is the integration of life energy. She displays mastery as she hones her skills. You become the expert. This is the beginning of maturation. The gothic tower stands in the distance as a hint of the ultimate attainment that is to come. The tower is the highest physical point we can reach without leaving the ground.

Once the lesson of Death is understood, accepted, and ingested, the spirit can engage Temperance. You are now able to combine the oppositional ideas of life and death in a new form. A new path appears. Options become available.

The center and focal point of Temperance is the liquid she fuses. It is the card of balance and complexity but also the magic we make when we focus on what's in front of us. We stand inside shifting polarities. Temperance is how we greet the changing dichotomy of life.

MEANING: Balance within duality, leading to complex thought and action. The honing of skills. Energetic mastery. Going with the flow. Unique and successful combinations. Excellent management skills put to the test with good results. Originality. The unique expression of personal talent.

SHADOW: Shadow artist. Blocking yourself off from the natural ebb and flow of the universe. Creative confusion. Great talent going unused.



15 • DEVIL



The Devil is the archetype
of the shadow.

*Make fear your friend and
turn obstacles into allies.*

The labyrinth awaits,” says Temperance as she points behind the witch to a gaping opening in a massive wooded maze leading into corridors of darkness. The witch takes a deep breath, knowing she must enter. The only way out of the wood is to move through each experience, each lesson. Perhaps she was dreaming. Did it matter? She turns back to see Temperance has vanished. The witch takes a deep breath and enters the corridor of knotted trees.

Your shadow becomes an ally when embraced. Fear is never an effort to avoid. Avoidance equals indifference; think of how it feels to be shunned or find out someone just doesn't care. Fear is realizing the value of a thing. The thought of losing such a thing becomes more terrifying than actually having it. Fears point us to where we want to go. This is why challenge cards are the heart of a tarot spread and the defining moment of any story.



The Shadow is every fear, terror, talent, desire, wish, and expression buried within the wells of the subconscious. The Devil is the mythological creature springing from the human ego. The ego is the false construction of our personality, the idea of who we think we are. It is entirely self-created. We need not destroy our ego. We simply need to recognize it for what it is and no longer be controlled by it.

Labyrinth patterns appear across the natural spectrum in galaxies, seashells, and even snails. We enter mental labyrinths when dealing with loss, confusion, darkness, and fear. Walk the maze to discover your shadow because he conceals himself well. Tricks and illusions would have us think our ego is ready to wage battle with him. What do you fear? Who are you vilifying? What makes you angry and upset? "What," asks the Devil, "do you want more than anything?"

The Devil stands as the terrifying "other" and as a cultural scapegoat. The Devil wants to keep you enslaved, angry, and scared because this is where he draws his power. He thrives on addiction, negative energy, and extreme control. The Devil is called the "Dweller on the Threshold" because once he is slayed and integrated, infinite possibilities appear. Slay the Dweller to set yourself free just as the Page of Swords is about to do.

MEANING: Illusion. Abusive power and control. Shadow. Addiction. Deception and trickery. The heart of the matter. The source of discomfort. Shapeshifting and trickery. A rip-roaring good time. Immediate desires fulfilled at a dangerous cost.

SHADOW: The generator and source of explosive, repressed energy in the wood. The love of your own drama. The false narratives you create. All repressed emotions, ideas, and talents. Self-hatred. Self-loathing. Shame. Anger. Jealousy. Fury. Fear.



The Tower is the archetype
of destruction.

*An act of release is the
art of surrender.*

The Devil is vanquished, and the witch exits the maze to discover a raging storm. A gothic tower reaches toward the sky as a massive lightning bolt strikes it. A fireball explodes as the circular, crown-like top is knocked off the square tower—the destruction of something that never fit to begin with. A storm shakes the sky. Bats stream from the tower, seeking safety. A figure falls from the window. It is your old life and your old habits slipping away. Three windows echo the number of innovation. Their pyramid shape reflects the creative principle of the universe.

The Devil has been greeted, defeated, and integrated. All false, inauthentic things you have created disappear and fall into ruin. Everything changes, often in shockingly abrupt ways. Friendships shift. New people are attracted to your light. Opportunities come knocking. Tower moments can feel jolting and appear shocking to those around you as you



make new and empowering decisions. Don't be sidelined when those you hold dear are surprised or unable to support you at first. The Tower requires adjustment from all parties. Friends and family expect you to adhere to your traditional role. Your evolution makes them reflect on their own lives. Those who count will come around as the rest fall away. New opportunities beckon. The Tower is sometimes as drastic as a complete life makeover, a move, a new job, a complete 180-degree turn. Other times the Tower is a moment of crystal-clear clarity where there was once confusion. You are reborn in an ultimate aha moment.

MEANING: Mayhem. Destruction. Collapse of what never fit to begin with. Needed recalibration. Shocking events. Surprise. Aha moment. Abrupt clarification. Empty space.

SHADOW: Starting fights and aggression toward others and the self. Stoking extreme emotion in others and amping up situations to gain attention. Making purposeful trouble. Breaking others down. Not knowing when to stop. Complete insertion of ego.





The Star is the archetype of healing.

*Universal alignment is
your natural state.*

The Tower has been toppled, and the Shadow Witch makes her way through smoldering rubble to discover a vast and peaceful body of water. Under a clear sky, she sheds her clothing and sits at the water's edge to bathe in starlight. A single toe gently breaks the surface. She teeters on an ancient tree while looking skyward.

The Star is the open, generous space emerging after the Tower destroys what is no longer needed. The Star is the inspired space available after a true energetic clearing. The Star reflects freedom. It reminds you of what is possible when it is hard to see through the static. The Star is the opening of the soul. It is the card of possibility, life, and connection. It is the breeding ground of true magic.

Generosity fills the Star card with the ability to be kind to others and the self. Jubilation illuminates you like helium in a balloon. The body is alive and open, warm, and receiving. This state of reception allows ingenious ideas to

burst forth. An unexpected possibility, a thrilling opportunity, or a situation beyond your wildest dreams becomes available to you.

The Star is naked, losing all self-consciousness. She is vulnerable yet active. Celestial radiance showers upon her. This is the energy of artist and muse. It reflects your connection to water, earth, and sky. She operates freely. The Devil has relinquished his grip. The Tower cleared the decks. You radiate hope, relief, and pleasure.

MEANING: Inspiration. Minimalism. Motivation.

Creating a new reality. Emotional clearing.

Gifts of the heart and soul. Belief. Peace.

Pleasure. Space cleared. Hope. Optimism.

SHADOW: Thinking life should always be brimming with pleasure. The assumption that fairy tales are true. Thinking outer perfection is everlasting. Preconceived ideas of everlasting bliss lead to disappointment and distress. Using others to justify your behavior. Trying to make things nice on the outside when the inside is festering. Dishonesty. Shallow thoughts and behavior.



The Moon is the archetype of mystery.

*Portents are seen in the mind's
eye and felt in the body.*

A full moon rises. It outshines all celestial objects. The Shadow Witch feels a stirring deep within her. A body rises from the waters, as if the moon were a magnet, birthing a fully formed woman from the murky depths.

The Moon reflects new possibility rising from your subconscious to fill the space you have created. The Moon is odd and unfamiliar. It is something new taking form. The Moon is uncanny, mysterious, psychic, and dangerous because original creations are rarely familiar. It can be downright frightening and scary to encounter something you can't identify. This is why the things we desire often frighten us.

New possibilities, new ways of being, draw unfamiliar responses from us. The Moon card gently lets us know we can support what is rising. The time is at hand. This is the birth of what always existed within. The subconscious communicates directly with your highest consciousness. There



is no interference. This urge, desire, and new way can rise through the Moon's reflected light. Sacred imagination is activated. Visions of future portents are seen in the mind's eye and felt in the body.

The Lady rises from lunar subconscious depths as the pregnant moon rises in the night sky. Two wolves howl, reflecting our animal instincts. Dual gothic towers foreshadow the evolution of what is to come, what will be built. A path leads from the water to a distant mountain. This is the path of completion. What rises is sure to become real.

MEANING: Dreams. Nighttime. Psychic activity and the paranormal. An idea, thought, or thing inside your subconscious is ready to rise and be seen. Imagination. Visions. Dark magic.

SHADOW: Mania, deception, and mental illness. Crossing the line into madness. Unable to find the line between sanity and insanity. Blurred vision. Entrapment. Obscuring the truth. Blaming outer circumstances for inner turmoil.





The Sun is the
archetype of creator.

Health and vitality flourish.

The moon sets as the sun rises. The witch returns to the sacred garden to see a woman riding on a horse. The Moon card called to your eternal depths. What had risen now flourishes in daylight. Darkness recedes. Shadows retreat like scattering ants. The Sun card reflects the abundance of a warm summer day. Your heart's desire expands and grows. This card reveals the unfolding of who you are and what you are capable of—you in your glory riding into your inescapable destiny.

The figure is naked. You have nothing to fear, nothing to hide. You are free of attachment. She rides a horse, a symbol of power, mastery, and cooperation. Events work in your favor. Health and vitality are yours. The sun rises behind a garden wall marking the boundary from past into future. You are safe from what used to threaten you. The creeping ivy suggests inherent growth and expansion, the tendrils of connection.

Two pillars mark oppositional forces fueling life's synergy. The sun, the center of the solar system and the source of all life, shines. Sunlight guides and warms you. You shine in the center of your universe.

MEANING: Expansion, renewal, and growth.

Brilliance and beauty. Pregnancy. The unfolding of the heart's desire. Pleasure. Productivity. Recognition of achievement.

SHADOW: Jealousy. Blocking another's light.

Purposefully sabotaging another's good fortune. Wanting all of the attention for yourself. Not recognizing there is more than enough for everyone.



20 • JUDGEMENT



Judgement is the archetype
of transformation.

*You have passed the
point of no return.*

Day revolves quickly into nightfall. Darkness falls like a curtain. The Shadow Witch moves from the garden of manifestation to the garden of the dead. The vampire emerges to take the witch to the point of no return. The witch offers her neck to the vampire. She succumbs to sweet immortality. Nothing ever truly dies.

Judgement appears to remind you there is no going back to the way life used to be. Nothing will ever be the same. You see what you are capable of and, more importantly, you no longer ignore it. Choice evaporates as it becomes your eventuality. Others take note. Ramifications are everywhere. There is no going back. The transformation is nearly complete. You embrace your true destiny.

The Shadow Witch offers her neck willingly to the vampire. She is about to become an eternal child of the night.



Vampire neck bites are erotic symbols marking metamorphosis. The Death card taught us that all life is temporal. Change is the natural state. This is what the Shadow Witch came for. Our instincts will lead us to what we require. We learn who we are. We surprise ourselves.

Corpse hands reach up from the graves to express a wake-up call on every level of existence. What is true for you is true for the world. You change, the world changes. As above, so below. The transformation of the soul is complete.

MEANING: The choice is made. Wake-up call.

Eternal change. Nothing will ever be the same.

Evolution is at hand. Rebirth. Heeding the call of your heart. Unfolding joy.

SHADOW: Need for constant stimulation and drama to cover up the heart of the matter.

Distraction and noise to hide from inner truth. Refusal to change habits. Stuck with ideas defining a false sense of self. Placing unrealistic expectations on others.





21 • WORLD

The World is the archetype
of integration.

You are the universe.

The Shadow Witch is infused with supernatural force. She integrates the lesson and experiences of each card. She is all things—light and dark, high and low, masculine and feminine, and all gray areas in between. Duality vanishes. She is the tantric entirety of infinite possibilities.

She holds two magic wands, compared to the Magician, who held a single wand. Her wands reverberate as a constant source of power. Rather than direct the energy, like the Magician, she embodies the energy in every direction. Four corner animals reflect the four suits of tarot, four elements, and four directions. Symbiotic universal dance ensues as everything moves in perfect symmetry.

The World is the ultimate card, the grand finale of the major arcana. It is the sweet spot of life when all energies mingle, inside and outside, meeting in ecstatic union. Your desire is met. You share your gifts with the world. You hold

nothing back. You are fully alive and present. The outer world manifests and greets you with everything you have ever desired. It is the ultimate state of bliss.

MEANING: Travel, excitement, and movement.

Going with the flow. Lost in the moment.

Complete integration with the world around you. Effortless ease. Freedom of the self. You in all your glory. Victory. Magic. You as you were always meant to be. Success. Infinity. Grace. Magnetic.

SHADOW: Resisting your true nature. Reacting instead of simply being. Hiding from your true self. Projecting false assumptions onto others. Watching from the sidelines rather than joining the game.





Ignition

Tarot suits are an unfolding story progressing from the ace to the ten. Tarot aces sparkle with unique magic. Aces are the seed of their suit. The infinite possibilities of each suit exist inside the ace just as everything you are, were, and will be is tucked inside of you. Understanding how the ace is a seed, like a flower, fruit, or vegetable seed, will help you interpret the ace when it appears in a reading. It is true beginning.

The Ace of Wands ignites the world of wands. A single spark can incite a scorching wildfire. A mysterious hand appears through clouds. Clouds appear on every ace because they are the threshold and entry point to reality. What was hidden is now visible. What was unseen is now seen. Aces reflect the gateway of manifestation. First there is nothing. Then there is something. Aces reflect the beginning, the start. It is the birth of their suit.

A bewitched hand holds a sparking ace. The hand is the symbol of human ingenuity and potential. Hands suggest invention, creative ability, and expression. Hands can be



used lovingly to comfort another or oneself. Palms and fingers caress and nurture. Alternatively, hands can be used for violence, in anger, or even to kill. Hands remind us of how we “handle” things in life. They are used for communication via sign language. Hindu and Buddhist traditions make use of mudras, hand gestures creating a specific energetic flow in the body. Interior thoughts move through our fingers when drawing, texting, and writing.

The Ace of Wands asks you to consider how you are currently handling the suit of Wands. How are you accessing the energy of passion that pulsates through you? Are you up to the challenge as a new cycle of excitement begins? Hindu tradition describes kundalini, or serpent fire, as uncoiling awakened energy. This fire energy is used for spiritual transformation. Are you ready and willing to let the energy of fire transform you?

MEANING: Inspiration strikes. A new cycle begins. Move energy forward into career and passionate pursuits. Great power lies within. Potency. Strength. Go with your first impulse.

SHADOW: Blinded by passion. Distracting impulses. Knocking other people's opinions. Dampening other's excitement and enthusiasm. Taking something you love and desire and burying it so deeply within yourself that it transforms you into a false version of yourself.





Witch of Wands

The Witch of Wands stands between two wands, symbolized by torches. Two is the number of reflection and division. The torches are oppositional forces, masculine and feminine, hot and cold. It is energy and lethargy, high and low, awake and asleep, east and west, etc. The witch stands between two torches and integrates the duality of oppositional forces through her physical body. She reflects the shifting polarities you synthesize at all times.

The witch holds a crystal ball, a symbol of fortunetelling and enchantment. Oz's wicked witch used a gazing ball to spy on Dorothy. Modern seekers infuse the ball with personal energy. They use the device to scry for symbols and see waking dreams and visions. The words *divine* and *divinity* are at the root of *divination*. The crystal ball reminds you to take a bird's-eye view of the situation at hand. Do not rush to decisions. Look deeper. Behold the belly of the matter. Stop to consider all outcomes. Energy is warped when old ideas cling. Do not share your plans with others just yet.

The witch's cone hat suggests the calling down of celestial, spiritual power from above. From the spired cathedrals of Europe to Islamic mosque towers to New England churches, steeples are a symbolic siphoning of energy. It is drawing down from above. The witch reminds you of latent power. You are the sorceress who conjures your life with actions and ideas. You can fill your life with enchantment. You are the spell.

A gris gris bag hangs from the witch's waist. It is a talisman containing roots, herbs, and charms to bring the witch luck. Gather everything that empowers you. Keep it with you at all times. Discard what no longer serves your highest good.

Devoured red apples litter the ground at the witch's feet. Has the witch devoured these apples to consume their magic or has she infused the fruit with her energy and intention and fed them to the object of her desire? The alchemical markings on the wall are ancient knowledge as found in cave paintings and pyramids.

This is the planning stage. Every day you become more of who you are. When you know yourself, you'll know more than any fortuneteller or psychic could ever tell you. Hold your power as the witch holds her crystal gazing ball.


MEANING: World in your hands. Eye on the prize. Careful planning and making good choices. The energy of excitement doubles. Realistic intention setting. Plot a course of action. Do not allow others to drain you. Keep personal energy protected.

SHADOW: The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Taking responsibility for the worst thing you have ever done. When have you caused pain to another? When have you acted selfishly? Decide how you can make amends. Reconsider your current goals. Are you thinking of the highest good for all parties concerned? Is a quick fix worth it in the long run?





THREE OF WANDS



Vampire's Embrace

The vampire is a symbol of erotic power and eternal life. She is a shapeshifter taking on any form she likes to seduce her prey. Her nocturnal nature brings us in line with the dark side of our psyche knowing no bounds, no limits. She feeds on the life force infused in human blood. Blood is the metaphor of wands. Wands energy makes our ruby-red blood boil and provokes us to action.

The dark one's scarlet mouth trickles with her victim's blood. It moves down her neck like a lover's touch. It is the special, private spot that has been kissed and where you wish to be kissed again. Vampire hunger is insatiable. What do you crave? What do you want? What is your deepest desire?

The vampire stands between three wands. Her victim lies at her feet. Look deeper. Is he dead? Does she hold him on the brink of life as a constant food source? Will she transform him into her companion? What would you do?

MEANING: Plans put into action. Creativity. Original solutions. Innovative thinking. State your case. The pleasure of innovation. Commitment to propelling the self forward even against seeming odds. Making your stake in the world. Creating your own luck. Help often arrives when least expected. Trust inner power. Creative vibration.

SHADOW: Psychic vampires suck energy. Do you allow people to drain you? Examine the nature of your personal energetic exchange. Where you place your focus. Attention is the magic wand of energy. Your focal point determines the course of your life. Do you focus on needy people, personal misfortune, negativity, and technological time sucks? What feeds off your energy?



Grumpy Old Troll

The troll sits near a smoky fire waiting for his dinner to cross over the bridge. Bridges are a symbol of danger and transformation. Bridges, like thresholds, transform us, carry us from one reality to another. Ancient travelers put themselves at risk and vulnerability when crossing bridges. Imagine traveling by horse and carriage and greeting the expanse of a river with no crossing in sight. Roadside thieves hide beneath bridges to ambush the weary traveler. Fear of a bridge's underbelly runs as deep as fear of what lurks under the bed. It is discomfort and things going bump in the night.

The troll's fingers dip into the river. The flowing waters reflect consciousness and flowing life force. Eyes peek from a tree in secret observation. It is the hidden hand of a guide, totem, or ally. Fire smoke rises like incense. Your passionate ideas rise higher and hold more consequence than you might imagine.



MEANING: A passage has been cleared for you. What surprises await? The passport is issued, tickets are in hand, and adventure is afoot.

SHADOW: A troll under the bridge is what we hide away. Positive qualities can be stored in the shadow if we repress them. Do you hide a talent or stop yourself from doing something you love?







Clash of the Fairy Folk

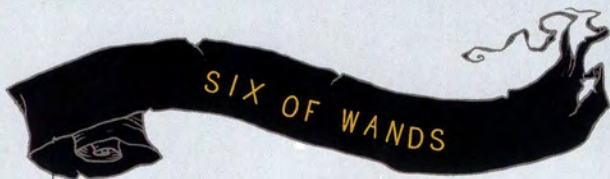
Five elemental fairies erupt under a toadstool. The mushroom is mysterious and unexpected manifestation. Mushrooms can be healthy and nourishing forest foods, but they sometimes carry deadly poison. Psychedelic mushrooms open new worlds of perception. Toadstools often appear in fairy rings. Unlucky humans may be held hostage if they step inside the ring.

Fairy symbolism is deeply rooted in many cultures. These winged sprites will aid humans but if provoked can turn menacing, even dangerous. Have you ever walked alone in the woods and had the distinct feeling something invisible moved along with you?

Fives in tarot are the midway point of the story. They always suggest the ultimate challenge that must be met and overcome for evolution to occur. The Five of Wands reflects heated arguments. How can you channel excess energy?

MEANING: Conflict and lively debate. Confusion as to how to proceed. Agitated people in the family or workplace. Combustible energy. Passionate beliefs spread to others. Action.

SHADOW: What are you fighting for? Are you swept away and affected by group thinking and reaction? Do you surrender to the power of anger when provoked? Anger provides false strength. Is it possible for you to remain calm even in the face of adversity? Can you surrender to a situation?



Parade of Ghosts

A parade meanders through the wood. A woman holds a child in her arms. Ladies-in-waiting accompany her, their torches lighting the way. The Six of Wands reflects a public display of achievement. How can we inspire others with our actions? What is the message we are sending? Do we share our fortune with others or do we feel superior or up on our high horse when feeling above it all?

MEANING: Success and inspiring others. Held in high regard. Reason to celebrate. Support is offered. Movement is clear. The struggle subsides. All parties are in agreement. Success is yours.



SHADOW: Not all is as it seems. The women are ghosts. The child is real. The ghosts have stolen the child and left a changeling in its place. Changelings, common in European folklore, express anxiety about the pre-industrial family and infant mortality. This card asks you this: How does anxiety express itself in you? Are you jealous of other people's good fortune? Jealousy and envy are helpful. They point us in the direction of what we want. Let it go. If we harbor jealousy, envy, and thievery, we act against the natural state of the universe. There is enough for all of us.





Confront the Shadow

Sunlight contains boundaries while darkness holds infinite horizons. The more we repress darkness, the deeper it haunts us. We are usually our own worst enemy. Presumed enemies in our life are the shadow projections of our psyche.


Tarot sevens are uncanny, squirmy, and tend to be supernatural in nature. Why is your shadow rising? Why now? The witch is cloaked; perhaps she hides and represses too much. She holds up a torch, willing to look at the darkness that rises before her. What are you afraid to look at? What have you been avoiding? It is standing right in front of you.

MEANING: Defending oneself. Battling others and holding the higher ground. Are your enemies and challenges real or imagined, self-created or manifested for distraction? The card of confrontation that can no longer be avoided. You are put to the test.

SHADOW: The shadow meaning of this card is victimhood and ego identification. The ego doesn't care about the nature of the energy that feeds it. Victim mentality and "poor me" feeds the ego. Victim mentality engages in the idea that you are "good" while others have wronged you. The ego takes center stage when you feel right and others appear wrong. Look at the patterns in your life. Examine how people disappoint you. Is resentment and pain a repetitive theme? What benefit do you receive from repeating these patterns?



EIGHT OF WANDS



Mermaid's Dream

Mermaids and sirens are slippery, sexual creatures who reflect unconscious depths. They carry the potency and power of water and are vast and powerful, inhabiting seas, rivers, and harbors. Mermaids reflect the female embodiment of attraction and danger, luring males to their deaths. The mermaid represents the human capacity for longing.

The reclined mermaid expresses our own naked vulnerability. She remains exposed and open as she sends out her personal desire, each intention embodied in the wands shooting out above her. She casts a spell and makes her intentions known. This card is your energy in action.

MEANING: The Eight of Wands is the space between wish and culmination. It is the call and response of the universe. Prayers are sent. Forces are set in motion. It is impossible to see where intentions will land. It is too late to alter their course. You've done all you can for the moment. Sit with patience and wait for the situation to develop.



SHADOW: Do you sit back and wait for people to do things for you? Not taking action is still an action. What holds you back? What action can you take? What intention can you set right now? Remember the witch's karmic rule: what you put out into the world will return to you.





Clown Crossing

The clown is the trickster archetype who operates outside of society. Many fear clowns because who knows what a clown might do? Is he charming or evil to the bone? Can we ever really know a person? Clown makeup is skin deep. Menacing clowns speak to the human mask.

The fence reflects a barrier that has been transcended. It is stepping out into the darkness and pushing forward into unknown territory. Nine is the number of wish fulfillment. You are getting what you came for. Is it meeting your expectations? Is it all you wished?

MEANING: Finding strength you didn't know you had. You are about to receive what you want. Breaking barriers. Moving past your comfort zone. Inner expansion leads to new ideas, objectives, and potentials.

SHADOW: What behavior do you hide from others? What are you hiding from yourself? What appeases the holes inside you: Secret eating? Hidden internet searches? Snooping? Devious behavior? Do you wish revenge on another? Guilty pleasures can take a turn for the worse. Stay vigilant.



Demonic Fire

The Demon of Fire stands with one wand in her hand and nine wands in her pack. She is radiant and full of energy, embodying the culmination of the entire suit of wands. Tens in tarot are the end of the suit. The end of a cycle gives way to a new beginning. The World card circles back to the Fool, and the ten circles back to the ace. Your journey and experience begins again, fresh with new adventures, new lessons.

The suit of wands expresses fire and passion burning with such intensity that it can overwhelm and exhaust. The flames of passion awaken your inner fire of intention. It gets things done but leads to burnout and stress.

You have taken the current cycle and situation as far as it can go. Allow yourself to surrender to all you have learned. Surrender to what is out of your control. Appreciate what you have. Get ready to begin again.



MEANING: A goal achieved. A cycle complete. Gathering time. Relax and plan for the future. Time for renewal. A job well done. A new cycle awaits. Rest now.

SHADOW: Does the weight of the world rest on your shoulders? Do you feel the need to be “on” all the time? Are you a people pleaser? What is the payoff you receive? How can you change this?





Burning Ember

The Page of Wands stands in the wood surrounded by hovering candles. Has she conjured these flickering possibilities or have they magically appeared? She holds a magic wand toward a flame, ready to ignite her instrument. An energetic idea is sparking for you, igniting your interest and focus.

The Page of Wands is the sparkling intelligence of a child following passion and curiosity. This card reflects the gifts of innocence and the ability to see and experience passion for the first time. This marks the purity of awareness unaffected by experience and held without a filter. Such focus connects the Page of Wands to life's universal flow as dazzling possibilities form and dissolve before her.

The gift of the Page of Wands is her ability to focus on what deeply thrills her. Her laser focus allows passionate communication. She gives full attention and collaborates with the invisible. The Page of Wands is the great adventurer and traveler. Dreams churn inside her endless curiosity.

MEANING: An eager and excited personality. Trying anything. No hesitation. Painfully honest. Speaking the truth. The friend who tells you like it is. Delightful and inspirational. Magnetic enthusiasm. Loads of fun. An adventurous traveler who finds pleasure and excitement in all things.

SHADOW: Guarded and suspicious behavior. Prone to gossip. Spreading rumors. Ruining plans for others. Anticipating and envisioning future events too intensely. Reality falls flat. Nothing can live up to your desire because you have set the bar impossibly high and therefore sabotage yourself.



Explosion

The Knight of Wands stands in a wood full of flame. Salamanders—fire creatures—approach him. The Knight of Wands is the explosive energy of combustible fire. Consumed with the intensity of youth, blinded by passion, he is prone to boasting about his talents. He displays a larger-than-life personality. He is both charming and annoying, depending on the situation at hand.

His personality is daring, putting everything on a limb for what he believes in. Impulsive, he rarely thinks before acting. The knight's energy is a flashpoint. This card appears when the situation will unfold like a wildfire. The Knight of Wands is the instigator of energy carrying positive or negative ramifications.



MEANING: Easily agitated. Open to manipulation.

A seductive and dangerous lover. Burned by romance. On to the next adventure. Challenge of restlessness. The inability to stay put.

SHADOW: Hot under the collar and angering

easily over insignificant matters. Small issues steal focus from productive energy.

Containment is a recipe for disaster. Freedom is the answer. How can you save yourself from burning down the forest? Release and forgive.





Charismatic Flame

The Queen of Wands is a bright shining star. She embodies the mature feminine essence of fire. She is active kundalini energy. She is magnetic attraction. The love in her heart radiates through her body. She is irresistible and an innate flirt who draws all near to her. Her warmth is infectious. Her bright enthusiasm and compassion win over any situation.

The Queen of Wand's inner confidence is knowing and owning who she is. She is in excellent health and is an athlete who greets victory and defeat with equal grace and gratitude. The Queen of Wands' greatest challenge is balancing her intensity. She may feel there is something wrong if she's not firing on all cylinders. She is found in dancing flames and near flickering candles but languishes in the heat of the sun.

MEANING: Radiating joy. Aliveness. Rooting in the present moment. Focusing on passion. Bringing out the best in others and the self. An inspiring teacher, actor, and personality. Helping others reach for their own dreams and aspirations.

SHADOW: Excitement turns to hatred, wonder to bitterness, and delight to dour and dinginess when one stuffs desire into subconscious realms. This bright, shining queen is danger when her flames burn out of control. How do you express anger? Has your own intense desire taken on a life form of its own? Are you willing to hurt others in order to get the results you want or is there another way that is kinder and gentler? Consider how you respond to the world around you. Can you channel your intense passion into a sustainable fire that nourishes yourself and others?



Iconoclast

The King of Wands is a dominating and commanding personality. He is the mature, masculine expression of fire. He exhibits the incendiary charisma of a movie star and possesses a wicked sense of humor. He demonstrates easy authority. He's empowered and extremely turned on by his own ideas. His enthusiasm spreads like a brushfire. He's open to new ideas and willing to accept help and collaborations to bring his visions to reality. He embraces showmanship, performs stunts, and attracts attention everywhere he goes.

The King of Wands does what it takes to further his cause. An original thinker who is proud to stand apart from the crowd, he believes deeply in using his energy to spark ideas, efforts, and creative projects of others. Spiritual leaders and gurus carry wand fire. His challenge is being overbearing and anxious if he feels undermined.

MEANING: A person who enjoys expressing power.

Courage in the face of adversity. The strength to challenge oneself. Exhaustive energy sometimes requires a break. Leadership and organizational ability. Dazzling charisma. Inspiring the crowd.



SHADOW: Danger abounds in repressed wand energy. Explosive energy turned inward. Self-destructive tendencies. Dictator- or authoritarian-like control. Victimhood, blaming others for personal problems. Lack of personal responsibility. A danger to oneself and others. Let emotion pass. Take a breath. Phone a friend.





Flow

Tarot suits are an unfolding story progressing from the ace to the ten. Tarot aces sparkle with unique magic. Aces are the seed of their suit. The infinite possibilities of each suit exist inside the ace just as everything you are, were, and will be is tucked inside of you. Understanding how the ace is a seed, like a flower, fruit, or vegetable seed, will help you interpret the ace when it appears in a reading. It is true beginning.

The Ace of Cups is the font of the world of cups. A mysterious hand appears through clouds. Clouds appear on every ace because they are the threshold and entry point to reality. What was hidden is now visible. What was unseen is now seen. Aces reflect the gateway of manifestation. First there is nothing. Then there is something. Aces reflect the beginning, the start. It is the birth of their suit.

A bewitched hand holds a cup. The hand is the symbol of human ingenuity and potential. Hands suggest invention, creative ability, and expression. Hands can be used lovingly to comfort another or oneself. Palms and fingers caress and nurture. Alternatively, hands can be used for violence, in anger,

or even to kill. Hands remind us of how we “handle” things in life. They are used for communication via sign language. Hindu and Buddhist traditions make use of mudras, hand gestures creating a specific energetic flow in the body. Interior thoughts move through our fingers when drawing, texting, and writing. The hand of an ace asks you to consider how you are currently handling their particular suit.

The Ace of Cups is an emotional outpouring. Five streams of water flow from the magical cup and into the water below like a fountain. A crow descends to the cup. The shapeshifter crow is a symbol of the shadow self. The crow feeds an offering to the cup. It is communion from the invisible world into the physical world. Dark lotuses float on the gentle water, a symbol of transformation. The lotus roots in the depths to blossom in the sunlight.

MEANING: Emotionally open. Truth. Healthy emotional state. Rise and fall without attachment. An open heart receiving gifts. The pleasure of emotional freedom. Empathy. Love. An outpouring of emotion.

SHADOW: An inability to experience emotions. Feeling closed off. Held hostage by recurrent emotions. Lack of empathy. Chemical imbalance. Depression. Slave to emotions. Extreme remorse and sadness. Despair. Melancholia that won't dissipate. Take any emotion you feel and bring it out of your body and into the mind's eye. Examine it. Learn from it.



Recognition

The Two of Cups is meeting a person, thing, or energy mirroring your soul—the sweet recognition of oneself in another. This is the pure essence of attraction toward the things we love. The horses convey intimacy, tenderness, and reverence in the wild nature of the Dark Wood.

The Two of Cups reflects finding one's other half, meeting your desire with a full heart. The two horses share an intimate bond. It doesn't matter how much time passes for old friends. Time vanishes. The wild magic of reunification.

Horses use scent to identify one another. Horses in tarot decks are traditionally used as an expression of the energy of a situation. The horses in this card have stopped in their tracks. Time stands still. They inhale, breathe, and consider each other.

The human urge to be seen is deeply seeded within us. The Two of Cups reflects a moment of reunion. These circumstances may occur with humans, animals, the perfect job, finding your calling, or even a mystical experience. We thirst for understanding and recognition. To be “seen” is a desire shared by all things.



MEANING: Greeting your heart's desire.

Recognition. Your other half. A perfect pairing. Heart happiness. Pleasure. Reflection. Delight. Love. Coming home. Reunion. Spiritual marriage. Twin flames. Soul mates.

SHADOW: The dark side of this card emerges when you love something or someone who doesn't love you back. Rejection hurts like physical pain; they share the same centers in the brain. Treat rejection like a short-term flu or illness that you will heal from. The shadow of this card is evoked when there is an attempt to re-create past feelings that have long since departed for one or both parties. Not all feelings, passions, and loves will or can last, but all can be valued and appreciated for the fact they existed at all.





Weird Sisters

Three cats sit together with eyes as wide as saucers. They gaze into a crackling fire, mesmerized by dancing flames as if terrific visions dance before them. They are hypnotized. Smoke curls above them. Their collective dream reaches up and out into the world. Each cat sits near a cup. The feline energy is like Macbeth's three witches, the sacred trinity, the sacred power of gathered souls who share the desire to create a new ecstatic reality. The number three reflects creativity. The friends share a common goal. They are stronger together.


The cats vision quest collectively and are greater than the sum of their parts. This gives them cause for celebration. The emotional nature of cups is magnified by the creative number three. It is the indestructible bond of friendship and showing up for others.

MEANING: Celebration. Friendship. Coming together with others in communal expression and support. Lifting each other up. Combined efforts lead to generous feelings. Companionship. Common cause.

SHADOW: Humans are hardwired for social interaction. It feels good to be part of a group, to find a “tribe” and hold feelings of connection and belonging. Are you sacrificing any part of who you are to fit in? Are you enjoying inclusivity based on keeping others out?



FOUR OF CUPS



Unseen Gift

Four cups stand before a female fox. She looks away, distracted and unamused. What she searches for is to her right. Her mate brings a tasty treat. It can be hard to see the gifts before us. We all wear personal blinders. Visual, audio, and sensorial stimulation comes at us at all times. Are the answers and gifts we are searching for in front of us all along?

Foxes are clever creatures who adapt with the seasons by changing coats of fur. How well do you integrate emotional change? Foxes blend into their surroundings and employ keen observation. Observation of the self is essential to introspection. When feeling sad or bleak, dour or depressed, turn your attention to the world around you. Become fox-like. Take the focus off yourself and turn it outward.

The number four implies stability. Trust what you feel. Allow your emotions to guide you while not overpowering you. Understanding your own emotional ebb and flow, cyclical like lunar phases, is essential for good mental health.

The four empty cups stand as a reminder that we are like empty containers filled with emotion. We fill our emotional container by focusing on situations, projects, and people.



MEANING: Emotional stability and the support of others. Unseen gifts. Open your perception. Look carefully. What you seek is at hand. The universe is conspiring to help you even when you lose sight of it. Allow others to help and provide for you when you need it. You don't have to do everything by yourself.

SHADOW: What is the darkest thing holding your focus? Where do you place negative energy? How does it distract you from unseen opportunities staring you right in the face? Emotional reality is tricky and seductive. Once an emotion takes hold, it can trick you with the illusion of permanence, then vanish without a trace. Placing stock in emotional fluctuations is like grasping at the mist—it will always elude you. Knowing this, you are free to change your reactions to emotions as they bubble up.





Sadness

The bunny shudders. She sadly looks upon three spilled cups from which ruby blood flows. The blood has a life force of its own. Two cups remain upright. Is your glass half empty or half full? Do you ruminate over what is lost or appreciate what remains? Was the blood poisoned to begin with? Did it require leeching? Will you return to more of what ails you? Your addiction will always be fed as long as you desire it. Will you walk away for good this time?

The Five of Cups contains healing medicine if administered wisely. It reflects the challenge of the emotions. It is root issues returning to haunt us. The biggest challenge is thinking we actually are our emotions. Cravings and imaginings are as temporal as ocean waves. The bunny has forgotten the wisdom of the Magician, who controls the inner experience of life through detachment and observation. Feel the emotion but do not identify with it. All things will pass. Once a challenge is met, integrated, and completely understood, the experience of life is illuminated with new possibility.

MEANING: An emotional state returns to haunt you. Heal your soul by looking at yourself honestly. Addiction and sadness. Depression. Inherited cycles of emotional trauma. There is a loss but only because nothing lasts forever. The present challenge holds an opportunity for you to change old emotional patterns and habits once and for all. Now is your opportunity to change the cycle forever and break free.

SHADOW: If you wear sadness like a cloak or badge of honor, it will define you. Sadness can define the ego as well as success or peace. Look deeper. What is the payoff of living in addiction? What needs healing?



Mother Crow

An ancient Indian myth describes the crow that was so obsessed with its own shadow, it pecked and scratched until the shadow came alive. The crow's shadow proceeded to eat the crow. Gaze into the supernatural by looking in the eye of a crow. What requires vision? What seeks to be understood? What wants your attention?

A woody nest supports a baby crow, who lifts its head to accept the worm from its mother. Six cups balance in the branches of the tree, reflecting the calm emotional balance of the situation. White moonflowers spring from the cups, representing manifestation in the material world. Emotional growth and nurturing abound. Simple, nurturing gestures of love and caring return in karmic dividends.

MEANING: Giving and receiving emotional gifts.

A walk down memory lane. Fond memories.

Happy home. Feelings of comfort. Pleasure.

Good habits and inherited traits. Smells, songs, and friends reminding you of the past. Sensorial experiences bridging you to a happier time.




SHADOW: A romanticized past creates an impossible-to-reach future. Beware of any sentence or thought beginning with the phrase “If only” or “I’ll be happy when.” Bring yourself into the present moment. Find what you need at your fingertips. Give to others what you wish for yourself. Nurture and care for the broken parts of yourself by caring for others. Open and receive generosity when it appears. Do not be fooled by the trick of the material world. Remember we all have wings; it is time to spread yours.





SEVEN OF CUPS



Vision Quest

The Shadow Witch stands in an empty clearing. Clearings in nature are metaphorical. They brim with future possibility. If you desire something, make room for it. She sends seven bats into the sky to do her bidding.

Seven cups contain secret gateways to magic. Each cup connects to a major arcana archetype. From the left, the cup of stars relates to the Empress and the star signs of the zodiac. The sliver moon cup connects to the High Priestess's lunar essence. The snake cup connects to the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot's Lovers. The castle cup connects to the Tower. The bejeweled cup connects to the Wheel. The victory wreath connects to the World, and the dragon cup connects to the Devil.

Cup 1 = Empress (creativity)

Cup 2 = High Priestess (intuition)

Cup 3 = Lovers (passion)

Cup 4 = Tower (disillusionment)

Cup 5 = Wheel of Fortune (fortune)

Cup 6 = World (integration)

Cup 7 = Devil (temptation)

MEANING: All possibilities hang before you.

Will you make a choice or enjoy languishing before the dazzling potentials? Anticipation. Opportunities are ripe. Reach out. Ask for help. Go for it. Potential hangs before you like fat, ripe fruit on a tree. What will you select? Which option will you choose? All paths are inviting. There is no wrong answer. All lead toward the path of enrichment. Rewrite your story. Redefine who you are. Take action. Step boldly. Make the choice you've always desired. Fill in your blank spaces.

SHADOW: The witch stands with her back to the reader. Do you turn your back on something important? Do you turn away from a situation requiring further attention? Do you define yourself by the exclusion of a person, place, or thing?



Slithering Snake

A solar eclipse lights a mountain path. Ocean water laps in the distance. A slinky snake travels up a rocky path. She leaves a nest of snake eggs. The snake winds herself through eight cups on her way up the hill.

A solar eclipse beckons. A solar eclipse occurs when the moon moves to block the light of the sun. This celestial event provides strange and milky colors, even casting double shadows. It is an omen of portents to come.

The snake moves freely and without fear. Snakes are symbolic of rebirth and wholeness, as exemplified when shedding their skin. This is the card of setting off. It is leaving things no longer needed. The path is steep. It is the Hermit's path. This is a journey upward, a movement toward something important. The time is now.

MEANING: The veil has parted. A special moment.

Unique opportunity at hand. Leaving behind what is no longer needed. Beginning ascent. Bringing the experience needed. Onward and upward.



SHADOW: Evolution is essential. Are you running away from a situation or avoiding responsibility for your actions? Use care. Examine all aspects of your current situation before abandoning ship lest they will return to haunt you. You'll revisit the same energy, cycles, and patterns wearing a different mask.





Devour It

The black cat with wild yellow eyes holds a bird in its mouth. Nine golden cups surround the cat, echoing the World card. Nine is the number of wish fulfillment. Nine is three to the third power. This is the card of getting exactly what you want.

The Dark Wood required sacrifice. What do you exchange for your heart's desire? We plan, strive, aim for our desire. We show up and do the work and synchronicity occurs. Lucky breaks seem to happen when you lay the groundwork. We sacrifice to gain the things we want. We transform ourselves to reach our goal. Our desires lie outside the spectrum of who we are because in attaining our goals we are required to grow and shapeshift out of previous incarnations. Brushing up against intention and making it real is the evolution of the natural world and yourself.

MEANING: Your wish comes true. Hidden ramifications. Treats and tasty delights. Having exactly what you want. All the tasty bits. Yum. Yum. Yum. Yes.

SHADOW: Why do you want what you want?

What lies at the heart of your desire? Has your dream been held for so long it is romanticized? Is it unattainable? Have you fostered an identity around the struggle for such a thing? What would it mean to strive for something completely new? Can you become still and pleased with what you have before you this very moment? Can you find pleasure in the color, sound, and texture surrounding you? Can you sense the bits of life and magic infused inside of you and outside of you? Can you feel the wildness of the given moment, the path that brought you here, the thousands of generations who lived so you can live and read these very words? Do you feel the sun rise and set inside you? Can you feel the moonlight shine through your eyes? You hold the answer. You are the answer. Will you let yourself be enough?



Happily Ever After

A family of wolves is seen under the light of a bright, full, pregnant moon. A rainbow of cups is spread across the sky. The mother and father wolf snuggle together. The father wolf howls to the moon. Two pups play together. Security and fulfillment fills the scene. It is happiness and contentment, perfect companionship and fulfillment. This is the culmination of emotional cups.

Wolves mate for life. They are pathfinder animals. Wolves connect to the energy of the moon and reflect latent psychic power. It is the satisfaction found in forging a path toward personal happiness, walking in tandem with qualities, people, hobbies, careers, and pursuits filling you with joy. It is easier to swim in the direction of your true destiny when supported by generous emotions. Surround yourself with elements of joy.



MEANING: This happily-ever-after card teaches us happiness is possible, yet not an ideal continuum. All things evolve and change. The ending leads us to beginning. Release and relaxation. Emotional contentment. Blessings. Peace in the house and home. Tranquility among friends and family. Happiness comes full circle. All things in life are cyclical. This is why happily-ever-after is a myth and not a continuum. Take the good when it comes. Appreciate it. Value it. Value yourself.

SHADOW: Do you second-guess happiness? Do you wait with baited breath for good fortune to come to an end? There's no surer way to bring good stuff to a grinding halt than by waiting for the moment it will slip away.





The Intuitive

The Page of Water, half human, part animal, and all heart, holds a golden cup. Tendrils of mist stream up and out of the cup. A ghostlike fish gazes up at the Page. It is as if they were the only two people in the world. This card reflects youthful perception: a child and her imaginary friend. It is the child's imagination and intuition bringing all of us into what is possible.

The Page of Cups is a visionary, psychic, intuitive child. The Page of Cups allows objects, shapes, and apparitions to appear before her without passing judgment or staking claim. She allows things to be just as they are and uses astute observation to see the true nature of what passes before her.

Observe without judgment. Look deeper, like an artist or a mystic, into the true nature of people, places, and things. Allow clairvoyance and psychic phenomena to occur without censure.

MEANING: An open and sensitive personality.

Kind and nonjudgmental. The response in our hearts when we experience startling beauty. Instant forgiveness and a kind word that is desperately needed and unexpected. Honoring the dignity of every human, animal, and thing. Acceptance.

SHADOW: Emotional tantrums. Runaway

imagination. Hallucination. Delusions of grandeur. Wild ideas unchecked. Inability to stay grounded in reality. Solitary and silent. Eating at oneself from the inside.



KNIGHT OF CUPS

The Romantic

The knight of romance. The waterfall is a symbol for his wild and pouring emotions. Moonlight glitters and bounces across the space he has cleared. He's been waiting for you his whole life. You have arrived. A picnic is set, a romantic dinner for two bathed in moonlight near the sound of rushing water. He holds a single cup. Will you accept his gift? Bubbles spill from the cup. Will you risk your tender heart?

The Knight of Cups spills poetry, emotion, and feeling. He dreams with clarity and intense emotion, causing the material world to follow suit. Can you dream with such passion? Fuel your imagination because love is on the horizon.

MEANING: Romance. Sweet nothings. Charming nature. Romantic messages are on the way. Poetry and prose. Passionate suitor. Dazzling display of affection.



SHADOW: Clingy. Needy of affection and attention. Thinking one's talent is far greater than it actually is. Unable to commit to relationships. Prone to jealousy. Self-indulgent and self-centered. Successful liar. Flair for deception. Aware of social standing. Desperate to fit in. Self-indulgent.





The Empath

The Queen of Cups exudes empathy. The master of depth, she dives deep into the well of human understanding. She is the therapist and tarot reader, empathetic, calm, and understanding. She knows you better than you know yourself. Her unique intimacy allows open sharing. People always leave feeling better, stronger, and seen. Her acute listening is followed by excellent advice.

The queen sits at water's edge. She has touched the depths; a hand greets her. She is a creative genius who can summon the muse at will. The magic of music, poetry, dance, and all emotive qualities springs from her cup. She is the ultimate creative force to be called forth. The Queen of Cups sees what others do not. She makes the invisible into reality. She is found amidst seashells. She dances in foamy rivers and takes refuge on the sand where earth meets ocean.

MEANING: Active imagination. Empathetic qualities. Dreamy and love filled. Soft and nurturing. An encouraging and understanding personality. Excellent advice. The mother who understands everyone's problems and never takes sides. Deep understanding.

SHADOW: Overly dramatic. A person who attracts menacing people and situations. A psychic vampire feeding off the energy of others. Passive-aggressive behavior. Jealous of other's creative talents. Capable of harsh emotional wounds. Addictive personality who is always on to something new to fill the vast hole inside.



The Virtuoso

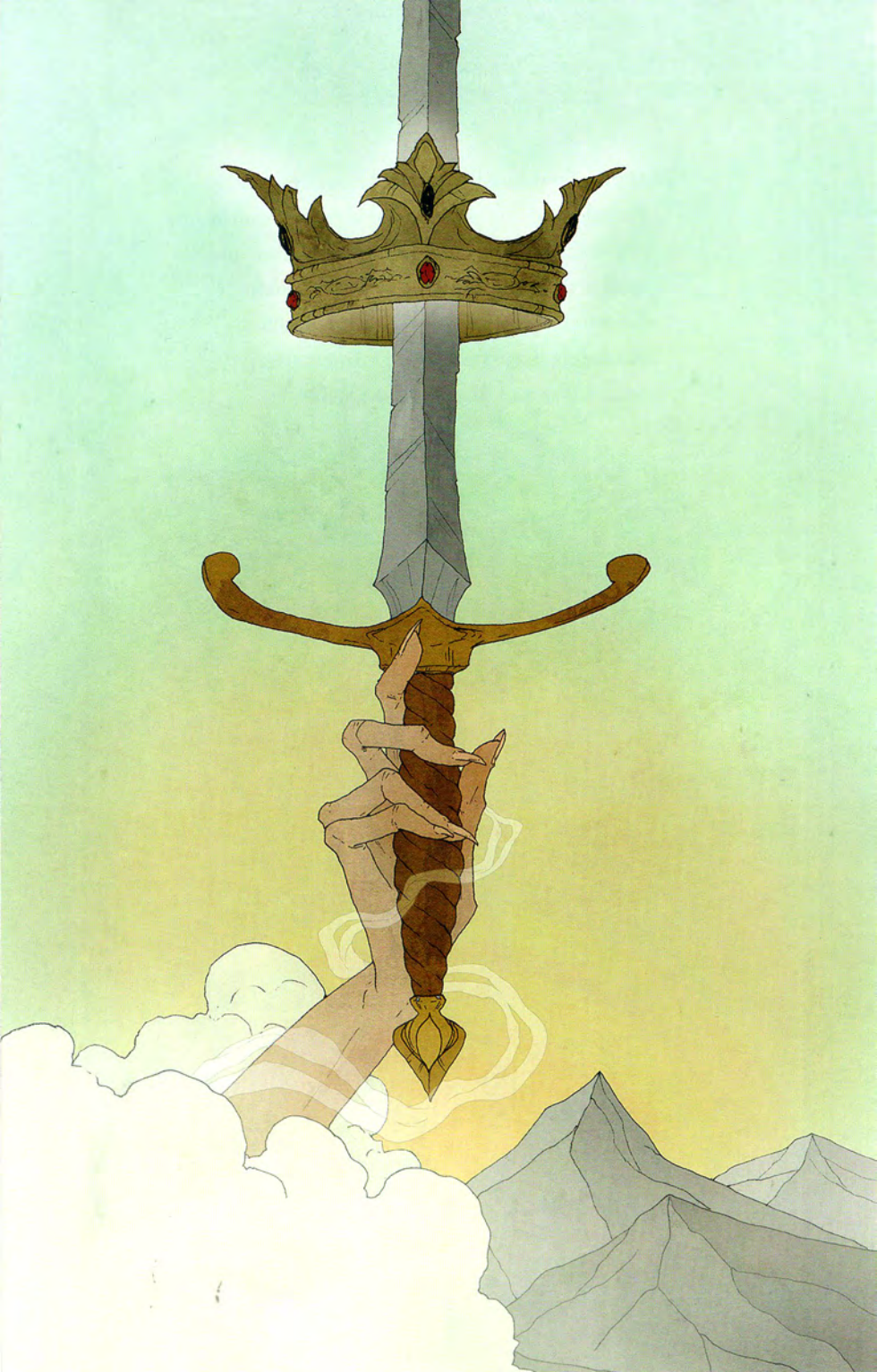
The King of Cups is the master artist. He makes dreams a reality. He makes wild, ingenious ideas perfectly palatable for others. He is the mystic and philosopher at the top of his abilities.

The king stands before a pool of water summoning a sensual water goddess. She rises like Venus from the foam. She is misty and vapid, a tempting siren. He brings you to the brink of love and shows you how to reimagine it. He is the dazzling possibility you may not of imagined on your own.

MEANING: Master artist and dreamer. Loving attention is showered upon you. A talent for soothing any situation. Bringing balance to the equation. Diplomatic and affable. An open mind. A careful speaker. One who empowers others after dazzling them with their own potential. Drawing on the power of the creative mind and subtle body.



SHADOW: Emotionally manipulative. Egomaniac. Pathological liar. A person able to prey on the emotions of others and create distraction and destruction for their own personal benefit. Emotionally immature. Giant inequities masked by false stories and fairness. Deep-seeded fear and disgust of the self.





The Origin Story

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The Ace of Swords is the flash of insight instigating the world of swords. A mysterious hand appears through clouds. Clouds appear on every ace because they are the threshold and entry point to reality. What was hidden is now visible. What was unseen is now seen. Aces reflect the gateway of manifestation. First there is nothing. Then there is something. Aces reflect the beginning, the start. It is the birth of their suit.

The hand is the symbol of human ingenuity and potential. Hands suggest invention, creative ability, and expression. Hands can be used lovingly to comfort another or oneself. Palms and fingers caress and nurture. Alternatively, hands

can be used for violence, in anger, or even to kill. Hands remind us of how we “handle” things in life. They are used for communication via sign language. Hindu and Buddhist traditions make use of mudras, hand gestures creating a specific energetic flow in the body. Interior thoughts move through our fingers when drawing, texting, and writing.

The Ace of Swords is as high as the mind can go. It is a flash of insight so rich and complete that you see and understand with clarity. You take charge of a situation. The sword moves through the crown in victorious action.

MEANING: A flash of understanding. Insight.

The brilliance of the mind. Mental facilities working. A genius idea. Execute your inspired plan now. Winning. A great organizing intelligence. The essence of truth. Logic and reason that can be applied for desired results. Strength of the mind. Soundness of thought. Clarity. Brilliance.

SHADOW: Living in the head. Are you so in love with your idea or concept that you refuse to acknowledge anyone else? Do you feel entirely responsible or can you give props to others when deserved? Do you cast your gaze so high, set intentions so monumental, that they cloud what’s right in front of you? How can you better balance the mind with a rooted connection to the body?



Retreat

A madness takes shape as a woman sits near a reflecting pond. She holds two identical swords and wears a blindfold. Tree branches, roaming like hungry fingers, reach toward her. Shadow monsters approach from all sides. Two shadows form the devils of self-criticism. One shadow forms of a man who fears what others think. The fourth shadow is the cat that fears its own instincts. It is the conflict of what we want versus societal ideas.

The dualistic mind believes in the separation between the self and the world. Duality appears in the woman's reflection, within the symmetry of her swords and the base of her body. She sits squarely, her knees open.

Gaze at the reflecting pool. Nothing actually creeps toward her. She imagines the shadows. She is the projector. The fears and monsters are inside her head. None of it is real. She hides her true self from the world out of fears and ideas she has invented. The shadows and trees are figments of her imagination. She warps and twists them to fit the narrative inside her head. Look closer at the reflection. There are no trees at all. Even the Dark Wood exists inside the mind.



The Two of Swords reflects a voluntary retreat into the inner mental sanctum. It is discovering the truth of what you feel. Forgo distraction from the chatter, energy, and influence of others. Find inner peace.

MEANING: Meditation and retreat. The symmetry of ideas and thoughts. Taking time to discover how you really feel, think, and respond to external circumstances. Choosing words carefully. The ability to recognize old habits and patterns. A new path, even if the new strategy is unclear. Silence of the mind.

SHADOW: How far are you willing to go to protect yourself? Better to face the issue at hand than to retreat inward, especially if you have a tendency to isolate yourself. Avoid martyring yourself. It helps no one, least of all you. Allow and accept help when offered.





THREE OF SWORDS



Heart Opener

A spiderweb holds a human heart. The web is spun within the roots of a massive overturned tree. Three different swords pierce the heart with razor-sharp precision. A furry tarantula sits to the side, observing the heart. Will the heart be devoured? Have you ever observed the nature of your own heart?

The three swords, emblematic of the mind, reflect logical, creative ideas in conflict with the sensitivity of the heart. A heart is soft and spongy, red and veiny. The veins branch off like spiny tree roots. It is the true nature of love growing, sprouting, and evolving.

This card is the wound that lets in the light. Extreme beauty is as painful as extreme loss. Agony and ecstasy open us wider than we thought possible. The deeper the feeling, the richer the experience. Be brave. Experience shows you what it means to be alive. To imprison love is to lose its essence. Allow the Three of Swords to break your heart wide open.

MEANING: Disconnect or schism between the heart and the head. Betrayal and loss. The stages of grief and heartache. A love triangle. A heartbreaking loss that leads to an emotional opening. A rough time. Slicing through to the heart of the matter.

SHADOW: It is natural to shield ourselves from pain. In our rush to avoid pain, we create systems, ideas, and entire lifestyles that may be out of line from the authenticity of who we are. Can you become truthful? Opening the heart hurts; it breaks us wide open. Beauty, love, extreme pain, and pleasure are nearly identical in the way they pierce us. Surrender to the present moment. Accept everything that is your life.



FOUR OF SWORDS

Happily Never After

Four is the number of stability. Swords are the suit of the mind. It is the calmness and quiet that we enjoy when mentally balanced. Yet even the surface water is bound to be touched by wind sooner or later. The mind is an ebb and flow of thought, realization, logic, and knowledge.

A woman sleeps—or does she? A man approaches her bedside wearing dastardly gloves. Three swords hang precariously above his body. The woman holds tight to the fourth sword. What happens when the story you cherished, loved, and believed in doesn't work anymore? How do you adapt when stability is threatened? Can you accept truth when it stares you in the face?

Old stories are dying. The new narratives must unravel. It is the nature of evolution. All things want to grow. You have the means of protection at hand. You have the power to adapt to any situation once your mind is made up. Trust your inner voice. Hear the inner whispers speaking truth in your ears. Know what you know. React accordingly. Sleep well.



MEANING: A need for new stories, narratives, and unique ideas. Balanced and logical thoughts. Rest with a plan for action. Just when everything is settled, something comes along to provoke you in new and interesting ways. Trust what you know instead of what you see.

SHADOW: What happens when we realize the bedrock of personal stories and agreed-upon narratives no longer work? Will you cling to outdated mythology because it's comfortable or will you pick up all available tools and move boldly into a future of your own making? So many of the stories we were told belonged to an older generation with their own unique needs and circumstances. Evolving consciousness invites fresh perspectives. What do you still believe? What needs to change?





Cruelty

The suit of swords is often the scariest in the tarot deck. Swords reflect the darkest qualities of the mind. Twisted, treacherous thoughts turn active and hurt ourselves and others. You are more powerful than you know. Words are capable of great healing or tremendous pain.

A woman stands with a sword, ready to impale another woman. It is the card of deliberate, cruel, and destructive behavior. Animosity and anger are seductive energies that make a person feel powerful. The inflated ego fills you with a sense of entitlement. Hating on others, tearing people down, inflicting revenge, and jealous rage destroy you as much as they hurt another.


There is more than enough for everyone. Victory is sour when the game is fixed. Integrity is lost. What is your role in the current situation? Wipe off the dust, blood, and tears. Take an honest look at your own behavior. Take responsibility. Make things right. Walk away, make amends, or relinquish your cherished role once and for all. You have the power to make the peace.

MEANING: Cruelty to others. Jealousy. Superior brute force. Delight in another's demise. Preying on the weak. Acts of cruelty. No accountability. Choose words with care. Think before acting. Stand up for yourself. A strike at someone else is a strike against the self.

SHADOW: What do you dislike most in other people? Make a list of five irritating qualities of anyone you know. Circle the most annoying quality. What you circled is the quality you must integrate into your own personality. Use your projections and feelings about others as a tool for self-awareness. Stop blaming others; look at your own limiting beliefs and behaviors. Accept all aspects of yourself with generosity and compassion; this is the key to freedom. Transform tightly bound negative energy into a powerful force of generation and evolution through healing and self-honesty.



SIX OF SWORDS



Journey

A woman stands in a flat-bottomed boat, using a stick to navigate beneath a bow of Spanish moss. Swords are scattered, and a swaddled baby lies at her feet as curious alligators approach. A young woman reaches toward the boat from the shore.

Boat symbolism implies passage and journey, while the rivers and water bodies they traverse reflect the depths of emotional connection and energetic flow. All waters spring from the font of the High Priestess. Alligators reflect power and danger lurking in unconscious depths.

The number six reflects the heart center, while swords continue to express thoughtful ideas and mindful narratives. Is this a scene of rescue or theft? Is the woman in the boat reclaiming what was hers to begin with or is she stealing another woman's child? Have the figures been manipulated into their actions from a menacing power we cannot see? It is a moment of transition and a journey that lies ahead. Will you enter the boat or remain upon the shore?




MEANING: Theft. Escape—but at what cost?
Treason. Rescue. Better times lie ahead.
Travel, voyage, and passage. A new beginning.
Emotional waters and the connective depth
between people.

SHADOW: What are you trying to get away
with? It is easy to think we will not be held
accountable for our actions, yet what we put
into the world always returns to us times three
(the Six of Swords is two times three).





SEVEN OF SWORDS



Red Hood in the Wood

A woman holds seven swords. She wears a shredded gown and red hood while her dainty legs and bare feet are exposed. A menacing wolf creeps down the path in search of her, while a pair of eyes looks out of the tree above. The path is scattered with crunchy leaves.

The white of her dress implies purity, while the red hood is a sexual symbol implying passion and fervor. The combination invokes the loss of virginity and chastity. Wolves and other monstrous creatures often have been used to express dangerous masculinity.

This card is about making a clean getaway. It is the ability to evade detection and to escape unscathed. It reflects the need to take serious action. The Seven of Swords contains the mystical luck of number seven. It is outwitting danger and sneaking away. The path remains. The woman and the wolf chose it consciously or subconsciously. These two will rendezvous in the near future. It is their destiny.

MEANING: Editing carefully. Taking only what is needed. Escape and intrigue. Evading what seeks to devour you. Knowing who your enemy is, whether it is yourself, another person or situation, or a combination of both. Identifying the heart of the matter so it can be dealt with swiftly. Cleverness in all ways. Luck.

SHADOW: What are you hiding from? True avoidance of a person, place, or thing is indifference. The conscious desire to avoid something usually stems from desire. Our defenses emerge when we discover what we want, then realize we could lose it. The stakes are high. Are you ready to embrace your desire? Can you face what you've been running away from? Give yourself the advantage by setting up the game rules, facing your opponent honestly, and moving from your heart.



Execution

Awoman's body is bound and blindfolded. A noose attached to a tree branch above her falls loosely around her neck. A circle of eight swords stuck into the ground forms a circle around her. She stands on top of a box while rats gnaw at the wood beneath her. Her time is running out. A vulture, sensing death, waits patiently.

This card speaks to witch hunts, executions, and the demonization of the female. We often punish ourselves before others can. Her ropes and noose are loose. She could wiggle herself free if she wanted. Her hands are loosely tied, if at all. The swords are within reaching distance. How did she arrive in this precarious position? What will she do next?

Eight is a transformative number. There is no going back. It is time to finish what you started. There's no stopping now. It may feel obscure, but trust intuition will guide you through. Blindfolds are symbolic of initiation. Take it off. See the world through a new set of eyes.



MEANING: Bound. Paralysis. You have the power to escape. It feels like time is running out. Making a point to suffer. You are not the first or last person to have your feelings hurt. Remove your self-imposed blindfold and view the truth.

SHADOW: Is the excitement of drama overtaking your life? Like attracts like. Anger and resistance hold as much energy as pleasure and satisfaction. Wouldn't you prefer to be on the latter side? Look at the role you play in getting yourself into the present situation. Take the proactive steps needed to completely rewrite the story of who you are. Combine the elements of who you aspire to be. You are writer, producer, and director of your life drama. Change the genre by changing your thoughts and reactions.





Self-Critique

A woman sits on the ground, her legs curled beneath her. Her left hand cradles her cheek as inner thoughts pound her temple. Anguish fills her face. It is the dark night of the soul, insanity, and thoughts gone mad.

Nine swords reflect the tortured, wild, and untamed mind. The head is rattled, sleep disturbed. Disrupted thought patterns lead to anxiety. Passive-aggressive behavior poisons the soul and nothing can be trusted, least of all your own delicate sanity.

We create and redefine past happenings by interpreting events through our point of view, thoughts, and feelings. Thoughts can attach to negative feelings and compound if we are not diligent in releasing negativity and expectations while rooting into the present moment. The Nine of Swords usually appears when the situation at hand is so mentally arduous that changing your thoughts is the only option. It is the breaking point at which you create a new system of thinking and conceive of a new approach. The Nine of Swords also reflects an indulgence in negative self-talk and poisonous self-critique. Consider how your thoughts are serving you.

MEANING: A slave to mental agony. Obsessive-compulsive thinking. Wakefulness and distress. Anxiety over self-worth. Guilt and shame over who you are. Feeling like a failure. Worry and stress.

SHADOW: Examine the intensity and power of your mind on its darkest night. Most of what occurs in the world has nothing to do with you. Flip your worst-case scenario inside-out to discover the glittering jewels within. Negative thinking, self-blame, and shame feed the ego just as much as an overinflated sense of importance. They are two sides of the same coin (or same brain). Stop playing the role of victim, savior, aggressor, etc., and begin the work of being your true self. How? Baby steps. Create a “Diary of Dark Thoughts” and write down all the horrible thoughts you think about yourself and other people. Be brutally honest. Every week choose one single dark thought and rewrite it from a positive point of view. Each time you catch yourself thinking the negative version, replace it with the empowering one.



TEN OF SWORDS

Death of the Ego

The woman's body drapes across razor-sharp rocks. Her body is stuck with ten swords. Her right hand reaches out. Her left hand grasps a sword, yet no blood spills down her arm. She has finished the story on her own terms. The ego is destroyed. The dark night of the soul has ended, and a new day begins.

The Ten of Swords appears when a situation has reached its conclusion. A lesson has been learned. A thought pattern is eradicated. The sense of self that was once defined by the mind no longer exists. It is the death card and the cessation of thoughts, ideas, and opinions that no longer serve you.

Sun rises in the distance to signify a new day. A spider rests on the jagged rock as a reminder that even the quiet mind will wake up again to spin a new story. This card is a reminder to make your new thoughts count. Release and expel what is dead and gone while creating space for expansion and vastness of the mind.



MEANING: The cycle has ended. Destructive thoughts and patterns no longer hold you hostage. Everything you clung to in order to define yourself, even dark, negative things, is gone as the cycle completes. This death, above all others, leads to the new emergence of your soul, possibilities, and a new narrative.

SHADOW: Come out of the death pose. Face the light. Stand up tall. Engage in positive self-care and nurturing activities. Stay attuned to your responsibilities. New opportunities are waiting for you. This time around, you get to control the narrative.





The Detective

The Page of Swords peers behind her as if trouble is creeping up on her. Her body language suggests an awareness of past events and future possibilities while remaining grounded in the present moment. She combines past, present, and future with ease.

A mama bird perches in a tree above her next to a nest of eggs. The bird connects the page to the element of air, and the nest of eggs reminds us of her youth. It is the freedom existing in the safety of a family. The nest is the net allowing the young page to explore, imagine, and expand her mind.

The Page of Swords is clever and inquisitive. She reads between the lines and divines the mystery and deeper meaning of all things. Enigmas and puzzles fascinate her. If faced with a challenge, she diverts attention with an original tactic. The Page of Swords reflects the victorious mental activity of the curious mind.

MEANING: A clever, bright attitude. Looking between the lines, solving problems, and figuring out the mysteries. Smart and studious. A passion for ciphers and number games. A puzzle solver. Gaze beneath the surface. Unpacking the truth of a situation without emotion. Honest and ethical and ready to help anyone who needs it. Brave and wise beyond one's years. An old soul.

SHADOW: Lazy and unable to focus. Taking pleasure in playing mind games and finding people's weak spots. Dishonest. Keeps secrets for the sake of having them. Delight in the deception of others.



The Fighter

The Knight of Swords stands ready for a fight. Ravens flock to his side to aid his quest. They reflect his high mind and rapid energy. He is filled with the conviction of ideas. His set mind will not be dissuaded. The Knight of Swords succeeds at his goals quickly and succinctly. He holds the strength of conviction. He is a thinker who analyzes the situation at hand, yet once his mind is made up, he reaches the point of no return.

The Knight of Swords speaks to what crosses his mind. His bluntness is sometimes taken for rudeness. An opinionated orator and debater, he is critical when others fail to see his point of view.

MEANING: Cleverness overtaking the situation.

Speaking one's mind. A message is on the way.

Expressing complex ideas. Talking your way out

of a situation. A fierce poker face and brilliant

gamer. Focus on the positive. Elegance and

natural speed. A winning argument.



SHADOW: Cruel and manipulative. A bad boy who leaves behind broken hearts. Promises unkept. Dangerous youth who won't take no for an answer. Compulsive fighter. Brawler. Happy to spout opinions. Too smart for one's own good.





The Articulator

The witty Queen of Swords knows the pen is mightier than the sword. Her butterflies are symbols of transformation and the spiritual world. On their migratory path, monarchs use the earth's jet stream to cross continents. Your thoughts and words move quickly. Words craft a wicked magic. They inform how you feel while affecting the feelings, opinions, and emotions of others.

She is mature feminine energy, a person who uses brain-power to gather the best of any situation. Her broad experience seeks truth. She is you when you've said exactly what was on your mind with no reservations. She can cut to the heart of the matter without seeming curt. Her sense of humor is witty and direct. She is found on mountain peaks, on windy beaches, and in dramatic landscapes where earth meets sky.

MEANING: Articulate mature female who expresses thoughts and ideas without reservation. Quick witted, pointed, and searing. Gift of language and expression. A fabulous conversationalist with the ability to speak to anyone anywhere and in any situation.

SHADOW: Critical. Makes fun of others. Nothing is ever good enough because you don't feel good enough. Harsh critiques keep others at a distance and shut down possibility.



The Thinker

The King of Swords is wise and mature intellectual energy. The buzzard on his right signifies strength. He finds value in what is overlooked by others. He is the mature masculine energy of air. He articulates thoughts and words turn into real-world results. Call him when you need something accomplished. He is dependable and trustworthy and will always tell you the truth.

The King of Swords is that rare individual that holds himself up to the high standards he sets. He would never ask someone to do or act in a way he would not. His linguistic talent makes him an excellent communicator, writer, and author. He is shrewd in business and communications and adept in anything he turns his attention to. Above all, he carries a great wisdom, as he is able to understand the plight of others in the greater context of their situation.

MEANING: Mature male energy never mincing words. Honesty and expression. An intellectual giant, fine thinker, and orator. Teacher and mentor. Inventive attitude. Clever and astute. Forward thinking.



SHADOW: Nasty and cruel. Cold and unavailable. Using mental prowess to undercut family and friends. A personality only interested in serving their own ideas. Intellectual snobbery feeding the ego and used to cover underlying feelings of worthlessness. Cutting off one's nose to spite your face all in the name of being "right."





ACE OF PENTACLES

The World in a Grain of Sand

Tarot suits are an unfolding story progressing from the ace to the ten. Tarot aces sparkle with unique magic. Aces are the seed of their suit. The infinite possibilities of each suit exist inside the ace just as everything you are, were, and will be is tucked inside of you. Understanding how the ace is a seed, like a flower, fruit, or vegetable seed, will help you interpret the ace when it appears in a reading. It is true beginning.

The Ace of Pentacles is the gift of the world of pentacles. A mysterious hand appears through the clouds of possibility holding a pentacle. Tendrils of growth extend through the hand. Clouds appear on every ace because they are the threshold and entry point to reality. What was hidden is now visible. What was unseen is now seen. Aces reflect the gateway of manifestation. First there is nothing. Then there is something. Aces reflect the beginning, the start. It is the birth of their suit.

A bewitched hand holds a pentacle. The hand is the symbol of human ingenuity and potential. Hands suggest invention, creative ability, and expression. Hands can be used

lovingly to comfort another or oneself. Palms and fingers caress and nurture. Alternatively, hands can be used for violence, in anger, or even to kill. Hands remind us of how we “handle” things in life. They are used for communication via sign language. Hindu and Buddhist traditions make use of mudras, hand gestures creating a specific energetic flow in the body. Interior thoughts move through our fingers when drawing, texting, and writing.

The pentacle suggests evolution that is to come. A path leads from the heart of the garden through an arched gate. The path suggests the road we travel. The enclosed garden suggests a barrier that encloses and protects but also can become a hiding place. The doorway is the threshold of change and adventure. The open door reminds you of current opportunities.

Fall pumpkins are neatly gathered beneath the tree. White flowers suggest the purity of the soul and innocence thriving within you. A mountain rises toward celestial realms far in the distance. How high do you want to go? What are you willing to risk? The Ace of Pentacles is a gift. Magic is at hand, but what will you do?

The Ace of Pentacles holds all possibilities inside the material world. It is the gift of people, places, and things—a gift that you can see, smell, taste, and touch. The Ace of Pentacles is a windfall of money, a new friend walking into your life, and an opportunity.

MEANING: A windfall of money. An opportunity bearing fruit appears. A new idea leading through a gate of possibility. What you need shows up. You see the forest for the trees. An appreciation of nature. Dynamically living inside the body.

SHADOW: The refusal to allow something natural and new to emerge. Refusing to take the gifts that are offered to you. Ignoring important signs and omens. Taking what you have for granted. Expecting more without appreciating what you have because nothing fills the dark hole within that you refuse to acknowledge. Peace comes from the inside out and not the outside in.





Choice

An ancient anthropomorphized apple tree holds two pentacles. The two enchanted pentacles suggest choice. The energy moves back and forth between the pentacles. The number two reflects duality, like stocks divided or cells splitting. You have something at your fingertips that you can play with.

Pentacles reflect people, objects, money, and things. Like usually attracts like. Be sure you choose what you want carefully so more of so it will naturally follow. Marvelous energy fills this card. Flexibility and rolling with the punches is key to keeping your balls in the air. The tree looks grumpy, but you can find the fun in your situation.

MEANING: Making a choice, often a happy one.

Options appear. Division and evolution. Take what is being offered to you. Pluck fruit from the tree of life. This is your chance. Take opportunity and grow it. Say yes.

SHADOW: Duality is a blessing and a curse. It is natural to look at the dark and light, good and bad, highs and lows. Make room for the gray area in all places. Take comfort in not knowing or at least pausing before you rush to judge anyone or anything.



Creativity

Three pentacles appear as a graphic triangle pointing downward. The infinity spiral flows around the sacred triangle. The Three of Pentacles is true creation in the material world, as objects, projects, and even people expand and multiply on a cellular level.

This card implies collaboration among groups of people. The expansion comes from an exchange of ideas provoking new growth. The inherent genius of the Three of Pentacles is the use of unseen creative energies. How can the world be this beautiful? How can something like a sunset rip your heart wide open? This is the creative principle illuminating the Three of Pentacles and the creative force infusing all life.



MEANING: The three reflects creation and expansion on the material level. Ingredients come together, words flow, the working structure appears. People appear synchronistically, the money you require shows up, doors open in unexpected places. Creativity feels effortless. You move faster and farther with less effort. Spatial relations and objects can be manipulated and arranged to aid the flow of energy. It is quite possible to clear space in the material world to make space for new possibilities in the energetic world.

SHADOW: A preoccupation with space can turn into obsessive-compulsive behavior. The need to control things, people, and creative flow.





FOUR OF PENTACLES



Miser

The mandrake contains four pentacles. A large pentacle sits at the crown chakra. It holds a single pentacle at the heart chakra, while two pentacles are entwined at the creature's feet. His expression is solemn as he holds his pentacles.

The mandrake is a member of the nightshade family and is the root of a plant (*Mandragora officinarum*). Mandrake is considered the witch's greatest ally. It is used for conception, as an aphrodisiac, to induce visions, and to calm restless spirits. It is said you must use great care to remove the mandrake root, for once the root is unearthed, its scream is so piercing it will kill the person who dared remove it. The roots appear humanlike in form and are used for sympathetic magic.

Mandrake root connects to the grounding and stable nature of the number four. Fours echo stability, the solid nature of a square, and link to the Emperor card. A four in the material world suggests a solid base, cornerstone, and essential building block for future growth.

MEANING: Holding on to what you have. Miserly tendencies. Security in the material world. Success in finance. The groundwork is laid. The building blocks are in place. All signs point to go. Don't become too attached. Things will change before the cycle is through.

SHADOW: How tightly do you cling to ideas, concepts, and material possessions? Are you rigid? Unwilling to let go? Trust prosperity. Release attachments. If you love something, set it free.



FIVE OF PENTACLES



Dark Night

Snow fills the Dark Wood. The landscape is illuminated by an unseen moon. A couple walks together up an embankment, suggesting an uphill struggle. They are sad; their clothing is in tatters. They are barefoot and ill-equipped to deal with the snowfall, wind, and brittle cold. Betrayal between them creeps through the card. It is the classic dark night of the soul à la *La Bohème*.

The five pentacles are packed inside the base of a tree, hidden like treasure in plain sight. If the couple could see past their pain, they would look up and discover salvation is at hand. They are too consumed with familiar and comforting pain to discover the pentacles, which are the answer and refuge they seek. The Five of Pentacles foreshadows the Ten of Pentacles. The tree of life holds entrance to the underworld, but it is blocked.

MEANING: The dark night of the soul. Trials and tribulations that can make or break romantic, familial, and friendly relationships. The highs and lows of being together. Struggle and drudgery. Old wounds rise to the surface.



SHADOW: The Five of Pentacles suggests the breakthrough and release of a blockage that once held relationships back. It is the working of the problem. It is sticking around when times get tough, not just when things are easy and fun. This is the transformative moment of a relationship that shows two people what they are made of together.





Devil's Deal

A Devil stands before twin girls, the three figures forming a graphic triangle. One twin reaches up and accepts coins. The Devil holds a parchment paper contract for the twin to sign. She eagerly writes her signature with a bloody quill. Six pentacles hang in the vines and trees surrounding the scene.

The Devil's position is powerful. He towers over the girls. The girls reflect dual personalities. Is this an act of charity or an act of economic exchange? Does the girl know what she is signing up for?

Examine this card as the concept of give and take. How do you give and take energy and attention? How do you exchange money and material goods with others? How do you exchange information and ideas? Do you expect a quid pro quo or do you give of yourself freely? What are you signing up for when it comes to certain people in your life? Which character on the card do you identify with right now?

MEANING: Acts of charity and donation.

Reciprocity. You are given what you need—but at what price? Look before signing legal contracts and giving too much away. Kindness appears in a surprising place.

SHADOW: Charitable works and acts—giving time, effort, and money—are worthwhile pursuits. They can make a person feel incredible and even offer feelings akin to an endorphin rush. But are you using charitable acts to pump up your ego and feel superior to others? Examine your motivations.



SEVEN OF PENTACLES



Slumber

A scarecrow looms over a pumpkin patch. He has scratchy, spiny branches for hands, and his cape flaps in the western wind. A girl lies beneath him. She rests her head upon a fat pumpkin under a spell or enchantment. Tendrils of growth spring beneath the pumpkin. Seven pentacles appear in the back of the garden.

Scarecrows spook crows and other birds who come to eat freshly sown seeds. What opportunities are you scaring away with your actions? What is your personal relationship to fear? Are you acting in subversive, subtle ways that hurt rather than help?

Seven is an ancient number of magic appearing in biblical texts, fairy tales, and myth. The seven pentacles imply fortuitous circumstances. Pumpkins contain protective magical properties. We carve them with ghoulish faces and place them outside our homes at Halloween to scare away haunting spirits. Know you are protected. The girl is safe in her slumber. Is the entire picture a lucid dream of her own conjuring? Dream divination offers an opportunity to consider what should be done next.



MEANING: Results are seen. Things move rapidly according to plan. Stop and reassess. Reconsider the final goal. Rest is needed. Your head clears upon waking.

SHADOW: Are you using sleep as an escape? Lying around listlessly? Do you use medical issues purposefully to retreat from life and gain attention? If so, wake up from the dream. Rouse yourself.





EIGHT OF PENTACLES



Dryad

A dryad, a nature spirit who inhabits a particular tree, places a pentacle on display. These nature spirits take human form; according to myth, they live as long as the life of the tree they call home. Nature spirits are the bridge of communication between humans and the natural world, often acting as intermediaries. Like a pentacle, the tree is a source of wisdom and manifestation. This is why the dryads who inhabit them and live among them consider trees, groves, and forests sacred.

The dryad's handiwork reflects the continual evolution of the suit of pentacles. The energy of growth continues to expand within the context of infinity, represented by the number eight. Those who focus on tasks can bask in the reward of a job well done. It is pleasure and pride in what you do.

MEANING: Handiwork. Working hard at what you love. Diligence. Proud to show your talents and accomplishments. Time evaporates as you are lost in “right” work, the work you are here to do. Trust the results you have seen and continue to forge ahead. Feel proud of yourself. You earned it.

SHADOW: Release attachments to results. Joy exists in the process. Once your work is finished, it ceases to be yours and takes on a life of its own. Stay connected and centered in the moment, the action, and the sensorial aspects of your work. There will be highs and lows, good days and bad. Stay true and persevere.



NINE OF PENTACLES



Secret Garden

The dark fairy who was born from the shadows of the Dark Wood stands in her secret garden. It is her innermost sacrum, a place no one has ever seen but her. Nine pentacles blossom in the grapevines. A snail creeps near her foot. She casts her eyes to the side as if something or someone has caught her attention.

The Nine of Pentacles reflects manifestation and the culmination of a wish, desire, or goal. Nines are the number of wish fulfillment. The fairy takes deep pleasure in manifestation for herself before sharing it with anyone else. This is the card of inherited traits and talents. It is being happy with the self and taking refuge in quality time alone and appreciating the finer things in life. It is knowing who you are.

MEANING: Luxury and a taste for the finer things in life. Appreciating value in quality and craftsmanship. Self-care. Inherited talents, gifts, and DNA. Lineage connecting us to our ancestors. Slow-moving energy. Fierce loyalty.




SHADOW: Quiet, peace, and privacy protects personal energy from the interference of others. Personal energy can be multiplied when it is not automatically shared with others. In an age where it is all too tempting to make your personal life public, this card reminds you to always keep a little for yourself, no matter how generous you feel.





TEN OF PENTACLES



Threshold

A door of life opens inside an ancient tree. This is the tree of creation, the oldest tree in the wood. Gnarled roots spread like hair beneath the tree. The Dark Wood is infinite. Its paths and doorways lead into ever-evolving fecundity, richness of possibility, and growth. The tree invites us to leave our material senses and concerns to move deeper into the experience of reality. The tree leads us out of the material realm of pentacles that have fully manifested to their ultimate destiny. The cycle is complete. Undiscovered suits, multiple dimensions, and wild possibilities await. Everything you have ever experienced is just a hint of what is to come.

Animals gather at the tree, culminating like the pentacles. The crows reflect the supernatural ability of bilocation, being in two places at once. Spiders weave the web of fate inside the tree. A mama cat and her kitten reflect generations of feline mystery. Bats reflect initiation and shamanic death. The senses are how we find ourselves in this world. They are also how we leave it behind.

MEANING: The culmination of a project.

The gathering of generations, family, and groups of people. The end of a cycle leading to unexpected new places. A door opens. Opportunity beckons. Seeing through the trick of the material world. Embracing the interconnectivity of all things.

SHADOW: What price do we pay when a door opens for us, yet we decide we are unworthy to enter? Animals, trees, and flowers evolve without second-guessing themselves. Allow internal resistance to dissipate. Say yes to what appears before you.



PAGE OF PENTACLES

The Student

The page holds a pentacle in her hand. She looks deeply, observing the magic of the five-pointed star hidden within. Her dress is crafted from the bark of the trees, linking the page to the energy of growth and manifestation in the material world along with the ancient wisdom of the wood.

The Page of Pentacles is the perpetual student who absorbs information like a sponge. She integrates information, takes what she learns, and creates new worlds for herself. She is handy and crafty. Pentacles relate to physical cells of the body, and the page is completely at home in herself. She is the perfected state of being without judgment. She has faith in others and faith in herself. She is sensorial and tactile in her approach to the world.

MEANING: Use what you have and place it into action. Trust what you see before you. It does not deceive. You have what you need at your fingertips; it is time to use it. The solution is at hand. More is on the way.



SHADOW: Observe. There is magic in front of you, if you will stop to see, taste, and feel it. You are overlooking resources that can help you achieve your goals. Gaze beneath the surface of the situation at hand. Look through the veneer to see the structure of life and the repeating patterns making up the essential nature of reality. Find the patterns. Discover how things are more similar than they are different to eradicate any idea of “you” vs. “them.” Everything is interconnected.





Slow and Steady

The Knight of Pentacles reflects the slow and sensual yet seismic activity of the energy of earth. He takes his time making decisions and carefully plots and plans all he does. Just because he's slow moving and cautious, don't think he's dead in the water. Every move counts; everything takes on meaning. Do not rush him.

Knights are the harbingers of messages. The wise owl descends to do the knight's bidding. A message is on the way, and it will have real-world results and visible benefits. The knight displays a cautious personality who chooses action with care. He would rather take small steps than risk a large failure. In this way he is safe. He is a gentle soul who never wounds on purpose.

MEANING: Taking your time. Thinking things through. Slow and steady energy wins the race. Careful planning. Realism in the face of what is before you. Hard work and diligence. Complete dedication to a task. Message is on the way. Dependable.

SHADOW: Lost in the minutia of life. Hyper focus stealing attention from important, basic life activities. Obsessive-compulsive behavior. Concern for material objects. Needy and incomplete. Looking at the dark side of life.



QUEEN OF PENTACLES



Sensual Goddess

The Queen of Pentacles reflects a personality pleasantly entranced with the natural world and with the ability to manipulate it. She is representative of physical manifestation and the care of herself and others. Touch, sensation, and texture are of utmost importance. Taste, form, and aesthetic are high on her list of priorities. She commands all five physical senses and uses them to continually enjoy and embrace the experience of being alive. She uses this taste to bring pleasure and manifestation to others. She is often found in wooded glens, under rocks and trees, lingering in your garden, and in the reflection of your looking glass.

MEANING: Love, care, and nurturing. Motherly love. Manifestation of something physical. The evolving physical body. Cooking, cleaning, and rearranging. Gardening, teaching, and creating spaces that make people feel warm and at home.



SHADOW: The witch who fools you into things you really don't want and especially don't need. The ability to lead you astray with material possessions. Being consumed with the cost or indulgence of any item and spending money for money's sake. That dark hole never is filled.





The Builder

The King of Pentacles is the masculine, mature energy of growth and expansion. His nature is slow moving due to his earthly energy, yet he is as dependable as they come. He is a master of business and finance, able to make small sums multiply. He ventures boldly into any arena and is successful. His practical nature is unfailing in the face of opposition. Ultimately, he always has his way, even if it takes him a long time to reach the finish line.

The King of Pentacles is supportive of others. He is a philanthropist who delights in sharing and giving. His nature is calm and even-keeled; his brain is often lost in thought. He assumes responsibility of the family and home and takes pride in providing what is needed. He is rock solid.

MEANING: Time to invest and make financial plans. Father figure. Growth, real estate, and earning potentials. Being clever with investments. Handsome and slow. A rock-solid word. Dependable personality.

SHADOW: A person who uses his power to make others feel unworthy in his presence. Complete lack of empathy. A person bullied as a child who takes it out on others as an adult. A miserly and stingy attitude. Someone needs to learn how to give back and be grateful.



The Shadow Witch emerged from the Dark Wood. The rustling poplar leaves and chirping crickets told her she was home. The landscape looked different, but she knew it hadn't really changed. The witch was the one who had transformed.

She sensed him before she saw him. The boy's familiar silhouette stood in the elongated shadows. She didn't move near him yet. The Shadow Witch knew now the boy was not the antidote to the pain she felt when her heart split open. Grief does not spring from pain. It is grounded in love.

The witch learned happiness was not dependent on any one thing or person outside of her. Love was the magic threading the entire universe together. She knew the universe existed inside of her, as it does for everyone. As above, so below. Armed with this truth, she was free, like a newly born nebula star, to meet the boy—or any other thing in life—in safety and on her own terms. And she did.

The Shadow Witch possessed the secret of the Dark Wood. She knew if you show up to face the things that frighten you—if you do the work required, step back, and let go—

miraculous things are bound to unfold, just like the pages of a fairy tale.

The Shadow Witch still sleeps near her sacred circle of trees. The trees and the birds and the bugs now watch over a brand-new baby witch who grows and giggles under their watchful presence. The Shadow Witch often sits in the grass and knowingly smiles at her cooing daughter as she shuffles her tarot.

She hopes you cast your cards with care and compassion. She hopes you enter the Dark Wood for clarity and exploration whenever you need a helping hand, piece of advice, or inspiration. She hopes you realize that everything you desire desires you. Everything you want wants you too. You can't always detect it right away, but use your witching eyes. It is right there on the other side of the veil. It sees you too. This is the trick of the visible and invisible world. Magic permeates everything, and what you want is right in front of you.

We can craft our intentions, cast our spells, and root into the enchantment of the present moment. If we do, the results are often wildly unanticipated. Therein lies the delicious surprise that makes life worth living. The only time we fail is when we are so busy rushing, pushing, or boxing in our desires that we don't recognize the true manifestation when it unfolds itself in front of us. Magic works in accordance to its own time. There is no happily ever after; there's only right now.

The Shadow Witch reminds you that, like the Magician, you already have exactly what is needed before you. And if you have the courage to look honestly into the dark, squirmy, uncomfortable parts of yourself, you will create a world unleashing infinite possibility—because you are the most beautiful supernatural creature the world has ever seen.

What to do now, little one? We finish the Shadow Witch's story. Well, lean in. Come closer. I'm tucking your soft hair behind your ear and whispering one last secret:

The end of the story is up to you.

Gather your experience.

Head in a direction that frightens you.

If goose bumps erupt—if your blood races and your heart flutters—you will know with certainty
you are treading in the right direction.



