



SPECIAL TOPICS IN TAROT

The Complete Book of  
**TAROT  
REVERSALS**



MARY K. GREER

## The Topsy-Turvy World of Upside-Down Cards

*Tarot Reversals* is the first book to fully and exclusively address a vitally important area of Tarot reading that is virtually ignored—interpretation of the cards that appear upside-down in a spread. The explanations given in books for reversed cards are rarely more than a few lines, yet, in the average spread, half of the cards will be inverted. Many books do not even give reversed meanings. Others unquestioningly parrot “traditional” interpretations that simply state the opposite of upright meanings, but usually more fatalistically, emphasizing negative attributes. Thus, at least half of the average Tarot reading is poorly understood, inadequately interpreted, and, by dint of a preponderance of negative interpretations, emphasizes problems rather than opportunities. It’s no wonder people avoid them.

This book offers readers at all levels eleven different methods of determining reversed card meanings. The majority of the text consists of sample interpretations for each of the seventy-eight reversed cards in each of the methods, including traditional meanings. Discover which approaches work best with your own Tarot reading style and worldview. In addition to applying the interpretive text immediately, learning the conceptual theory behind each option will enhance and deepen your Tarot consultations.

—Mary Greer

## About the Author

Mary Greer is an author and teacher specializing in methods of self-exploration and transformation. A Grandmaster of the American Tarot Association, she is a member of numerous Tarot organizations, and is featured at Tarot conferences and symposia in the United States and abroad. She has a wide following in the women's and pagan communities for her work in women's spirituality and magic. A Priestess-Hierophant in the Fellowship of Isis, she is the founder of the Iseum of Isis Aurea. Mary has studied and practiced Tarot and astrology for over thirty-four years. Her teaching experience includes eleven years at New College of California, and hundreds of workshops, conferences, and classes. She is the founder and director of the learning center T.A.R.O.T. (Tools And Rites Of Transformation).

Her books include *Tarot for Your Self: A Workbook for Personal Transformation* (1984); *Tarot Constellations: Patterns of Personal Destiny* (1987); *Tarot Mirrors: Reflections of Personal Meaning* (1988); *The Essence of Magic: Tarot, Ritual, and Aromatherapy* (1993); *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (1995), and she collaborated with Kathi Keville on *Aromatherapy: Healing for the Body and Soul* (1998).

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Special Topics in Tarot



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**TAROT  
REVERSALS**

MARY K. GREER

Llewellyn Publications  
Woodbury, Minnesota



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# Contents

<i>Foreword by Barbara Moore</i>		<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>		<i>xi</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	About This Book	1
<b>Chapter One</b>	A Different Point of View	13
<b>Chapter Two</b>	Using Reversals	25
	Major Arcana Interpretations	39
	Minor Arcana Interpretations	
	Wands	98
	Cups	118
	Swords	138
	Pentacles	158
	Minor Arcana Interpretations	
	The Court Cards	180
<b>Chapter Three</b>	Spreads	213
<b>Chapter Four</b>	Reading for Sarah	229
<i>Appendix A</i>	Reversed Keywords	243
<i>Appendix B</i>	Suit and Number Keywords	247
<i>Appendix C</i>	Elemental Dignities	251
<i>Appendix D</i>	The Heroine's Journey	255
<i>Bibliography</i>		261
<i>Index</i>		267

## Foreword

Like any long-time Tarot enthusiast, I am well aware of and grateful for the numerous Tarot books available. These books explore a wide range of subjects, from basic card interpretations to meditations to using the Tarot to heal, but until now there has been no comprehensive study of reading reversed cards. Depending on the reader's comfort level, reversed cards can add depth to a reading or hopelessly muddle a reading, or something in between. Many readers don't even use reversals. Others have developed their own methods. Whatever your relationship with reversed cards, I am certain you will benefit from the wisdom and insight contained between these covers. In this book, Mary K. Greer examines many methods of handling reversals, studies each card in-depth, and describes "The Heroine's Journey"—the Fool's Journey through the reversed Major Arcana.

I can think of no one who is more qualified to write this book than Mary Greer. For many people, Mary needs no introduction. Her *Tarot for Your Self* is one of the most popular and often-recommended Tarot books available. She teaches workshops all over the county, including a fabulous week-long Tarot class with Rachel Pollack at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York. Mary is not only a scholar, a rigorous researcher, and an extremely creative thinker, but also an exceptional teacher and true Tarot enthusiast. Her work is solid and well rounded. It is based on research and tested through experience. She lives the Tarot in a way few people do—as you will see in her introduction.

As if a comprehensive guide to reversals written by Mary isn't exciting enough, this book also marks the beginning of a new series by Llewellyn: Special Topics in Tarot. We created this series to meet the needs of intermediate and advanced Tarot readers who want to learn new methods for, approaches to, or applications of the cards. Sometimes new books for beginners are published with only a chapter or so of new information. This means intermediate/advanced users are paying for information they don't necessarily need, just to get a bit of new information. The books in this series will forgo basic information, such as what is a Tarot deck, Tarot history, what is a spread, how to shuffle, how to store and cleanse your deck, etc. Instead, each book will focus on a very specific topic. Some upcoming subjects include using Tarot for magic, for self-discovery, and for dream interpretation. A new Special Topics in Tarot book will be released three times a year. Each one (with the exception of this one, of course) will feature a foreword by Mary K. Greer. Finally, the icing on the cake: each book in the series will feature new cover art by Brian Williams, the artist of the *Renaissance Tarot*, the *Minchiate Tarot*, and the forthcoming *Ship of Fools Tarot*.

For *The Complete Book of Tarot Reversals*, Mary suggested that the *Hanged Man* was the best image for the cover. The *Hanged Man* epitomizes the nature of reversed cards. As Mary writes, this card is about "total surrender to an opposing point of view, reversing your consciousness, and imagining differently." I am reminded of a scene from the movie *The Dead Poet's Society*. Actor Robin Williams plays a teacher who urges his students to stand on their desks, simply to see the room from a different point of view. That's what reversals can do. Sometimes that's what we need. With Mary as our guide, we can explore the often-bewildering realm of reversals with confidence and excitement. Thank you, Mary, for giving us a desk to stand on.

Barbara Moore  
October 2001

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the acquisitions editor at Llewellyn Worldwide, Barbara Moore, for her outstanding dedication to improving the quality of Tarot literature, and Llewellyn for their commitment to publishing more advanced texts. I especially want to thank Barbara for her understanding as I faced my own reversals. Connie Hill was a wise angel—available whenever I needed her.

Ed Bury and Sharyn McDonald read the manuscript and added so many valuable ideas and corrections that I could not begin to point out their individual contributions. They are not, however, responsible for any of my errors.

Rachel Pollack, with whom I have co-taught for many years, has been a constant source of inspiration, as have the students in all my classes and workshops who are too numerous to name, and my clients, whose insights constantly humble me. A special thanks goes to my compatriots in “Symbols Class”: Sharyn McDonald, Dawa Fitzmaurice, Chris Irving, Vail Kobbé, Charlotte Bollinger, Virginia Westbury, and especially Jack Meyer and David Haight, whose lecture series, “Myth as Metaphor,” always sparks new ideas. Thanks to my sister priestesses in the Fellowship and Temple of Isis for their encouragement and support.

The names of those who have helped to build a Tarot community should be shouted from the rooftops: Thalassa, Barbara Rapp, Janet Berres, Gary Ross, Anne Shotter, Wald Amberstone, Ruth Ann Brauser, John Gilbert, Crystal Sage, and everyone who has ever attended a Tarot



gathering. A special thanks to Christine Payne-Towler whose interest in European Tarot traditions has broadened my perspective, and to Brian Williams who led me through the wondrous matrix of Italian Renaissance Tarot. Additional appreciation goes to Donna Hanelin, Fern Mercier, Geraldine Amaral, Arnell Ando, Alexandra and Ken Genetti, James Wells (who called regularly from Toronto with reversed card advice), Nina Lee Braden (a sister in reversals), Melanie Oelerich, Leah Samul, Doreen Vitkuske, and James Ricklef (aka Nighthawk).

The internet Tarot communities, especially TarotL and Comparative-Tarot at yahoo.com, are made so exciting because of people like the following who have generously shared their ideas with me: Tea Hilander, Valerie Sim-Behi, Diane Wilkes, Michele Jackson, Elizabeth Hazel, Eva Yaa Asantewaa, dtking, Tom Tadfor Little, Bob O'Neill, James Revak (who has done an excellent job of showing how Etteilla's interpretations influenced Mathers and Waite), and all those mentioned in the footnotes. The list of members could go on literally into the hundreds but since I would be sure to leave someone out I believe I will stop here and simply say thank you all.

Lastly I want to acknowledge all the Tarot writers and creators who have gone before. We owe so much to those who pioneered the divinatory traditions.

## Introduction

# About This Book

THIS BOOK CONTAINS meanings for reversals based on many different theories and traditions. The intent is to give you a background in both “traditional” Tarot meanings and modern approaches to generating such meanings based on principles and analogies drawn from numbers, elements, and pictures. The interpretations are meant to stimulate your own intuitive ideas. As you try them out, note which approach works best for you. This will depend, in part, on your own world-view, style of reading, purpose in doing the reading, and kind of question asked.

If your intent is purely to tell fortunes and predict the future you may find the interpretations labeled “Traditional,” with their specific referents, sufficient. There is little ambiguity here except in how the meanings relate to other cards, a skill that comes from observation, intuition, and experience. But if you are examining personal motivations, clarifying goals and desires, or seeking new options, then you will probably find the modern approaches to reversals more pertinent.

Traditional interpretations for reversals usually include illness. This makes sense because reversals suggest that an adjustment needs to be made, and stress is the body’s response to adjustment and change. Doctors now believe that all illness originates in stress. The greater the stress reaction the more potential there is for harmful effects from it. Stress picks on the weakest link in the chain of the body. Reversals merely point to the major “weak links” at the moment. Dean Shrock acknowledges in *Doctor’s*

*Orders: Go Fishing* that “the most common approach to health care historically over time and across cultures, is shamanism.” In shamanism, “sickness is thought to be a positive messenger that says you need to rebalance spiritually.”<sup>1</sup>

This book includes a shamanic and magical perspective for each reversal. Tarot is an excellent feedback mechanism for receiving the messages before imbalances can manifest either physically or in stressful actions and interactions. It can also pinpoint a source of energy imbalance that has already manifested so that you can work to free it from underlying patterns of criticism, anger, resentment, guilt, and fear.

## Health Wise

References to health and illness in this book are in no way to be taken as medical prognostication. *Do not predict illness or give medical advice in a reading*, whether for yourself or others, unless you are qualified to do so. Advise all querents to see a qualified medical practitioner if they are concerned about their health.

All references appearing here to health and physical conditions are purely metaphoric. They indicate analogous psychic tendencies and thought patterns that may precipitate the kinds of stress that, when unrelieved over long periods of time, can result in illness. At no time is it suggested that a particular person has any physical condition mentioned herein. For instance a “brainstorm” can indicate a fresh idea, or the misfiring of neurons in the cerebral cortex. Metaphorically the term represents a continuum of possibility.

## A Personal Story

I began this book with the intention of rectifying the “erroneous” idea that reversed cards represent an opposite, often negative aspect of the upright meaning of a card. While confronting and dealing with problems is essential, in my readings I emphasize clarifying goals and the conscious creation of what you want in your life. Problems, then, represent energy that is constrained and can be liberated. In doing so we access their hidden wisdom and potentials. What I did not fully realize, but should have, was that, like a dirty pipe when the water is first turned on, all kinds of stuff must come up before the line runs clear.

As with everyone who has written a Tarot book, taught or studied a card-a-week, or created a deck, you find uncanny synchronicities between your life and the cards. Frieda Harris worked on the Thoth deck during World War II. While painting the card named "Victory" (*Six of Wands*), there was a major Allied victory, and during the painting of "Defeat" (*Five of Swords*), there was a major Allied defeat. Harris felt that the cards and the events were connected, although common sense said it was absurd. And so, I too experienced each reversal in my own life.

The following are only a few personal examples of what happens when you enter the underworld of *psyche* or soul. Reversals are certainly not evil, but they sometimes represent adversity: the kind that teaches us what we are capable of, the kind that teaches us what really counts and what is truly important, the kind that tests our moral fiber and character. By struggling with reversals we learn to respond with integrity and a determination not to turn away from the teachings of each circumstance.

Before I mention some of the situations I encountered I want to note that I have been blessed in my life with almost no prior personal injuries or experience with family illness, and I nearly always meet my deadlines.

My first delays occurred when it took more than a month to get delivery on a new computer. I had the same tenant for three years, yet as I began writing, starting with the reversed *Court Cards* I went through four tenants in four months. Throughout the *Swords* I dealt with a crisis in an organization that involved alleged deception. The *Ace of Pentacles Rx* corresponded with a badly sprained ankle that occurred four days before a Tarot tour of Italy.<sup>2</sup> With the *Ten of Pentacles Rx* the bank lost two checks that were intended to pay my house taxes.

As I wrote about the *High Priestess Rx* I was reading a biography of Christiana Morgan, whose paintings of her inner visions (begun under analysis with Carl Jung) became the basis of a four-year seminar taught by Jung. The biographer regularly described Morgan in terms of the *High Priestess* reversed, for instance, "as mirroring *anima*—as the beloved who reflected, completed and created the man. . . . The *femme inspiratrice* . . . [who] disappears beneath the role, while the man who loves his reflection feels he has the right to the reflector as part of his own imaginative property."<sup>3</sup>

Many of the books I read and classes and workshops I taught and attended dealt with subjects corresponding to the current card—again echoing word-for-word the material I was writing; for instance, when there was a discussion of “sacrifice” in a Jung seminar as I worked on the *Hanged Man*.

My divorce was finalized the day I started *Death*. The *Tower* corresponded with a friend’s burst appendix. The hottest day all winter fell in January while I worked on the *Sun* card. As I began editing I fell and sprained my back so seriously that I was first bed-ridden and then could not function without a brace. Then came snowstorms, electricity outages, e-mail glitches, and, as I madly slashed and cut for the final edit of the manuscript, my stepdaughter was diagnosed with breast cancer, so I put everything temporarily aside. It is only through the understanding of Llewellyn acquisition editor Barbara Moore that I have been able to finish this work in my own time.

While immensely difficult, these stressful experiences have brought me face-to-face with material from the psyche, which I must face honestly and with all the clarity I can muster in order to do my own healing, and to bring about a “harmony of forces.”<sup>4</sup>

I have had equally good experiences including the support of friends at a level I never have known before. I received my Reiki I and II training in time to use it as needed. And, midway through the book, I was honored by Barbara Rapp, organizer of the Los Angeles Tarot Symposium (LATS), with an award for my service to the field of Tarot. The award is a bronze sculpture by Eden Gray of the RWS *Hanged Man*. It is a magnificent piece, Gray’s only Tarot sculpture, which Barbara purchased at the first International Tarot Congress in Chicago when Eden Gray was given her own award. Barbara had it in her home for three years but felt the time was right to pass it on, just as I was working on a book that to me is symbolized by that card. As the symposium began, I was asked to draw a card for everyone to represent the day—it was the *Hanged Man*.

## A Note on the Interpretations

Contemporary or English card meanings are generally based on visual elements from Rider-Waite-Smith (RWS) influenced decks and on concepts and keywords used in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The Rider-Waite-Smith deck of 1909 was first to feature pictures on all seventy-eight cards, changing forevermore the state of Tarot art. Using other decks may significantly modify your interpretations, however, as the most popular English deck it has the strongest influence on modern interpretation.

Older, or what I call “Traditional,” meanings are based on those originating in France with Etteilla in 1783 (see the history section of chapter 1) and modified by later writers who used either Etteilla- or Marseilles-style decks. Variations are found in modern Italian, Spanish, and French works. Some reversed interpretations seem arbitrary and may be completely independent of the upright meanings. In several cases the reversed and upright meanings have been exchanged when making the transition from traditional to contemporary meanings. Modern techniques favor modifications to the upright meaning rather than using unrelated concepts. Still, you can discern Etteilla’s influence at the root of many of our contemporary English interpretations, and they may give you new insights into the cards.

Traditional interpretations are taken from the following authors whose books are listed in the bibliography:

- Etteilla (ca. 1780s) as reproduced in Papus (1909)
- MacGregor Mathers (1888)
- Saint-Germain (1901)
- Eudes Picard (1909)
- Lo Scarabeo Publishers (contemporary)
- Grand Orient/Waite (1889)
- A. E. Waite (1910)
- M. C. Poinsot/Anon (1939)
- Alessandro Bellenghi (1985)
- Maritxu Guler (1976)
- Fournier Publishers (1992)
- Docteur Marius (1975)
- Grand Etteilla/B. P. Grimaud (1969)

Remember, the interpretations given in this book are only suggestions. Images on different decks, other cards in the spread, or personal intuitions and associations may suggest entirely new, and more appropriate, meanings.

## Specialized Terms

The following terms used in this book are defined here as an easy reference. Italicized words have their own entries in this list.

**Anima/animus:** Used by Carl *Jung* to indicate the unconscious or concealed female element in the male and male element in the female, respectively. While operating somewhat differently in male and female, its basic function is to inspire.

**Archetype:** Archaic remnants of instinctual patterns of meaning in the human *psyche* that influence our psychology. These collective thought patterns are innate and inherited. We cannot see the archetype itself but only specific images and representations of a motif that follow these patterns, and crop up in myths and fairy tales around the world as well as in the dreams, fantasies, and art of individuals everywhere.

**Correspondences:** A basic principle or “law” of *occult metaphysics* and *magic* that says symbolic analogies and affinities exist among everything in the universe of the same or similar vibration, and that what affects one thing affects others through this symbolic link. It is summarized in the Hermetic axiom, “As Above, So Below.”

**Court Cards:** Sixteen “people” cards divided into four *Suits* that, in interpretation, generally refer to self or others, or their roles, masks, and subpersonalities or as a mode of acting; but may also refer to situations encountered. Although there are a wide variety of names, the most common in English are: King, Queen, Knight, and Page.

**Elemental Dignities:** Modification of a card’s meaning based on elemental affinities with other cards. See Appendix C.

**Elements:** The essential building blocks of the universe, which in Western *occult metaphysics* consist of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. *Correspondences* between Tarot *Suits* and elements vary from deck to deck, requiring a reader to either ignore the intentions of the deck creator, or to modify their descriptions of the card characteristics. See also Appendix B.



**Elemental Correspondences:** The correspondences between elements and Tarot suits that are used in this book are:

**Wands** Fire Desire. Energy. Inspiration. Self-growth. Impulse.

**Cups** Water Emotion. Relationship. Imagination. Reflection.

**Swords** Air Thought. Conflict. Discrimination. Problem-solving.

**Pentacles** Earth Physical manifestation. Security. Worth. Result.

**Enantiodromia:** Used by Carl *Jung* to indicate the reversal of a psychic situation. The word means things turning over into their own opposite, or the tendency of seemingly polar extremes to flip over into one another. The term comes from Heraclitus, and signifies a running contrariwise.

**Etteilla:** Pseudonym for Jean-Baptiste Alliette (1738–1791). He wrote the earliest books of divinatory meanings for cards that continue to influence modern interpretations, created the concept of reversals, and coined the term “cartomancie,” meaning “divination by cards.” He also designed a deck of Tarot cards.

**Golden Dawn:** The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is an organization founded in 1888 in London and continuing today. Members practice ceremonial magic in the Western Magical Tradition. Their rituals and practices are based on their own set of *correspondences* among the Tarot, astrological signs, and the Hebrew letters that influenced the creation of two of the most popular twentieth-century Tarot decks—the Rider-Waite-Smith and the *Thoth* Tarot. The decks’s creators, Arthur Edward Waite, Pamela Colman Smith, and Aleister Crowley were members. “The Golden Dawn Tradition” refers to these correspondences in contradistinction to others such as the French Tradition established by Eliphas *Lévi*, and the “Egyptian” correspondences of the Brotherhood of Light.

**Jung/Jungian:** Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). A Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist. Also refers to Jung’s theories of psychology which have greatly influenced the exploration of *psyche* or soul, and the interpretation of symbols.

**Lévi:** Eliphas Lévi (1810–1875), whose real name was Alphonse-Louis Constant, was a French writer and theorist of magic and the occult. He originated what are usually called the French School Tarot *correspondences* and was a major influence on French *occult* Tarot, and on those using *Marseilles*-style Tarot decks.

**Magic/magical:** A traditional occult definition states, “Magic is the art and science of using little known natural forces in order to achieve changes in consciousness and the physical environment.”<sup>5</sup> A more psychological definition is, “Magic . . . is the soul of the world creating itself, according to its own laws.”<sup>6</sup> From this point of view the magical realm, the occultists’ “inner planes,” is the realm where archetypes have substance and in which we can perceive that world soul.

**Major Arcana:** The twenty-one numbered cards and one unnumbered card that depict allegorical scenes, derived from images that were well-known in Catholic Europe in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. In modern interpretation they generally refer to principles and lessons as well as events.

**Marseilles Tarot:** Also “Tarot de Marseille.” Most Tarot practitioners who use a “Marseille-style” deck use a set of astrological and Hebrew letter correspondences devised by Eliphas Lévi rather than the *Golden Dawn*. Basic meanings are usually memorized, since the *Minor Arcana* number cards show only the suit markers (no storybook pictures).

**Minor Arcana:** Fifty-six cards divided into four *Suits*, each suit containing ten cards numbered from Ace through Ten, and four *Court Cards*. Thus there are forty numbered (or “pip”) cards, and sixteen Court Cards. In modern interpretation they usually refer to the events, situations, or people encountered.

**Numinous:** A term used by *Jungians* to describe the quality of a thing or event that generates a deep emotional response of awe, fascination, and mystery in those who behold or experience it.

**Occult/Occult metaphysics:** Occult means “secret” or “hidden” and refers to knowledge that must be uncovered and brought to light by searching. Metaphysics refers to the philosophy of things beyond the physical. “Esoteric” is a related word meaning “pertaining to that which lies

within.” Together they imply that there is knowledge and wisdom hidden within the *psyche* that can be made conscious through examination and, when employed *magically*, create change.

**Projection:** A psychological term used to mean the unconscious attribution of one’s own characteristics (including emotions, attitudes, and desires) to someone or something else. Simultaneously, the originator denies or rejects these qualities in himself.

**Psyche:** From a Greek word meaning “breath” and hence “soul” or “spirit.” It signifies the processes of the mind, both conscious and unconscious, and implies the part of the human being that strives for union with God. The Greek myth of the maiden, Psyche, who was loved by Eros, has come to symbolize the development of soul from unconscious to conscious and on to Divine Union. Psychology is the study of the psyche as the mind.

**Psychopomp/Psychopompos:** Guide of the soul, especially through the underworld.

**Puer/Puella:** Used by Carl Jung to signify the archetype of the “eternal youth.” Puer is the man who never becomes emotionally mature, and puella, the woman. It implies an adolescent playfulness, beauty, charisma, and allure, but there is an inability to fully commit in a responsible way.

**Remedy:** This is an agent such as a medicine, cure, medication, elixir, action, or physic used to restore health. Based on the root *medi*, signifying “to make right what is wrong” or “mend,” it corrects or counteracts like an antidote, to rectify an undesirable or unhealthy condition. Its shorthand form is *Rx*. Rectification is itself an alchemical process involving an adjustment of alcohol level or “spirits.”

**RWS:** This refers to the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, first published in 1909 by William Rider and Co., London, designed by Arthur Edward Waite, and artistically executed by Pamela Colman Smith. As the first deck to have representational pictures on all cards it has become, in addition to the “classic” *Marseille* Tarot, one of the most influential Tarot decks of modern times. Because of the propensity of “readers” to tell stories based on its images, it supports interpretation through pictorial

imagery by both free association and cultural iconography rather than simply by memorizing card meanings. Because of its popularity, it has influenced a great many modern decks and so is used as the basic reference in this work.

**Rx:** This is the shorthand notation most used by Tarotists to indicate reversed cards, and by astrologers to indicate “retrograde” motion of a planet. It is also a pharmacy sign for the medicinal recipe or *remedy* used to treat disease. It was originally written as a cursive capital *R* with a short backward slash that turns the extended leg into an *x*. According to *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, “The ornamental part of this letter is the symbol of Jupiter (♃), under whose special protection all medicines were placed. The letter itself (*Recipe*, Latin for ‘take’) and its flourish may thus be paraphrased: ‘Under the good auspices of Jove [Jupiter] the patron of medicines, take the following drugs in the proportions set down.’” *Recipe* means “a formula for or means to a desired end.” Given that traditional and modern interpretations for reversed cards often indicate stress-producing situations that could become disease but that also show us the positive motivations behind such stress, I like to think of *Rx* as indicating “dis-ease as remedy.” (See also “Health Wise” earlier in this chapter.)

**Scry, Scrying:** From “descry” meaning “to discern something difficult to catch sight of.”<sup>7</sup> It refers to the process of obtaining clairvoyant visions usually by staring hypnotically at an object such as an image on a Tarot card, a flame, or a reflection in water or oil.

**Senex:** A term used by Carl *Jung* to signify the archetype containing the duality of wise old man and the end-time of the repressive, melancholy, dying old man.

**Shadow:** A term used by Carl *Jung* to indicate an aspect of the unconscious self that is repressed, denied, and unactualized and that goes unrecognized by the conscious self. Shadow qualities are often *projected* on to others and may be “bright” or desired qualities, as well as “dark” or disliked ones.

**Shaman/shamanic:** From a Tungus word meaning “one who is excited, moved, or raised.” A man or woman who, as an inspired priest, enters

into an ecstatic trance state to access nonordinary reality (usually perceived as an upper or lower world) in order to gain knowledge, protection, healing energy, and/or support for self and others.<sup>8</sup>

**Suits:** The *Minor Arcana* are divided into four categories: Wands (Staves, Scepters), Cups, Swords, Pentacles (Disks, Coins). Usually each suit corresponds with one of the four *Elements*.

**Synchronicity:** A theory developed by Carl Jung and the physicist Wolfgang Pauli of an acausal principle in which everything that happens at a single moment in time is related in a meaningful way.

**Tarocchi:** The original game played with Tarot cards, which is still played in some parts of Europe today. It resembles bridge but features a permanent *Trump* suit. The term is also used in Italy to refer to the cards themselves (*Tarocco*, singular).

**Temenos:** A sacred ground, precinct, or courtyard, usually enclosed. In *Jungian* psychology it implies a place that is safe for deep transformative work.

**Traditional/Traditional Rx:** As described earlier in this chapter this term refers to a body of card meanings originating with the eighteenth-century “cartonomantist” *Etteilla*, which have been augmented by commentators primarily of the French, Italian, and Spanish schools of Tarot, and appearing in early writings by MacGregor Mathers and A. E. Waite.

**Trumps/Triumphs:** Another term for the *Major Arcana*, from the oldest known name for these cards in Northern Italy, *I Trionfi*, suggesting their role in card games as a permanent trump suit that can triumph over all the other cards, and possibly referring to Petrarch’s poem, *Trionfi*.

## ENDNOTES

1. Dean Shrock, *Doctor's Orders: Go Fishing*, p. 96.
2. Brian Williams, creator of the *Renaissance* and *Minchiate Tarots*, led this tour of northern Italy in 2000, as a pilgrimage to the sources of Tarot imagery.
3. Claire Douglas. *Translate this Darkness: The Life of Christiana Morgan, the Veiled Woman in Jung's Circle*. Morgan, along with her long-time lover and work partner, Harry Murray, were creators of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), a personality assessment tool using images. Transcripts of the weekly seminar, attended by many of the great Jungian analysts, have been published in the two volume work, *Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930–1934 by C. G. Jung*, edited by Claire Douglas.
4. I owe this phrase to Magister Ludi, Joseph Knecht, in Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*, p. 311.
5. This succinct definition is from Francis King and Stephen Skinner, *Techniques of High Magic*, p. 9. It is based on definitions used by members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.
6. Robert Sardello, *Facing the World with Soul*, p. 20.
7. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.
8. Thanks to Sharyn McDonald for the core of this definition and all her knowledge of myth and shamanism.

## Chapter One

# A Different Point of View

“HOW DO I READ reversed cards—the ones that appear upside-down in a spread?”<sup>1</sup> “Why bother with reversals at all?” Answering these questions for students over the past thirty years led me to write this book.

For a time I ignored reversals because I did not like the meanings I found in books. Then I found that the cards seem to work no matter what interpretations I used, as long as I specifically intended that the cards follow that system. It is the reader’s decision whether or not to use reversals, as is the choice of what they are to signify. Chapter 2 will give you plenty of options so that you can freely choose interpretations whose world-view you most value.

Many readers find that reversals add depth, nuance, tone, and subordinate ideas to the upright meaning. When seeking unambiguous answers you can effectively double the possibilities. Furthermore, they encourage us to see things from a different and more complex point of view. Receiving too many reversals can make you feel like you have been dealt a “losing hand,” but hopefully, this book will help turn that around.

In truth, reversals are ways to see through to the “other side.” They allow us to go beyond the limits of the known. In offering further possibilities and insights that are not immediately apparent, they provide an opportunity to reach beyond logic and lead us into the realm of potentials and underlying causes where everything is connected and magic happens. We are invited to look beyond the obvious to a place of richer meaning. To



assist in this process, try regarding reversed cards as if influenced by a divine *Fool* or the *Hanged Man*. Reversals reveal the esoteric or hidden components, the shamanic perspective of the world, and a place known as the dream-time or inner planes versus so-called “reality.” In the words of a wise woman in one Internet discussion, “Reversals present opportunities to reach closer to energies, feeling, realities, and potential not easy to access.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite their rich potential, reversals are usually read in very limited or simplistic ways. You can characterize each card as good/bad, or use any other dualism. But, do not be misled by the fallacy that a reversal merely switches the good and bad attributes of the card—although it may sometimes do so. When seen primarily as negative, reversals needlessly emphasize the irrational fears and suspicions that gather around the creative gifts of the spirit and psyche. None of the cards are absolutely good or bad; each has meanings ranging from problematic to helpful. The *Sun*, for instance, can be happiness and joy, or sunburn and burnout. When reversed, the *Sun*’s effects are traditionally lessened rather than changed, so that the experience of either joy or burnout might be denied. However, the reversal can also tell you to look for the *inner Sun* and its spiritual guiding light rather than seeing it only as an external source.

Beginners may choose to use only upright cards until they get a good grasp of basic interpretations. Experienced readers, too, may use only upright cards, for a variety of reasons. This is fine. In either case, with this book you can greatly broaden your knowledge of card potentials. Even if you still choose to read only upright cards, you will be a more informed reader.

Rule number one is, *Know the basic meanings for each card ranging from its most helpful to most problematic possibilities.* There are a few decks in which I still use only upright cards—like the *William Blake Tarot* and the *Thoth* deck—but I integrate my understanding of reversed potentials into their full range of meaning.

## Synchronicity, Archetypes, Duality, and Enantiodromia

Since everything in a reading has significance, I have come to appreciate that a card appearing upside-down adds special nuances that should not be ignored. The psychologist Carl Jung, in conjunction with physicist Wolfgang Pauli, developed an acausal theory called *synchronicity*, which states that everything occurring in a single moment of time is meaningfully related (see “Specialized Terms” in the Introduction). From this perspective, meaning is everywhere if we only had the time or the will to consider all the possibilities. By laying out the cards we set an intention to look for the meaningful relationship between the question and the cards dealt at that moment. Reversed cards have their own unique message, and it is part of our job to consider what that might be.

The Tarot can be seen as particular manifestations of the instinctual patterns or ancient remnants in the human psyche that psychiatrist Carl Jung called *archetypes*.<sup>3</sup> These *primordial patterns of meaning* (such as father, mother, hero-savior, predator, shadow, wise man, wounded healer) influence our psychology, and continually compel and fascinate us. Jung often referred to archetypes as “bi-polar,” that is, carrying dual aspects such as positive and negative, light and dark, male and female, good and bad. We can here add, upright and reversed. Yet, he noted that such splitting of archetypal forms into opposing, dichotomous images was symptomatic of a lack of psychological development. Jeremy Taylor points out in *The Living Labyrinth*, “The more exciting truth of the matter is that we can’t have one without the other, because they are literally different faces of the same energy.” Taylor notes that Jungians generally ascribe to the unconscious “the universal tendency of human beings when operating out of fear to ‘split’ and ‘twin’ images of multivalent archetypal power.”<sup>4</sup> Our attempt to split a card’s meanings through the use of reversals tends to throw us into the unconscious realm where fear and the shadow dwell, along with other fringe or culturally unsanctioned modes of operating, such as the shamanic and magical. Yet, it is through knowledge of the tension between the opposites that we sharpen our sensitivity and increase our self-awareness.

Jung borrowed a term from Heraclitus called *enantiodromia*, which describes, in the words of Jeremy Taylor, “this predictable tendency of

seemingly polar opposites to flip over and turn into one another at precisely the moment when they seem to be most in opposition.”<sup>5</sup> It happens when blocks in energy channels are removed or new energy fields are opened,<sup>6</sup> which a Tarot reading can sometimes accomplish. As Jung described the result:

There comes the urgent need to appreciate the value of the opposite of our former ideals, to perceive the error in our former convictions, to recognize the untruth in our former truth, and to feel how much antagonism and even hatred lay in what, until now, had passed for love. . . . The point is not conversion into the opposite but conservation of previous values together with recognition of their opposites.<sup>7</sup>

One reason why reversals are so difficult is that they take us to a place where we are most uncomfortable—the realm of the soul—which many of us know or reach only through our dis-ease, that is, what takes us out-of-ease.<sup>8</sup> However, if we can learn to navigate this realm and to appreciate its mysteries we have much to gain. It need not claim us only through dis-ease and obsession, but can become a welcome addition to a full experience of all that life has to offer. In chapter 2, and throughout this work, we will see how these ideas apply to working with reversals.

## The Hanged Man: The Art of Reversing Adversity

If any card epitomizes reversals it is the *Hanged Man*, representing the archetype of the “wounded healer.” In the original Italian decks this card depicted punishment by shaming that was reserved for traitors. At one level, the image is about our own shame and the betrayal of our highest potential through the wounding that we have all experienced.

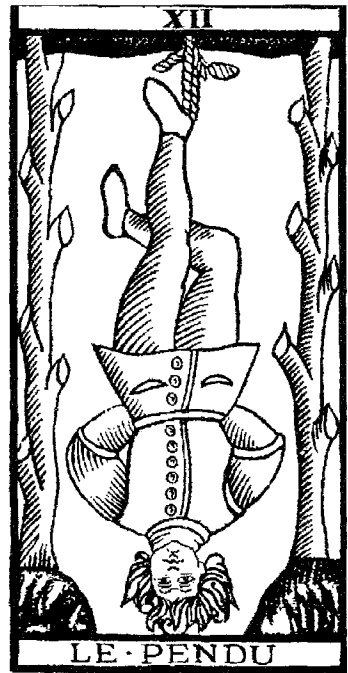
By learning to change our misery and pain into fulfillment and understanding, shown by the halo in the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, we reverse our erroneous thoughts and interpretations of ourselves and of life—the illusions of appearances—into reality. By realizing that we can reflect our True Center, we learn to see below surface appearances, just as the head of the *Hanged Man* in French and Italian decks is below the surface of the ground; we change from ego personality to the self. This causes a reversal

of our entire concept of what consciousness and life are about. It is as if the values of our ordinary life are turned around 180 degrees.

To reverse adversity we suspend ourselves from cosmic consciousness, represented as the living tree on the *Hanged Man* card (see picture from the Marseille Tarot), by realizing that all circumstances are particular encounters of Spirit with soul. This changes our concepts of the source of pain, and the reasons we are subjected to it. The real "I" can do no wrong. Every adversity is an opportunity for gathering wisdom and understanding, for it is only experience that cures our ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

When inner growth is the enemy of the conscious personality (which appears in the form of adversity), then the self-will of the conscious personality has to surrender to the process of inner growth or die. When an inner psychological conflict gets too awful, life gets suspended and we get "hung up." Life cannot go on. Jungian therapist Marie-Louise von Franz characterized this stoppage in the flow of life, along with its intolerable suffering, as your "wish to move with the right leg and the left refuses, and vice versa."<sup>10</sup> It is just this problem that is depicted on the *Hanged Man* where one leg is free while the other is tied. The archetypal therapist James Hillman points out that shamans do a one-legged dance and that this unnatural distortion or "abnormal standpoint" represents supernatural power. One is "hindered, heroic, and magical."<sup>11</sup>

As Mircea Eliade once said, "We must die to one life to gain access to another . . . [a] life where participation in the sacred becomes possible."<sup>12</sup> It is the "suspension of the belief system" of the ordinary reality that releases us into the next blossoming of the soul.



## History

While the Tarot seems to have originated in northern Italy early in the fifteenth century, scholars have been unable to find any system for ascribing psychological or divinatory meaning to these cards until the eighteenth century.

In 1770, Jean-Baptiste Alliette, who went by the pseudonym Etteilla, published the first divinatory card reversals. His original book on *cartomancie*, a name he made up, used a shortened playing card deck, called *piquet*, which contains only thirty-two cards. To increase the number of portents he added reversed meanings.<sup>13</sup> This book, *Etteilla, ou maniere de se récréer avec un jeu de cartes part M\*\*\* (Etteilla, or a Way to Entertain Onself with a Pack of Cards by Mr\*\*\*)*, lists many methods of fortunetelling, including something he calls *les Taraux*, an early French term for Tarot.<sup>14</sup> Alliette was originally a seed and grain merchant, then sold prints and playing cards in Paris and Strasbourg, and finally became a *professeur d'algebra* which probably meant a numerologist. For instance, he described fortunetelling with playing cards as an “algebraic entertainment.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1781 Antoine Court de Gébelin announced to the world in the eighth volume of his encyclopedic work, *Le Monde Primitif*, that the Tarot deck contained the vestiges of the great mysteries of Egypt. The year 1781 saw not only the birth of the occult and divinatory Tarot, but was a significant year for several other reasons. The American Revolution ended. Uranus, first planet to be discovered since Babylonian prehistory, was identified on March 31 by William Herschel. Russia's Catherine the Great and the Holy Roman Emperor Josef II divided the Balkans (which became the impetus to and cradle of two world wars). Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason* and Gibbon his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Mozart was composing his great works. It was a revolutionary end to one era, and the beginning of a new one.

Two years later Etteilla published divinatory meanings for the Tarot that included his recently invented reversed card meanings. This was a period of duels, debtors' prison, epidemics, widespread infant and maternal mortality, revolution, and, soon, *le guillotine*. It is not surprising that dire warnings were the rule, individuals felt buffeted by an incomprehensible fate, and with the prevalence of such sudden reversals in fortune, card reversals soon became known as “ill-dignified.” We shall see,

however, that reversals can in fact “remedy” the difficulties of the upright interpretation.

In the late nineteenth century, MacGregor Mathers was head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1888–1900), the matrix from which the Rider-Waite-Smith and Crowley-Harris *Thoth* decks appeared. He taught a system for modifying cards by means of *Elemental Dignities*. EDs, as they are called, are based on affinities and contraries among the four elements and the four suits. Revived in the last few years, this technique is gaining in popularity and is used today with or without reversals. Modern practitioners are refining and modifying Mathers’s original instructions, which are summarized in Appendix C.

Times have changed and interpretations have generally become more psychological and spiritual, emphasizing human growth potential. Reversed meanings, on the other hand, at least in previous books, have remained all too negative and fatalistic. People react to them with fear and apprehension. We can enter our fears to reclaim our energies, however we need a way that promises to reward us for our efforts.

Individual readers have created their own reversal techniques, and I’ve talked to Tarot readers around the country who have independently developed approaches similar to my own—but this largely intuitive wisdom has rarely found its way into the literature or the texts. Now a new age of reversals is upon us.

## Getting Started

### Shuffling to Obtain Reversed Cards

You get reversed cards in a reading when you shuffle or mix them so that the top of the card becomes the bottom and vice versa. To shuffle, all cards should be facedown, with their images turned away from you so you see only the backs of the cards. Shuffle them any way you like: a bridge riffle in which you raise the edges and release them so they fall back alternately into one stack, or an overhand mix. You can also place all the cards on a clean, flat surface and stir them as if in a pool. Be sure to periodically turn some of the cards head to foot.

## Selecting Cards

To choose cards for a spread:

- Pick them from anywhere in the pool;
- Spread the deck in a fan on a tabletop or in your hand, and pick from anywhere in the fan;
- Gather the deck in a stack, cut and restack, then draw from the top.

This last technique, as taught by Eden Gray, has the querent shuffle the cards and, with the left hand, cut to the left in three piles.<sup>16</sup> The reader restacks the piles in any order and deals off the top, placing the cards in the spread positions.

It is important to hold the cards so that when turned over, the upright and reversed cards maintain the same orientation as when the querent shuffled them. If you sit beside the querent or read for yourself you would turn the cards over from right to left. If you sit across from the querent you will need to turn the stack so it now faces you the same way as it faced the querent when being shuffled. Otherwise, take the shuffled deck from across the table (without rotating it) and turn over each card from head to foot in a consistent manner.

## Spreads

Spreads, also called “layouts,” consist of specific positions relative to each other, in which the cards are placed after shuffling. A reading consists of combining the meaning of the card with the position’s designated meaning within the parameters of the question asked. For instance, one of the most basic spreads has three positions—Past, Present, and Future—requiring you primarily to switch tense (from past to present to future) as you individually interpret each card, in its position, in response to the question.

There are literally hundreds of spreads to choose from, or you can invent your own. Any spread can be used with reversed cards. A basic three-card spread and a ten to twelve-card spread are the stock-in-trade for most readers, but you may want to explore the hundreds of spreads that have been created in recent years. The issues posed by each position’s meaning will help you determine the key factors in the question, so pick a spread that has appropriate position meanings.



The *Celtic Cross Spread* is found in nearly every Tarot book for good reason. Like all good stories it begins with a conflict at the heart of the spread—a basic dilemma posed by the two central, crossed cards. This is the core issue of the subject's present life, but described now in Tarot symbology. The remaining cards explore the subconscious roots, the past, the superconscious or ideal, and the future elements of the issue; followed by cards for self, environment, hopes and fears, and the result or outcome. This spread handles both general concerns and specific questions equally well. The sample reading for Sarah in chapter 7 uses a basic *Celtic Cross* format.

Other spreads give insights into specific areas of a person's life: home, health, relationships, career, creativity, money, etc., or focus more on the development of a situation through time. There are spreads for exploring multiple options or alternatives, for describing stages in a process, or for exploring the parts of an individual's psyche or the components of an interaction. You will find several spreads in chapter 6.

### **When There Are a Majority of Reversed Cards**

Some Tarot readers choose not to read spreads containing a majority of reversed cards, believing this signifies the person will be unreceptive to the information, or that they may be too depressed, dishonest, or distressed to work with the material. This has a certain logic if you use primarily negative interpretations, but this need not be the case. As I stress in this book, there is more to reversals than simply negativity. You must judge whether it would be more distressing to such a person to abort the reading after seeing the cards that are drawn or to interpret the cards and possibly confirm their fears. One solution is to start over with a new spread, while asking the question: "What will help the querent most at this time?"<sup>17</sup>

There is a possibility, however, that an excess of reversals may be the Tarot's only way of informing you that a reading on this question will go nowhere or accomplish little at this time. This is an opportunity for you to help the person see why this may be necessary to their growth.

Another way of working with spreads containing a preponderance of reversals is to determine whether the inverted cards express an overall theme. For instance, if the theme is delay or denial, turn the cards upright, remembering which ones were reversed, and proceed with the

interpretation while looking for ways to access or unblock the beneficial potentials. The few cards that were originally upright will likely show the greatest areas of support and leverage. Upright cards also may suggest qualities or situations that are obvious and automatic, or points at which energies are flowing normally. These cards can provide an opening or impetus that will aid remedial work involving the reversed cards.

### **Alternate Ways of Using Reversed Cards**

One Tarot tradition recommends that you first turn all cards upright in the deck. Then before shuffling, the querent turns just three cards upside-down. If you get any of these cards in your spread, it powerfully emphasizes these as “fingers of fate” that outweigh most other factors.

A variation of mine is to shuffle the deck with all the cards upright, lay them out in a spread, and thoroughly interpret your reading. Write down their positions, pick them up, and shuffle only the cards from the reading, reversing three at random. Put the cards back into their spread positions as before. The positions of the three now-reversed cards signify areas of greatest difficulty or upset. You have already seen the spread’s overall potential, now you can discern just where there may be “bumps in the road” or blocks to achieving that potential. If you wish, instead of reversing only three, completely mix the cards from the spread and let fate determine how many will end up upside-down.

Remember that, if you thoroughly mix the deck, it is “normal” to have half your cards reversed. It is still within the norm to have six or even seven out of ten cards reversed!

### **Getting Started with the One-Card Rx<sup>18</sup> Spread**

Draw a single reversed card when you want to learn more about difficulties, go beyond consensus reality into the realm of magic, or try out the interpretations in this book. A single reversed card can answer such questions as:

- What is being blocked or delayed?
- What am I not seeing in myself?
- Where am I experiencing difficulties?
- What am I breaking through or overturning?

- What new concept or idea awaits my recognition?
- Where is the magic here?

To obtain your card, shuffle the deck while making sure that cards are randomly turned head-to-foot. Cut and restack the deck. Turn over cards one by one until you come to the first reversed card. Interpret it using the ideas in chapter 2.

For further information, note how many cards you turned over before getting the reversal. If within the first two, the energy is strong and currently active. If more than five, the situation is deep in the unconscious, far in the future, or only a weak possibility. If ten or more, it probably has little or no significance; in this last case, ask again some other time, or try a different question.

## ENDNOTES

1. Spreads are defined later in this chapter.
2. Thanks to Eva Yaa Asantewaa of [DancingWorld@yahoo.com](mailto:DancingWorld@yahoo.com).
3. See Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, pp. 67–68. To understand more about archetypes I also recommend *Mirrors of the Self*, edited by Christine Downing, and the works of Robert Johnson, who calls archetypes “psychological building blocks of energy.”
4. Jeremy Taylor, *The Living Labyrinth*, p. 74.
5. *Ibid*, p. 73.
6. Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson, *Dancing in the Flames*, p. 148.
7. C. G. Jung, *On the Psychology of the Unconscious*, para. 117–119.
8. James Hillman discusses the role of “pathologies” as the way to soul or psyche in *ReVisioning Psychology*.
9. This is adapted from the ideas of Ann Davies, former president of Paul Foster Case’s organization, Builders of the Adytum (BOTA) in her booklet, *Inspirational Thoughts on the Tarot*, pp. 51–54.
10. Marie-Louise von Franz, *Shadow and Evil in Fairytales*, pp. 36–41.

11. James Hillman, editor, *The Puer Papers*, pp. 102–104.
12. I am unable to find the exact source of this quotation.
13. Ronald Decker, et al., *Wicked Pack of Cards*, p. 74.
14. *Ibid*, p. 83.
15. *Ibid*, p. 82.
16. Eden Gray owned a metaphysical bookstore in New York City. At a time when few Tarot books were available in English, she wrote straightforward, useful, modern guides to the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, the first of which, *Tarot Revealed*, was self-published in 1960.
17. See *Celtic Wisdom Tarot* by Caitlín Matthews, p. 129.
18. See the “Specialized Terms” in the Introduction for an interesting explanation of the symbol *Rx*, used here to mean “reversed,” by astrologers to mean “retrograde,” and by the medical profession to indicate a “remedy.”

## Chapter Two

# Using Reversals

IN THE FIRST chapter you learned how to shuffle the deck to obtain reversals, how to use a spread, what happens when there are a majority of reversed cards, and you got started with the *One-Card Rx Spread* (see chapter 3 for more spreads). In this chapter you will discover many ways of reading reversals, as well as which technique to use. You will also learn to “rectify” a card, and when to use reversed meanings for upright cards.

In general, it helps to think of reversed cards as “red flagged,” indicating that you should pay extra attention to them. They signal that something is not operating as usual. Upright cards tend to be conscious, outer, automatic, in process, and available. Reversed cards often indicate choice points, where you must be attentive. They may require conscientious, willful handling if you are to take full advantage of the energies and opportunities. It is like knowing that a car has a tendency to pull to the right and so you have to keep alert and make adjustments for it. Or they are places to stop struggling, relax, and let go of all expectations.

### Twelve Ways to Read Reversals

The following suggestions indicate how the reversal of a card can modify its upright meaning(s). Try all the possibilities until you find an interpretation that works best in a particular reading. Eventually you will discover which categories most align with your personal reading style and world-view.

### 1) Blocked or Resisted

The energy normally described by the card may be blocked, repressed, denied, rejected, or resisted. This could be appropriate and healthy or an expression of fear, depending on the circumstances. For instance, the *Eight of Cups Rx*<sup>1</sup> could express resistance to spending time alone, blocks to a vacation, or repressed yearning for an inner journey. On the other hand, by blocking the urge to run, you could be re-incorporated back into a nurturing environment. A reversed *Judgement* might mean resisting a “call to action” or righteously ignoring someone’s judgments or criticism.

### 2) Projected<sup>2</sup>

There could be a tendency to project denied material on to others. These may be qualities you admire as well as those you do not like. The *Emperor Rx* might indicate the projection of one’s own repressed aggressiveness on to someone else who is wielding power inappropriately or ineffectually. Or, you could overidealize their strength and command.

### 3) Delayed, Difficult, Unavailable

There could be hesitation, uncertainty, unavailability, or an external delay. With many cards reversed, overall change may take longer than expected. It can indicate that you should wait because the right timing for the delay may be preparation for a more rewarding opportunity. With reversed *Aces* or the *Wheel of Fortune Rx* a new enterprise or change may feel imminent but have trouble getting started. Its initiatory impulse may depend on clarity of choices, extra effort, or conscious commitment from the individual—if that is what is desired. It could be a bumpy road filled with obstacles and difficulties. Energy flows less smoothly or automatically than it would otherwise. Yet it is not always appropriate, for instance, to turn the *Three of Cups* upright when your friends are temporarily unavailable. If the *Hermit* is also in the spread it may indicate an opportunity to turn inward. I have seen the *Three of Cups Rx* come up when one of my clients stopped hanging out with his drinking buddies. This card reversed suggested both his misuse of drink and his withdrawal from his pals.

#### 4) Inner, Unconscious, Private

The energy might be unconscious, inner, or private rather than conscious, outer, or public. The *Two of Cups Rx*, for instance, can refer to inner polarity, and the relationship of self with the masculine or feminine within. Remember too that if the energy is truly unconscious the querent may not recognize it.

#### 5) New or Dark Moon (and other round deck variations)<sup>3</sup>

This suggestion is based on the round decks in which multiple directions can modify a card's meaning. Most of these decks are feminist and Goddess oriented, which harmonize well with the moon's cycle delineated by the Jungian-humanist astrologer Dane Rudhyar. Briefly, the reversal signifies the dark or new moon phase: unconscious, instinctual, hidden. It is the moment of interior conception and re-formation. When the top point of the card is on the left side it indicates the waxing or increasing moon which indicates growing, learning, developing, exploring. When upright it represents the full moon signifying a fully conscious, developed, and observable situation. As the card tilts to the right it is time to teach, distribute, and disseminate. As it approaches the bottom, there can be a releasing and letting go of what is no longer necessary or that which needs to transform. The exact quarters represent crisis points in the waxing and waning cycles.

#### 6) Breaking Through, Overturning, Refusing, Changing Direction

The querent could be overturning, getting out from under, breaking free of, rejecting, refusing, or turning away from the condition pictured. It can also show the end or passing away of a situation, a loosening, or a change in direction. For example, the *Eight of Swords Rx* indicates that bonds, blindfold, and barriers could be falling away. In the *Ten of Wands Rx* the person seems to be putting down the weight of responsibilities and burdens.

#### 7) No or Not (the upright meaning); Lacking

Occasionally you can preface a standard upright interpretation with "no" or "not." Or try adding prefixes such as "non"- or "un"- to upright meanings. The *Emperor Rx* might mean "not acting masculine or authoritative."

Take care that this does not lead to a judgmental, overly deterministic, or negative attitude. A multitalented woman asked for guidance about what Spirit wanted her to be and do. A series of wonderful Major Arcana cards came up—all reversed. I finally realized the Tarot was telling her *not* to specifically identify herself as teacher, artist, or lover, because her true spiritual purpose transcended these labels and she should not be role limited.

### 8) Excessive, Over- or Undercompensating

The reversal may intensify or lessen the meaning of the card, or take it to extremes and overindulgence: too little or too much, under or overdeveloped, immature or senile. In psychological terms it can indicate over- or undercompensation, or a tendency to flip dramatically between polarities. A querent can usually identify which polarity is involved because the extremes are so pronounced—unless the denial factor (Category One) is involved.

### 9) Misused or Misdirected

Misfiring, misuse, or misdirection implies a faulty start, bad timing, or something that is not used appropriately. In the *Six of Pentacles Rx*, money or charity could be misspent. In the *Seven of Swords Rx* you may have misplaced strategies or loyalties; perhaps the perceived “enemy” is not really so. Try other forms of the prefix mis-.

### 10) “Re-” Words: Retried, Retracted, Reviewed, Reconsidered

Reversals immediately suggest other “re-” words such as those above.<sup>4</sup> The prefix “re-” denotes backward motion, withdrawal, opposition, negation, or to do again. In astrology such words characterize retrograde planetary motion during which a planet appears to move backward through the zodiac and we review, reconsider, and redo previous actions. The *Magician Rx* may want to retract an intention. The *Seven of Wands Rx* might want to reconsider his need to stand his ground and fend off opposition.

### 11) Rectification: Disease into Remedy

Reversals can be considered as both the disease (or at least the stress that may lead to disease) and the remedy, “What won’t kill you will heal you.”



According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a *remedy* is an “agent used to restore health” that acts by correcting or counteracting and thus rights what is wrong. *Rectification* works as an alchemical process: refining and purifying to the essence through distillation and by adjusting the proof of liquid “spirits.” In electricity, to rectify means to convert alternating into direct current. The word *remedy* comes from roots meaning “to take appropriate measures against,” while *medi* is also the source of “meditate,” suggesting that healing and contemplation were always related. Sometimes, by going deeply into the reversal, seeking the causes and not just the effects, and experiencing all the excesses, we can break through to the other side. See the Introduction for further thoughts about health and remedies indicated by reversals. See page 33 for techniques for rectifying a reversal.

## 12) Unconventional, Shamanic, Magical, Humorous

If an upright card depicts conventional wisdom, then the reversal illustrates unconventional wisdom. It questions all the assumptions indicated by the upright meaning. It is not straight, but crooked and crazy. Each card has a place that you can “see through and into.” You have to look under the mask of what “seems to be.” Thus there could be a trickster aspect to a reversed card. Perhaps a sense of humor is required; you are being instructed not to take the situation too seriously. The *Hierophant Rx* clearly points to “coyote-energy”: wisdom and spirituality that might appear in unexpected forms.

The shamanic or magical view, in particular, asks you to enter the card and journey to an Alice-in-Wonderland realm in order to bring back a vital message or understanding. It suggests viewing things from a different perspective than that of the ordinary world, and assumes that what we normally view as metaphor is a living reality, and that what we call reality is merely a dream. This view represents the “esoteric,” that is, secret or hidden, teachings.

## Additional Techniques

Tarot readers are always creating new techniques for using reversals that evolve from personal beliefs about how reality operates. Individuals, who are identified in the footnotes, suggested the following alternate systems:

- A reversed card sometimes carries similar meanings to the upright meaning of the *preceding* card in the deck. The new energy cannot fully manifest due to past attachments of the previous card. Perhaps you need to go back and revisit its lessons or experiences. Thus, a reversal can “throw you back” or “revert you” to the naturally preceding card.<sup>5</sup> The *Five of Wands Rx* might reflect back on the *Four of Wands*, or the *Star Rx* asks you to consider the lessons of the *Tower*. *Aces* could revert to *Tens*, but what about the *Fool* and *Pages*? Define these for yourself.

- A reversal might be a “yin” or passive manifestation of the card’s upright meaning (which would be “yang” or active). Notice the shape of the background (a kind of shadow image), and ask what possibilities move forward from the background when the upright figure(s) has stepped out? What is left if you cut the active (upright) energies out of the picture? When I am doing the upright thing, what is left behind? This approach looks at the oblique, subtle consequences that result from the neglect of the normal roles or activities.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, reversals can point to spirit messages, indicating the influence of or messages from “mirror-reflection, shadow, or parallel worlds.”<sup>7</sup>

- Reversals might be situations or people on which you cannot rely. Likewise, you may lack skills or aptitude, turning them into a problem or weakness, a place where mistakes are likely.<sup>8</sup>

- Occasionally the reversal of a Court Card or Major Arcana indicates that it is referring to the opposite sex than the one perceived in the illustration.<sup>9</sup>

- John Gilbert of the *American Tarot Association* offered this method and the next. “Reversed cards mean these things are . . . major problems indicating the need to read the card in its most negative light. Upright cards are always seen in their most positive aspect. Reversed Major Arcana cards are then warnings that you are going in the wrong direction on

your spiritual journey, and becoming more deeply involved in the physical realities of this life. Thus you need to look at where you think you are going and what you think you are doing spiritually.<sup>10</sup>

• This version applies two different categories of meaning to each card orientation.<sup>11</sup>

	<b>Well-dignified &amp; Upright</b>	<b>Ill-dignified or Reversed</b>
<b>Pentacles</b>	Jobs and Career	Financial Affairs
<b>Swords</b>	Ideas	Worries and Concerns
<b>Cups</b>	Relationships	Raw Emotions
<b>Wands</b>	Intuition	Willpower and Determination
<b>Trumps</b>	Spiritual Path	Material (non-spiritual) Path

## Determining Which Reversed Meanings to Use

Several characteristics may be at work in a single reversed card resulting in multiple meanings. The reversed *Empress*—whose upright meanings include being feminine, nurturing, relating—can indicate (reversed keywords are capitalized) NOT acting in a feminine way. If we look deeper this may be because you are BREAKING THROUGH family patterns of nurturing, or RESISTING the influence of your mother who is EMOTIONALLY UNAVAILABLE to you. You might, however, see your actions as EMPOWERING rather than LACKING, especially if you are INWARDLY QUESTIONING society's expectations of women in order to discover how to be feminine WITHOUT having to fulfill everyone else's needs and expectations. So you could be COUNTERING the norm, and exploring the full range of the DIVINE FEMININE.

Sometimes, though, too many possibilities lead only to confusion. If your reading style is primarily predictive, or deals with questions requiring unambiguous answers then you might want to select a system that is similarly precise. If spiritual and psychological insights are your major concern, you will welcome ambiguity, because it allows you to explore the multivalent qualities of the archetypes.

As a beginning Tarot reader, or when you need to simplify, you can limit yourself to just one of the following:

• Memorize meanings for each reversed card. This is my least favorite technique since I find memorization difficult. And, of course, it limits the

spontaneity and breadth of possible meanings. It is necessary, however, if you use the often arbitrary interpretations of the French and Italian traditions, like the *Eight of Cups Rx* representing “grandfather,” while the *Nine of Pentacles* upright is “grandmother.”

- Pick only two to four categories or keywords to use when you get a reversal. You can select them from “The Twelve Ways to Read a Reversal,” above, or from the “Reversed Keywords” in Appendix A. Or, try James Ricklef’s mnemonic known as “The Five D’s”:<sup>12</sup>

1. Delay of the original effect.
2. Diminution of the original effect.
3. Direct opposite of the original meaning.
4. Dark side of the original meaning.
5. Direction change.

- Look to other cards in the spread for repetitions of a theme, symbol, color, or action that support a particular nuance. For instance, the *Ten of Swords Rx* followed by the *Ace of Wands* could indicate that you have broken through an old cycle (are no longer pinned down), to a new beginning. The *Star Rx* with the *Three of Cups* might signify group libations rather than private ones, while the *Star Rx* accompanying the *Six of Wands Rx* could indicate that your self-esteem falters when your accomplishments go unnoticed by others.

- Use the “Reversed Keywords” list (Appendix A) to choose the most appropriate modifying term for each reversed card using the following divinatory technique. Close your eyes, turn the sheet to a different angle, then point. Use the word closest to your finger to modify the upright meaning.

- Examine the reversed card image to see if a new picture strikes you. For instance, one person saw the parallel swords in the *Nine of Swords Rx* as a ladder into the cellar. The window in the *Five of Pentacles Rx* becomes a door. The swords in the *Three* and *Ten of Swords Rx* seem to fall out of the heart and the person’s back.

- When considering the suggested meanings in this or other books, turn them into open-ended questions (How? When? Where? What? etc.) for the querent to answer.

- My favorite method is to ask the querent to literally describe the upright card (no interpretation allowed at this stage) including the attitudes, feelings, or mood of the figure(s) in it. Using what you know about the upright meaning, listen for anomalies, that is, any deviations or departures from the norm. For instance, if the querent describes the person in the upright *Nine of Cups* as unhappy and dissatisfied, and the cups as being empty, this hardly fits the upright meaning but rather depicts the querent's "dis-ease," plus their expectation that they will not get their wish. Additionally, you might sense that an extreme deviation from the "normal" upright meaning suggests deep pain, denial, or lack of appreciation. To learn more, ask the querent to make up a brief story about the cups being empty, and then ask how they are currently experiencing this.
- Review several possible interpretations with the querent and ask which fits best.
- Use the elimination technique, work with the querent to determine which interpretations do *not* apply and see what's left.
- Let all the stops out and use a different method with each reversal in a spread.<sup>12</sup> Remember that multiple meanings increase the depth of your reading.

## Ways to "Rectify" a Reversal

If you or your client receive a reversed Tarot card but desire its upright associations, is there a remedy? Of course. A Tarot reading is about becoming aware of what you are creating with your current attitudes and choices. It can help you make new, conscious decisions based on what you have clarified and affirmed in the reading. While some situations are more difficult to change than others, every decision made and every action taken creates a new future. Since both upright and reversed images are part of the card's energy, its full range is there for you to access, but it may feel like jumping a hurdle or walking through molasses. In most cases you are going to have to extend your imagination and exert yourself to achieve a desired change.

## Possibilities for helping you “rectify” a reversal include:

- Gauge it. Imagine that the whole range of a card’s meaning is indicated on a semi-circular meter (like a gas gauge) in which the extremes indicate the most beneficial and most problematic interpretations. Give an example of each. Imagine your forearm is the needle on this meter. Rotate your arm from one extreme to the other, finally stopping at the point where you think you are right now. Describe this point in relation to the overall meaning. Then, move your arm until it rests at the point you would *like* to be. In terms of the card’s meaning, state aloud what this preferred point in the range indicates.
- Activate it. Within two days of the reading, act out or symbolically express the energy you desire. For example, if you want to feel more playful, then go to a playground. This is known as imitative magic, in which you mimic what you want to create.
- Fix it. Look at the numerically preceding upright card in that suit and consider if there is some incomplete understanding of it that is retarding your progress. Tie up loose ends or review the lessons of that previous card.
- Speak it. Look at the upside-down figures of the reversal and ask them where the problem lies, what they want of you, and how you should proceed. Speak or write the first thing that comes to mind. If you have difficulty with this, then make up the silliest response you can imagine, and continue from there with your dialogue. Do at least one of the suggested actions, no matter how small.
- Act it. As best you can, act out the image on the reversed card, then turn it upright and act out the image again. What does it take to move from one to the other version?
- Visualize it. Go deeply into the reversal by pushing the implications as far as they will go—in your imagination—or through a safe playing-out of the extremes. By the principle of *enantiodromia*, as discussed in chapter 1, when you have gone far enough the energy will transform into its opposite. This often manifests as an insight or “aha!” experience about the source of an issue, or simply as a sensation of relief. For instance, if you are resisting a “call” as depicted in *Judgement Rx*, then cover your ears with your hands,

and repeatedly say or shout something like, “I won’t listen; I refuse; you can’t make me listen.” At some point you will realize what you are *really* refusing to hear. This can free the energy from this particular situation that may, in fact, only bear a minor resemblance to your true concern.

- Follow it. Describe the card both upright and reversed. When you find the “hot spot” by touching on a disturbing emotion, follow it like a cord or a lifeline into your past. Try to keep the emotion alive as you revisit episodes where you felt it before. Keep moving along the cord of the emotion until you get to the earliest image possible. Notice how you are actually reacting emotionally in the present to this earlier scene. Can you be compassionate and forgive your younger self? Often, simply reliving the earlier situation will relieve the stress and tension in the current situation.

NOTE: Turning the reversal upright is not your only option. You may be entirely satisfied with its portent or willing to observe how its energy plays out naturally. Learn to appreciate its mysteries and you will welcome it as part of the full experience of what life has to offer.

## Reversed Meanings Applied to Upright Cards

Reversed meanings can also apply to an upright card. For instance, the *Seven of Wands Rx* can be about a paranoid sense that “everyone’s out to get me,” but such a meaning could also apply when the upright card is afflicted, challenged, or represents a problem. The reversed meaning could apply when:

- The position meaning in the spread includes any of the reversed keywords (see Appendix A), or includes concepts like “the problem,” “the challenge,” “what works against you,” etc.;
- Other cards weaken, inflict, or debilitate the card in question, for example, with “contrary elements” (see “Elemental Dignities” in Appendix C) or with a “crossing card”;
- Repeating themes in other cards support an extreme expression of the card (whether excess or dearth);
- The reading is about one’s inner work and motivations, life purpose, spiritual journey, or psychological dimensions, because a reversal automatically tends to emphasize cause, motivation, and the inner life;

- The reading is about one's problems, discomforts, "dis-eases," blocks, worries, or mistakes;
- The reading is on a shamanic or magical level.

Remember that reversed cards often express the extremes that exist naturally in a card's entire range of meaning.

## Further Work

- Consider what the words REVERSAL, UPSIDE-DOWN, TOPSY-TURVY, TURNED AROUND, INVERTED mean to you.
- Note your own reaction the moment you see reversed cards in a reading. Do you have expectations concerning bad news, failure, difficulties, or, perhaps, beliefs that someone must be at fault? For instance, some people believe reversed court cards are people who mean you ill or whose unpleasant personality traits create difficulties in your life. Are these expectations borne out by your experience?
- Turn to the list of "Reversed Keywords" (Appendix A) and pick out your twelve most significant words for reversals. Narrow the list to three or four main ones. Draw several cards at random from the deck and see how well your chosen keywords work.
- Using the "Reversed Keywords" list, cross off all keywords that do not work for you.
- Create your own compendium of reversed categories, trying them out with a variety of cards. Notice which categories make sense to you in practice, and which work best in your own readings.

The following sections offer example card interpretations demonstrating how both modern and traditional meanings have been modified by the principles presented here. These interpretations should simply be a starting point or inspiration to your own intuitive perceptions.



## ENDNOTES

1. See the “Specialized Terms” in the Introduction for an interesting history of the symbol *Rx*, used here to mean “reversed” and by the medical profession to indicate a remedy.
2. See “Projection” in the section on “Specialized Terms.”
3. Round decks of this type include: *Motherpeace*; *Daughters of the Moon*; *Tarot of the Cloisters*; and the New Zealand deck, *Songs for the Journey Home*.
4. Nina Lee Braden shared this with me at my Tarot workshop at the Omega Institute many years ago. She discusses her ideas about reversals at her excellent website (see Bibliography).
5. Both Rita Moore and Sherryl Smith, from TarotL, independently noted this effect.
6. This comes from Tom Tadfor Little who shared it with TarotL (see his website in the Bibliography).
7. Eva Yaa Asantewaa of the Comparative Tarot discussion group sees reversals in much the same way as Little.
8. John Ballantree, publisher of Ballantree Reprints, gives this meaning for reversals in his book *Tarot for the Millennium*.
9. Thanks to Patty Keaney of TarotL.
10. John Gilbert, of the American Tarot Association, advocates that you have “a well-defined system and not leave these things to our intuition, imagination, or reasoning mind.” He published his recommendations for reading reversed Major Arcana cards in the July and August 2000 issues of the *ATA News*.
11. *Ibid.*
12. James Ricklef’s Tarot columns, including the outstanding “Ask Nighthawk,” appear in many Tarot newsletters, and now appear in a book. See Bibliography.
13. Wald Amberstone and Ruth Ann Brauser of The Tarot School in New York City advocate this as their most playful and evocative method.

Major Arcana  
Interpretations

## The Fool

This card represents Spirit just prior to manifestation, when all possibilities exist. You may be at a jumping-off point in your life, and traveling light. Perhaps, you are starting something new, but without much knowledge or forethought. The *Fool* is about being in the present, and looking at things with fresh, unjaded eyes. This card empowers flights of fancy and imagination, and opens you to intriguing possibilities, but, on its own, lacks assertiveness or follow-through. Hounded by your instincts (usually symbolized by a dog or lynx), you may pursue an eccentric whim. For instance, you may feel there is something “dogging” you, urging you to greater heights of silliness, impelling you toward the new and adventurous.

You could lay aside responsibilities, and yearn for something you cannot name or describe. You, or someone you know, might be behaving like a child, displaying enthusiasm, freedom, and delight. You can appear foolish or act with divine nonchalance, and take risks that are either stupid or brilliant. Irrationality and gullibility characterize your actions, or even empty-headedness. You can wreak havoc through confusion and irresponsibility, or be a breath of fresh air. The *Fool* can indicate absolute trust in Spirit, or the ravings of a madman or idiot. It speaks of the consciousness that knows little but dares to learn.

The *Fool* is sometimes seen as a vagabond, hobo, or one of the homeless, and is apt to suffer harassment. You may lack “normal” perspectives and goals, have no objective, and be clueless. You may have the ability to appear anywhere, yet be powerless. You could feel pushed around or at the mercy of others. Your spontaneity of action might be coupled with deficiency in judgment, so that you inadvertently reveal what should be concealed. However, by not having a goal or destination, you cannot lose your way, nor can you fail.

**TRADITIONAL:** Madness, folly, dementia, foolery, extravagance. Straying, mistake, disorder. Disreputable. Intoxication, frenzy, rapture. Blindness, infatuation, delusion. Betrayal. Senseless, irrational. Innocent. Unchecked sensuality, amoral. Nonsense. To appease or atone.

## The Fool Reversed

*The Fool Rx* is about not taking risks or, at the other extreme, about taking them extravagantly and recklessly. Sometimes it suggests being careful, or that it is time to grow up and take on adult responsibilities. It tends to restrict or deny free-spirit-ness. You may lack adventure in your life, or resist opportunities to travel. Modern interpretations give the upright *Fool* a kind of divine protection in his innocence, while the reversal depicts him as taking a nasty fall. You may not want to be seen as a fool, leading to excessive concern about doing something stupid. You could distrust a situation—

correctly or not. Sticking to conventional and safe approaches, you might accept limits as absolutes, or be unable to trust what the future will bring. Alternatively, you may be lazy and apathetic. With no idea where to begin you can find yourself restless, adrift, and ostracized by others. You might feel abandoned by Spirit, or filled with regrets. Your remorse and attempts to atone may not be taken seriously by others.

You may want to reconsider possible decisions, and look at other options. Perhaps you are failing to notice a warning, not following your own instincts, or being careless or indiscreet. In older decks, a dog or cat tears open the *Fool's* pants, so you might be trying to “cover your ass” to avoid getting caught in a misdeed or cover up a mistake. You could be pursuing a “fool’s errand,” wasting your time with nothing to show for it. You might do anything to avoid the possibility of embarrassment.

If you are projecting this reversal on to others you could see them as innocent but irresponsible, trusting but heedless, and unable to grow up. They may get on your nerves with their senseless antics, and you probably would not trust them. Psychologically this indicates your “inner child,”



which, when not acknowledged, erupts inappropriately, but, when recognized, allows you to play with situations and remain open to possibility. At the literal level, a child you know may have problems. The reversal can also represent a sudden change of mind either about people or ideas you formerly thought stupid.

From the shamanic or magical perspective, the *Fool Rx* means giving yourself to God or Spirit in the manner of a wandering sadhu with begging bowl, the guileless simpleton, or the trickster saint who achieves through innocence. It means finding the magic in everyday things. It begins a journey of initiation with no end in sight.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Negligence, bad decision, ineptitude, carelessness, distraction, stupidity. Imbecility. Imprudence. Absence. Apathy, exhaustion. Nullity, void, a trifle. Mistakes. Hesitation. Lack of material assets. Abandonment. Vain remorse.

## The Magician

This is the card of “me, myself, and I,” old “numero uno,” the self or ego—and so it can simply mean doing something on your own. It is about focused consciousness, concentrating your will on a task, backed up by tools, skills, and abilities. You are self-consciously aware of yourself as a unique, creative individual. You could be using your mind, skills, and dexterity to organize and manipulate ideas and materials. You might initiate action, create new ideas, or communicate with others. You could be promoting yourself, or pitching a project, or otherwise using persuasive tactics. You might be working alone, or be solely responsible for an outcome. If working with others, you need autonomy. As a facilitator, you catalyze change, and as a networker you connect and make links. This card suggests the use of language and communication skills. You might be writing, speaking, or using some new technology. This card also suggests being witty, cunning, and clever. Its mercurial nature indicates adaptability and protean skills. You might be networking or facilitating some interaction. At worst, you use guile and trickery to foster an illusion, manipulating the truth to serve private ends. It can represent a young person or anyone characterized by youthful wit, charisma, and the ability to fascinate, like those Carl Jung called the eternal youth, or *puer* and *puella*. Based on

traditional meanings, however, you, or someone you know, could be acting as a mountebank, juggler, or charlatan, or, in light of more modern images, as a gardener, poet, or entertainer. The *Magician* tends to make things happen. The flowers on the RWS card suggest that you might be cultivating, preparing, or refining materials as the first stage in a larger project. You may be transforming a situation to be more favorable to your needs.

**TRADITIONAL:** Skill, dexterity, craft, sleight-of-hand. Diplomacy, eloquence. Adaptability. Will, will power, intention. Self-confidence. Originality. Beginning. Trickery, deception. Infirmary, sickness, pain. Trouble, loss, disaster.

## The Magician Reversed

The *Magician Rx* reminds me of a young person saying, “Not me; I didn’t do it. I wasn’t anywhere around.” Things may not be going as planned. Perhaps there is an intractable situation. You may have to give up your responsibility and to let a situation go. Possibly you don’t have the necessary skills (ineptitude), or you can’t do it by yourself (inadequacy). Consider whether you are focusing in the wrong place. Your intentions may not be well formed and need to be rethought. With reversal comes the danger of being over- or underconfident, possibly taking on too much, or getting out of your depth. Like the sorcerer’s apprentice you may have started something you cannot finish.

Perhaps you are not what you seem. The *Magician’s* shape-shifting ability can easily become a tool of deception, of self as well as others. You may have lowered yourself to self-serving manipulation and confidence tricks to get you what you want. Add weakness of will or subterfuge and the energy is ripe for personal disaster. As a card of Hermes, its reversal emphasizes aspects of the thief, liar, and con artist, even in minor ways. Alternatively, you could be peevish and petulant. There is a danger of misusing a still fledgling state of individual power, or you could be pulling strings behind the scenes.

Maybe you feel lonely or tired of doing things by yourself. Perhaps you lack the confidence to initiate friendships. There could be difficulties getting something started. Communications can be blocked or misdirected. You might feel pessimistic or cynical.

If projected on to others, you could be intrigued by their flash, show, and cunning, yet wonder if they will try to “pull a fast one,” or you see



them as brash, young professionals who think they know everything, and are trying to get ahead at any expense. Inwardly, you could be working on self-development, cultivating your inner garden—working magic on yourself.

Healthwise, there can be some kind of mental, psychological, or nervous illness, or it may refer to a therapist who works with this sort of distress.

On the shamanic or magical level, this is the cunningman, the witch doctor, medicine man, alchemist, or herbalist, who might in today's world be a doctor, chiropractor, psychotherapist, or energy healer. Magic, as defined by Dion Fortune, is the “art

of changing consciousness at will,” and thus the *Magician* possesses the ability to alter consciousness and see through illusions.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Weakness of will. Mental or nervous illness. Head injury, affliction. Disgrace, discontent. Indecision. A physician, magus. Boaster. Charlatan, imposter, liar, crook, exploiter. Concealment, illusionist. Agitator.

## The High Priestess/Papess

As the *Magician* is ego-self, so the *Priestess* is knowledge; together they initiate self-knowledge. The *High Priestess's* knowledge is seen only through the veil of symbol, and expressed as moods and emotions.

This card suggests spending time alone, withdrawing into solitude, and heeding the natural rhythms and cycles of your body and of nature. It signifies that you, or someone you know, may be acting mysteriously, cool, and aloof, yet compassionately offering guidance and understanding. It implies that you are keeping a secret or maintaining privacy. The act of looking for deeper significance, spiritual purpose, or value affords greater

meaning to your life and work. You may be getting advice or assistance from a wise woman, counselor, or mediator, or you could be a sympathetic listener for someone else. Hidden motivations or unseen factors could influence a decision or negotiation. You may experience a psychic bond or intuitive link with someone, or perhaps serve as a *femme inspiratrice*. Perhaps you have a transformative, healing encounter through a sexual experience. Hormonal cycles could affect your perceptions. This card can indicate a time for withdrawal into dreams, meditation, or moods. You may look for inner guidance or seek counsel to determine your path—a middle way—not caught up in extremes. Occasionally it can indicate that past life influences are present. In aspiring to hidden things, the *High Priestess* suggests you must unite opposites.

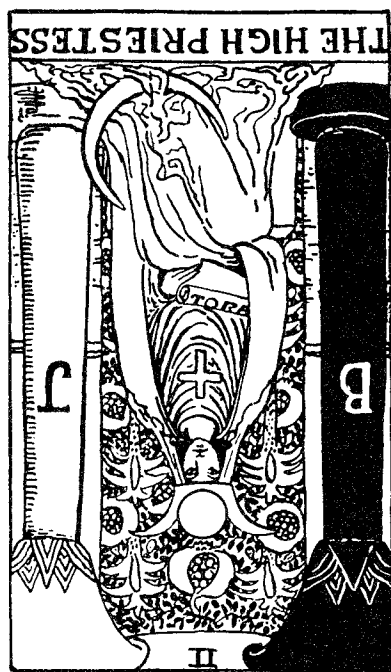
This is a realm of mystery and inner-feminine wisdom. You may act as an oracular vessel, a virgin afloat on lunar tides and cycles of knowing. In the *temenos*, church, or sanctuary of self-knowledge you find revelation into the hidden, esoteric, secret, inner self. Intuition is your psychic teacher and dream-keeper. It may also suggest there is something you need to remember. As Socrates said, “What we call learning is only a process of recollection.”

**TRADITIONAL:** Mystery, secrets, wisdom, knowledge. The unrevealed future. Intuition. Retreat, retirement, sanctuary, withdrawal, meditation. Silence, discretion, modesty, prudence, peace. Learning, education. Memory. The female querent or one who interests the querent.

## The High Priestess/Papess Reversed

The *High Priestess Rx* can signify difficulties with accessing your intuition, remembering your dreams, or knowing your own feelings. You may be out of touch with or deny your inner feminine wisdom. Some people are more comfortable with the *High Priestess Rx* than with the deep currents of the upright card. At one extreme you could come out of your shell, hold back nothing, and dally with surface fads and flirtations. At the other, you become even more formal, businesslike, or withdrawn, and may feel trapped. You can be either wallflower or wanton, or you may seethe with turbulence and unrest at a lack of more options. Then, daring to act outside the expectations of others, and refusing to be a doormat, you could be labeled a hag or witch. Alternatively, the reversal can signify lack of female





companionship, or betrayal by a woman. Generally it increases the sense of superficiality and distance in relationships, unless it signifies a returning to the world after a period of isolation.

While feelings of loneliness and a lack of self-confidence usually increase, you could, on the other hand, be resolutely “on your own.” Sometimes this suggests sexual passion, seduction and licentiousness, or an unwanted sexual encounter. Perhaps your purity is assailed, literally or symbolically. If you act as inspirer, mirror, or mediatrix to another you may feel a loss of self, and doubt your own identity. Secrets are revealed or denied, confidences

break; intrigue can disrupt personal interactions. Your placid, receptive surface could become ruffled and agitated.

Through projection you may see others as either sacrosanct or untouchable, or as irrational, promiscuous, and undependable. You may suspect them of coldness, superficiality, and insincerity, or hold to their delicacy and fragility. The *High Priestess* mirrors your *anima*, so what you see reflected in the reversal may be disturbing.

Healthwise, women can experience menstrual problems or other women’s health issues. Cycles of any kinds could be disrupted. Because this card is associated with the moon, hormonal mood swings or “lunatic” behavior is possible. Medications could need adjustment.

From the shamanic or magical perspective, this is a time for invocations to the dark and underworld manifestations of goddesses. It suggests moon rituals, women’s ceremonies, secret societies, and difficult underworld paths of the heroine’s journey.<sup>1</sup> There may also be trance and dreamwork, divination, mediumship, witchcraft, and spirit possession.

TRADITIONAL RX: Passion, ardor, effervescence, bubbling, gushing. Ferment. Tartness. Superficial knowledge, shallowness, ignorance. Selfishness. Intrigue, hidden intentions, dissimulation. Secrets revealed. Misjudgment. Laziness.

## The Empress

This is traditionally the Mother/Lover card, referring to both femininity and the creative life force. The *Empress* represents the fruitfulness of the earth and of human fertility. She encourages and nurtures the growth and development of all things, integrating disparate elements into a harmonized whole. As Venus-Aphrodite, she embodies love and the forces of attraction, with an emphasis on socializing and relating to others. You may be experiencing sensual pleasure, luxuriating in femininity, or drawing someone to you. The card suggests the influences of your mother, as well as your own issues around mothering and nurturing others. You might produce or birth something—a creative idea, a new product, or a child. Occasionally this signals pregnancy, and in older interpretations also marriage.

The RWS card shows the *Empress* in a garden suggesting natural surroundings, gardening, beautifying your environment, or working with food, plants, and personal enhancements. You may be concerned with your appearance, changing hair or clothing styles, or creating beauty around you. There is an esthetic appreciation and enjoyment of fine things. Perhaps you have concerns for the environment, or with culture in your community. You may employ your social skills by entertaining, facilitating, or hostessing. For a man, this card might represent a woman in your life, but it is just as likely to represent your internalized feminine self (Jung's *anima*), or your ability to embody nurturing and caretaking qualities. You could be carrying a project to term. Sometimes it represents a person or institution you want to honor, love, impress, or protect, or an allegorical principle to uphold, like Mother Nature, home, “mom and apple pie,” or “charity.” As a parent or executive, you might express power and authority by issuing commands promoting harmony, interaction, and physical well-being, and expect due respect for your position.

**TRADITIONAL:** Fertility, fruitfulness, wealth. Mother, sister, wife. Marriage. Loyalty, idealism. Elegance, charm, courtesy. Sociability. Action, plan, undertaking. Action, movement, progress. Obscurity, clandestine, the unknown. Symbol, figure, image, allegory.

## The Empress Reversed

The *Empress Rx* can be the devouring, smothering, demanding mother, or absent mother, or, perhaps, not wanting to be like your mother. Aspects of the negative feminine also include self-indulgence, vanity, and superficiality. On the other hand, you might be constructively denying or rejecting traditional female roles, or deciding not to birth a child. While it can signal abortion, miscarriage, hysterectomy, infertility, frigidity, divorce, or widowhood, other cards should support such interpretations. You might not be taking proper care of yourself or others. Or you may be acting too selflessly or be excessively generous. There may be extravagance and over-indulgence, necessitating budgeting or a diet. Perhaps you do not feel particularly attractive or sensual, or have let your housekeeping go. Vacillation and inaction are possible through laziness or lethargy. You or someone you know might withdraw interest and patronage from a project. You may feel disenfranchised, disempowered, or slighted because of your gender or feminine traits. Occasionally it might refer to the “empty house” syndrome; that is, feeling alone and useless.

The fertility and creativity of the upright card can transform into rampant, unhealthy growth and excess in the reversal. You could lack limits, so that projects spread and then wither from overgrowth. Alternatively, you may experience a lack of creativity, or the frustration of creativity denied. Healthwise, it might indicate nutritional or thyroid disorders, or tumors and cysts, in which the body provides a nurturing environment for abnormalities.

Because the card is associated with community and society, the reversal can suggest condemnation and disapproval of traditionally unacceptable behavior, especially errors in etiquette, hedonism, role reversals, unlicensed unions, extramarital affairs, or illegitimacy. This may be particularly apparent if you are projecting the *Empress* on to someone else. As a manifestation of what Jung called the “bright shadow,” she is the impossibly idealized woman—whether mother image or beauty queen and

model. Otherwise you might see her as overprotective or destructive. On the inner level, you could feel you are not seen for who you really are, or you may hide your true self under the guise of conventional feminine attributes.

From the shamanic and magical perspective she represents creatrix, Earth Mother, and earth magic, including encounters with places and forces of nature as aspects of the divine feminine. This card can also represent encounters with the terrifying, destructive face of the feminine and nature. All forms of love and fertility magic, as well as herbs and tinctures in general are evoked here.



**TRADITIONAL RX:** Affectation, vanity, frivolity. Vacillation, fickleness. Lethargy, paralysis, inaction. Anxiety. Infertility, infidelity, seduction. Unloving. Material loss. Day, clarity, light, truth. Expediency, ease. An opening.

## The Emperor

This card represents fathers, fathering, the inner male, as well as older, masculine, paternal, authoritative, and professional people. Just as the *Empress* rules the heart, so the *Emperor* rules the intellect; he is the head of the organism, using reason and logic to function as a benevolent dictator. This card shows your ability to make laws, set boundaries, name and define things, and analyze your domain. It suggests that you may be pioneering, building, and doing; or administrating, ordering, and establishing. Building upon the feelings and imagination of the *High Priestess* and the *Empress*, you now initiate innovative schemes and structures. As a card designating mastery you have knowledge and expertise. You might be asserting leadership, acquiring power, or assuming responsibility. The

situation presents an opportunity to act forcefully and with conviction. For men, this card may represent what society expects of you, or it suggests male bonding and dominance rituals. For both sexes, it could be the internalized father who approves or disapproves a course of action and defines expectations.

This is about owning your authority, or being aware of where you have given that authority away, and whom you have invested with these qualities. Your reaction to this card indicates your relationship to power, law, and order. On the job you might be making assignments and decisions, initiating projects, allocating resources, or you are taking orders from someone who is doing so. It is the take-charge attitude of an executive, boss, or manager, and may represent government or the military. The *Emperor* encourages you to express your vision within a hierarchical structure, and shape and direct your future by setting goals. You might also be marking boundaries, or strategically armoring yourself to ward off attack, chance, or disturbing emotions. You could be establishing stability and protection for dependents. As a card of virility, this is the energetic inseminator who projects their will outward.

**TRADITIONAL:** Will, power, authority, law. Protection, stability, assurance, confidence, conviction. Realization, accomplishment, attainment. Reason, logic, intellect, principle. Paternity, masculinity, virility. Leadership, domination. Contracts. Corporations.

## The Emperor Reversed

The *Emperor Rx* tends to express the autocratic, self-righteous tyranny of a not-so-benevolent dictator. Or it can express its opposite—a weak-willed, lily-livered, unmanly coward. Usually it is somewhere in between, such as the father, boss, or leader who betrays your trust, abdicates their support, fails to protect you, or does not stand up for principles. Here we have the absent or ineffectual father, the failed leader. It can indicate false pride—the *Emperor* wears no clothes, and becomes a buffoon. With its reversal you could be abruptly humbled, your kingdom overthrown.

You could vacillate, back away from a challenge, lose control, or use excessive force. Rather than establishing boundaries you may build walls and roadblocks. Rather than stiffening your resolve you may freeze into rigidity. Perhaps you have been relying too heavily on what you call reason

and “facts,” leaving no room for alternate opinions. You could be overly critical and judgmental; or, self-righteous, competitive, paternalistic, or chauvinistic. The reversal represents the person who uses power or superior physical or intellectual strength to dominate others. If you have given your authority away to another it may result in undermined confidence and lack of self-worth.

On the other hand, you may have rejected certain masculine characteristics, or are breaking through traditional male stereotypes to define new possibilities of expression. If indicated elsewhere, this card can indicate either immaturity or senility, or unconventional sexual interests and orientations. Perhaps you lack a current male relationship. The reversal also indicates the inner male (Jung’s *animus*), the internalized father and authority, who may be disapproving and censorious, or who provides wise guidance in the ways of the world.

Projections on to another can span a wide gamut, although at some point you may have invested this person with the ideals of mastery. You may see them as tyrant or fool, abuser or abused. This can also be an opponent. A former hero may have toppled from their throne. Health aspects include such things as gout, headaches, loss of virility and vitality, prostate problems, accidents, wounds, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

At the shamanic and magical level, this reversal suggests the wounded Fisher King whose injury makes the land barren, and which can only be cured when the Holy Grail (sacredness) is reintegrated into society. It marks male initiation ceremonies and symbolizes the civic leaders or horned gods who act as initiators and role models to youth.



TRADITIONAL RX: Protection, benevolence, compassion, goodwill. Opposition, obstruction, stoppage, stubbornness. Immaturity, ineffectiveness, indecision. Prejudice. Tyranny. Weak character. Misuse of power. Failure. Abduction.

## The Hierophant/Pope

This card is about teaching, counseling, and learning. The *Hierophant* represents the “shoulds” and “oughts” in your life that link you to traditional values and established knowledge. The *Hierophant*, by educating you in laws created by deity, society, and government, trains your conscience. This ensures, at least in theory, that you will respect taboos and obey commandments. In the situation at hand, you might be taking or teaching a class, learning what works and has proved effective and meaningful over time. You may focus on problem solving, emphasizing practical applications of spiritual truths. You could be looking for keys to enter a club, way of life, or the next level of growth and change. Perhaps you hope to find this through a guru, religion, or the latest hot lecturer on the personal growth circuit, or you take on this role yourself.

As with the *High Priestess*, you might ask for or give advice but here it is based on established sources. You could be dealing with large organizations or institutions, “the system,” or “city hall.” For several querents, this card represented a building inspector, with their book of codes and mandate to maintain standards. Arcane processes become accessible when expertise is shared at a level you can understand. While some see the figure on this card as a kindly and helpful mentor or counselor, others like those who read Tarot in the early 1970s, experience him as dogmatic, rigid, and closed to questioning attitudes.

The word “hierophant” means one who reveals the sacred by bringing it to intelligible light, thus, in yourself this can mean bringing forth one’s genius, or inborn quality and spirit. You might turn to church or temple to show the way, or employ meditation and spiritual practices. Blessings, benediction, and forgiveness of sins can be healing. You may have simple faith in higher powers, or are taking vows that commit you to a certain path.

TRADITIONAL: Inspiration. Union, joining, alliance, marriage. Captivity, servitude, constraint. Mercy, goodness, kindness, clemency. Duty, morality, conscience, conformity. Respectability, reserve. Forgiveness. Teaching. Good advice.

## The Hierophant/Pope Reversed

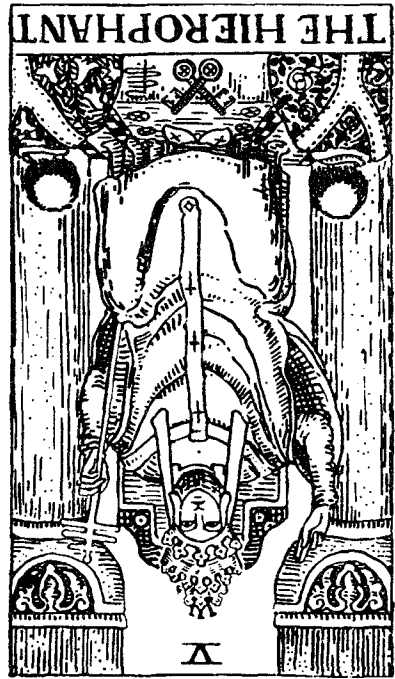
The *Hierophant Rx* can refer to questioning conventional mores, disobeying rules, doubting or flaunting moral principles, or rejecting your religious training. It indicates the “outsider” or iconoclastic consciousness. Perhaps this is a time to “question authority.” You may wish to choose your own standards rather than accepting those of the “powers that be.” There could be a confrontation with the “establishment”: religious, corporate, governmental, or educational. You might feel an urge to take part in civil disobedience or outright rebellion. Perhaps your conscience is bothering you.

The “shoulds” and “oughts” could be wearing you down. Or you may be contemplating something immoral, unethical, or unprincipled. In a daily reading it might simply indicate inappropriate behavior, a venial “sin,” or something for which you feel ashamed.

On the other hand, it could suggest being too rigid or dogmatic. You may cling to outdated ideas or inappropriate principles. You could judge yourself harshly, or allow someone else to play grand inquisitor, accepting their censure, or negative viewpoint. Perhaps you fear excommunication or being expelled. A path to which you have committed might prove limited and restrictive.

You or someone else may be acting pompous, righteous, or arrogant. Perhaps you are clinging to unproved or unprovable principles, with sheer blind faith. This reversal shows ruts in your thinking, or rusty habits. At the other extreme is a lack of conviction or timidity in upholding your beliefs.

You may be confused, unsure about the difference between right and wrong, or caught in a dilemma between two rights or wrongs. There could





be divorce, if otherwise indicated, or a break with tradition, or leaving school.

If projected on to another you may see them as your access to spiritual truth, and a being that is higher or more pure than other mortals. Alternatively, you may see them as setting impossible standards, sanctimoniously adhering to the letter and not the spirit of the law, or being hypocritical. The reversal could indicate a teacher or guru caught in a compromising situation, and thus you might feel betrayed by those you admire or by the system.

Healthwise, this can indicate ear, nose, and throat conditions, infections, muscle tension and aches, and rigidity of the joints.

In the shamanic and magical realm, this is one of the cards representing the shaman as mediator or bridge-maker between worlds. This is about rituals, and the high priest officiating in formal ceremony and explicating the sacred meaning of the holy mysteries.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Society, institution. Overkindness, foolish generosity, weakness. Inappropriate intimacy, familiarity. Susceptibility. Impure mixture, combination, blending. Unorthodoxy. Sententiousness, rigid morality, inflexibility. Renunciation.

## The Lovers

With this card you learn how the moral responsibilities taught by the *Hierophant* apply to human interactions. You may be working on a relationship of any kind: with family, friends, coworkers, lovers, Spirit, as well as different aspects of yourself. The *Lovers* often links or shows an association between cards on either side of it, which will be attracted to or balance each other. You could be involved in a merger, or a situation requiring cooperation. There is a possibility of romance or sexual consummation. Perhaps someone near you is influencing your thinking or a decision.

In the Golden Dawn tradition the *Lovers* corresponds astrologically to Gemini, and hence to communications. Since marriage counselors usually begin with communication skills, this could be central to your concern. You might want to relate to others, to exchange thoughts and opinions through shared symbols and experience. The nudity of the two figures in

the RWS picture suggests you want to reveal yourself and be accepted for who you truly are, without hiding anything. Love could be freeing you from inhibitions or guilt. Perhaps you need to reconcile and balance some duality within yourself. You may be looking for a higher perspective that can encompass or synthesize your options. Or perhaps you desire a spiritual, rather than physical, union. Your own sense of self-worth may be mirrored by the way a partner treats you. Consider what you most love and who or what you are choosing as a companion.

The RWS depiction of the Garden of Eden refers to Eve's choice to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, so also do your choices bring you knowledge and experience. Older decks show two paths and a decision between vice and virtue. You may face a test of maturity in which you need discrimination. They also show Cupid shooting his arrow, just as infatuation could put you under the spell of an unconscious compulsion.

**TRADITIONAL:** Desires, feelings, aspirations. Affection, attraction, love. Youth, innocence, beauty, perfection. Tests, temptation, trials surmounted. Balance between forces. Harmony. Unanimity. Trust. Wise choices. Self-determination. Responsibility.

## The Lovers Reversed

The *Lovers Rx* may show an intangible union, a blending of spirits rather than bodies. Sometimes this is a marriage made in heaven between pure soul mates, yet material circumstances keep you apart. You may idealize someone (especially if they are absent), or simply the idea of a relationship.

You could be in a relationship that is challenging, inharmonious, immature, or unhealthy, especially involving matters shown by the flanking cards. Perhaps you are having communication problems, or do not know how to approach someone. Confusion can arise and conflicts surface due to disagreements or misunderstandings. Alternatively, there may be no relationship in the offing, or, perhaps, you are disappointed because a potential interaction fizzled.

In the area of romance, you might be seduced or seducing without love, or your love is unrequited. There can be sexual frustration or incompatibility. You could feel pained by jealousy, envy, or possessiveness. In rare cases, there can be a "fatal attraction" and stalking. On the other hand,



maybe you have given yourself over to self-indulgent pleasure, lust, and hedonism. Someone may be too controlling or you are both in a struggle for dominance. A union or merger could be suppressing your individuality. Perhaps you simply need space right now.

You might lack discrimination and make bad choices leading to regrets and guilt, especially if someone else is involved. Sometimes it is about having trouble making a decision or delaying the next move, which could lead to an ultimatum. A conflict between devotion to another person or to your higher self could have you stymied. You might fear a separation, even if it is

temporary. If other cards concur there could be mistrust or deception, quarrels or infidelity. Occasionally this card can indicate splitting up, separation, or divorce. If you are drifting apart you may not know how to reconnect in a meaningful way.

Psychological projection is a major issue with this reversal, along with the need to see yourself through another's eyes. However, if you are consciously integrating your own psyche, it can indicate balance between your inner masculine and feminine selves, or active work going on between them in the dream world.

In the shamanic and magical realm this can indicate the "Great Rite" or "Sacred Marriage" in which the male and female forces are ritually united. It may also reflect a relationship with a daemon or dream lover, or any deep soul communication on the inner planes.

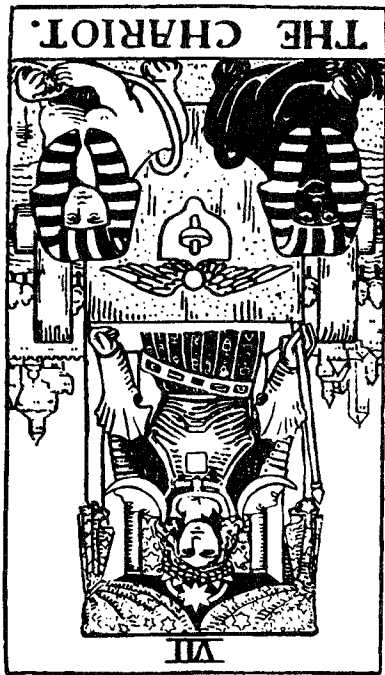
**TRADITIONAL RX:** Failure. Unwise plans. Not meeting the test. Contraries. Doubts, indecision, disorder. Disobedience. Interference. Seduction. Sexual misconduct. Temptation, weakness. Lack of trust, disillusionment. Immaturity. Separation.

## The Chariot

The original card game of trumps or *tarocchi* was probably based on triumphal marches featuring carts like this one. You may be triumphing; that is, winning a victory, or proving your mastery. You might be seeking power over the conditions of your life. While the previous card was love, this is war, or at least aggressive self-interest. You are asked to develop an ego that will move you toward your destination, while keeping instincts (sphinxes or horses) and emotions (moons on shoulders) firmly under control. For instance, you may be a go-getter, climbing the corporate ladder. The reins are in your hands—at least metaphorically speaking. Something could be driving you toward attainment and the development of mastery. In essence, you are striving to control your vehicle, hone your abilities, and focus on achieving your goal. You could be building your career, fame, and influence. You might take an aggressive stance on some issue, yet, at the same time, you feel pulled in two or more directions by conflicting needs and desires. You may step forth as a warrior for a cause, a champion of the home front. Dressing for success provides an “armor” and also makes a clear statement of your professionalism; it is also a mask, role, or subpersonality that disguises your vulnerability. Victory is possible when masculine and feminine, conscious and subconscious are harnessed and work in tandem. Occasionally this card may refer to military service or competitive sports, where your task is to overpower adversaries, and prevail over obstacles.

More frequently it indicates travel and transportation. You could be moving forward in your career or personal life, moving to a new location, or taking a trip. You may need to learn about machinery, or maneuver through complex business and financial transactions. Ultimately, this is a test of maturity in your quest for individuation.

**TRADITIONAL:** Triumph, victory, mastery, conquest, control. Overcoming obstacles and adversity, progress. Journeys, exploration. Succor, providence. War, disputes, turmoil, vengeance, battles, trouble. Anger, wrath. Injury. Fame, pride, arrogance, pomp.



## The Chariot Reversed

The *Chariot Rx* illustrates the story of Oedipus who, stopped at a cross-road in his chariot, kills an old man. A sphinx asks him a riddle, which he correctly answers, as “man,” and, by saving the country, he marries the queen. Oedipus later discovers that the old man was his father, and the queen his mother, the origin of Freud’s “Oedipus complex” theory. You too may be on a journey of self-discovery, overcoming obstacles to achieve victory, but the reversal asks, at what cost? Some contend that this champion is essentially adolescent, just beginning the road to mastery, and thus the reversal shows him riding for a fall. You may

be overconfident in attitude and rash in your actions. You could have car trouble, problems on the road, or with travel arrangements. A trip might be delayed or cancelled. It is easy to get deflected from your course.

You could experience conflicts and problems due to opposing ideas and aims. Daunted by opposition or lack of experience, you may feel indecisive or reckless, caught up by a runaway idea, or spinning your wheels, rather than moving toward your goal. Your energies may be scattered, or surge out of control. Perhaps you are being inconsiderate and disregarding the rights of others. There can be anger, agitation, and occasionally violence. In contests and competitions you might be defeated through lack of energy, stamina, or expertise. On the other hand, you could be overly aggressive, or not play fairly. There is danger of ego inflation, and the belief that any means justifies your ends.

Projected on to someone else, you may perceive them as a bully, outlaw, delinquent, road warrior, or revolutionary. As “bright shadow,” you could idealize this person as the conquering hero or rescuer, someone who can fix anything. On the other hand, you may consciously choose to not work

in the forefront, but behind the scenes. You may not want to leave home, preferring to focus your energies locally, or on an inward journey.

In terms of health, look for rashes, ulcers, gastro-intestinal or other stress-related problems, accidents or injuries, and, perhaps, the need for a wheel chair.

In the shamanic and magical realm, this is out-of-body experience—travel in the imaginal or astral body. Internalized, you are on the hero's journey, and, at the highest level, you become a transformed vehicle through which cosmic energy expresses itself, building your nature into, as the Egyptians say, a Horus god, a spiritual warrior.<sup>2</sup>

TRADITIONAL RX: Uproar, noise, din. Quarrel, dispute, litigation. Contest. Overthrown, conquered. Failure, defeat, collapse. Usurped power, plots. Riot, rebellion. Accidents. Bad news, worries, delay. Overweening ambition. Unmerited success. Dangerous opportunism.

## Strength

Fortitude is the virtue that helps us curb our fears and moderate our daring so as to face dangers in a reasonable way. It is the balance between fear and temerity. You could be handling your emotions, befriending your instincts, and facing whatever can devour you. You develop self-confidence by discovering “power within”—rather than exerting the *Chariot's* “power over.”<sup>3</sup> No matter how wild and frightening, you may need to accept and respect the instincts of your own inner nature, which will give you courage, confidence, magnificence, patience, and perseverance. Perhaps you are wrestling with a problem that requires such perseverance. You may need the great-heartedness of the lion. You could be experiencing strong desires or embracing lust. If your basic survival mechanism has been activated, use intellect and will to direct your urges. On the other hand, rage and anger can sometimes give you strength to make healing changes.

This card is also about forging connections and establishing bonds. In the role of “good listener,” you can encourage and sustain others. You might ease pain, or quiet rage using love and gentle understanding. By combining passionate commitment with gentle guidance and loving direction, you can cope with crisis calmly and confidently, and thus soothe

the savage beast. Like an enchantress you can tame raw energy and transform it into what is necessary to succeed. A passion for life, and the courage to engage your heart to its fullest may give you power to express your unique creative and vital abilities.

Sometimes this indicates a love of, or involvement with, animals, especially felines. This could depict an interaction between the cultured and the coarse. You may need firmness of will, strength of character, clarity of mind or purpose. Or, you might simply have to apply physical strength to some task at hand. Sexual energy can be a vehicle for creative transformation.

**TRADITIONAL:** Strength, force, fortitude, courage, power, might, ability. Perseverance, endurance. Authority, command, conviction. Magnanimity, greatness. Patience, calmness. Zeal, fervor. Moral energy. Subjugation of passions. Mind over matter.

## Strength Reversed

With *Strength Rx* you could be fearful of your passions, urges, or instincts, or, on the other hand, could be overly daring and bold. Perhaps you are struggling with a divided self, the inner discord of intellect versus instincts, culture versus crudity. When your heart is not in something you may be unable to endure the struggle. You might feel overwhelmed by forces outside your control.

Alternatively, you could use your personal power to dominate or to subjugate others. Or you might be merely timid or submissive, cringing and fawning like an animal that has been beaten. Thus, *Strength Rx* can indicate that you are in the process of establishing some kind of pecking order. It could be playful—like roughhousing, or, like the cat with the mouse, become vicious. Passions can get out of hand, or they could be suppressed and unreasonably denied. Strangled feelings might then emerge inappropriately. There can be failure, cowardliness, personal weakness, and debility, or rashness, excessive pride, and an overweening will. Someone once defined evil as an instinct that is misused. You might overestimate your abilities, pit yourself against impossible odds, and persist in something when it would be better to stop. Or, perhaps you are caught in inaction because you fear mishandling a situation. You might become inconstant, fickle, and faithless.

On the other hand, this could be letting the cat out of the bag—not just inadvertently revealing secrets, but unleashing a force that should, but could not, be confined.

When projected on to others you may see them as emotional or controlling. Perhaps you feel they are trying to bind you through enchantments. You could either fear or adore this person's power and dominance. Inwardly, it is about balancing mind and body, and finding moral courage by drawing on both freely and equally. You may be listening very closely to what your body is saying.

Healthwise, trying to be strong can result in coronary conditions, high blood pressure, and depression. There can also be hormonal hot flashes or PMS. Anger and rage can take their toll on your body, as can physical abuse.

From the shamanic and magical perspective, this is a very significant card of life force energy. It involves enchantment, witchery, tantric sex, menstrual mysteries, animal shape-shifting, and working with a power animal or ally. It is also the healing power of touch, or vital healing. In occult metaphysics this reversal can signal the awakening of your own magical power, whether for good or ill.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Despotism, tyranny, abuse of power. Sovereignty. Kingdom, state, government, administration. People, nation. Weakness, helplessness, imperfection. Anger, cruelty, discord. Impatience. Succumbing to temptation.





## The Hermit

Like the *Hierophant*, the *Hermit* can be a teacher or guru, but is more like a guide, mentor, or role model—Jung's Wise Old Man, or *senex*. With a focus on solitude and introspection, you may be avoiding groups or organizations, although it can still indicate furthering your education. More likely, you are seeking truth, wisdom, and knowledge outside of traditional venues. As the last integer, nine, the card signifies a level of attainment that carries the responsibility to serve others in a humanitarian way. Someone could be turning to you for guidance.

You may be withdrawing from distracting influences in order to focus or concentrate. Perhaps you are perfecting a technique or completing a project. You may be drawn to such introspective pursuits as meditation, journal writing, or therapy. You might want a reflective overview of some situation, or are looking for the meaning of a life experience. Using knowledge of the past, will help you choose a path where your potential will continue to unfold. For instance, this Tarot card may help you discern how past experience affects future probabilities.

You may be plotting a sensible, prudent course of action that relies on experience, impartiality, or a unique perspective. Older decks show the *Hermit* holding an hourglass, so you could be arranging your schedule and priorities to maximize efficiency. Or, time could be running out on a deadline. While you may do things your own way, you are likely to be quietly unconventional rather than flaunting your idiosyncrasies. In fact, you might need to be discreet and prudent. If in a relationship, you or your partner may require time alone. This can also indicate a period of celibacy or sexual disinterest. Perhaps you are drawn to a much older person, or are working with the elderly. There is a tendency to austerity, perfectionism, and inflexibility.

**TRADITIONAL:** Prudence, caution, deliberation, discretion, circumspection. Wisdom. Vigilance. Reserve, restriction, resignation. Withdrawal, isolation. Meditation. Counsel. Disguise, dissimulation, secrets. Treason, roguery, corruption.

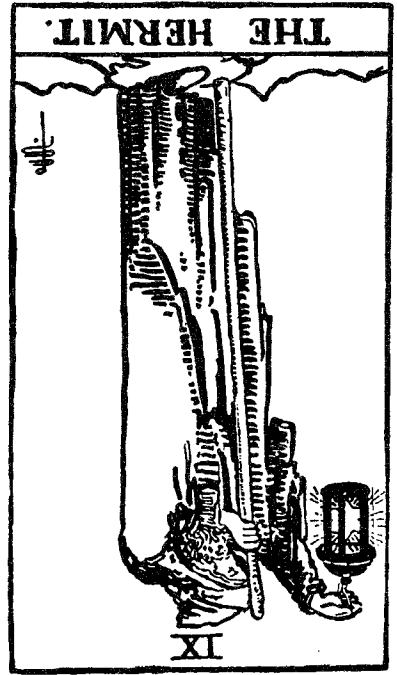
## The Hermit Reversed

You may not want to be by yourself, so the *Hermit Rx* sometimes indicates a search for relationship, for it brings up fears of an old age alone. Or, you can feel unsociable, avoiding close relationships. You could have been deserted or you turn your own back on friends or family. Perhaps a teacher or guru has proved false or betrayed you. This reversal can indicate holding yourself and others to excessive perfectionism and impossible standards. Alternatively, you become incautious, imprudent, and flamboyant, instead of circumspect. You may claim an expertise you don't really possess.

You may fear to examine a situation too closely, or you deny what is right in front of you. Overcaution, if it is excessive, can become paranoia. You could refuse to listen, or give or receive bad advice. Alternatively, you could be secretive about something you want to conceal or disguise. The *Hermit Rx* can show where you have a disapproving attitude. He seems most compassionate when urging you to plunge into an emotional experience in search of its source in your psyche or past. The need for inner journeying and meaningful insights can intensify to the point of compulsion.

This reversal can signal a midlife crisis. No matter your age, you might fear getting older, or becoming infirm. You may escape into immaturity, or enter into a second childhood. At the opposite extreme, you attach yourself to old beliefs, customs, or outworn ideals. Perhaps you get trapped in nostalgia. You may act prudish or become a curmudgeon, embittered and intolerant of youth, especially if you hold regrets. This can also indicate genealogical studies.

When projected on to others you see them as experienced but alone. They can be either stick-in-the-mud fuddy-duddies, or role models of



personal integrity and wisdom. This reversal, as an inner guide, is likely to indicate withdrawing projections from others, taking back your light, in order to see your own flaws and potentials.

Healthwise, there could be issues around digestion. It can point to all the problems of the elderly, from senility to stiffness, to failing eyesight and hearing, and insomnia.

From a shamanic or magical perspective, the *Hermit Rx* is the alchemist, hermeticist, occult scholar, or owner of a metaphysical bookstore. He is the *psychopomps*, or guide of souls. However, both Waite and Crowley acknowledge this figure as the hidden Persephone, queen of Hades, who, in winter, leads souls into the underworld, and, in spring, leads them into rebirth.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Timid, recluse, solitary, hermit, misanthrope. Isolation, loneliness. Unsociability, sullenness. Fear. Over-prudence, imprudence. Inactivity. Immature, premature. Foolish, bad advice. Concealment, disguise. Celibacy, poverty, silence.

## The Wheel of Fortune

The *Wheel of Fortune* symbolizes change, movement, expansion, and opportunity in all areas. Often the change is sudden and tangible, possibly exhilarating, and the final results or outcome difficult to predict. With the goddess Fortuna or Lady Luck involved, however, situations can take a turn for the better. Metaphysically you may feel like it is destiny rather than chance, synchronicity rather than coincidence. As fate is the daughter of necessity, you adapt and change with the requirements of the seasons. Advantageous situations may open, but it is up to you to take a gamble and grab hold, for it is said that, "luck is where preparation and opportunity meet." Resources, people, money, or news may be coming or going. You might work with reoccurring cycles or up-and-down patterns, as found in business, anniversaries, and the repeating solar festivals. You might strive for a centralized view of the whole, seek a higher perspective, or just go along for the ride. You may even get swept up in the easy-come, easy-go attitude of inconstancy.

Perhaps you receive rewards and recognition for things you have completed. You could be in a whirl of social activities, with life speeding up. Horizons expand and possibilities open, involving promotion, travel or

other changes of venue, or a broadening of knowledge. As indicated by the four winged figures with books in the RWS deck, you may be diversifying, promoting, networking, advertising, or spreading information via the media. The tendency is toward broad and encompassing effects.

You may have a chance encounter with someone, or be at the right place at the right time. This card can indicate reincarnational and karmic issues, which tie you to the wheel of rebirth, and the spiraling evolution of consciousness. This card also suggests the importance of recycling and renewable resources.

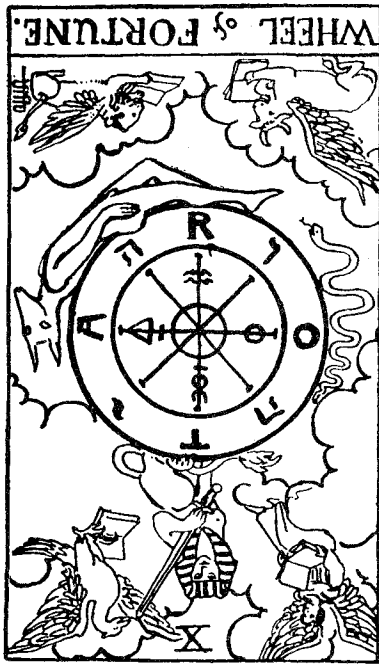
**TRADITIONAL:** Fortune, destiny, fate. Unexpected success, luck, felicity. Inevitability. Providence. Prosperity, improvement, advancement. Ascent, elevation, progress, movement. Change, fluidity. Culmination. Fruitful initiative. Winnings. Good health.

## The Wheel of Fortune Reversed

Traditionally the *Wheel of Fortune Rx* is still beneficial, but it is more unstable—like a psychological yo-yo—with hope and despondency alternating. You may experience delays and petty annoyances with your hoped-for changes, like repeated start-stop maneuvers. You can feel anxious and ready for something new, but blocked and stymied, with the next turn unknown. It could be that a situation is not yet “ripe,” and movement could be premature. You might have to redo or repeat something you did before, going over the same ground.

At the other extreme, the thrill of the social whirl or life’s transitions can start to feel hectic and unrelieved, as if you were on a treadmill and could not stop. Sometimes there is a superabundance of change, with rapid growth and expansion, and broad, scattered effects. It may be too fast for any kind of planning. If you suspect that things are happening too quickly and easily, you might become overly prudent, inflexible, or conservative in an attempt to slow it down.

While some interpretations suggest failure and bad fortune, more likely the problem is with attitude, as negativity starts creeping into the otherwise optimistic view of the upright card. You need courage, stamina, and a belief that the wheel will turn. Your timing could simply be off, like trying to do something out of season. You may fear you missed an opportunity and aren’t sure if another will come up. As with the *Chariot*, there might



be issues involving travel. The instability of the reversal makes it very chancy for gamblers as there could be unexpected wins or loses, or both. Unpredictability increases.

If projected on to another you might see them as having all the luck, on their way to the top, and fortune smiling upon them, but, if you stick around, you'll probably see them fall. On the inner level, there are unseen movements and changes in consciousness that will only emerge later in external events. You may perceive meaning in patterns and cycles you had never seen before. You could also begin to recognize how your actions both affect and reflect the whole.

Healthwise, this can indicate the ups and downs of any condition, like reoccurrences and relapses, fluctuations in weight, water retention, or manic-depressive mood swings. It could also indicate allergies or seasonal affective disorders.

On the shamanic or magic level, there could be past-life work and practices to help you get off the wheel of incarnation. It is all acts of seasonal magic and the quarters and cross-quarters themselves. The RWS deck depicts books of wisdom from the four corners of the world, and alchemical signs of transformation.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Increase, development, expansion, production. Abundance, surplus, excess, superfluity. Carelessness, negligence, insecurity, instability. Inconsistency. Adventures, risks, speculation. The unexpected and impersonal. Ill-fortune, failure, bad fate. Fall from power.

## Justice

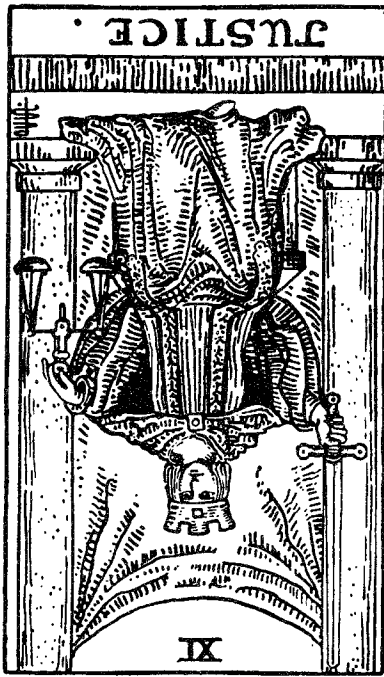
When this card comes up you are called to account for your actions. You may be at a point of decision upon which subsequent accountings or consequences will be based. You could be making agreements with others in which you balance your needs and desires with theirs; this can include contracts, marriages, partnerships, negotiations, exchanges, or settlements. You might be involved in a court case, lawsuit, investigation, or mediation. Of course, you could be the person demanding justice. Perhaps you are the judge, lawyer, mediator, or middleman, facilitating a judgment. For some commentators the upright card indicates that truth and justice will prevail, whether karmic, moral, ethical, or legal, and you will get just what you deserve.

Since the pen is mightier than the sword, this card can refer to writing and writers. Sometimes it is the voice of criticism, which can demand discipline, logic, reasons and justification, and exactitude. The symbols reminded one person of a musical metronome requiring her to keep pace.

At a deeper level, this is about being true to yourself and your own nature; or else none of your agreements with others will be truly fair and just. To make decisions with which you can live, you may have to weigh pros and cons, analyze and evaluate, make lists, and assess values. You can make adjustments based on your underlying feelings, and honor your personal truth, while still being fair and morally upright. The cards on either side of *Justice* often show what you are trying to balance, adjust, or decide between.

The scales also refer to business activities such as balancing your checkbook or accounts; paying bills, loans, and taxes; as well as business deals and partnerships. In relationships you might be asking for a fair and equitable distribution of responsibilities. Perhaps you are concerned with “legalizing” a relationship. The goddess depicted here, Themis, also represents public opinion, just as her name means “convention” or what is fixed in society.

**TRADITIONAL:** Equilibrium, balance, poise, harmony. Rightness, equity, probity, rectitude. Impartiality. Honesty, integrity, virtue. Law/order. Mercy/fairness. Logic/reason. Right/wrong. Good/bad. Administration, execution. Regularity, method. Discipline. Necessity. Winning a lawsuit.



## Justice Reversed

When people see *Justice Rx* they often say that something is “not fair.” The fear is that justice will literally be overturned, that order can be disrupted, or desires will be thwarted. There can be legal complications and losses, or a complete disregard for the law. You may need to adjust imbalances in your life and relationships. Look to the cards on either side for indications of this. Perhaps you fear having to answer for your actions or being called to account for things that might require restitution or amends. You could feel ashamed or humiliated, or have difficulty dealing with consequences.

On the other hand, you could be recognizing and accepting your mistakes with humility. The reversal can indicate poetic justice, whereby someone gets their just desserts through unusual means and in an ironically appropriate manner. Speaking of poetry, it can also indicate writer’s block or getting overwhelmed by paperwork.

Something stable, balanced, or normally unvarying could be disturbed. Prior values, old rules of thumb, and social expectations are not reliable—so you have to dynamically respond in the moment with little or nothing to go on. You may push the boundaries of what society and convention can tolerate. You could react emotionally when cool reason is called for. Perhaps you are trying to justify your actions. Alternatively, you may become mired in indecision and inaction.

Injustice is, of course, at issue with the reversal, along with bigotry, bias, and prejudice. The relationship between *Strength* and *Justice*, wherein both have been numbered eleven, was noted by St. Ambrose who defined injustice as strength without justice: ready to oppress the weaker. Criticism

can be excessively severe and thus destructive, or lacking in understanding. You may over-rely on rationality or facts, or ignore them through a lack of discrimination.

When projected on to others, we either get jokes about lawyers and police, or the idealization found in cop shows and Perry Mason. Looking within, finding inner justice and resolution can be one of the hardest tasks of all.

Healthwise, this can describe any kind of metabolic imbalance or vitamin deficiency, but traditionally it relates to poisoning and, thereby, liver damage. This especially applies to environmentally and chemically caused sensitivities and illness—or any accident or situation that could lead to legal action.

On the shamanic and magical level, it is the heart that is weighed in the balance. This card also relates to the threefold law of return and sacred oaths, along with the consequences for breaking such oaths. It also includes divinatory techniques and ordeals for discovering sources of imbalance, illness, or disaster.

TRADITIONAL RX: Jurist, legal professional. Legislation, law, codes, statutes. Police. Human and natural rights. Bigotry, bias, intolerance. False accusations. Legal complications. Abuse of justice. Overseverity. Inequality. Red tape.

## The Hanged Man

Because this card is itself reversed, characteristics that normally appear in reversals will be found in the upright position, and so are discussed here. The *Hanged Man* is the most complex image in the Tarot, which perhaps explains why it appears in so many movies and in literature. We fear it because we don't understand it. Several interpretations arise from this common unease: feeling victimized, powerless to escape fate, hung up in addiction, or beset by fantasy and astral illusions. You could feel "tied to the rack" or otherwise punished, filled with self-pity, plagued by bafflement and confusion, adrift or stuck and going nowhere, being put-upon, or attacked or scapegoated. You may feel humiliated by any of the above conditions or exposed to ridicule and abuse whether you deserve it or not.

At the time when the Tarot first appeared, traitors were depicted hanging upside-down in shame-paintings drawn on public buildings.



However, this is not the deeper meaning of this card, but only what happens when you remain stuck in materialist concerns and avoid what the next stage of consciousness requires of you. With the real world seemingly on hold, you can pause to reconsider what you really are attached to.

Essentially the *Hanged Man* is about total surrender to an opposing point of view, reversing your consciousness, and imagining differently. Here you put spiritual awareness first, and seek meaning and wisdom rather than earthly goods and data. The card suggests devotion, egolessness, and sacrifice. You may find rapport with the mystic, shaman, healer, artist, poet, or dreamer, and thus with the paradoxes and mysteries of life. You might want to dedicate yourself to some cause or project, or make voluntary expiation for some wrongdoing. You could give up worldly expectations and more fully accept life's trials and conditions, as well as abandoning yourself to service at the altar of Spirit. If so, you may experience an ego release that transports you into an ecstatic state beyond rationality and self-control. Thus you could sacrifice a lesser thing for something greater, though less tangible. Sacrifice means "to make sacred," and as novelist Mary Renault once said, "It is not the blood-letting that calls down power; it is the consenting." It is not the redemption, but the willingness to be redeemed.

From this new perspective you can see beneath surface appearances, which leads to a reversal of consciousness about the meaning of life. Adversity becomes an opportunity for gathering wisdom and understanding, which is exactly what can happen with the problematic aspects of reversed cards. When you resist the inner process of growth you can get involuntarily stuck, and then feel victimized. You can escape the suffering by surrendering the very intellect and self-will that reached their peak of development in *Justice*. This is most effectively done via prayer and meditation, and by giving yourself over to a greater power. When you get the *Hanged Man*, you may receive intimations of this alternate reality, as well as guidance and affirmation, through psychic experiences, divination, dreams, and visions.

When this card is projected on to others, you may see them as unrealistic, hopelessly idealistic, sensitive, imaginative, and maybe even crazy or "hung-up."

Healthwise, any physical, psychical, or spiritual ailment can manifest, for this activates the “Wounded Healer” archetype, whose premise is that we can only heal when we ourselves are wounded. However, addictions and other forms of avoidance or abuse could tend to weaken the call to Spirit.

This is a major card of the shamanic realm, for it represents induction to the otherworld. Anthropologist I. M. Lewis noted: “Those whom the gods call they first humble with affliction and despair,” and “[The] gift of illumination, in return for a surrendering of the self, . . . is part of controlled spirit possession everywhere.”<sup>4</sup> In ceremonial



magic it represents entrance into an inner order that requires a death and resurrection into new life. It also represents the ecstatic state from which much healing work is done and prophecy arises.

**TRADITIONAL:** Sacrifice, self-sacrifice, renunciation, selflessness. Wisdom. Life in suspension, entrancement. Devotion. Submission to duty. Patriotism. Traitor. Trials. Intuition, prophecy, foresight. Idealism. Regeneration. Reversal. Repentance, expiation.

## The Hanged Man Reversed

**NOTE:** Topics normally discussed in the reversed card are found in the description of the upright *Hanged Man*.

The *Hanged Man Rx* looks like he is ready for action but with nothing to do. With his bright halo and saucy stance he seems too good to be true; and he may be. You might want to look good and please the crowd, but there could be ulterior motives hidden behind your back. You may not be as guileless as you appear. Your goals might be selfish ones, or you could be preoccupied with your own agenda and personal perspective. You

could be absorbed in materialism. While you appear willing, you may renege, or break promises entailing a sacrifice. Perhaps you resent the need to make any sacrifices at all. At worst, you could hold an arrogant, “holier than thou” attitude, a false superiority, since you may not be firmly attached to anything. You could also be ungrounded, bored, and apathetic, simply hanging out, with nowhere to go.

On the other hand, you might be more vulnerable than you look, wanting to do things right but unsure where to start, or stuck in procrastination. You could feel trapped, backed into a corner, and at the mercy of others, or just released from some form of detention. You may be impatient to get going but are still tied to minor inconveniences and obligations.

Perhaps you are just waking up to your situation, but not yet aware of your options. You may be at a spiritual turning point, looking for direction, and waiting for a sign or omen. This is like the youthful *chela* or student, hoping for the master’s attention and advice about a particular path or teaching. If you feel very vulnerable, look to other cards in the spread for more guidance.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Selfishness. Partial, useless, or unmade sacrifice. The masses, *hoi polloi*, population, body politic. Unrealized projects or ideas not executed. Promises not kept. Preoccupation with the ego. False prophecy. Unjust accusations or imprisonment. Unbound.

## Death

You may feel a sense of great relief when you get this card, or relief mixed with grief. Wondering and apprehension are at an end; change and transformation are inevitable. Whatever you have been struggling with is, or soon will be, over and done, enabling you to finally move on. The process is like pruning and composting to clear the way for new growth, while decomposition and decay transform the debris into rich, nourishing soil. Seth, as channeled by Jane Roberts, says that what we call death is really an “aggressive surge of creative life energy,” since it removes what is lacking vitality.<sup>5</sup> Destruction in preparation for renewal, and dismemberment that clears the way for regeneration can result in your releasing restricting habits and obsolete ways. You may be uprooting yourself from a stagnant environment, or leaving friendships you have outgrown. It could be the ending of a project or job, or represent cutbacks and liquidations.

By eliminating everything inessential you can get down to the bare bones of a situation and find what really supports you. *Death* represents letting go of your personal will, and releasing unnecessary forms. It may require a period of grief and mourning.

On the other hand, you could be experiencing an intense passion, eroticism, or release. In Shakespeare's day orgasm was called the "little death," from the idea that each orgasm shortened your life by a day and simulated the dying experience through an obliteration of individual egos. This card may also indicate whatever "takes your breath away," or is "to die for."

One querent, during her pregnancy, got this card on the day of her ultrasound scan. She saw, in the flag on the RWS card, the same white figure on a black background. "All of these layers made me think of a rose unfolding, especially since at the center of a rose is the rose's uterus and embryo (pistil and ovary); and the rose, of course, is a classic symbol of the female reproductive system."<sup>6</sup> The baby was fine, and so we have a perfect example of not fearing this card.

**TRADITIONAL:** Change. End. Transformation. Alteration. Mortality. Destruction, annihilation. Renunciation. Corruption, putrefaction. Loss, severing. Failure. Deterioration. Disenchantment, disillusionment. Detachment, resignation. Unemployment.

## Death Reversed

*Death Rx* can be more difficult than the upright if you are trying to resist an inevitable change. You may be delaying or avoiding the ending of something, and thereby deluding yourself, prolonging the pain and distress, and preventing new growth. It can indicate worry and distress about something you anticipate—especially if you think it bad or harmful—whether or not your fears ever materialize. You could feel that something or someone is "plaguing" you, following you around or pestering and annoying you. This can also indicate death-in-life situations characterized by inertia, excess sleep, lethargy or weariness, stagnation, petrification, and constipation—activated by a variety of fears and insecurities. Note that this reversal is more likely to suggest a pessimistic attitude or state of mind rather than actual calamity. However, such pessimism can make even the brightest day seem dull and lifeless.



On the other hand, you may feel as if you are “emerging from the dead,” coming out of a period of depression or stagnation, awakening again to enjoyment of life and sensual pleasure. Perhaps you are recovering from grief or sadness. Something you considered dead could resurge or reemerge, like revived interest in an old passion. A person could “come back from the dead,” either figuratively or through a literal “near-death experience.”

Alternatively, you might be fascinated with death, morbidity, or the gothic scene. You may try to communicate with the dead, or be involved in Spiritualist activities.

Conversely, you may reject and disbelieve such experiences.

If projected on to others, you might find them ominous and threatening, like the taxman, who is sometimes equated with death, along with “men in black,” and others who are dour killjoys. Or you may see them as psychological vampires—people who emotionally drain you and yet may exert a strange fascination or sense of the erotic.

Healthwise, never interpret this card (upright or reversed) as a prediction of death. If a literal death is involved the person will usually inform you. Illnesses can include constipation, infectious disease (especially sexually transmitted ones), surgery and all excisions, or atrophy and lack of sensation in parts of the body, and comas. It is also one indicator of menopause.

In the shamanic and magical realm, knowing how to die is the great secret of initiation, and advanced initiation usually includes a rite of death and rebirth that approximates the “near-death experience” (NDE). It could also refer to the “undead”—golems, zombies, vampires, and necromancy.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Death or accident narrowly escaped. Inertia, sleep, lethargy. Stagnation. Ruin. Immobility. Sleepwalking. Slow or partial change. Alteration for the better. Discouragement, pessimism, depression. Destruction of hope and plans.

## Temperance

*Temperance* is about moderation and modifying, and about finding your way between extremes by being temperate and considerate. You may be creating something new by blending, combining, or alternating components, which are likely to be contrary in nature. These could be represented by the cards to either side. Perhaps you are looking for solutions, bridging gaps, and catalyzing change, or attuning yourself to the environment and circumstances around you. The process, rather than the goal or result, is most vital here and may require repeated attempts, tests, trials, and mistakes to “get the chemistry right.” To maintain and maximize balance (homeostasis) you might have to make continual adjustments. You could also be concentrating on timing, temperature, pitch, or emotional disposition, trying to sense the right time, season, pace, or amounts. It can be as mundane as cooking or as exalted as mixing a magical elixir.

The *Temperance* angel can signify divine guidance or your guardian angel that supports you in the alchemy of transformation with patience, compassion, and forgiveness. Perhaps you are obtaining guidance and assistance from a trusted source. Sometimes there is baptism, rebirth, or renewal after the letting-go of *Death*. In modern interpretations this is the primary healing card of the deck, wherein healing occurs holistically and by correcting imbalances and reconciling opposing beliefs. You might be soothing tensions, offering solace, or bringing about a reconciliation by maintaining a calm temperament, and a relaxing flow of energy. It views stress as a creative challenge and errors as blessings. You could be affirming wholeness, beauty, strength, and the ability to accomplish whatever you desire.

For one querent this card referred to a financial backer, a show-business “angel.” You could be involved in managing, budgeting, or product testing. As a networker you might make links and connections or facilitate a merger. It asks you to keep the circulation of ideas and forces moving by balancing emotions with concrete pragmatism.



**TRADITIONAL:** Moderation, adaptation, adjustment. Management. Economy, frugality. Combination, uniting. Compatibility, accommodation. Soothing, appeasing, alleviating, consoling. Temperate. Serenity. Caution, discretion. Temperature, timing.

## Temperance Reversed

*Temperance Rx* suggests that something may be out of balance, in conflict, or excessive, thereby creating stress, which, if not alleviated, could result in ill health. Look to the cards on either side to find out what seems problematic or unable to be combined. Alternatively, you may feel that people are uncooperative, or that your interests and needs are competing or conflicting. Emotions

can get out of hand, resulting in quarrels and disagreements. Perhaps there are accidents, or faults with mechanics or production; for instance, water leakage or breakdowns in heating/cooling or regulatory systems. Chemical solutions could separate or become corrupted. Energy dissipates. Creative projects and experiments can turn out to be impractical or require more time, leading to impatience and frustration. You could lack compassion and believe that a situation has to be “all or nothing.” You may feel out of the flow and disconnected.

Perhaps you are unwilling to discard anything or you refrain from committing to one possibility over another. You might avoid tackling a problem, perhaps because you feel uncreative or lack confidence. You might procrastinate or waste time because of distractions, inefficiency, or wavering. This card suggests unease, unrest, and uncertainty. Timing could be off; you may be out of sync, and adjustments do not come out right. You could overreact or overcompensate.

If projected on to others, you might see them as too good and perfect, like ministering angels, and more talented than you can ever be. Or you

may see them as intemperate. As inner temperance, it suggests being aware of your own internal disposition and physiological states. You may have an intuitive sense about the right combination of elements that is necessary to a situation, but are unable to put this into words or convince others.

Healthwise, this is an indicator that your homeostatic processes and hypothalamus are working to regulate internal states, for instance, by means of antibodies that deal with infections. Upsets from tainted food, indigestion, or other eating disorders could occur, or you might go on a binge. You may respond well to such holistic treatments such as energy healing, therapeutic touch, massage, chiropractic, herbal tinctures and tonics, flower essences, aromatherapy, and homeopathy—practices that work on both the physical and subtle bodies.

In the shamanic and magical realm, this is a card of psychic surgery, alchemical transmutation, and healing. It suggests the ability to work in two worlds simultaneously. It can also indicate contact with or feeding of the spirits of places and things, and working angel magic. It represents the priest or priestess officiating in the holy mysteries.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Church, religion, clergy and their ministry. Discord, disunion. Ill-advised combinations. Competition. Conflict of interest. Lack of cooperation. Passive change. Mood shifts. Impatience, frustration. A grave illness. Unsettled.

## The Devil

The *Devil* is primarily about fear, lies, and ignorance, resulting in doubt and pessimism. The word comes from a root meaning “adversary,” someone or something that acts contrary to your interests or welfare. The card shows what tends to halt, limit, or constrict your creative energy and actions, and may refer to childhood guilts. In its milder forms you may act “devilishly,” do what is “bad” for you, and, perhaps, taunt, bug, or bedevil others. You might trespass on social or sexual taboos, or fixate on materialistic concerns, or be tempted to bend the rules to serve your own ends. You may seek gains by asserting undue power and influence. You could relinquish your will to others, or seek to dominate them. You may fear that some cruel, external force or fate wants to harm you, and thus look to scapegoat those you view with prejudice and hatred. Underneath there is a failure to love, with a resulting sense of isolation and separateness.



Psychologically this epitomizes the “shadow”—aspects of yourself that are denied, unacknowledged, or hidden. Although it can indicate sexuality, it is easily tainted with perversion or violence. You may feel tempted by lust, desire, greed, or pride. You could obsess about a relationship or coveted object, with a kind of fatal attraction. You might feel panic or confusion, or perhaps you are the one invoking pandemonium or inviting chaos. Sometimes this is sheer mischievousness and practical jokes—“the devil made me do it.” Or you may fear and avoid whatever you consider bad, which is itself a limiting, fettered condition. Occasionally it refers to inflicting intentional or malicious pain upon someone, or acting from jealousy, envy, or spite. You might be subject to addictions or compulsive-obsessive behaviors. As the god Pan, the *Devil* awes and attracts you to the numinous power of the elemental forces of nature. But, it can also signify humorlessness and an inability to laugh at yourself, along with excessive dogmatism and seeing only the surface of things.

TRADITIONAL: Fate, fatality. Violence, havoc, ravage, shock. Disease. Vehemence, force, power. Impetus. Immodesty. Passion, lust, sensuality, magnetism. Occult power, black magic. Bondage. Malevolence. Temptation. Self-destruction.

## The Devil Reversed

The *Devil Rx* can express greater extremes than any other card. At one end it is evil triumphant, spiritual blindness, or succumbing to temptation, and totally indulging your appetites. At the other end, you may turn away from evil and bondage and begin the path to spiritual enlightenment. Following the principle of *enantiodromia*, you could easily go from sinner to saint by flipping over to the other side like a pendulum that swings too far and goes over the top. This is like Saint Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, from villain to apostle. Occasionally the reversal may signify feeling superior to other people’s weaknesses and frailties, or being excessively upright, moral, and virtuous.

You could say no to temptations, removing what binds you, and escaping an unpleasant situation. For instance, it might be time to quit a soul-destroying job in which you feel “owned” by the company or tied to it in order to pay your bills. It can signal an opportunity to access the guarded, hidden treasure of your own creativity and spontaneous delight. If you realize your fears are groundless, you can release yourself from false inhi-

bitions, and patterns of manipulation and codependency. Usually you become more conscious of your destructive behaviors, and misuse of power. Alternatively, the weaknesses and devilish actions of public figures could disillusion you. Perhaps you are making excuses instead of facing how bad a situation really is.

When you believe this energy is not you, and project it on to others, you might see them as false leaders, soul stealers, or troublemakers. You could see this energy manifesting in political figures and their public, dictators and their scapegoats, batterers and their victims, sorcerers and their dupes. Inwardly, it may be experienced as nightmares, a fixation on sin, or inner panic. On the other hand, this energy can erupt as mirth and the kind of comedy that deflates evil, and shows up false pride and unworthy prejudices.

Healthwise, the upright card can represent abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, or substance), smoking, hemorrhoids, and venereal diseases, while the reversal can indicate recovery. In some cultures, what we call germs and viruses were believed to be demons who had invaded the body, so in the reversal they could be driven out.

On the shamanic or magical level, this card represents the horned god of unbounded Nature. It is also trickster energy. It deals with setting wards and pentacles of protection, and is that aspect of soul-retrieval, dream, and shadow work in which the shaman must defeat an adversary.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Fate, fatality. Weakness, pettiness. Blindness. Amorous lust. Complications, intrigue, trouble. Bewitchment, fascination. Release from bondage, end of enslavement. Recovery, respite. Divorce. Beginning of spiritual understanding. Virtue. Morality.



## The Tower

The *Tower* is one of the “change cards,” but here the change is usually sudden, unexpected, and unwilling. It is about volatile situations and the breakthroughs and breakdowns that result. Often signifying an explosive temper or angry outburst, you could be involved in aggressive action, arguments, and occasionally violence. With the goal of greater awareness it shatters whatever has become rigid and unyielding, and expels you from limiting circumstances. Energies repressed for too long are suddenly released. It suggests the intervention of fate or the divine into your life, precipitating excitement, upheavals, and crisis. You may confront difficult or dangerous situations, or receive a shock to your system. The shake-up helps you to detect flaws and weaknesses that cannot endure stress, for it strips away any false sense of security in your job, home, relationships, or sense of self. You may receive a humiliating blow, or be thrown from a lofty position or attitude. Your pride can take a fall, and cracks in your personality edifice be revealed. But, while this may involve such situations as natural disasters, accidents, bankruptcy, or getting fired, it is likely to be less calamitous. It also can mean you receive a flash of insight or breakthrough idea, often shocking and uninvited. Or, you could simply be cleaning house and getting rid of outworn stuff.

The lightning represents insights that reveal new possibilities, and the flames, like the firing of sparkplugs in an engine, drive you to action. The crown is like the crown chakra, so with the rising kundalini force comes the opening the doors and windows of perception. You may clear out debris, burn through obstructions, cleanse, and renovate. The *Tower* symbolizes the ejaculatory and orgasmic force of the creative impulse, as pent-up energy is liberated. Occasionally the card signifies the emotional pyrotechnics of falling in love, coming as a bolt from the blue, or it can be as literal as roofing problems. On a broader scale it can include urban renewal, earthquake, revolution, and the exodus that follows.

**TRADITIONAL:** Misery, distress. Indigence, poverty, destitution. Calamity, catastrophe, destruction, ruin. Downfall. Sudden, unexpected. Adversity, misfortune. Overthrow. Disgrace. Loss. Bankruptcy. Punishment. Awakening. Salutory crisis. Natural cataclysm. Shipwreck.

## The Tower Reversed

Traditionally the *Tower Rx* lessens the degree and impact of the upright meanings. Additionally, it can indicate narrowly averted disaster, freedom from constraints, or the cessation of difficulties. One querent saw the human figures as “getting away scot-free.” You could be bailing out before things get too bad.

Alternatively, aspects of your life could be crumbling despite your insistence that there are no problems. However, you might accept collapses or setbacks, or have already lived with them so long they no longer surprise you. Needed change could be delayed or denied, allowing you the opportunity to alleviate the situation before it explodes.

On the other hand, pressure could be intensifying with no means of escape. You might deny responsibility for, or knowledge of, any tensions with others, or turn a blind eye to oppression. You could accept that things are not right, and be unwilling to do anything about it. You may cling to established structures and the status quo, ignoring warning signs, and believing yourself untouchable. Or, you could feel that disasters are imminent, and be filled with apprehension and panic. However, there is often more confusion and discomfort than actual emergency. Perhaps you are cleaning up the debris of some personal debacle. There is a tradition in French Tarot that the reversal indicates imprisonment, for Napoleon supposedly drew this reversal when he was exiled to Saint Helena.

When projected on to others you may fear they are making trouble or deliberately causing upheaval. Perhaps you see them as angry and destructive. Alternatively, you might perceive them as dynamic, assertive, and excitingly dangerous. On the personal level this can represent inner



turmoil, chaos, or anger, or it can be a divine “kick in the butt,” to shake you out of complacency.

Healthwise, it indicates operations, surgery, chemotherapy, along with accidents, cuts, and burns. There can be fever and skin eruptions like acne, scabies, boils, and rashes, or nausea and throwing up. However, such symptoms can be signs that your body is detoxifying itself. For one querent it coincided with a burst appendix. Just as the upright card can represent male ejaculation, the reversal can indicate impotence.

At the shamanic and magical level, it can signal the raising of energy as with a cone of power, or a terrifying breakthrough to enlightenment, such as with the kundalini or through divine intervention. It also can signify psychic surgery and sex magic, or it can represent magical battles and psychic warfare.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** To a lesser degree: ruin, disruption, overthrow, loss. Imprisonment, arrest, captivity, entrapment. Oppression, tyranny, subjugation. Illness. Punishment. Clandestine childbirth. Monopolizing. Exile. Persecution.

## The Star

In the calm that follows the *Tower's* storm, you are not only released from imprisonment, but truly liberated and at peace. It suggests a situation in which you can be totally open, and honestly express yourself, holding back nothing. This is the core of self-esteem and faith in the betterment of humanity. The *Star* is about seeing yourself in the cosmic pattern and as a force of Nature, in a practical way. You might sense a deep connection between the stars and the earth, the above and below. You may perceive ecological and planetary implications in a situation. As a result you could pour your energies into a good cause, or dedicate yourself to a long-range vision, which could, however, be ahead of its time and not appreciated by others. For instance, you could be involved in healing the environment, or renewing resources, or employing prudent conservation management. Other expressions of this card could include meditation, ritual, science and computers, or natural medicine. Astrology, astronomy, and other pattern-based systems or networks might be significant, as well as taking part in the free spread and exchange of ideas, like on the Internet.

On the other hand, you could figuratively be a “star,” that is, in the limelight, receiving recognition for beauty and accomplishment. This card

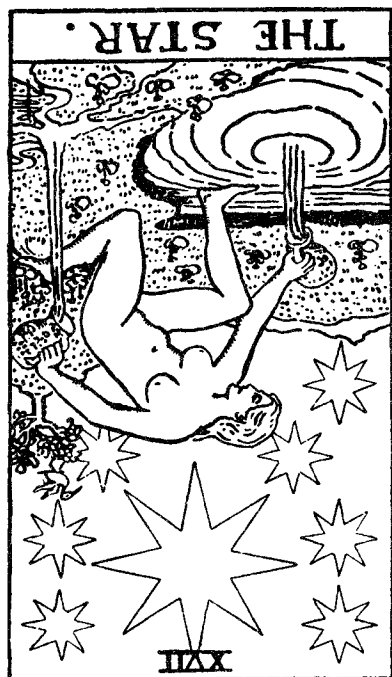
can signal the unveiling of a talent, or the opportunity to “hitch your wagon to a star.” You may be handling something with grace, poise, and charisma; or giving, without thought of return. In relationships, you might be involved in an idealized and unusually independent association. This card can also indicate clairvoyance, or the cool, clear light of creative imagination and inspiration, which can lead to doing the right thing in the right moment. You may feel a greater destiny or providence working through you. The pouring libation can indicate a blessing, a purification, or thanks. It also represents recycling, vitalization through moisture, and renewal as if in a “fountain of youth.”

**TRADITIONAL:** Hope, faith, expectation, bright promises. Inspiration. Idealism. Eternal youth and beauty. Candor. Nature, climate, atmosphere. The heavens, astrology, destiny. Favorable omens. Balance of hope and effort. Satisfaction.

## The Star Reversed

The *Star Rx* is like the heroine’s journey into the underworld. You might shed all ideas of self that falsely depend on status, appearance, and possessions. Or, like Carl Jung’s concept of the “bright shadow,” you may deny your true gifts, thinking you lack talent, grace, or beauty. Thus, you are unable to see yourself as a star. Usually this is a temporary disillusionment, occasioned by shortsightedness rather than reality. It can indicate losing touch with your sources of inspiration. Your aspirations may not seem worthwhile or possible to attain. Clarity of vision is lacking and so decisions may be scattered, unfocused, or delayed. Efforts can seem futile or overwhelming, like trying to empty a pond with a sieve. Perhaps there is dispoilment or a loss of innocence. With self-esteem at a low, you may avoid being seen. Or, this might not be a time for recognition or external efforts, but rather for inner contemplation, or for just “being” rather than “doing.”

On the other hand, you can become haughty and arrogant, misusing the adulation of others, devaluing their compliments and gifts. You could get caught up in false aspirations and self-deceit. It can indicate waste in all areas. You might feel drained or your imagination dried up. One querent saw this as the difficulty in balancing her “real world” obligations (pouring water on land) with her spiritual work (pouring water back into the pool of the cosmos). Alternatively, this can signify immersion in a



meaningless fad. You could also long for an unattainable ideal, like the perfect soul mate, which always seems just out of reach.

When you project this on to others, you may see them as beautiful, talented, and charismatic, or as uninhibited and freethinking—embodying the qualities you seemingly lack. You may also feel they fail to appreciate their gifts as you would. On the inner level you may recognize yourself as a spark of the divine: the truth, of course, is that you are a self-luminous, self-contained being whose interior energy generation is perfectly balanced by your outflow and by the energies of those who gravitate to you.

Healthwise, this can signify your body's healing processes, especially of the kind that can be developed through biofeedback. The *Star's* energy is good for dispelling negative thoughts, cooling fevers, soothing migraines, and salving eruptions; and it calms hysteria, hyperactivity, and nervous stress.

At the shamanic and magical level, this card refers to working with the elemental spirits, and with earth and plant medicines. It can indicate purifying and reconsecrating the body and soul when they have become ritually unclean. It is also about working with astrological alignments.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Hopes unfulfilled, expectations disappointed. Arrogance, haughtiness. Shamelessness. Despoilment. Testing. Sorting, separation. Imprudence, frivolity, lack of spontaneity. Stubbornness. Bad luck. Instability. Storm, tempest.

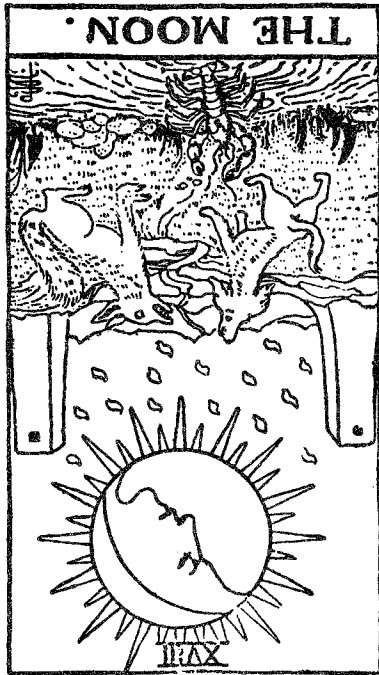
## The Moon

This card is about synchronicity, intuition, dreams, mystery, and symbolism (which Carl Jung described as, “something vague, unknown, or hidden from us”). Due to its reflected light, the *Moon* represents the displacement of meaning from one thing to another. Eliphas Lévi said, “There are no mysteries without symbols,” and vice versa. You imagine reality first in the unseen world of dream and vision—the astral plane. Ideas or new forms might be emerging within you that have not taken final shape. This card depicts the fears and illusions that can beset you on the evolutionary path, beyond the last outposts, in an unknown landscape. Delusions, deeply submerged fears, or even terror might be calling on your survival instincts, making you react with irrational or habitual behavior. You could be feeling confused or bewildered, lost or afraid. There may be something you can’t quite grasp, at the edge of your consciousness. Swamped by emotions, you could find yourself amid misunderstandings, clouded perceptions, hidden motives, secrets, and underlying issues—whether your own or others. On the other hand, you could feel guided or drawn, as if by the tide of fate or compulsion, toward some as-yet-undefined purpose. Like the crayfish you may be cleansing the waters of unconscious habits by digesting debris from your past, and walking bravely between the needs of instinct and domestication that “dog” you.

If you feel at home in the dreamtime or astral realm, collective unconscious, or the subconscious, then you may act as a medium, have out-of-body experiences, write poetry or imaginative fiction, do therapy, or assist others to “cross over” into death. If you are uncomfortable with subjective experience and hidden meanings then you may fear what you perceive as dangerous illusions. Contemporary Tarot deck creator Brian Williams notes that the French describe the shifting shapes of twilight as “*entre chien et loup*” meaning “between dog and wolf,” suggesting a dangerous thing could appear benign to you, or vice versa.

**TRADITIONAL:** Hidden enemies. Secret, occult forces. Deception, illusion, delusion. Twilight, darkness. The unknown. Danger, warning. Instinctual fears. Terror. Plots. Scandal, calumny, gossip. False friends. Nostalgia. Dreams. Lunacy. Navigation.





## The Moon Reversed

With the *Moon Rx* you may deny the unseen world, clinging to rationality, reason, literalness, and practicality, especially in the face of confusion and perceived irrationality. You might block psychic information or resist receiving intuitive impressions. You may try to hold “wild things” at bay or scare them off, which could result in feeling psychically drained and exhausted. You might retreat within the bastions of conventionality and conformity, or withdraw into silence, immobility, or lassitude. You may feel ill-adapted for dealing with the kind of changes the *Moon* represents (including atmospheric ones),

especially if they don’t make sense. In some cases, this could point to the fantastic: UFO experiences, alien encounters, parallel lives, reincarnational existences, extreme romanticism, and alternate realities that few people believe are real. Archetypal content, sometimes clothed as other worldly perils or urban myths, may erupt from the collective unconscious. The reversal could increase irrational behavior especially through fear of conspiracies or illegal acts, attack from predators, or spirit possession. They may be delusions, but not necessarily.

On the other hand, this could indicate the ability to face perils with calm and acceptance, especially when personal or cultural transformation or spiritual evolution is underway. Thus, instability and deception may not seem so threatening as in the upright. Hidden things may come to light. Secret addictions or madness or trauma could be revealed, leading to a need for treatment.

When projected on to others, you may see them as dreamy, delusional, or excessively emotional, and not responsible for their acts. Or, you could believe that they mean you harm through some kind of psychic attack.

On the inner level, there may be self-delusion. Alternatively, there is insight into the imagery of the psyche as, in the words of the nineteenth-century mystic Anna Kingsford, “the soul receives interior illumination, and the dark recesses of her chamber are lit up by sacred reminiscences.” Acceptance allows you to digest and clarify your experiences.

Healthwise, this card is particular to all forms of lunacy and mental health. Additionally, there can be incontinence or water retention, sleep disorders, neurasthenia, problems with smell, or anything affected by the old brain and limbic system, and all primal survival issues. It can also refer to drug and alcohol abuse, comas, and the dying process.

This is an important card of shamanism and magic suggesting astral travel, underworld journeys, dream interpretation, past-life recall, finding lost objects, alignment with lunar cycles and all forms of moon magic, animal contacts, spirit possession, psychic attack and defense, and soul retrieval.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Instability, variation, fluctuation. Fluidity, dew, mist, rain. Silence. Inconstancy. Irrational change. Fantastic or visionary beliefs. Slight deceptions, trifling mistakes. Taking advantage of someone. Ambush, fraud, blackmail. Overcoming weakness or temptation.

## The Sun

The *Sun* is about feeling a joyous, radiant sense of well-being. It is a “yes!” card. You may be happy about something in particular or simply glad to be alive and enjoying simple pleasures. It sometimes heralds success, honor, prosperity, triumph of reason, and the flowering of the self—or, at least, a momentary realization of these. You may have just fulfilled a long-awaited goal, or there could be a birth in the family or of some new enterprise. The celestial sun suggests a natural playfulness and spontaneity, and so you may act with the freshness and innocence of a child. Or, you could be working with children or animals, or on inner-child issues. Gloom is dispelled, bringing brightness into your life and lightening small tasks, minor affairs, and lesser matters. You might feel brightly optimistic in a way that allows you to freely express your individuality. You could enjoy working or playing outdoors. Perhaps you are feeling enthused about a brilliant new idea, or making the best use of your talents, interests, and

abilities. You can brighten other people's lives and inspire them with your optimism, creativity, and vision—and thus effectively promote a product or concept in which you truly believe. This card suggests something could be at the center of your universe—around which everything else revolves, be it children, work, relationship, home, health, or other concern. It might indicate confidence and self-assurance.

Wherever the *Sun* shines, hidden facts and motivations are revealed and clarified, and situations are laid bare, out in the open. You could feel enlightened by an insight or a suddenly realized truth. You might join in any kind of conscious union, confirm friendships, or experience reconciliation. You can generously share your good fortune with others. Possibly you are considering or enjoying a holiday in the sun.

**TRADITIONAL:** Enlightenment, clarity, revelation. Happiness, contentment, joy, satisfaction. Success, honor, glory, accomplishment. Radiance. Triumph of reason. Sincerity. Material fortune. Marriage, conjugal felicity. Good friendship.

## The Sun Reversed

Generally the *Sun Rx* is the same as the upright but either weakened slightly or overdone. In either case, the pleasure and contentment may be lessened. You might refuse to acknowledge joy in your life, or perhaps it seems clouded. You may misunderstand what seems clear to others. Perhaps you are afraid to enjoy yourself, accept what is good, or you doubt it will last, as in it's being "too good to be true." You may lack confidence, and not believe you deserve recognition or success. You could hold back your inner light.

Alternatively, your life may be too intense. You can be self-involved or showing off. Your energy could be overbearing and overzealous, scorching others with too much ego inflation and self-assurance. Or, you might feel "burned out" and exhausted. Possibly the weather itself is too hot, or it is overcast. If other cards show difficulties, there can be broken agreements, contracts voided, or a smirch upon an otherwise bright situation. Divorces tend to be amicable. At worst, you may put up a false front, full of hot air and hubris, with sham optimism or insincere pleasure. Or you might take credit where it is not your due.

You can act inappropriately childish and immature, or fear to have your vulnerability and playfulness observed. One Tarot reader found it indicated

a romantic involvement with a younger person, in which there was more appearance than genuine feelings.<sup>7</sup> For one of my clients it was a profound image of life in death, for it represented his life partner that had recently died, and had, in Chinese astrology, been born in the Year of the Horse. While my client placed horse statues around the house, I pictured his partner rejuvenated and riding free of pain.

When projected on to another, you may see them as a creative leader filled with youthful optimism and enthusiasm, although either too self-centered, or gullible and naïve. Seeming to dazzle and shine, such people share their happiness with others.

Healthwise, it may warn of heat stroke, heart attacks, skin cancer, and sunburn. But mostly it is a card of health, vitality, and regeneration, and the alleviation of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), fear, and anxiety. In the inner realm this represents a loving acceptance of yourself as a unique individual.

At the shamanic and magical level, it is illumination, enlightenment, the completion of the Great Work, the *hierosgamos* or sacred marriage, the making of alchemical gold, the outpouring of the heart of Spirit, and awakening the divine inner child, unfettered and free of sin.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Happiness, joy, success to a lesser degree. Heat, flame, passion. Illumination. Vanity, pride, bragging, delusions of grandeur. Bluff, façade. Misunderstood. Clouded future. Broken engagement or marriage. Triumph delayed.



## Judgement

*Judgement* is about transcending the narrow confines of material limitations or constricting circumstances. You may find yourself at a crossroads where you have an epiphany or revelation that creates deep, significant change. Like the metamorphosis of the butterfly, you could assume some new form, or be liberated from constraints. Something may be “calling” you, whether a new vocation, intellectual idea, or great truth. You could face a major choice or decision that will require total dedication. You might volunteer for a task. The card heralds a paradigm shift: the sudden manifestation of a new perspective, meaning, or quality of life. Or, it can announce the advent of something momentous, such as a new cycle or stage of life. Perhaps you receive a wake-up call from your own conscience, giving you the chance to atone for past sins or errors in judgment. You may do a personal inventory or self-evaluation. It suggests a reassessment of your life direction, accepting responsibility for past actions, and ending karmic patterns. For some people it is like being born again, or finding your true calling.

Alternatively, you might be cultivating good judgment by using all your faculties in a mature, integrated manner. You might give or receive criticism, or be responsible for project approval. In legal judgments, a higher truth tends to be served. If you see yourself as the angel with the trumpet, you could be calling the tune, blowing your own horn, sounding an alarm, promoting a cause, or otherwise speaking to large groups. Family, group, or community cooperation and action might be important, as well as Buddha-like concern for all beings. You can be sensitive to mass needs, fads, and desires. Sometimes it is about resurrecting something old in a rebirth or renaissance in style or interest. The card also indicates the struggle of each generation for consciousness and identity, and for a voice of its own. Occasionally the situation has something to do with music or vibrational resonance.

**TRADITIONAL:** Renewal. Resurrection. Awakening. Movement, change. Outcome, result. Intelligence, reason. Opinion, belief. Determination of a matter. Account. Atonement, repentance. Exhaltation, wonder. Fame. Mission.

## Judgement Reversed

*Judgement Rx* is about difficult transitions and resisting transformation. You could abandon a cause, or take flight from a situation that threatens the comfort and security of old ways, means, or possessions. You might resent change, avoid decisions, or need time to adjust. If you dig in, there can be stagnation and decay. Perhaps you refuse to hear a “call,” or reject new technologies. On the other hand, you could volunteer too hastily for something.

There might be a disbanding of or blow to the family unit, a forced move, or loss of material goods. Delays and confusion could arise from missing an opportunity or an important communication. You might be excluded from an invitation. Groups of people can feel alienated from each other, creating disturbances, or protests and demonstrations. At worst, there could be riots or a call to arms.

You may be unhappy about a court or legal decision. You could be overly critical and self-analytical, or too judgmental. Or, you deem criticism from others to be too harsh, spiteful, or prejudiced—which can impede your creative output. Generally there is a lack of perspective and an inability to see the big picture, which might lead to bad judgments and poor decision-making. You may have missed out on some important news or information. On a mundane level, this card can indicate unsolicited sales calls, or noisome disruptions. You might doubt, rightfully or not, the value of change, the validity of inner voices, or the promises of leaders. Sometimes this indicates a fear of old age and death.

When projected on to others, you may see them as trying to influence people through the force of their personality or propaganda. Or,



contrariwise, you perceive them as sheeplike followers. On the inner level you might hear inner voices or receive apocalyptic visions.

Healthwise, this card can indicate allergies, insect bites, seasickness, indigestion, migraines, asthma, colic, painful menstruation, and general ill health. Or, it can indicate a sudden or unexpected recovery from illness.

In the shamanic and magical dimension, this involves conscious working at a societal, collective level, as well as global transitions, perhaps involving weather and earth changes, or the coming of a new aeon. More tangibly, it shows the magical effects of music and vibration to raise spirits.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Postponement of results, delay, aversion. Faint-heartedness. Weakness, incapacity. Simplicity. Sentence. Arrest. Noise and agitation. Disappointment. Indecision. Procrastination. Stagnation, delay. Alienation.

## The World

As the final card in the Major Arcana, the *World* is about the triumph of completion, and victory after struggles. With a glow of achievement in a goal fulfilled, you may claim your place at the center of material bounty and receive your rewards. In the full flowering of your attainments, the gifts and approbation of the world surround you. This is about recognizing yourself as a multidimensional being, and affirming your simultaneous reality in flesh as well as spirit. You could be dancing on your limitations; that is, finding individual freedom within inescapable boundaries of space/time constraints, or creative inspiration within the strictures of an artistic medium. Or, you might be in the exactly right place, where you have everything you need. You might combine resources and people from the four quarters, bring them together in a composite whole. Perhaps you are thinking globally, traveling widely, or involved in international relations. On the other hand, you might be creating or defining a sphere of influence, and setting physical and psychic boundaries. This card can be about saying “no” to what is beyond your ability and establishing personal security and protection as needed. You could be involved in a challenging, all-encompassing experience that you handle with aplomb. You could be recreating yourself at a new level, integrating male and female characteristics in your own personal expression.

On the more literal level, you could be dancing, doing bodywork or exercise, or taking a holistic approach to health and well-being. Or you could receive rewards or a promotion for work well done. This is about planetary or Gaia consciousness with a respect for all life. It suggests you are in a position of beauty, prosperity, and grace, and are striving for excellence. At the same time there is something earthy, practical, and sustaining in your cosmic dance and divine play. You are emerging from the womb of your former life, and stand at the edge of an exciting leap into an unknown of infinite potential.

**TRADITIONAL:** Completion, success, fulfillment, triumph. Perfection. Goal achieved, the end result. Recompense, reward, promotion. Health. Honors. Voyage, emigration, flight. Integrity. Travel. Integration, synthesis. Inheritance. Ecstasy.

## The World Reversed

Like the *Sun*, the *World Rx* essentially remains the same but of lesser degree. A promotion or reward may be delayed or less than hoped for, the triumph quieter or more private. On the other hand, it can indicate the sense of emptiness that accompanies even the successful completion of a project, similar to postpartum depression. There could be difficulties with travel. You may deliberately put off the culmination or end of something. Alternatively, you might have to redo what you thought was finished.

You can feel restricted, or your energies uncomfortably constrained. Perhaps you are overly protected, bound on all sides by the limits of your environment. You could lack perspective and have difficulties seeing the whole picture. Your material circumstances may limit other avenues of personal growth and development, resulting in frustration and the sense that something is missing. Inertia and stagnation could keep you from moving ahead as you would like, or you might sit back and simply rest on your laurels. Responsibilities and obligations might hang you up, like the *Hanged Man* whose legs are crossed in the same way; however, sacrifices made here will likely arise from wisdom and compassion. This is like the soul that has completed its own karma and achieved enlightenment but chooses to return to physical manifestation until all souls are liberated.

If other cards concur with a more problematic interpretation, there could be loss of position, failure, or even catastrophe.





When projected on to others, you might see them in an idealized light, as beautiful, accomplished, and surrounded by admirers. They may seem untouchable, godlike, and not of this world. On the personal level, this suggests an inner moment of perfection in which you let go of what holds you back from participation in the divine dance of creation.

This is a major card of health, with an emphasis on community. Only if there are other indications would you find back, spine, or bone problems; osteoporosis; physical handicaps; or a weakened immune system. You might be concerned with weight loss or appearance. A

successful birth could be presaged by either the upright or reversed position, although with possible delays if reversed.

On the shamanic or magical level, this is Gaia, Nature, or the earth goddess personified, and the creation of sacred ceremonial space reflecting the axiom, "As above, so below." It also portrays ecstatic dance, central to the celebration of life. It epitomizes the wholeness, harmony, and balance that most magical practices seek to achieve, as well as the promise of eternal life.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Inertia, fixity, stagnation. Obstacles, failure. Evil reward. Hostile atmosphere. Prima Materia. Matter. The earth. Imperfection. Lack of vision or foresight. Distractions. Disorientation. Despair. Cataclysms. Unfinished work.

## ENDNOTES

1. See the reversed Major Arcana as “Heroine’s Journey,” in Appendix D.
2. Thanks to Normandi Ellis, who describes this process in *Dreams of Isis*.
3. The distinction between “power over” and “power within” is developed in greater detail in Starhawk’s book, *Dreaming the Dark*, and applies perfectly to the contrast between the *Chariot* and *Strength*.
4. I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, pp. 70 & 57.
5. Jane Roberts, *The Nature of Personal Reality: A Seth Book*.
6. Thanks to T. Susan Chang who shared this story on TarotL.
7. Thanks to Elizabeth Hazel of TarotL.

Minor Arcana  
Interpretations

The Number Cards

## Ace of Wands

This *Ace* offers new opportunities on the energetic plane. It is the “thumbs up” or “yes” card, and could give the go-ahead to anything you are considering. This could be an idea, a passion, an inspiration, or urge toward self-growth. Occasionally it can represent a birth. You may grab on to a vital opportunity and move forward with energy. Since *Aces* represent potentials or seeds, it is up to you to develop the latent possibilities. As an obvious phallic image, it declares your intent to take passionate action. The “blood is up” if you are ready to go. This card may challenge you to act spontaneously and make snap decisions. When it appears you have probably been yearning for change. It represents a motivating belief that things will get more exciting, and hints of success. It also says that magic is alive, and that you can conjure amazing things by accepting a challenge. The placement of the *Ace of Wands* in your spread directs your attention to a point of emphasis, almost like a command. It represents a goal. However, one querent saw it as a carrot-on-a-stick, a bribe to get him to do something he did not want to do.

**TRADITIONAL:** Letter. Command, edict, decree. Announcement. Beginning, birth, commencement. Invention, Fortune, Enterprise. An adventure. Force, authority, order. Origin. Principle, pre-eminence. Premise, cause, reason. House, lineage, family.

## Ace of Wands Reversed

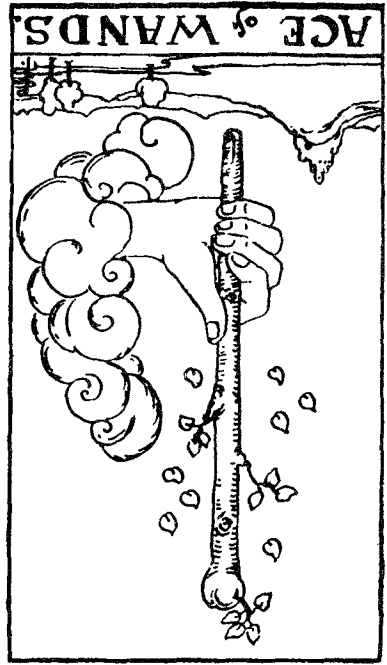
The *Ace of Wands Rx* is sometimes called the “thumbs down” card, counseling inaction, “no,” or “not now.” But, even with reversed *Aces*, new beginnings are in the air. You may feel ready for change—the desire or yearning is there—but the right opportunity has not manifested. Alternatively, a situation is premature and you are not energized or prepared enough to take it. Thus, you may feel frustrated or stymied. Your enthusiasm could be misplaced if a goal is illusory or criminal. If overly enthused or stimulated, there could be rash or false starts. You might resist or be reluctant to take on one more thing. Other cards could indicate what is holding back the process. Sometimes there are delays, cancellations, or compromised situations, or an opportunity fizzles. There might be damaged goods or unavailable labor. Someone may let you down. Perhaps you are

simply uninterested or lack energy. As with all reversals, illness could arise. Here, the phallic image is that of deflation or impotency. You might feel powerless or ineffectual. If you have applied for a position or presented a plan, you could be turned down, rejected, vetoed, or forbidden to act. It may be best to reconsider your plans and goals or put something aside for the time being.

In the RWS deck the wand appears to be taking root in the sky and therefore suggests planting your ideas in the realm of spiritual potential, without expectation of results. Just as this card may counsel “no” on the outer, it can suggest “yes” on the inner, emphasizing access to inner strength and power.

From the shamanic and magical perspective, this could be a torch serving as a light and guide through an underworld journey. The occult maxim associated with Wands is to “will,” meaning to set and focus your energy on a specific conscious intent.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Fall, decadence, ruin, decline. Collapse, vexation. Lost or damaged goods. Unproductive work. Clouded joy. Illegitimacy or trouble with a birth. Tyranny, cruelty, persecution. Abandonment. A bad start. Hopes not realized.



## Two of Wands

This is sometimes seen as the “having-everything” but “longing-for-more” card. With the *Two of Wands* you could be deciding about your next project. You might evaluate several choices or courses of action, or look for alternatives. The RWS deck depicts a person with the world in his hands, signifying dominion over resources. You might have enough power, influence, and control to do anything in the world you want. You can choose what to accomplish within a particular sphere of influence. Or, you may establish one position now and expand it later. Perhaps you are contemplating a journey or taking your last look around before leaving for foreign shores. This card can indicate a doorway to opportunity, although you might hesitate to move through it. Perhaps you are waiting to see if previous efforts will bring results. There is a curious paradox here: in the midst of achievements that have yielded wealth and position, there is a seeming melancholy or discontent. One client interpreted the card as marital separation. On the other hand, the two wands could indicate a collaboration, cooperation, alliance of forces, or balance of power. You stand at the threshold of a decision. At its deepest level, you may be finding a balanced relationship between spiritual and earthly natures.

**TRADITIONAL:** Departure or absence that will cause surprise mixed with sadness. Melancholy. Grief. Pain. Trouble. Loss of faith. Suffering. Quarrel. Anger. Resentments. A disappointment. Jealousy. Loss of money. Failure of marriage.

## Two of Wands Reversed

The *Two of Wands Rx* could be called the Cinderella card for it can presage an astonishing change in an otherwise dead-end situation. You might lack direction, have limited resources, or feel hemmed in and frustrated in your decision-making process. You could feel restricted by another’s dominant personality, or be reluctant to travel or leave the house. Perhaps you are longing for something you cannot have. This could cause you to drop the ball, or fail to carry on with what you do have. But, seeming miracles could transport you beyond current limitations. An unexpected turn of events could either generate awe or overwhelm you. It is not through will but receptivity that this reversal brings results. You could be startled by the sudden arrival of someone. Or, perhaps you need to turn back from

a journey because of difficulties. Expect the unexpected, for it could open up new perspectives and new horizons that you did not previously know existed. However, if there are cards of deception in the spread, check to see if you have been too gullible or duped. Disappointment or discontent could emerge as a kind of anticlimax to a series of events. Through loss, you might awaken to inner possibilities and resources, rather than relying on outer stimuli.

Healthwise, this can indicate agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces.

If projected on to others, you may feel they have all the power, and either they are disinclined to share their fortune, or you could be so in awe of their greatness that you feel unworthy of their consideration. This person might appear to be standing in the way of your own opportunities.

Shamanically speaking, as in many fantasy stories, this could be a portal or opening to another world, or an unlooked-for realm or state of enchantment, involving ecstasy, joy, and rapture.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** The unforeseen. Surprise, astonishment. Rapture. Wonder, awe. Miracle. Enchantment. Unhoped for joy. A return journey. Fear, terror. Trouble. Domination. New possibilities. Unexpected loss and sorrow. Anxiety.



## Three of Wands

The *Two* showed a decision to be made, but in the *Three of Wands*, events are put in motion. In the RWS image, the ships have set sail. This card shows you have the virile force, confidence, and boldness to launch enterprises, perhaps by bringing three people or factors together. From a position of authority you command, supervise, and direct activities. These may be in trade and commerce, or overseas business and foreign negotiations. Once set in motion, you can settle back to wait for your ship to come in. Historically, the shipping business involved large, high-risk ventures, whose payoff, if successful, might take months or even years. Therefore you could be making long-term plans, or envisioning future prospects, with a need to get the “big picture,” a creative overview. However, you can overlook small, immediate details. Or, you might be on the lookout for new prospects and new territory, ready to seize that opportunity first seen in the previous card. This card suggests you are being audacious, bold, and daring in starting toward your goal, even though it might seem imprudent. This might require travel on your part, or you might have to handle your business from afar. Foresight in determining future needs could be important.

**TRADITIONAL:** Enterprises, trade, negotiation. Activity, undertakings. Bold, audacious, rash, imprudent. To seize or usurp. Courage, daring. Intellectual dynamism, commercial ability. Initiative. Travel. Voyages of discovery. Productive cooperation.

## Three of Wands Reversed

The *Three of Wands Rx* indicates you have difficulty putting plans into action or that you are experiencing a creative block. You may feel daunted at having bitten off more than you can chew, and tasks could appear overwhelming. At one extreme, you display a lack of foresight characterized by rash activity that brings on exhaustion and mishaps. At the other extreme, you can have daydreams, hopes, and wishes that never get off the ground because you do not know where to begin or are afraid to take risks. Problems could also arise from overambitiousness, arrogance, or obstinacy, followed by anxiety about whether you will see any returns. You may hesitate to get help from others through distrust and fear of deceit, causing you to



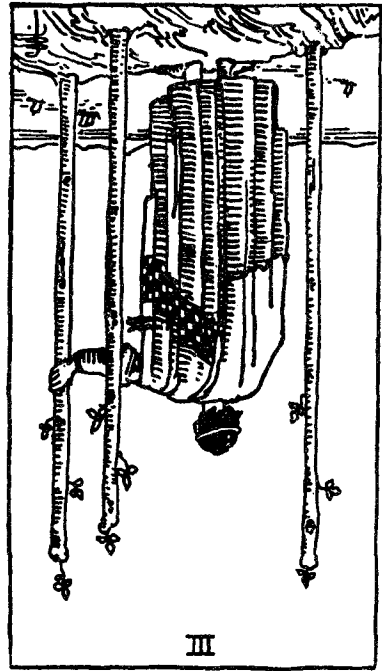
feel cut off and isolated. While these things can result in delays and setbacks they are generally temporary; the situation may improve. However, there is still a possibility that you will not get a return on your investment, or that a project could fail.

Focus on immediate, practical, step-by-step details. You could reorganize a job into smaller tasks. You might hold unconscious assumptions and expectations that will cause problems when someone fails to meet them or does the wrong thing. You may feel ignored or left out of the information loop. On a more personal level, you could turn your back on the future in order to focus on the past, which includes everything from past-life recall to genealogical research. This card could also signify an expatriate.

When projected on to others, you may see them as ignoring day-to-day operations while daydreaming or concentrating only on future potentials. Healthwise, it could indicate illnesses acquired in foreign travel or genetic proclivities to certain health problems.

In the shamanic and magical realm, this card indicates one's responsibility for actions and decisions as they radiate effects unto "seven generations" in the future and, some say, even into the past.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Ulterior motives. Distrust, treachery, deceit. Interrupted by misfortune. Reward for labors. Cessation of adversity. End of pain, toil, and disappointment. Respite from affliction. Beware of help offered. Hope, desire, attempt, wish.



## Four of Wands

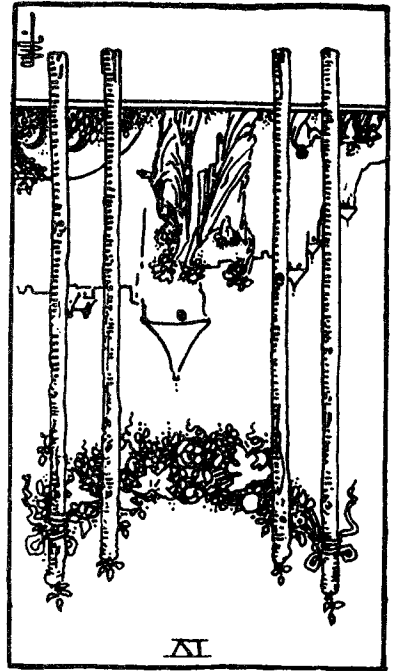
Just as the *Three* signifies departure, the *Four of Wands* indicates arrival or homecoming. This card usually shows a celebration marking the completion of a phase, or of a season and its labors. A work is perfected and the fruits harvested. There is a culmination of efforts and a sense of solid achievement. You may celebrate these moments with ceremonial rites of passage such as engagements, marriages, graduations, commencements, reunions, parties, and awards banquets at conventions or convocations. You could consolidate personal ties and establish alliances, reaffirm bonding, or return to familial roots. On the other hand, you might be negotiating agreement among opposing factions, in order to restore harmony and balance. Perhaps you are encouraging or heartening others for an upcoming task. This card can also signify seasonal rites or weekend workshops. You may be enjoying a stay in the country or other vacation retreat. There could be rest and relaxation, pleasure, social concord, and happiness. Alternatively, you are involved in the purchase of property, or otherwise establishing a firm base for future growth. As you prepare to move on to a new experience you might pause to give thanks for all you have received thus far.

**TRADITIONAL:** Society, alliance, community. Reunion, gathering, party. Convivial gatherings. Stay in the country. Convention, pact, treaty. Unexpected occasion. Small reward. Relaxation after achievement. Strength. Prosperity. Fruit of labors.

## Four of Wands Reversed

Traditionally the *Four of Wands Rx* is unaltered from the upright. Generally, people are still happy, and life is working to your advantage, although you may have forgotten to be grateful for this. Blocks or resistance to family and school reunions and convention banquets are reminiscent of the ambivalence most of us feel about them. You may want to see everyone, but, at the same time, fear the incompatibilities and dread the social niceties. Your own insecurities and inhibitions may surface, or you may be uncomfortably aware of what tarnished lives lurk below the surface. This card can also disrupt conventionality. Perhaps there is something lacking in your own pleasure on such occasions. You may find yourself projecting

perfect happiness on to others and suppose you are the only one left out. If you have been attending a gratifying workshop or gathering you could be apprehensive about your leave-taking and return to normal life. This can be the sad/happy moment when members of family or group go their own way. There can be breaches in what seemed complete. Rites of passage could be disquieting or atypical, like an unsanctioned marriage. It might also be time to leave or sell the family home. This card can also represent the mishaps and flubs at social occasions that are more humorous than devastating. At work, you can become too sociable or be afraid of upsetting the good times to the detriment of business.



When projected on to others, you may see them as part of an extended family or as benefactors. Healthwise, it suggests a return to good health, or the success of birth or medical procedures.

In a shamanic and magical context, this a major card signifying rites of passage, which, as one of their fundamental goals, serve a civilizing or spiritualizing purpose. In spirit journeys it represents the chants, drums, and prayers of assistants who help you return safely from the underworld.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Prosperity, success, beauty, happiness, pleasure, romance. Solid basis. Flourishing. Advantage, advancement. Beauty, embellishment. Incomplete happiness. Lack in pleasure. Tarnished beauty.

## Five of Wands

The *Five of Wands* upsets the harmony of the *Four*. It suggests that you are involved in strife, competition, power struggles, contests, ambition, or pride. On the other hand, the RWS image could apply equally well to team games, brainstorming, and problem solving for all involving an aggressive stance and the struggle for success. I call this the “committee card,” in which you can test your ideas through conflict and disagreements with others or struggle with the conflicting desires of five different parts of yourself. What begins as playful jousting or sham warfare can escalate into angry fighting or destructive criticism. When you fear your ideas will not be acknowledged or your desires satisfied, you could develop animosity. Alternatively, the card suggests exploring multiple perspectives by cultivating the free and playful expression of ideas. There can be invigorating activities, jockeying for position, or arousal of the fiery libido. You may be striving for success or struggling to be heard. In the RWS deck, five people seem to be building a pentacle, a symbol of power and protection. It suggests that you examine a variety of points of view. Although advancement is possible, you may have to work hard and overcome obstacles to earn it.

**TRADITIONAL:** Gold, riches. Opulence, luxury, brilliance. Abundance. Gain. A prudent marriage. Great moral activity. Extravagant pride or an angry disposition could spoil success.

## Five of Wands Reversed

The *Five of Wands Rx* can indicate breaking through a logjam or ending of a period of conflict and stress. It might, however, require legal or professional intervention. You could refuse to play games, or seek to diffuse a volatile situation by not engaging in it. However, you may not be able to remain uninvolved. As with President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, others might actively persecute and harass you, to the point of instituting legal proceedings. Someone could sabotage negotiations in order to keep the situation up-in-the-air or unstable.

Perhaps you seek to narrow your options rather than open them for discussion. You may fear to speak out, or hesitate to create controversy. Since, with a reversal, the turmoil could be internal, you might experience inner conflicts, so that it is difficult to make decisions. Priorities may not

be clear. Animosities could escalate into major disputes and arguments, or decrease into exhaustion. Whereas all the sticks are at odds in the upright RWS card, in the reversal the people's legs line up; so, at the other extreme, you could eventually work together as a group to reach accord and end hostilities. You might then have a chance to relax, and enter a period of tranquillity and relief. A game or sporting event may be postponed or cancelled.

Healthwise, this can indicate antibodies fighting off infection. If projected on to others, you may believe they are the ones generating antagonistic or disruptive behavior, while you remain tranquil and unattached. You might also suspect them of trickery.

On the shamanic and magical level, you may engage in psychic self-defense. Or you could assume coyote or trickster qualities, such as using trickery or guile to foment dispute. This is perhaps to distract attention from your real purpose, and then to sneak away from the melee.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Lawsuits, legal proceedings. Courts, tribunals. Disputes. Trickery, fraud. Persecution. Irritation, harassment, quarrels. Contradictions. Delays and some unpleasantness, but with a generally favorable outcome.



## Six of Wands

Following the strife of the *Five*, a victor or leader emerges in the *Six of Wands* around whom the rest gather in support. It also represents mobilizing around the prevailing plan. This card indicates success, victory, pride, and self-empowerment or advancement, usually due to one's own skill and courage. In the RWS deck we see a figure crowned with laurels, and "riding high." It presages a victory, ascension to power, or winning a prize. You might achieve high-visibility and public acclaim or rewards for your achievements. You could be taking a leadership role or you are supporting and following someone else in such a position. You might be expecting leadership, therefore, from persons in high places. This figure could bring good news or herald the realization of hopes and desires. Others might place you on a pedestal or ask you to take charge. Your self-confidence and motivational attitude could inspire a following or teamwork. This position, however, could depend on their continued goodwill. As a *Six*, the card suggests reciprocal benefits for both leader and followers, for they are operating in mutual accord. Alternatively, this card depicts an assembly of working people, and public opinion that can make or break popularity.

**TRADITIONAL:** Domestic and family life, home, servants, housekeeping. Messenger. Good news. Hopes, desires, wishes, expectations fulfilled. Difficulties resolved. Laziness and work alternate. Quarrels among servants. Efforts bring reward. Progress.

## Six of Wands Reversed

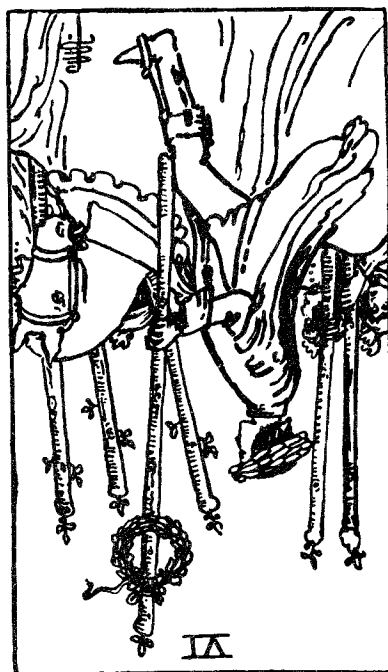
After the possible persecution and harassment of the *Five*, the *Six of Wands Rx* can indicate a fall from high places. This is the "Trojan Horse" card. Traditionally, it suggests that a victory or success may be transitory. Enemies could be at the gate and possibly some kind of treachery or betrayal is involved. News or deliveries get lost or waylaid, or you experience miscommunications. Employees or those under you may be disloyal, unsupportive, or simply let you down. Alternatively, you could be proud, arrogant or condescending toward your subordinates. Victory may elude you. You could be stymied in your actions. Delays are possible, or you might be fearful or apprehensive. Act with caution, especially if depending

on others, but do not let distrust turn into estrangement. Pride can also slip you up or lead to an embarrassing fall. The situation could be all show with no substance. Leadership might be lacking or ineffectual. A hero or other public figure can prove to have “feet of clay.” You might find yourself backpedaling to get out of a commitment. Perhaps you resist or reject taking a leadership position. While you may have secret ambitions and inner achievements, do not feel like you have to hide your laurels.

If you have projected victory on to others, you might feel jealous, distrust their ability, or try to undercut their efforts. Healthwise, it suggests that the efforts of your antibodies to fight off infection may fail, or you could literally suffer a fall.

On a shamanic level this recalls the riding forth of the fairy folk from their mounds, creating mischief and claiming for their own any who have stumbled across their entrances. Like Inanna’s quest, it can signify a descent to the underworld, a journey of self-discovery.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Infidelity, treachery, disloyalty. Apprehension, caution, fear. Waiting, expectation. Deferred hope. Betrayal. Delays. Poor service. Short-lived gains. Superficial benefits. Letters lost or waylaid. Self-trust. Confidence. Foresight.



## Seven of Wands

This is the king-of-the-mountain card. It is about holding your ground, and prevailing over the odds. Whenever people reach the top, as in the *Six of Wands*, there are others waiting to challenge or bring them down as depicted in the *Seven*. Overcoming such obstacles tests your mettle. After daring to become a leader, you need courage and persistence in the face of adversity or even in simple negotiations. You may need to take a stand or defend your position, beliefs, and ideals. You could be handling competition, or meeting opposing views in a speech, discussion, or on the Internet. Perhaps you face disapproval. In the RWS deck the figure seems to be straddling a divide, or at the brink of a cliff. While he has a superior vantage point, he's also wearing two different shoes that could indicate an uneven or unsure footing. You can develop confidence in your self-worth and valor by handling problems, rivalry, and confrontation with persistence, yet restraint. One Tarot reader noted, however, that dealing with opposition could steal your energy and waste the time you could be spending on better things.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, the figure could be sticking the wands into the ground, and thus concentrating on the proper placement or orchestration of elements in any project.

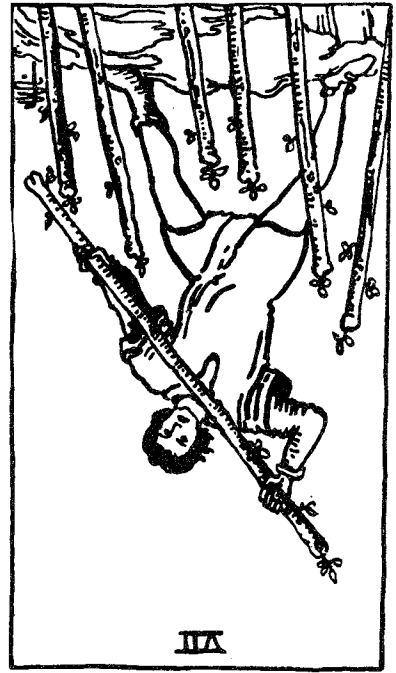
**TRADITIONAL:** Discussion, negotiation, speeches. Trade, commerce. Meetings, conferences, symposia. Dissertation. Gossip. Success, advantage, profit, gain. Victory through hard effort and competition. High productivity. Good exam results.

## Seven of Wands Reversed

This card is reminiscent of the Berlin Wall, which was devised to keep people from each other. It can be about paranoia, or about overcoming it and tearing down the wall. It is also feeling overwhelmed, or having too much to handle. You might be overcoming the objections of family or friends to a job or lover. Or you could actively set up defenses or barricades to keep people at a distance. At best, such barricades can allow you time and space for reflection before making decisions, or let you work out difficulties in isolation, and make adjustments in peace. But this card could also represent fidgeting as an excuse to avoid taking the next step. Traditionally, this card is called "embarrassment," which has a double meaning: of self-conscious distress, as well as a surfeit or overabundance



that creates complications. You may become overly cautious or faint-hearted, especially if in a disadvantageous or inferior position, causing you to back down or retreat, or behave passive-aggressively. Rather than standing your ground you might compromise in negotiations, especially to gain favor or popularity. On the other hand, you may become unyielding or aggressive and angry, especially as overcompensation for perceived vulnerability and feared victimization. Indecision can lead you to vacillate, or become discouraged. If projected on to others, you might see them as weak-willed and obsequious, or, alternatively, as stalkers who will not leave you alone.



The reversed card can also represent the removal of defenses, walls, and barriers between people.

Healthwise, this could refer to nervous anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder or to the body producing too much of a substance as in diabetes.

On the shamanic and magical level, this suggests grounding and centering techniques that are essential whenever you open yourself psychically or personally deal with fears and childhood trauma that you may have blocked or compartmentalized.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Embarrassment, anxiety, consternation. Indecision, doubt, irresolution, hesitation. Uncertainty, perplexity, vacillation. Losses. Variety, diversity. Victimization. Slander. Surplus. Excess.

## Eight of Wands

The *Eight of Wands* is often called the “falling in love card,” while the Golden Dawn called it “Swiftness.” You can think of it as being swept off your feet by infatuation, great ideas, or enthusiasms—carried away with your desires as if in an adrenaline rush. Activities and energies are mobilized and speeded up. This card can indicate business dealings and rapid communications by phone, Internet, or express mail. It could be air travel, maneuvers, a race, or any kind of rapid advancement toward a goal. As shown in the RWS card with its “arrows of love,” everything is up in the air, albeit neatly in parallel lines. You may be systematizing, ordering, aligning, or streamlining processes. In the world of ideas you could be working independently, yet along the same lines as others, as when several people make discoveries simultaneously. It usually indicates that progress is being made, although there is a danger of too much haste. Be willing to go with the flow. You might become aware of synchronicities or serendipitous encounters confirming you are moving in the right direction. On the other hand, this card can suggest you are experiencing the frenetic energy such as that found at a fair or amusement park.

**TRADITIONAL:** Country living or outing. Agriculture, cultivation. Garden, field, woods. Journey. Recreation, pastimes, festivities. Great activity. Calm, tranquility. Arousal of love. Luck. Hasty developments. Commercial transactions. Progress, direction.

## Eight of Wands Reversed

The wands in the *Eight of Wands Rx* seem to bar the way, or are being waved about, so that you could run headlong into problems. Accord falls into dispute, infatuation becomes jealousy or rivalry, your emotions run amuck. You might fall out of love. You could be overly impulsive, or caught in a volatile and repetitive pattern. There can be disagreements and quarrels. Arousal reaches the point of excess, and may leap out of control. A third party could cause upsets in your love life. Communications go astray or to the wrong person. Energy is wasted and efforts go for naught. Perhaps you are rushing around at the last minute, when a burst of little things goes wrong. In excess, it could lead to hysteria or panic. The card can also suggest nonconformity, incompatibility, irregularity, or something

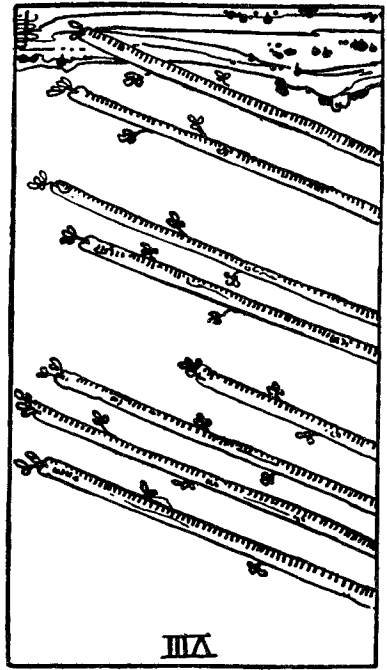
mismatched. On the other hand, there could be a strike or slow-down, the usual reversed delays and cancellations. Plans and inspirations may dissipate. Alternatively, this card takes the limits off what is possible, so that you are now free of restraints. Instead of coming to earth, the movement seems to be upward, so that you are breaking through to a new level of experience.

For one querent, who had been separated from her husband for three years, this represented the point at which she stopped wavering (*Two of Pentacles*) and filed for divorce. All qualms disappeared as she freed herself from self-imposed restraints to emancipate herself.

If projected on to others, you might see them as causing disruptions or problems through being too hasty. Healthwise, this represents the functioning of hormones, adrenaline and other body/mind and mood-altering chemicals in the body.

From the shamanic and magical perspective, this is an explosion of vital life force energy. In terms of the rapid movement, it can represent the witch's broomstick and the ability to fly or astral travel.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Quarrels, domestic disputes, discord. Arrows of jealousy, internal dispute, stings of conscience, household disharmony. Marital upsets caused by a third party. Setback, stoppage, strike. Regrets, remorse. Scruples.



## Nine of Wands

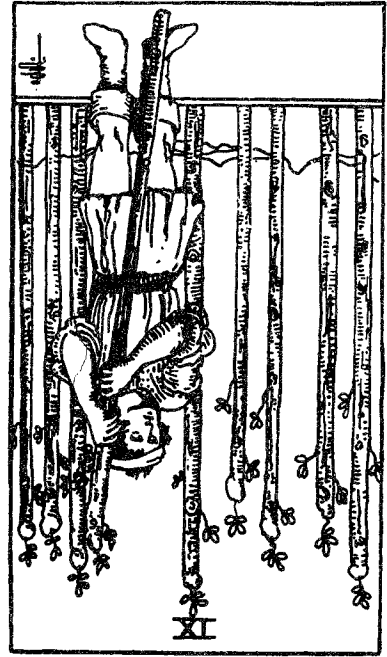
The progress of the *Eight* is completed in the *Nine of Wands*. In the RWS card the wands have reached their target and are placed as a fortification. You may anticipate being attacked by someone or even something that is not directly apparent. You could secure and oversee projects and interests, or stockpile emergency supplies, which must be protected. Like an old soldier whose wounds testify to his experience, your training, development, and discipline have resulted in moral and spiritual strength or character. Caution and wisdom suggest the need for careful assessment, for there are signs of wariness and suspicion, an expectation of difficulties, and the appearance of enemies. If so, you could delay, postpone, or temporarily halt work, although it may just be a time of rest. From many choices, you could be deciding on one at the expense of the rest. You can set yourself apart, with an independence that might be isolating and, because of emotional wounding in the past, you could hide behind self-created defenses. An inflexibility of outlook and old habit patterns could become ingrained. Strength of purpose and courage in your convictions will aid in handling hardship as you hold a line or resolutely defend what you have created. This card counters the haste of the *Eight* with a “wait-and-see” attitude.

**TRADITIONAL:** Delay, suspension, adjournment. Removal. Estrangement. Difficulties, frustration. Waiting, anticipation. Hidden enemies. Stagnation. Order, discipline. Experience. Strength in reserve. Rest from action. Prudence. Lack of motivation.

## Nine of Wands Reversed

In the *Nine of Wands Rx* the figure depicted on the RWS card seems as if he is ready to break through confinement and is looking for a way out. The obstacles and difficulties of the upright card could become more extreme, as might the loneliness and sense of alienation, which, at worst, could feel like a banishment. It might be time to tear down defenses and rejoin the human race. Alternatively, you might be trying to overcome someone else’s resistance. You could be reconsidering commitments, shirking responsibility, lack discipline, or perhaps you are bored and tired of waiting for something that never comes. On the other hand, you could simply be off duty. Given a little freedom, you might be impulsive or do something rash.

You might have reached a dead-end in your own progress, or be experiencing career setbacks. Like a long wait in a doctor's office or airport you might despair of ever getting going. Healthwise, a minor but prolonged illness, perhaps something chronic and nagging, and a weakened immune system, can indicate a continual battle for health. In other words, your basic defenses could be weakened and impaired. In fact, you might have some personal "cross to bear" that becomes an unwilling obstacle to achieving your ends. If you project this card on to others, you could experience them as hostile, as if denying you entry to some club or experience. Perhaps



you display a false front, and deny feeling suspicion or hostility yourself. You can either be overly defensive or caught off guard. This card can also represent inner knowledge and experience that is not shared or shareable with others.

At the shamanic and magical level, this is related to the archetype of the wise old man, hermit, or even the dragon, who, as a gatekeeper, awaits the arrival of journeyers. It expresses the skill of discernment in the use of powers.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Obstacles, crosses. Adversity, problems, delays, disaster. Barriers to overcome. Pain. Slight, but prolonged illness. Bad luck, misfortune. Sluggishness. Displeasure.

## Ten of Wands

*Tens* move from the individual completion of the *Nines* to sharing the results with community. In the case of the *Ten of Wands*, this could involve both success and suffering. What started as a single great idea in the *Ace* has proliferated, perhaps through overconfidence, into too many projects. The weight of maintaining them has become oppressive. It could mean information overload or burnout. This card is about burdens, responsibilities, obligations, and the necessity to do what is expected. You may feel betrayed by your own ambitions, or resentful of those you serve. If weighed down by “the system,” whether that is family, government, or work, you tend to feel that the burdens have become unjust and cruel. You are being taxed and encumbered. You may feel trapped and pressured. Perhaps you are unable to delegate responsibility, or selfishly keep everything to yourself. Projects become obstructions that are difficult to see beyond. Enthusiasm dies under the weight of duty, triggering creative blocks. On the other hand, you could be proud of your skills and your ability to help others, as you shoulder tasks with perseverance and even ease. This could also signify the home stretch, the final agonizing steps of a long, successful endeavor.

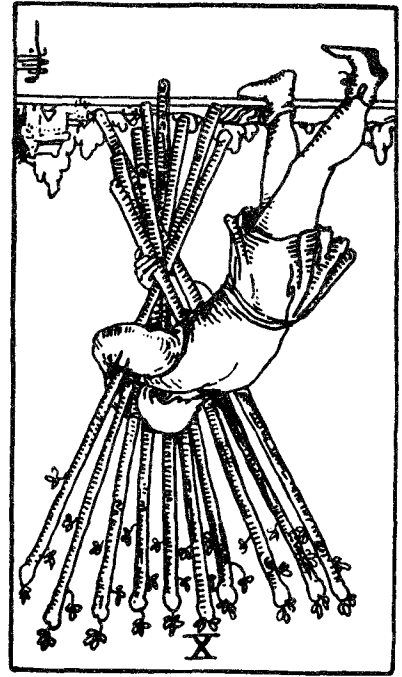
**TRADITIONAL:** Oppression. Overactivity. Betrayal, treachery. Forgeries, false-seeming, disguise, perfidy. Injustice. Cruelty. Obstinacy. Travel. Confidence, security, honor, good faith. High-stakes gambling. Success at any cost. Harvests. Great rewards.

## Ten of Wands Reversed

The *Ten of Wands Rx* can indicate laying down burdens, getting out from under oppressive situations, and delegating responsibility. You can be walking away from difficulties, obtaining relief from pressure, or clearing the way for a new start. On the other hand, you might deny that a labor is too great. If trapped in an untenable position it may lead to feelings of despair and hopelessness. You could “bury your head in the sand” to avoid an issue. Borrowing from traditional upright meanings, it can indicate forgeries and falsities, something rotten at the core, or simple dissembling. You might be “hiding your light behind a barrel,” or disguising yourself for purposes of subterfuge, like Sherlock Holmes camouflaged as a common

laborer. It is important to consider if there is duplicity or treachery involved. Check whether you are shifting the burden conscientiously or “passing the buck.”

If you are projecting this on to others they may seem full of contraries and hypocrisy, or you consider them irresponsible and untrustworthy. Perhaps you trusted someone and now are “left holding the bag.” Chores may not get done. You could feel incapacitated by stumbling blocks. Your efforts, no matter how considerable, may not be producing positive results. It can spell the end of a long-held ambition or dream. Look to other cards for the circumstances and alternative ways



of handling them. Healthwise, a traditional meaning suggests a disease for which you have not been vaccinated, perhaps signifying flu, measles, or tuberculosis. If you are releasing encumbrances it may feel like having a new lease on life. This card can indicate clearing out debris and getting rid of household clutter. You could be moving your home or emigrating.

At the shamanic and magical level, it can indicate working with ancestors to release genetic and familial patterns that do not serve your highest purpose.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Efforts produce little results. Rot at the center. A trap. Obstacles. Deliberate breach of faith, calculated violation of trust, treachery. Not what you seem. Contraries. Losses. Intrigues. Hypocrisy, worries, plots.

## Ace of Cups

This *Ace* offers new opportunities on an emotional, psychic, and familial plane. It may presage a new relationship or a deepening of existing relationships. You may be commencing an affair, opening to happiness, or welcoming someone into your home. There could be plenty of food or drink, or a party or social event in the offing. Perhaps you will experience an unspecified urge or upswelling of emotion, for it depicts your heart and emotions as overflowing. You and your loved ones could benefit from a gift of human or divine blessings and spiritual nurturance. You might receive an offer of love or demonstration of affection, possibly in the form of a love letter. This card urges you to go with the flow and make connections with others. In work, you may have the opportunity to “follow your bliss,” and do what you love. Occasionally, it can indicate fertility, conception, birth, or a marriage. It also suggests a psychic opening, or an outpouring of dreams, visions, and intuitions. The realm of the imagination and the unconscious is now accessible. You could be exceptionally receptive and reflective. It is a good time to look within. Filled with joy, “your cup runneth over.” The card suggests the idealism of the holy grail and an ever-flowing cornucopia of both spiritual and material favors.

**TRADITIONAL:** Home, hearth, abode, family. Table, banquet, nourishment, feasting. Invitation. Good Cheer. Opulence, overindulgence. Good news. Fertility, birth. Love, passion. Kindness. Abundance. Beauty. Joy. Constancy.

## Ace of Cups Reversed

The *Ace of Cups Rx* implies limits or boundaries set on emotional, psychic, or dream-time experiences. The love you formerly felt for a person, home, or work may have eroded or dissipated over time. You could be feeling drained and empty. Perhaps you are distancing yourself from a situation to avoid disruptive influences. Unpleasant memories and old disappointments could make you resistant to a new idea or relationship. You might deny feelings or, on the other hand, express care and concern you do not actually feel. For instance, you could use insincere flattery to manipulate others. Or, you might barter your affections for money, security, or position. If you overindulge in food or drink, or have an eating disorder, it signals a deeper cause. You might experience unrequited or lost love or



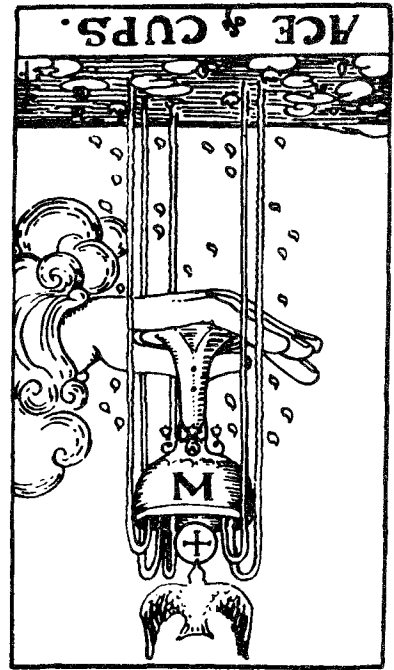
deception. Or, the love you crave is simply not in the offing. As with the other reversed Aces there could be delays or infertility.

You may have blocked your psychic, mystical, or intuitive abilities, or believe them to be untrustworthy. Alternatively, you could be adrift and gullible, unable to focus, or commit to a direction. If projected on to others, you may think them inconstant or wish-washy. Change is unwelcome, and you may become sentimental or melancholy, as you cling to the old. Perhaps you feel like others are “raining on your parade.” You might reject a friendly overture or turn down an opportunity. On the other hand, this can be

a turning away from drugs, drink, and overindulgence as you seek a better grasp on the true sources of life. Healthwise, this card suggests issues with addictions as well as stomach, digestive, and other food-related concerns, and “female” problems.

From a shamanic perspective this suggests sinking deeply into your feelings—especially negative ones—and following them like a thread back to an earlier memory, to thus reclaim your feelings from the excessive charge and guilt residue of that experience.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Change, novelty, revolution, alteration. Erosion, mutation, metamorphosis. Inconstancy, instability. Unrequited love. False-hearted. Sterility. Exchange, barter, sale. Donation. Benefits scorned.



## Two of Cups

As the image in the *Two of Cups* suggests, this is about love and its uplifting and healing power. The red, winged lion depicts the potential spiritualization of the passions, and the card as a whole implies equality as well as reciprocal respect and benefit. As a major statement of the power of opposites to attract, it indicates the potential for a loving relationship or a caring interaction. You may cooperate or share with someone, seek to transcend differences, or draw together for some higher purpose. Perhaps you engage two different aspects of yourself, such as the masculine and feminine, or outer and inner, in a harmonious interplay of give and take. You may feel compassion and sympathy, or be willing to meet someone halfway. The *Twos* can be about choices, and in this case suggests that options can be blended or united. William Blake noted that contraries need each other to elicit the fullest expression of each. If there has been conflict you could be looking for a way to forgive or reconcile; this indicates a bridging and harmonizing of that split. This card can indicate marriage or engagement, friendship, passion, or simply infatuation. You might make pledges of mutual agreement, or be seeing eye-to-eye on a collaborative venture.

**TRADITIONAL:** Relationship, love, attachment. Attraction. Passion. Affection, affinity, kindness. Harmony, empathy, concord. Sincerity. Betrothal, marriage, partnership, union. Friendship, cooperation. Shared fortune. Benevolence.

## Two of Cups Reversed

The *Two of Cups Rx* can signal conflicting messages and a kind of “push-pull” interaction, or quarrels and empty passion. Attempts to get together may fail, at least temporarily. There could be hindrances or opposition to love. Differences might lead to divorce—but not always. It can indicate a high-and-dry period with no relationship in sight or blind lust. You could be rejecting or withdrawing from love or conducting a secret affair. If you are presently in a good relationship, there may be temporary problems. Other cards will indicate whether there is abuse, infidelity, sexual incompatibility. It could also be obsession, miscommunication, separation, unrequited love, no relationship, or someone dragging you down into the mud. At worst, you will find broken trust, degraded passions, or hopes

disappointed. Perhaps you are drawn into a relationship that is not good for you. On the other hand, this is such a good card that unless something supports the worst-case scenario, it is just that things are not working quite as you hoped. Not too many lovers are as star-crossed as Romeo and Juliet. More likely, your date shows up late, you have a lover's spat, or experience the sweet sorrow of parting—for the weekend.

If projected on to another, you might feel they have betrayed love or refused to come halfway. If internalized, it could be about balancing the inner masculine and feminine, Venus and Mars, or conscious and subconscious. A mirroring of your inner self is going on here, so the way other people treat you reflects how you feel about yourself. Healthwise, it could indicate sexually transmitted diseases or passing on other infections, but primarily this is a card of healing.

At the shamanic and magical level, this suggests sex magic, shamanic transgenerism, but especially mirror-work through meeting a shadow or adversary in another person through whom you can recognize things you do not acknowledge in yourself.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Crossed desires. Wish, want, longing, craving. Covetousness. Envy, greed, jealousy. Concupiscence, lust, passion. Illusion. Hindrances, obstacles, opposition. Quarrels, conflict. Partings, separation. Dissatisfaction. Infidelity.



## Three of Cups

After the pair bonding of the *Two*, you widen your interactions and make them more public in the *Three of Cups*. This card has come to have special significance for women's circles and gatherings, although it can also indicate male bonding, mixed friendships, or friendly work affiliations. It signifies congeniality, and can suggest an alliance, party, joyful occasion, hospitality, and general good times. You might attend an entertainment, recital, or performance; or play games; or celebrate good fortune and achievements, for instance career advancement or the completion of a project. You may be receiving help and support from peers, or profiting from shared advice and information. The harvest symbols in the RWS deck suggest a time of fruitfulness and plenty, when a work has been successfully accomplished or problems solved. Its implied success is especially relevant to the arts—literature, poetry, song, music, and dance. You might take part in rituals, since the three people seem to be building energy and raising spirits together. The emphasis is on enjoyment, satisfaction, grace, group sharing, and mutual support. Fun and dancing are in order. However, if other cards confirm it, there might be an excess of drugs or drink, or issues around codependency.

**TRADITIONAL:** Success, renown. Fruitfulness. End of difficulties, happy conclusion. Recovery, relief, solace, healing. Achievement. Perfection. Literary gathering. Pleasure, merriment. Abundance. Engagement. Pregnancy.

## Three of Cups Reversed

With the *Three of Cups Rx* you may have less time for friends or socializing than usual, perhaps because of other commitments. Life may be speeded up, that there seems little time for hanging out or friendship. This can result in a bittersweet sensation of nostalgia over a loss or lessening of companionship and good times. You may have indulged, however, in too much of it and could be weary of going the rounds. Perhaps you are disenchanted with your comrades or associates or are finding the usual pleasures empty and unfulfilling. This card can indicate excessive eating and drinking and addictive disorders. The dance could become a drunken revel, or you might be playing when there is work to be done. Your codependency or support networks may have been withdrawn. It can also

mean that you have cut back or “gone on the wagon,” and no longer hang out with the old crowd. If you are trying to reach a successful conclusion to some project then there still may be obstacles or lack of cooperation. This can also be about exclusion from a clique or inner circle, such as blackballing, and a feeling of being left out. One tradition mentions a theft by someone you know. Rather than being with those who celebrate your victories you might find yourself with those who are envious of them, or who do not have similar values and goals. If projected on to others, you may see them as the grasshoppers that frolic while the ants prepare for winter.

Healthwise, *Cups* tend to indulge, but there could also be accidents and falls.

At the shamanic and magical level, this card indicates the triple Goddess—Maiden, Mother, Crone. It suggests leaving offerings for the “wee folk” and elemental spirits in order to maintain good relations with the natural forces. It can also indicate raising energy for magical workings.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Termination, conclusion. Expediting business, quickness, dispatch. Obstacles to overcome before a happy ending. Setback. Excessive pleasures, overabundance, overindulgence. Loss of prestige. Delays. Theft of books. Accident.



## Four of Cups

The *Four of Cups* is sometimes referred to as “the morning after the night before” that is depicted in the *Three*. After a period of pleasures you may need some quiet grounding, stability, and rest. You could seek meditation, contemplation, or withdrawal in a search for serenity. Or, you may feel only lethargy, apathy, and boredom. You could have second thoughts about your indulgences, along with feelings of disgust, discontent, or aversion. Perhaps you are literally hungover or have a stomachache or are simply exhausted from some strenuous effort. Nothing interests or pleases you. With studied indifference you could ignore or refuse a gift, opportunity, or overture of friendship, or take something so much for granted that you exert no effort. You might take time off or go on a vacation.

On the other hand, as the daydream card, you could be ruminating, imagining, or organizing things in your imagination. In creative situations this card can represent a fallow period when little appears to be happening on the outside, so that creative leaps and new ideas can arise out of states of relaxation. It can indicate taking time to commune with nature, or you might simply wait for the next step to become apparent.

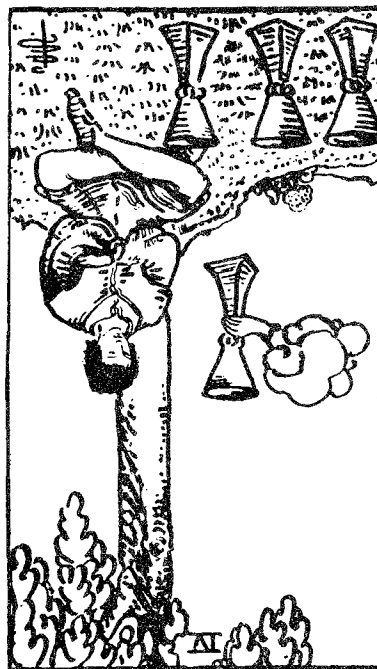
**TRADITIONAL:** Weariness, ennui, dejection. Annoyance. Boredom. Disgust, aversion, discontent. Dissatisfaction, displeasure. Sorrow of spirit. Domestic troubles. Pains of love. Affliction. Adversity, hate. Bitterness. Unsatisfactory relationships. Stationary period.

## Four of Cups Reversed

The *Four of Cups Rx* suggests you are looking for new opportunities to overcome boredom and passivity. In desiring to enliven your existence, you might reconsider options you formerly rejected. All you need is a sign, omen, or presentiment as to which new studies, friendships, or events you should throw yourself into. Reversal sometimes increases the psychic potential of this card, making you even more sensitive to messages from the unseen world. New solutions to old problems could arise in unforeseen ways.

Alternatively, this card can indicate a feeling of restlessness, an inability to sit still or meditate serenely. You could be breaking out of the fallow period of discontent, seen in the upright card, and are thirsting for fresh

experiences. If old relationships bore you, you will be eager to make new acquaintances but may not be especially discriminating if merely caught up by their novelty. Sometimes there can be premonitions or foreboding, as in the phrase: "someone is walking over my grave." When this card is projected on to others you may perceive them as stubbornly recalcitrant and closed off to experience or, alternatively, as will-of-the-wisps who flit from one new fad to another and then become quickly bored. At an extreme, you could be so caught up in the world of dreams, meditation, or fantasy that you reject involvement in this life.



Healthwise, there could be loss of appetite. Tiredness and apathy might increase, especially when low blood pressure, poor circulation, anemia, or chronic fatigue sap you of energy.<sup>2</sup>

From a shamanic perspective this card may suggest the use of divination tools and oracles. As in fairy tales it can also be the spirit or fairy gift that comes in the midst of despair. Alternatively, it represents the effects of being psychically drained.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Novelty. New turn of events. New knowledge, acquaintances, opportunities. Sign, omen, presentiment. Premonition, prognostication, prediction. Foreboding.

## Five of Cups

The *Five of Cups* suggests suffering, grief, sadness, disappointment, and unwilling sacrifice. Following the passivity of the *Four*, you may regret lost opportunities or departed serenity. In the RWS card the figure is cloaked in black—representing ignorance, limitation, or fear. The card shows several stages of grief: loss, anger and despair, picking up the pieces, crossing a bridge to a new stage, and finally coming home to the self. It may be mourning your loss, and letting the tears flow. However, two cups await your attention. Something valuable can come out of the situation—tradition suggests an inheritance or legacy. On the other hand, you may have kicked over the cups in anger. Perhaps you are leaving a legacy of abuse and rage. You are at a turning point. But you could be filled with self-blame or pity, the sense of “if only . . .” You may have discovered a betrayal, deceit, or treachery. Hopes can be overturned and plans go awry. It simply could be a day when nothing goes right. In concentrating on what was spilled, you may ignore what remains and therefore limit your options. Fears of abandonment might seem realized. Melancholy and sadness could keep you focused on the past, or you could accept it as “water under the bridge” and move on.

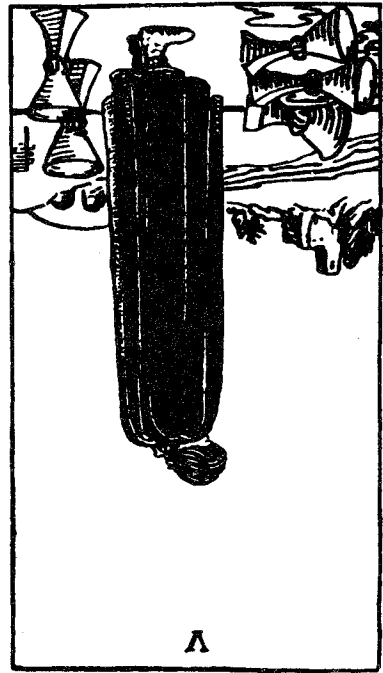
**TRADITIONAL:** Lament. Loveless marriage. Imperfection, error. Quarrels, breakups. Loss. Inheritance, legacy, patrimony, will. Gifts. Tradition. Sacrifice. Deceit, treachery. Dangerous liaisons. Moving away from the past. Regret. Inherited abuses, vendettas.

## Five of Cups Reversed

The *Five of Cups Rx* is generally quite hopeful, indicating recovery and renewal—moving away from loss and getting on with your life. There could be unexpected rewards for doing so. You may be surprised by the return of old friends or relatives, or be invited to a reunion, or discover a friend giving quiet support behind you. This is about healing rifts and letting bygones be bygones. You could be forming alliances and personal connections that will benefit you in the future. The card is characteristic of affinity groups around political and environmental causes—possibly spurred by the endangerment of species and habitats, or concerns for future generations. You may explore family history and genealogy in



which you discover “black sheep” and genetic flaws as well as heroes and ancestral talents. Parents and children who were separated could be searching for their birth family or being reunited, depending on surrounding cards. Occasionally this card is more difficult, especially if you are denying loss and sorrow, or refusing to move beyond grief. This would be clear because you would not be connecting with others in a meaningful way and perceive yourself as a victim or martyr. Your own sadness and loss could be made secret as you portray a false brightness. When projected on to others, you might perceive them as stuck in the past or wasting their



abilities on lost causes. Their upsets can cause you frustration and worry.

Healthwise, there could be incontinence, or the loss experienced when accident or illness has left you handicapped or has extinguished a former ability.

On a shamanic level, this can indicate mediumship and communication with the dead. It is the first stage of the archetypal journey into the underworld in which one must be stripped of all worldly pride and trappings before discovering true value.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Hopeful outlook. Alliance, affinity, connections. Consanguinity, family members. Race, lineage. Invitations. Return of an old friend or relative. Reunion. Beneficial friends. Inheritance opposed. False projects.

## Six of Cups

Following the loss of the *Five*, in the *Six of Cups* you may seek solace in the past or welcome the consolation and support of friends in the present. Generally this card speaks about the influence of your past on the present. You might be nostalgic for simpler, happier times, or early trauma could be affecting you in this situation. Memories occasionally reach back to karmic ties in past lives. *Sixes* are usually seen as the high point of each suit and represent reciprocity or an equal exchange, in this case, of emotional energy. You could be giving gifts or perpetuating romantic acts of loving kindness. Perhaps you are reminiscing about your youth and childhood or yearning for former styles and times. Or you could be courting someone or reconciling after a quarrel. The card suggests sensual pleasure and happiness or the care and appreciation of others. You could be beautifying your surroundings, especially in an old-fashioned, period style. An alternate reading of the RWS card notes that the guard, the enclosed courtyard, and disparity in size between the figures suggests either protection or intrigue, but it may have an even more disturbing significance since, upon rare occasion, this card indicates childhood abuse that may be denied or forgotten, like happy family photos that hide a dysfunctional truth.

**TRADITIONAL:** The past, previously, formerly. Memories. Thoughts of past loves. Nostalgia. Faded, vanished. Old age, decrepitude, antiquity. Longing, yearning. Indecision in love. Poor choices. Traumas, mistakes. Dissatisfaction, lack of affection. Courtship. New acquaintances.

## Six of Cups Reversed

While traditional meanings make the *Six of Cups Rx* a card of coming events, modern interpretation stresses clinging to the past. Putting these together suggests that you may be turning away from the past to focus on the future, whether successfully or not. Both imply an inability to live completely in the present. Preoccupation with the past can create lethargy and inertia—just as medical intuitive Carolyn Myss points to the dangers of “woundology” as an inability to move beyond old wounds.

On the other hand, this can be a card of regeneration. From a therapeutic standpoint you could be releasing old emotional ties and their

unconscious patterns. Returning to former environments you may find that nothing is as you remember it. Idealized recollections can disintegrate in the face of harsh reality. You can be liberating yourself from former obligations and responsibilities. At the other extreme, you might be involved in new technologies, science fiction, or other futurist endeavors. While this can be a card of inner child work, it also suggests it is time to grow up, live in the present, and perhaps let go of a childhood home or family stuff, whether metaphoric or material. You could redecorate to rid yourself of memories. Transcending your roots, especially if there is shame, could motivate your ambitions for the future. In rare cases, this might indicate a reconnection with a past love.



When projecting this card on to others, you may see them as either reactionaries or ultraprogressives or, perhaps, as people who refuse to grow up.

From a shamanic point of view, this can refer to plant medicines like the flowers on the card. It also suggests time travel into past or future. Smell and taste can catapult you into inner vision or the re-experiencing of former events, so the courtyard is a reminder of the importance of working within a sacred space or *temenos*.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** The future, future prospects. Shortly, soon, after. That which will soon come to pass. Promise of better times. Regeneration, resurrection, renewal. New friends or environment. Plans that may fail.

## Seven of Cups

As we proceed through the suit of *Cups* we advance further into the realm of dreams, reveries, and vision, and it becomes increasingly difficult to discriminate between fantasy and illusion, or to make clear choices. Since *Seven* is the number of tests and trials it could be a kind of *psychomachia* or battle for the soul, which tests your ability to see through erroneous perceptions. The apparitions arising from the cups in the RWS card could represent the seven deadly sins, fatal to spiritual progress, or they can represent the visions of a mystic or an artist. You may be working with the symbolism of the creative imagination and the soul, or you could abandon yourself to debauchery and indulgence in sin and sensual pleasures. You might be building castles in the air or be confused and plagued by indecision. On the other hand, you could be imagining exciting possibilities and internally rehearsing plans to achieve them. There is a danger that you will become so entranced by of your visions that you will wallow in daydreams and let your energy dissipate. Since the picture looks like pyramid marketing, perhaps you are tempted by get-rich-quick schemes, hoping for instant success. Waite calls such illusory or temporary success “fairy favors.” Other cards may show how to manifest these dreams.

**TRADITIONAL:** Thoughts and plans. Fantasy. Soul, spirit, intelligence. Idea, sentiment, imagination. Meditation, reflection, reveries. View, opinion. Unrealistic attitudes, foolish whims. Illusory success.

## Seven of Cups Reversed

The *Seven of Cups Rx* stresses clear, logical thinking, making realistic plans, and setting priorities. It bodes well for achieving your aspirations. You could be breaking through a fog of confusion and illusion, to focus on a chosen goal. With resoluteness of purpose, you might be setting intentions and finding solutions.

Alternatively, your bewilderment increases until, at the extreme, you lose touch with reality. You may be struggling to resist temptation or using your will power to repress or sublimate your desires. For instance, this can signify a celibate who foregoes sensual pleasures. In fact, you might be countering any of the seven deadly sins with the contrary virtues: humility against pride, kindness against envy, abstinence against gluttony, chastity

against lust, patience against anger, liberality against covetousness, and diligence against sloth. Things that you desired in the past may hold less appeal, so that you bypass temporary pleasures in favor of a greater reward. Whether this is for a spiritual purpose or to achieve some other goal will be indicated by other cards.

If you are a creative artist then you might have a well-conceived design, but one that still lacks the enlivening imagination and soul characterizing the upright card. If you are projecting this on to another you may see them as a rationalist unable to appreciate the imaginative wonder, or perhaps unable to recognize an underlying falsity to their premises. A hope could be shattered. Healthwise, this card can indicate



hypochondria, the false belief that one is sick, or any of the ills that arise from the vices.

In the shamanic realm, this is about dispelling illusions to see the reality within, and about facing the worldly temptations that cause, for instance, the downfall of so many gurus and leaders. It can also indicate spending too much time in the imaginal world.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Plan, design, project. Desire. Will power, intention. Determination, resolve. Clear thinking. A goal nearly attained. Intelligent choice. Aspirations achieved.

## Eight of Cups

*Eights* represent progress, making adjustments as you go. In the *Eight of Cups*, interest wanes or has been eclipsed. You might leave behind what formerly attracted, nurtured, emotionally sustained, or fascinated you, such as the visions in the *Seven of Cups*. A relationship could drain you emotionally so that you feel exhausted, weary, discontented, or disappointed. A vacation or retreat may be in order. Perhaps you need to find some way to withdraw, at least temporarily, from a situation, perhaps to heal and regenerate your energy. The water in the RWS image hints at the soothing energy of the sea or the contemplative pleasures of tide pools. You may feel pulled by some unknown, psychically sensed longing (the red cloak of desire) that could manifest as a spiritual quest or deep soul-searching. While this is one of the vagabond or travel cards, it can also refer to abandonment issues. You or someone in your life may have lost interest, feel alienated, or be dissatisfied. Something seems to be missing that prevents emotional tranquility. Other cards could indicate whether this is a temporary situation or if you have totally “lost heart.” Shyness, timidity, or apprehension can mask fear of success or a desire not to cause pain, however, this can be misread as disinterest.

**TRADITIONAL:** Relationship with a blonde or fair girl who is modest, shy, submissive. Propriety. Timidity. Attachment, tenderness. The decline of a matter. Efforts discontinued. Chances that a dream of love may come true; fear that it will not.

## Eight of Cups Reversed

Instead of walking away, the *Eight of Cups Rx* can indicate being reinstated in a nurturing situation. Like the man who abandoned his flock to find a missing sheep, the reversal can represent joy and feasting when the missing one returns. Traditionally it indicates sticking with a process to ensure ultimate success. The cups dominating the top of the reversed card suggest a “window of opportunity” where something more can enter. The cups could imply stockpiled items retrieved by the figure, who is always looking for more—the inveterate collector.

On the other hand, you may be resisting spending time alone. A vacation could be denied or postponed, or your yearnings for a journey

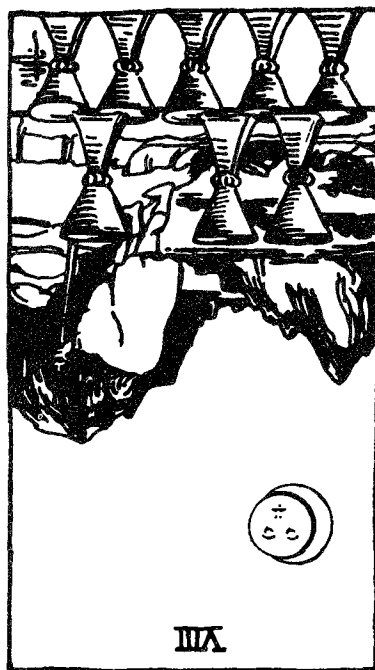
blocked. Dreams of escape may be stymied by inertia, or you may feel trapped by those who think they have your best interests at heart.

This can also represent the hopeless, aimless drifting of someone who cannot stand to feel confined or never quite fits in. You or someone else may fear intimacy and have difficulty making and keeping commitments. At the other extreme, you may find it hard to let go and move on, and so you cling stubbornly to the past even if a relationship is irretrievably broken.

This can be an important card signifying guided visualizations and inner journeys. At worst you may be using inner or outer journeys as escapism or flights from reality. Healthwise, you may experience insomnia or sleepwalking, or need a tooth removed.<sup>3</sup>

In shamanic and magical work, this is about exploring “unfillable holes” or “bottomless pits” in your psyche, which may manifest as eating or shopping disorders, or needy relationships. Journeying back to the first instance and repairing it (like replacing temporary duct tape with a stronger patch) may be part of the inner work required.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Happiness, satisfaction, joy, contentment. Gaiety, feasting, festivities. Family gatherings. Public spectacle. Preparation. Efforts continued to success. Apology, atonement. Debt repaid.



## Nine of Cups

Traditionally the *Nine of Cups* is called the “wish card,” signifying that you will get your wish. It represents material happiness and emotional satisfaction. Generally it presages good health and well-being, albeit with a slight tendency to overindulgence. Your appetites are gratified and desires fulfilled. Everything seems to be working in your favor; however, it can be “lonely at the top.” Perhaps you are a patron of the arts. Like a master of ceremonies, you may be producing an event or making a presentation. At the literal level, the card can indicate a dinner party. Your table is full, and collections and trophies are displayed for all to admire. You might be pleased with yourself, feeling smug, contented, or self-righteous. However, there may be embarrassing things hidden or “swept under the table.” The red hat indicates a developed ability to imagine and visualize what you want with such precise detail and clarity that you can literally create it. But, just as no one else is present at the banquet, it is possible that you have forgotten something important. Energy is reaching completion in the *Nines*, so there may be increasing complacency, even sluggishness. Watch out, for you could become the proverbial couch potato, vegetating and watching too much TV.

**TRADITIONAL:** A grandfather. Marriage to someone older. Victory over enemies. Realization of dreams. Success, abundance, advantage, gain. Triumph in material affairs. Love of pleasure. Pomp. Physical well-being. Difficulties surmounted. Prosperity.

## Nine of Cups Reversed

With the *Nine of Cups Rx*, mistakes, errors, imperfections, and faults may be revealed. This is why the card traditionally signifies both truth and error. Everything unpleasant that was hidden from sight may be exposed. This could be accomplished through the sincerity, honesty, and good faith of someone that uncovers the situation or shows you the error of your ways. The result may be a feeling of liberation, once you are released from superficial or false attachments. You may need to let go of a former attitude of smugness and complacency, even if it means lifting the emotional veil to see what is behind the public expression of your feelings. Opposition and difficulties can arise to upset your plans, especially around parties



and entertainment. There could be differences of opinion in which it becomes important to clarify information. The self-indulgence and tendency to excess in the upright card could dominate, leading to reckless hedonism, shallowness, and addiction. However, this card indicates that someone is likely to call you to account. Resting on past laurels militates against current abilities or methods. You could get left behind in a fast-changing world.

On the other hand, this card can be about inner rather than outer happiness and forsaking material pleasures for spiritual ones. It characterizes the pleasure seeker that overthrows that lifestyle for the sake of simplicity and contemplation. Maintaining a facade may no longer be necessary if you reconsider what makes you happy and what you really want. Healthwise, there could be overindulgence in food and drink, even though symptoms of these or other illnesses remain hidden.

On the shamanic level, this can represent a sweat lodge or steam bath in which toxins are released from both body and soul. It can also indicate a giveaway at which your true wealth and well-being is publicly demonstrated by your ability to give everything away.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Faults, errors, mistakes, imperfections, which may be clarified and overcome. Sincerity, truth, honesty. Loyalty. Candor, simplicity. Liberty. Science, Freedom. Affluence. Being shown the error of your ways. Transitory suffering or difficulties.



## Ten of Cups

The joy of the *Nine* becomes communal in the *Ten of Cups*. This is the culmination of the suit of love, imagination, dreams, and the unconscious. It represents wonder and ecstasy, bounty and high expectations, affection and compatibility, harmonious relationships, and the happy home. It suggests that “everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.” In the RWS card the cups are arrayed in a rainbow, which symbolizes peace after a storm. However, rainbows are illusions, so what seems ideal might be, in actuality, an overidealization—whether referring to home, country, marriage, or the results of a project. You might desire an impossible dream of the kind promoted by advertisers who sell fantasies. On a more literal level, you could be living with an extended family or loving community, spending a sojourn in the country, and welcoming or being welcomed as an honored guest. You may be experiencing hometown glory and high repute. Children could be playing a major role in your life. You might have found a way to bridge your personal and professional lives. In the *Thoth* deck, the card is called “Satiety,” indicating a situation containing more than is desired or appropriate. At its best, this card refers to living in harmony with the environment and those around you.

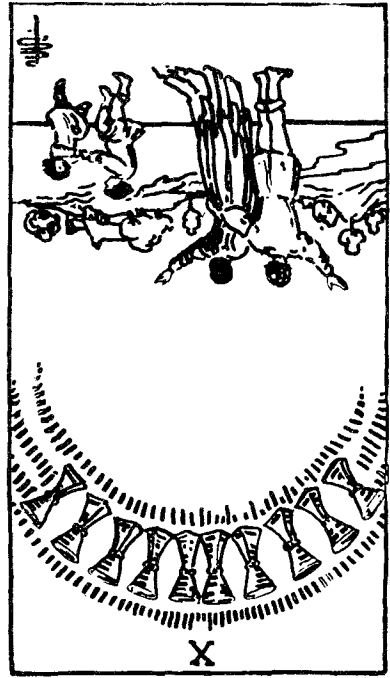
**TRADITIONAL:** Homeland, country, town, dwelling, site, residence. Citizen, people, inhabitants. Place where one resides. Public honors. Esteem, glory, virtue. Reputation. Love of home. Welfare. Contentment. Security.

## Ten of Cups Reversed

The *Ten of Cups Rx* suggests possible problems at home or in relationships. You may soon encounter “rain on your parade” or a “disturbance in the field,” or other kind of reality check concerning your hopes. Celebrations, homecomings, and reunions can be delayed, cancelled, or emotionally draining. A fantasy or dream may be disintegrating. Sometimes it presages the “empty nest” syndrome as children move away. But it can be any leave-taking, breaking up, or a loss of what you have called home. It could signify incompatibility, divorce, or arguments. You may have taken on the role of scapegoat or disruptive factor in the family. You could feel shamed and indignant, for instance, as in being forced to accept charity, welfare, or pity. Alternatively, you drown in your family’s emotional needs

and expectations. As a *Ten*, this situation is more likely to involve tribal or family values and beliefs than individual ones. You could be rejecting these values, by refusing to participate in a family or home life or deciding not to raise children.

This could be about satiation becoming disgust. There is an overabundance, an “embarrassment of riches,” a surplus that becomes unhealthy. Healthwise, this reflects on your environmental well-being. It could be a town growing too fast, country fields becoming ugly suburban sprawl, or your own backyard or garden being crowded out. You or your community could fail to care for the well-being of others less fortunate.



Inwardly, this card represents your interior family, a conjunction of harmonious elements within the self. It depicts inner emotional fulfillment independent of outside stimuli, a psychic wholeness.

At the shamanic level, the reversed rainbow suggests a vessel like that of Osiris and other moon gods who embark on a sea journey with the setting sun or Arthur leaving Camelot. In mystical traditions, this is a joyful journey of renewal and regeneration symbolizing the reuniting of the soul and spirit when the body dies.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Wrath, indignation. Sorrow. Insult. Imprudence threatens well-being. Family quarrel. Differences of opinion. Strife, irritation. Loss of friends. Pettiness, rage, anger, combat. Violence.

## Ace of Swords

This *Ace* signifies a new determination and application of will. You could be applying new ways of thinking or cutting through problems or hazy reasoning. In raising the sword, you focus your energies and commit yourself to a new direction and specific action. As a card of Air associated with mental sharpness, it denotes fresh plans or strategies as well as using analytical tools of criticism and analysis. Just as the sword is double-edged, you may feel divided about something or need to weigh both sides of a question, examine pros and cons, or assess truth versus falsehood. In situations where something is tied up or stymied, you can sever the bonds and liberate energy for action. At the literal level, it can refer to surgery, carving, or other use of a sharp object. Symbolically the pen is cognate with the sword (think quill pen for air and mind), and so communications could be important. The crown and laurels mark a crowning achievement, so the *Ace of Swords* is ambitious, but also stands for fair play and law and order. You might feel confident in your wit, cunning, and problem-solving abilities. It suggests that you be prepared to move forward and assert your rights. Judgments and decisions are based on reason, logic, and scientific method.

**TRADITIONAL:** Difficulties. Accidents. Strife, battles, aggressiveness. Bravery. Strength, justice, power. Excess. Triumph by force. Authority. Conquest. Glory. Competition. Potency. Temper, passion. Conception.

## Ace of Swords Reversed

Like the *Ace of Wands Rx*, this reversal counsels “don’t do it.” There can be project delays, judgments go against you, or efforts fail. Our biological “fight or flight” mechanism here says “flight.” If aggressiveness and logic fail, try a different approach: make swords into plowshares (or coins and pentacles). This reversal can be a humble surrender of ego, saying: “Not my will but Thine be done.”

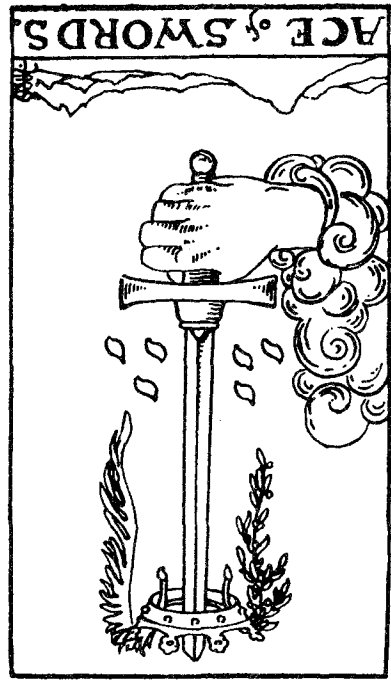
Things may go wrong due to pessimism and lack of confidence. This can lead to mental stress and nervous conditions characteristic of the element of Air (or of Fire, if you prefer). You may be experiencing mental or physical pain, like migraines or ulcers, or denying disturbing thoughts. It could be hard to think clearly, resulting in writer’s block, or an unsolvable problem.

When this card signals the end of hostilities, it may be because you see the situation as a lost cause. The tendency is to project aggressiveness on to others. You may find yourself cutting off someone in the name of cold truth and objectivity or feel cut off by another. Words and logic can be used to deceive. There might be clashes with authority. You could fear condemnation and punishment, feeling “under the sword,” especially if you are disobedient.

You can set limits on a project, define a specific sphere of influence, or place something in safekeeping (like the sword in the stone). You could also refuse to taunt or fight or you recant and take back harsh words. While we might expect impotency, the reversal does carry an old meaning of conception!

From the shamanic perspective, this can mean a lowerworld journey, away from air. It may signify psychic surgery, the removal of symbolic or literal objects that cause imbalance and “dis-ease,” and spiritual weaponry in a battle against lies and deception. The otherworld sword remains in the lake, stone, or cave until called forth by a hero to bring justice back to the world.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Slander. Disaster. Punishment. Tyranny. Injustice. Loss of power. Destruction. Obstacles, hindrance. Prejudice. Seed. Sperm. Conception. Impotency.



## Two of Swords

The *Ace of Swords* signifies there is only one idea, but with the *Two of Swords* we have conflicting perspectives, and you are attempting an impartial peace, harmony, or conformity between them. This means suspending hostilities and judgments and refusing to take sides. You could be involved in diplomatic negotiations or be seeking moderation and balance through placation and mollification. The equilibrium you establish can be a comfortable balance of forces or a stalemate, involving fence-sitting maintained by fear, indecision, or the need to comply. It is an uneasy peace with a delicate balance of power. You might unite with another in striving for mutual benefit through a nonpartisan stance. Conflicting ideas or visions require communication and impartial moderation. However, you could close yourself off by not wanting to see or know what will upset your equipoise. Perhaps you fear someone unduly influencing you. While your mind struggles with a dilemma, you keep your heart protected and unassailable. At cross-purposes, tending to be ambivalent, vacillating, and reluctant to commit yourself, you may be unable to make a decision. You could be waiting for the tide of affairs to change before acting, or it could just be procrastination. With ideas at crossed purposes, you may need to rely on intuition.

**TRADITIONAL:** Friendship, affection, concord, tenderness. Union. Conformity and equipoise. Dangerous times, requiring courage and valor. A duel but not fatal. Tension. Forces in balance. Pacts.

## Two of Swords Reversed

The *Two of Swords Rx* deals with breaking the peace and taking action. Loyalties may be divided, which can result, intentionally or not, in lies and duplicity. You could feel torn apart as if in a tug of war and therefore not at peace with yourself. You might be resisting a balance of power, trying to upset the apple cart, or more aptly, to knock someone off a fence. Perhaps you want to break through complacency and superficial accord, tear off the blindfold to look at disturbing issues that require action. You may be questioning the honor or wisdom of troublemaking or lawbreaking.

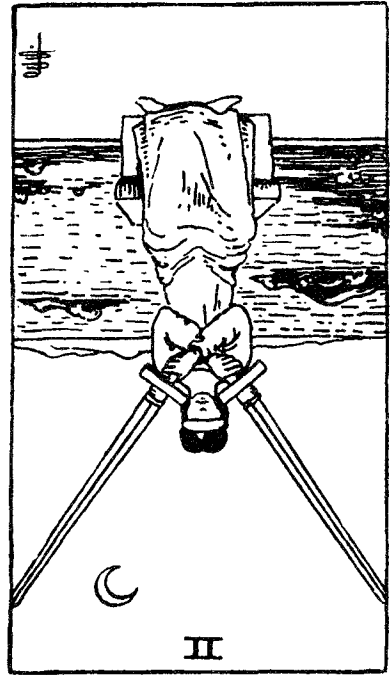
The RWS reversed image suggests a compass: two arms, joined at the top, with one arm placed at the center while the other travels around it. Its

purpose is to encompass; to enclose or include. Rather than the separate-but-equal image of the upright card, opposites are included in the whole, resulting in an inner peace. At the other extreme, a compass can circumscribe or confine within bounds and the opposites become treacherous like false friends. In everyday life, you may simply intend to confine something disagreeable, like designating areas for smoking and no-smoking.

Generally, the stalemate of the upright card does not apply here, but perhaps neither does the accord. You could integrate opposites or deem them irreconcilable. You take sides but could choose the wrong one. You could open your eyes to the truth but it might reveal you have been living with a lie. Whatever the circumstances, it seems likely that deeper truths will soon be revealed.

From the shamanic perspective, this shows the absurdity of thinking you could hold disturbances at bay. As a psychic warrior you must go out to meet the enemy, which is, or cloaks itself in, your own falsehoods.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Treachery, duplicity, lies, imposture. Falsehood, counterfeit. False friend. Victim of betrayal or cheating. Dishonor. A duel. Superficial. Divergence. Breaking off.



## Three of Swords

The attempts at compromise in the *Two* have failed, and the mental distress is too much to bear. A heart pierced by swords first appears in Tarot in the late-fifteenth-century *Sola-Busca* deck, suggesting its long tradition as a card of jealousy, heartache, and rupture. The *Threes* correspond to creativity and integration, but the swords bring disharmony and, ultimately, sorrow, demonstrating how difficult it is to reconcile the differing needs of three people or ideas. Perhaps your heart wants something your mind says you cannot have. You may be feeling unhappy and self-pitying. Perhaps there is a love triangle, failed affair, or separation. Partnerships disintegrate. Dissenting beliefs or the miscommunication characteristic of *Swords* can cause problems, releasing a storm of tears, accusations, and harsh words. Occasionally active malice plays a role. There may be physical pain, or injury and surgery. Even the traditional meaning of “a nun,” possibly signified (in those days) someone separated from family and society against her will, or who commits to contemplation of Christ’s sorrow. More mundanely, your heart may just not be in your work or a relationship, or someone has hurt your feelings. To give sorrow its due, heartbreak inspires much wonderful art and beautiful music. Shared pain can result in deep bonds and penetrating insights. Moreover, there is nothing like a good cry.

**TRADITIONAL:** Removal, departure. Separation, division, rupture. Aversion. Hatred. Incompatibility. Dissent. Quarrel. Perverted instincts. Morbidity. Loss. Tears. Unrequited love. A nun.

## Three of Swords Reversed

With the *Three of Swords Rx* comes a sense of relief after a narrowly averted disaster. The swords are falling from the heart and the clouds recede. You can let go of sorrow and begin the process of recovery. Old wounds could be healing, pain lessening. Surgery may not be necessary after all or be only minor. Perhaps you are clearing the air after a quarrel and accepting your own responsibility rather than accusing someone else. This card can also suggest a pledge of support—whether among friends or to a cause or organization.



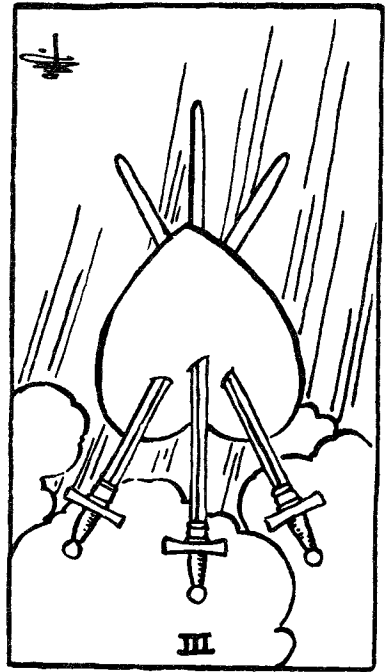
However, you could be feeling an invisible inner pain. You might be denying jealousy or sorrow, or refuse to believe that a relationship has gone bad. This card could describe, for instance, someone who never cries.

When projected on to another you might see them as a “drama queen,” a steady source of sob stories. At an extreme, this is the never-healing wound; incessantly dwelling on it can lead to alienation and eventual breakdown. You might blame others for your troubles, refusing to acknowledge your own role.

Older interpretations warn of escalating disaster. The situation degenerates into chaos, disorder, and misrule. Quarrels multiply into violence. You could feel like you are dying of a broken heart or that the pain is driving you mad.

From a shamanic perspective, this card can indicate black magic, curses, voodoo, and hexing used to harm another person. Although we ridicule and downplay such sentiments in our culture, tribal peoples know that bad wishes can cause deep imbalances and disharmony for the whole community. Creating a personal shield of protection both physically and in the imaginal realm can help deflect harmful intent. You may need the help of a wise and loving healer, shaman, or counselor.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Alienation, seclusion, loneliness. Madness, insanity. Error, confusion, misrule, disorder. Illness. Quarrels. War. “During an outing you will succumb to your companion and later on when you reappear in public it will cause you embarrassment.”<sup>4</sup>



## Four of Swords

If the strain and wounding in the *Three* is not alleviated, it could affect your health in the *Four of Swords*. To escape sorrow or clarify your thoughts, you might retreat into solitude or sleep. You could be seeking to suspend hostilities, get respite from stress, or engage in meditation or dreams. In the RWS deck, three swords hang on the wall and the figure lies upon a fourth. This suggests handling mental overwhelm by organizing your thoughts and prioritizing your tasks. Alternatively, you put aside multiple issues while the subconscious works on only one. However, the hanging swords could be putting you under pressure. You could go through a period of self-observation, writing your thoughts and dreams, or be watched over by others. In the stained-glass window of the RWS card, a supplicant kneels before a person with a halo containing the word PAX, suggesting a peaceful consciousness. These details might signify prayer, asking advice, getting assistance from an authority like a doctor, lawyer, clergy, or guru, or a spiritual apparition. Additionally, this card can be about incarceration, retirement, or pacifism.

On rare occasions, it can signify a death. In one case, an elderly Russian intellectual planned to commit suicide if she became too ill to care for herself. The image in stained glass signified how much she wanted her children to understand and be at peace with her decision.

TRADITIONAL: Solitude, isolation, refuge. Vigilance. Quiet. Retreat, retirement, hermitage. Exile, banishment. Abandonment. A tomb. Illness. Respite.

## Four of Swords Reversed

In the RWS reversal, it is easy to see how the crossed swords of the *Three* become aligned and ordered in the *Four*. The figure now seems to look down from the ceiling—like an out-of-body experience during dreams or scrying. You may be awakening from a literal or metaphorical sleep, probably with more clarity or a different perspective than before. As the period of peace and tranquillity comes to an end, you could be resolving concerns. Alternatively, you could be in recovery after an illness. If not, consider whether you are refusing to seek advice or take care of yourself. This card can also indicate an inability to get rest through insomnia or disturbing dreams. You might be ending isolation and re-entering the world. In

fact, this can be the “get-out-of-jail card”—or whatever confinement or isolation has meant for you. You might be going back to work or, alternatively, quitting a dead-end job.

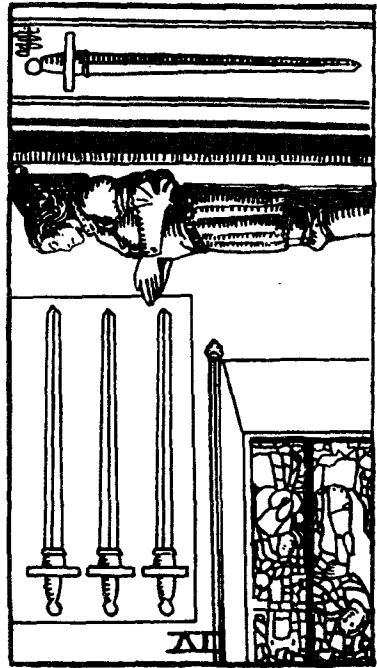
The figure could be falling into the swords. You may feel helplessly stuck on the “horns” of a dilemma or impaled by circumstances. Traditional meanings emphasize caution. Through prudent care, administration, and economies, you can recuperate from business loss, personal difficulties, or illness.

If you project this card on to others, you might see them as either perpetually good or frozen in perfection, like the now-dead founder

of a movement or the sleeping hero who awaits reawakening in a time of need. Alternatively, you see them as withdrawn, ill, or unable or unwilling to help. You may also be feeling sympathy for someone.

On the shamanic level, this is a card of dreamtime or the astral plane. It depicts connection with inner guides or figures of power like the supplicant in the stained-glass window. Channeling or mediumship is a possibility.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Economy, regulation of spending. Circumspection. Precautions. Wise administration. Foresight. Slow recovery of losses. Harmony. Sympathy. Greed, avarice.



## Five of Swords

The temporary respite of the *Four* now erupts in the battles of the *Five*. The jagged clouds mirror a stormy mood. The literal, abstract mind with its array of “facts” has defeated more tender sentiments. You may be arguing with others, and feel like any of the three figures shown in the RWS picture. The most distant person seems beaten and dejected. Midway, a person walks away, perhaps refusing to do battle. The foreground figure seems to be besting his adversaries. Like a scavenger, he gains from the misfortunes of others. We see here the attitudes of combatants or antagonists. You may want to salvage the situation or simply retreat. There is often a breakdown in communications. The principles used here might be righteous and ethical, yet lacking in kindness and understanding, or there could be unfair tactics involved. Thinking is fragmented. You might feel scattered or attacked. Perhaps you need to break a big task down into smaller parts. On the other hand, division could create divisiveness, mental fragmentation, or negative thinking.

This has been called a “no-win” situation—winning a battle but losing the war—or ending up without friends or support. All the choices—from smugness to humiliation—seem counterproductive while nothing gets resolved. If other cards concur, this could signify an abusive situation.

**TRADITIONAL:** Loss, destruction, damages, devastation. Misfortune, ruin. Defeat, rout, fight. Conquest. Shame, infamy, humiliation. Kidnapping. Malice. Spite. Slander. Theft at home. Rape, murder.

## Five of Swords Reversed

This is one of the few cards traditionally interpreted the same when reversed as when upright, with the added sense of mourning after carnage or burials. The word “bury” means to hide or protect—the opposite of salvage. Therefore, the reversal might indicate the presence of underlying motivational factors. For instance, when a person experiences unbearable pain there may be a split in personality with a subpersonality emerging, like the bully in the foreground, while the victimized, injured parts retreat and are buried deep in the psyche.

Another motivating factor is an abstract idealism that values humanistic principles over individuals. You may be unsympathetic to others if they

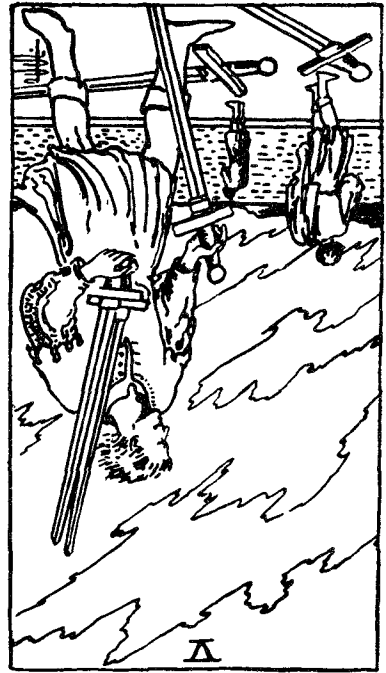
are unrelated to your mission. An abstract belief (like patriotism) may allow you to focus on a “truth,” problem, or task despite its causing anguish to others.

This card may also indicate “burying the hatchet,” putting an end to conflict or disagreements. Along this line, note such “re-” words as remorse, regret, revocation, and reparation. As the air clears, look to what you can salvage. Rather than gathering swords, it can be an occasion for gathering people, making amends, and repairing rifts, or determining obligation and liability. Just as most plants thrive after a pruning, this card reflects the potential for spiritual growth after loss and sorrow.<sup>5</sup>

Traditional meanings also focus on the “dis-” words like distress, dismay, disdain. When projected on to others, you may feel they are trying to thwart your endeavors. On the other hand, you may refuse to feel defeated. In general, whether upright and reversed, this card is not conducive to new ventures. Reversed, it suggests you resolve bothersome issues. Treachery or wrongdoing may be revealed.

From the shamanic perspective, this can indicate either the splitting away of parts of the soul or a soul wandering after death. In either case, the being may need assistance. The card can also indicate burial rites and weather magic.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Misfortune, losses, trouble. Mourning, pain, dejection, sorrows. Funeral, burial. Distress, dismay. Remorse. Vengeance. Bad for new ventures.



## Six of Swords

After the difficulties of the *Five*, you may need to distance yourself in order to regain equanimity. The *Six of Swords* is often called “journey by water” and indicates any kind of transition or passage. You could be moving away from difficulties and looking to restore harmony and mental tranquility. You may be escaping danger and seeking safety and refuge, but the card can equally signify a holiday trip, pleasure voyage, or work relocation. Being Air and mental, it could refer to planning your journey or transferring ideas, data, or material. Occasionally it suggests covert activities involving some kind of exodus.

This is about the scientific, reasoning mind that requires distance from its subject. The collaborative aspect of the *Sixes* in all suits stresses the importance of discerning relationships and patterns among things. You gain perspective and objectivity by leaving turmoil and turbulence for more placid shores. The RWS image depicts support in your endeavor. In addition, you may be showing a humanistic interest in the well-being of others. The figure in the card with which you most identify indicates your attitude and state of being. You also have the opportunity to choose which thoughts and opinions to take with you. Understanding another’s point of view requires clear communications and commitment to the effort.

**TRADITIONAL:** Road, path, passage. Means, way, route. Promenade. Travel, voyage, holiday. Envoy, messenger, or visitor. Trace, vestige. Dependence on others. Trying new objectives and approaches. Attempt to overcome difficulties.

## Six of Swords Reversed

With the *Six of Swords Rx*, you may be unable to leave a difficult situation or you resist new perspectives. Perhaps you are stuck mentally as well as physically. You could refuse to take a trip or make any move at all. At the extreme, you become agoraphobic—afraid of open spaces. There may be delays, changes of plan, or problems with transportation. Floods, difficulties with water, choking, or drowning could occur, or you feel like you are paddling upstream. Covert activities could be revealed, like getting caught at the border. You may think you are at a dead end. It could simply mean returning from a trip, perhaps with culture shock.

By hugging the shore and staying in the shallows, you might fear to commit to some direction. Misunderstanding someone else's point of view, you could cling to your prejudices for security, perceiving everything subjectively from within, with no external verification.

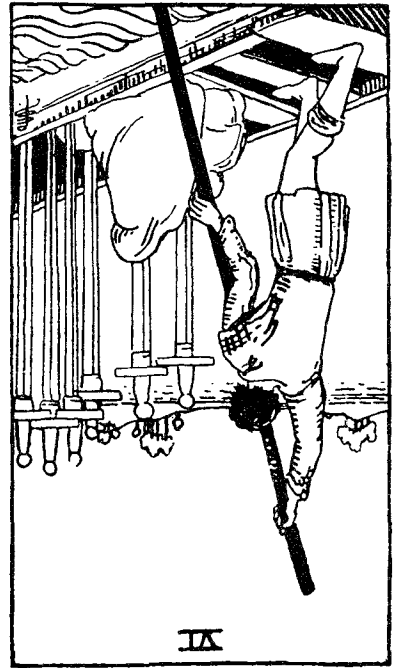
When projected on to others, you might think they are “jumping ship” or leaving you behind. They may seem inflexible in their thinking and unable to meet you halfway. There is a danger of holding unexamined beliefs and prejudices. Traditional meanings suggest unhappiness about a public revelation or disclosure, or an unwanted proposal. These could force a change in plans

or a need for escape. On the other hand, your journeys could take place inside instead of externally, as with guided imagery or armchair travel.

Facing a sterile prospect, you might overcompensate through an aloof, indifferent manner, or instead move directly toward difficulties. Undercompensation leads to getting trapped and entangled in fear and indecision.

At the shamanic level, this is one of the underworld journey cards, which can indicate a need for soul retrieval or healing, or for past and future life visioning—which often use the image of a journey along the river of time. It is especially appropriate that the self, inner child, and guide are present.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** An unwanted proposal. Declaration, disclosure, confession, revelation, surprise. A diagnosis of ill-health. A discovery that changes plans. Publicity or notoriety from a public statement.



## Seven of Swords

Coming after the *Six* with its movement away from danger, in the *Seven of Swords* you improve the odds and regain what was lost—like James Bond “007.” This is about tests of the mind, and meeting challenges with strategic skills. Perhaps there is a “dangerous opportunity” requiring stealth, in which you will either act with resolve or vacillate. Idealistic goals might seem to justify any means, including subterfuge. Wit can be used to disarm others and mental deftness to cut through their defenses. Modern meanings emphasize futility, deception, treachery, and evasiveness, while older traditions speak of perseverance despite insecurity. This card spans a range from research, strategy, and preparation, to espionage, deceit, and escape. If involved in a “con,” it may show “skipping town,” or sidestepping what you do not wish to face.

You could be collecting ideas, doing research for a project, or manipulating an outcome to your advantage. The swords stuck in the ground could represent distributing assignments or goods, or ideas being grounded. You might be resourceful or evasive. This card often suggests unfaithfulness and secret love affairs. Trust may be broken and wholeness split, like the split groups of swords; alternatively, you could be eloping. In contrast with the water journey of the previous card, this suggests a journey by land, or perhaps traveling incognito or unnoticed.

**TRADITIONAL:** Hope, desire, wish. New plans. Intention. Vow. Attempt. Perseverance. Faith in your efforts. Strength despite insecurity. To lay claim to. Theft. Betrayal. A lean sorrow. Impossible dreams. Journey by land.

## Seven of Swords Reversed

With the *Seven of Swords Rx*, you may be more prudent because of a fear of getting caught. Perhaps you are too honest to succeed with dubious deeds or too careless to heed good advice. Moreover, you tend to avoid danger. You could be in denial about shameful actions. Perhaps you overturn previously laid plans and arrangements. Dishonesty or deception might be revealed. On the other hand, you could be open-handed to demonstrate you have nothing to hide.

There may be an underlying clash between your desires and a sense of vulnerability. If lacking confidence yet envious of others, you might avoid



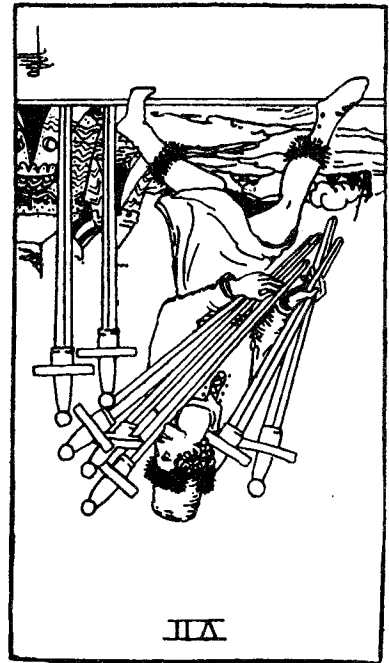
overt actions and turn to cunning and covert manipulation. Nevertheless, it may be time to come out into the open rather than living with what you fear might overwhelm you.

Alternatively, this could be about returning to the scene of some incident, going back to retrieve something, or assisting another person. Stolen goods could be returned. You might be examining past actions to determine what went wrong (similar to a Twelve-Step program, in which you ask forgiveness and make restitution for past wrongs). You might advise or warn someone or remind them of something overlooked. You could even be training others in covert skills or research.

If this is projected on to someone else you may feel that they are liable to steal, betray, or manipulate to get what they want. However, you could be letting someone take advantage of you, participating in your own victimization and putting yourself at risk.

On the shamanic level this is a card of initiation involving stealth, trickery, or thievery as part of a sacred ritual or initiatory test. The initiator explains to the candidate esoteric meanings and uses of words and symbols in the realm of the sacred.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Instruction, advice, warnings, admonitions. News, announcements. Wise advice, good counsel (not always taken). Prudence, circum-spection. Slander. Disputes. Temporary setbacks.



## Eight of Swords

The *Eight of Swords* is about being in a bind; it is the helpless victim or maiden-in-distress awaiting rescue. Things done in the *Seven* may have narrowed your options. There could be a crisis involving public censure, literal immobility, or lack of sensory input. Your hands feel tied; however, it is most likely your self-sabotaging, critical mind that will hamper you. Thoughts are stifled or short-circuited. Attempts to gain clarity, see the facts, or use your natural instincts meet with interference. Rationality might be blocking other kinds of insight.

You may lack skills or knowledge about how to navigate a particular terrain. Note that the ties binding the woman in the RWS card are loose and her feet are free. This suggests that self-imposed beliefs, rather than objective circumstances, restrict you. Perhaps you can walk away if you take matters into your own hands. Like Houdini, the escape artist, you may enjoy the challenge of difficult escapes or impossible situations. Another interpretation likens this to Masonic initiation, in that the seeker of spiritual wisdom must first undergo sacrifice and ordeals. You may feel stranded in darkness and surrounded by perils. Perhaps through feeling either hopeless and resigned or contemplative and quietly determined, you are forced to access your inner sight. This may be a test of ingenuity, trust, and faith. If other cards concur, there may be a trial, imprisonment, or other bondage issues.

**TRADITIONAL:** Crisis, calamity. Critical or troublesome situation. Censure and censorship. Gloss, epilogue. Lawsuits. Judgment. Condemnation. Imprisonment. Hospitalization. Accidents. Slight and insults from all.

## Eight of Swords Reversed

*Eights* are about reevaluation and progress—which, in the upright position, have been limited by the critical mind or by circumstances. To overcome these limits may require magic—not Houdini’s stage magic, but real magic, defined by Florence Farr as the ability to “take the limits off common experience” and by Richard Cavendish as “the power to transcend all human limitations.”<sup>6</sup> Etteilla related this reversal to destiny, fate, and pre-ordained events, which can be transcended.<sup>7</sup>

Luckily, ingenuity and improvisation in removing obstacles are greatly increased by the reversal. You may be breaking through constraints, including socially imposed ones. Restrictions may be temporary, although at the opposite extreme, they could become intolerable with delusions of persecution supported by apparent logic and reason. Self-sabotaging actions can arise from a fear of success. You could also be hiding your abilities under a barrel, especially in false humility.

Possibly someone deceived you into present difficulties. Swords suggest susceptibility to persuasive ideas, arguments, or facts. One querent saw this card as refusing to see or hear the doctors saying that her mother was dying; and indeed, her mother survived.

When projected on to others, you see them as victims, tied up in knots with excuses for everything or as humbugs that have led you into trouble.

From the shamanic perspective, this is a major card for initiatory traditions, as it shows tests in which none of the candidate's skills, but only faith and trust, will help. It could be a trial of endurance and vulnerability in which spiritual contact must come through nonphysical senses. Crowley called the card a "tendency to mysticism." This can also represent the severing of emotion contacts or "psychic cords." In rare cases, it may even refer to perceived UFO abduction.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Destiny. Fate, misfortune, accidents, danger. Surprises. Great difficulties and hard work. Mental depression. A small success in the midst of misfortune. Treachery in the past.



## Nine of Swords

The crisis in the *Eight* turns to despair, censure to shame, blindness to cruelty. We see depression, anguish, guilt, dread, and remorse—all mental torments that can weigh you down. This card may signify insomnia and nightmares, the dark night of the soul, or injury and illness. All seems to be failure and loss, especially if through your own failings or mismanagement. Unable to climb the ladder out of despondency, hopelessness could wreak havoc on peace of mind. With an impending sense of doom, you wait for the sword to fall. On the other hand, the rose quilt suggests there is a warm spot of comfort in your life, while the zodiac signs imply that time will heal.

At a more mundane level, there may be hot flashes and nightsweats, or temporary depression. You could feel pessimistic and have a tendency to brood or imagine the worst and be unable to see what to do. For instance, you may have learned a painful truth, fear an unwanted pregnancy, or been exposed to a disease. There could be grief over loss and changes, or pain at having hurt someone.

As with other *Nines* there is a sense of solitude and isolation, relating to an eighteenth-century interpretation of celibacy and monastic life. Likewise, older meanings of piety and devotion may relate to conscience and penance.

**TRADITIONAL:** Celibacy. Priest, monk, hermit. Convent. Cult. Piety, devotion. Conscience. Good faith, integrity. Ceremony, ritual. Sorrows. Miscarriage. Endings. Disappointments. Danger, doubt, suffering. Grief. Moral suffering. Isolation. Injustice, hatred, envy.

## Nine of Swords Reversed

The reversal can indicate coming out of depression. The nightmare is over, and things are improving. Confession has alleviated guilt and self-blame. You pull yourself out of self-pity. However, it may be difficult to find the faith or energy needed to see through a project without giving up.

You could deny your feelings of shame, depression, or loneliness as through defiance or protesting too much against it. Or you could experience a delayed reaction to loss. If other cards concur, look for unacknowledged depression that has become long-term, severe, and possibly dangerous.

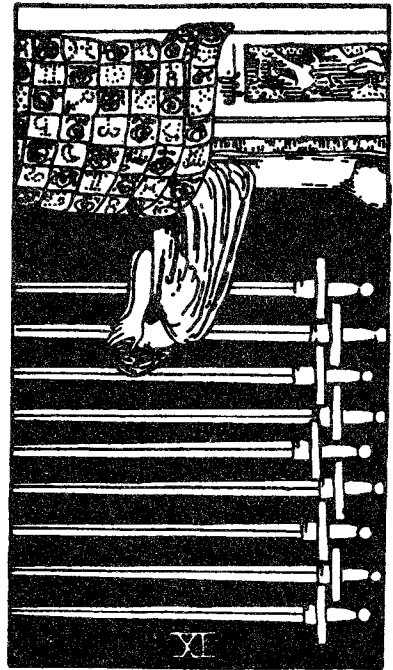
On the other hand, this can be psychological shadow-work or spiritual soul-searching, involving a willing exploration of your fears and self-hatred. One querent dreamt just before the reading that he descended a stairway that looked just like the row of swords, into a basement filled with terrors that he needed to face. So, too, you might have an opportunity to face your fears.

Anxieties may be justified and suspicions warranted. Thus, this can be “authorized” sorrow or pain. You might shrink from danger and be in hiding from villainous acquaintances. If you are the object of slanderous gossip and it colludes with your own self-criticism, you might avoid public view or facing others. Alternatively, you may feel you have been unfairly treated and be motivated to restore your reputation.

If you are projecting this on to others, you may see them as afraid and beaten down or fixated on morbid fantasies. This reversal might also indicate a bully or abuser who claims remorse but is likely to batter again.

In the shamanic realm this is the “death of the youth or maiden,” fear of dismemberment and loss, a terrifying encounter with the unknown, or the breaking of taboos—which are important parts of initiatic ordeals.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Slanderous gossip. Just defiance. Legitimate fear or suspicion. Shame, disgrace, infamy. Rumors. Spiritual struggle. Punctiliousness.



## Ten of Swords

The *Ten of Swords* is often less difficult than the *Nine*. Crowley notes that the *Ten* points to mass insanity rather than individual madness and torment. You may have reached the point of excessive force or overkill, of catastrophes beyond the personal. You may have pinned your faith on someone who betrayed it, but it is now time to let go.

Nevertheless, this does come up as personal defeat, failure, and closures. There might be a loss of health, fortune, position, or honor. You may have hit bottom, reached the end of the line, or are stuck in an intellectual cul-de-sac. Perhaps someone stabbed you in the back. This card allows for change and new possibilities. Generally, you quit the struggle, accept the inevitable, and surrender your will to god, fate, or circumstances. Former beliefs and thought patterns no longer serve; old ways of thinking die. While this may seem catastrophic, it is also about release, relief, and closure, like the “deadman’s pose” at the end of a yoga session. Struggling will get you nowhere.

Perhaps you have back problems, or are seeing an acupuncturist. You may be exhausted and ill, or in a rut. You can have objectively pinned down the facts, but they are dead ones. A new day is dawning if you are willing to leave old stuff behind and go on.

**TRADITIONAL:** Affliction, tears. Desolation. Complaints, grievances, chagrin. Sadness, pain, woe. Exhaustion. Endings. Failure. Change in social and economic conditions. Unforeseen misfortune. Faith shattered. Loss of a friend. Enemies.

## Ten of Swords Reversed

The *Ten of Swords Rx* signals recovery and rebirth. The swords seem to fall from the person’s back and darkness recedes. A blue sky tops the yellow horizon. You have turned the corner and things are looking up but you might feel like a disaster or near-death survivor. Liberation and exciting breakthroughs are forthcoming. There is relief from stress, like the sky clearing after a storm as you release the need to intellectualize. The worst is behind you now. If convalescing from an illness, relapse is still possible. Alternatively, you may experience recurring health problems, particularly with your back, chronic fatigue, lupus, or the immune system.

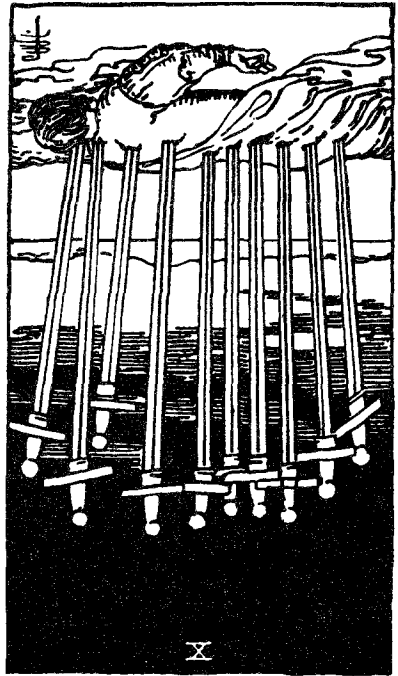
You could still be feeling doubts and low self-esteem that make new gains precarious. You might be on “pins and needles” about the future. One woman felt as if she was lying on a bed of nails in expiation for a transgression, as in: “You made your bed, now lie in it.” Another person felt it was time to leave her bed of nails, which symbolized self-pity. Although sweeping changes may occur, reactions to previous pain could hamper true progress.

You may be concentrating on repairing weak spots in your projects or defenses. Occasionally you may deny the seriousness of a problem. You could be refusing to let go.

When projected on to others, you may see them as ineffectual or needing to be sacrificed. You may even believe they got what they deserved, as in “only the strong survive.”

In the shamanic realm, this could indicate the astral body separating from the physical—in dreams, astral travel, or near-death experiences. In initiations it refers to ordeals involving ritual slaying, dismemberment, or disintegration of the material form prior to rebirth. You must surrender into this new state although it is a complete unknown.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Momentary advantage, favors, benefit. Grace, kindness. Power, authority, influence. Temporary gain. Passing success. Profit. Some improvement. Unexpected financial windfall or promotion. Recovery.



## Ace of Pentacles

This *Ace* offers new opportunities for good fortune on the physical and material plane. It could be a job or project, or a raise or promotion. Accepting this offer brings not only rewards but also responsibilities. The card contains the seeds of prosperity, comfort, pleasure, and security, along with the joy and satisfaction that accompany their growth. The outlook is so good it might seem foolish not to proceed. It is even thought to lessen any negativity in cards around it. The RWS image suggests that physical gain may be used to keep you in the safety of the garden, close to home, rather than your exploring the unknown. The gate, however, opens toward the mountain of spiritual aspiration, a reminder that material comforts might keep you away from the path to more difficult and austere spiritual rewards. Both options bring their own forms of gold. Pentacles are the fruits of your labor, the result of work done in the other suits. You reap the bounty, win the medal, and savor the products of your efforts.

This is a card of physical well-being and material abundance. It asks that you respect and value your tangible resources, including your health, possessions, and practical skills. It sometimes indicates inheritances, gifts, job offers, or other windfalls.

**TRADITIONAL:** Perfect contentment, happiness, felicity. Prosperity. Sudden wealth. Enchantment, ecstasy, pleasure, satisfaction. Accomplishment. Complete solar medicine; gold. A “talisman of fortune.”

## Ace of Pentacles Reversed

Traditionally, not even the reversal can lessen this card’s fortune. In fact, its benefits instead become exaggerated—wealth becomes opulence; baubles become priceless treasures; everything turns to gold. It is like the curse of the Midas touch. You may be so focused on material gain that everything is reduced to a possession and judged by its preciousness and price.

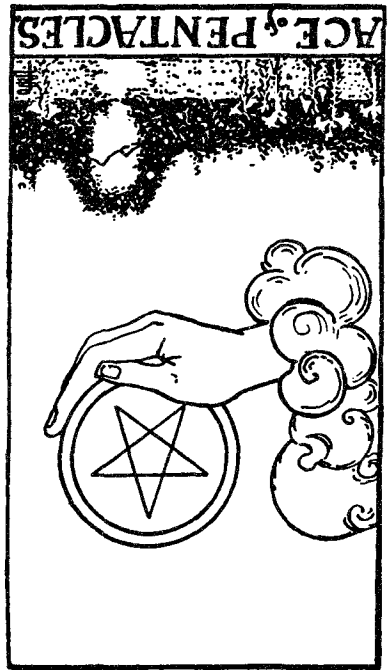
You may be so terrified of doing without that you withhold favors, refuse to share, and become greedy. Your choices dwindle as you fear loss. Holding back leads to poor use of resources, and lack of monetary flow. Physically you lose your mobility and flexibility, and so this reversal may require increased attention to the physical body or material plane concerns.



Like the wheel it resembles, you could get stuck in a rut. You might resist an opportunity as being “too good to be true,” or you suspect it will impose unwelcome limits. Delays or problems involving payments, work availability, or material delivery are possible. This can also indicate getting paid “under-the-table.” On the other hand, the reversal may suggest taking things more lightly, and not be so attached, because “it’s only money.”

From the shamanic and magical perspective this is a rich image. The occult maxim associated with Pentacles is, “To keep silent,” to conserve and concentrate magical energy. Just as the Pentacle seems stuck to the hand, so this relates to the folktale motif where Tar Baby gets stuck because of his greed or anger. Energy centers in your palms can be used to pull energy toward you. In healing, the shaman uses such magnetic attraction in psychic surgery. Finally we have the image of alchemical gold—Spirit hidden in matter.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Finding of treasure. Wealth. Purse of gold. Profit. Opulence. Prosperity without happiness. Priceless. Sum total. Principal. Capital. Waste. Greed, meanness, avarice. Materialism. Wealth that corrupts. Fool’s gold.



## Two of Pentacles

In the *Two of Pentacles* your gifts may double—perhaps bringing more consternation than happiness. As the saying goes, “Money begets money,” but only if kept in motion, continuously exchanged for goods and services. Thus this card can refer to commerce and especially fluctuations in the market. *Twos* signify choices, and here you want to “have your cake and eat it too.” It may require fancy juggling and quick footwork to keep several things happening at once—for instance, two jobs, relationships, or business deals, or alternating work and play. The *Motherpeace* deck shows a woman nursing twins—both a joy and a hardship. Adaptability facilitates change but tends to keep you focused on the process rather than the product. Continental interpretations emphasize the difficulties of handling multiple concerns, or the ups and downs of profit and loss. Modern interpretations ask us to enjoy the journey rather than worrying about the destination and so emphasize play, gaiety, recreation, exercise, and often recommend a vacation. The ships in the RWS image literalize the journey motif, especially in combination with business, depicting “steering through rough waters.” Ambiguity, confusion, or other problems might create an embarrassing situation—perhaps financial. At worst, you may be caught in some kind of exhausting loop.

**TRADITIONAL:** Difficulty launching new projects. Hindrance, obstacle, obstruction, snag. Confusion, entanglement, agitation, perplexity. Worry. Embarrassment. Contract or business exchange. Social popularity. Inconsistency.

## Two of Pentacles Reversed

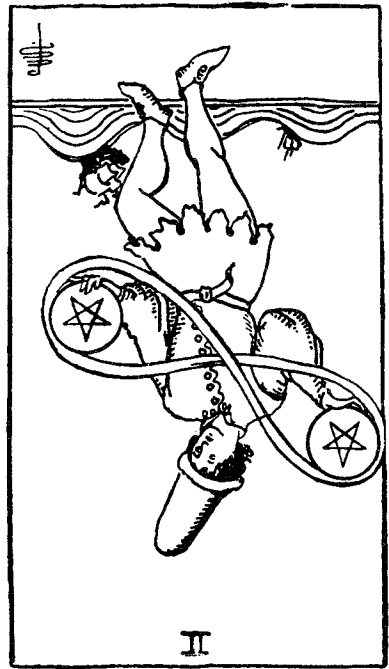
This is a “red-tape” or hot scoop card. You could be tangled up in forms, paperwork, documents, and e-mails. Faster than the old-fashioned ticker tape, more data accumulates than you can handle. You might be striving to avoid information overload or dealing with a computer crash. Or you could be trying to evaluate contradictory data, like stock-market indicators or political polls. A tricky hot tip or playing the stock market could take you on a roller-coaster ride. Take care, for others can too easily sway you. You may have shifted your perspective but it is not evident externally yet.

Older meanings stress literary ability, but it is more like journalism and work-for-hire, where you are paid for speed and quantity. Perhaps you are mailing a manuscript or proposal to publishers, or circulating a business memo around the office. Interpretations involving the alphabet and writing date from early deck publishers who printed their name and publication date on a ribbon design that encircled two coins. Therefore, you may be doing some kind of promotion or advertising.

At the extreme, financial or informational problems get out of hand. Action becomes frenetic as you try to pretend that everything is all right. There is a hint of Nero's fiddling while Rome burns. If projected on to others you may see them as frivolous, wishy-washy, or spread too thin, and not getting anything done. Energy fluctuates. You could feel caught on a treadmill. Play becomes tedious; jokes get stale.

From the shamanic perspective, this can be the clown, trickster, or he-she/transvestite that deliberately mimics individuals or pokes fun at community issues to bring attention to a lack of balance. Standing on one foot or being crippled in one leg is a standard shamanic motif, as is the conical hat of power.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Ticket, document, paperwork. Literary ability, learning. Alphabet, handwriting. Letter, message, essay. Business communications. Dire financial distress and abuse. Ignorance. Injustice. Enforced gaiety.



## Three of Pentacles

After struggling to keep things going in the *Two of Pentacles* you now get help from others. In the RWS card we see a team involved in building a church or temple: the abbot who commissioned the work, the architect with his plans, and the skilled craftsman. Each applies himself to his appointed task, yet the three must work harmoniously together to get the job done—a skill in its own right. It also helps to have a well-conceived plan, and the ability to follow instructions. This card can represent all kinds of employment situations: cooperation on the job, development of skills, making a presentation, demonstrating a process, evaluation and criticism, work for hire, or barter and trade. As a card of artistry or apprenticeship it focuses on self-improvement and patronage or support from key people. You might need to prove your expertise through tests or examples of your work. At a deeper level it suggests the materialization of the sacred, help from spiritual sources, or some kind of elevation in dignity and rank. You appear to be creating a thing of value, involving aesthetics and detail. You may need to make improvements or renovations, for which you will need talent and skill, as well as hard work. In rare cases, this might mean serving or receiving a summons.

**TRADITIONAL:** Rank and power. The important, noble, famous. Vast sublime. Distinction, renown, celebrity. An undertaking begins to bring profit. Many small expenses. Success in exams.

## Three of Pentacles Reversed

The *Three of Pentacles Rx* suggests the image of digging a hole or sinking into a basement. You may experience job-related problems. You could be out of work—whether that is a problem or a relief. Interviews and presentations go poorly, or you turn down an offer. There could be trouble with coworkers or superiors. You might feel unseen and unnoticed. Plans and diagrams may contain mistakes. Perhaps something is damaged or broken. Youth and inexperience can lead to sloppiness and delays or unwillingness to ask questions and get help. Sometimes there is just plain mediocrity or even abject inferiority. Your efforts may be undistinguished or go unnoticed, or the job may be boring. You could be over- or under-qualified. If you are being evaluated at work, expect criticism.

Support can be withdrawn or lacking. On the other hand a boss may ask you to do something dishonest or hazardous. You may find yourself alone on one side of the issue. Waste disposal could be a problem. This card might indicate a cabal or conspiracy undermining a foundation or effort, or even planned sabotage.

You may struggle to generate fresh, creative ideas. Others could make you nervous by looking over your shoulder. If you project this on to someone else you might see them as unwilling, inefficient, or incapable. Watch the tendency to diminish efforts, or to undervalue your own work or others. Consider the intangible values involved in your livelihood and whether you are doing what you love.

This card is extremely significant at the magical and shamanic levels. Its likeness to a gathering of master masons recalls the “Great Work” of creating heaven on earth. It can represent work within the unconscious, the lower world, or in the imagination—building internal structures or using occult diagrams as the map for a vision or journey. Perhaps you are meeting with inner guides or teachers.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Childishness, frivolity. Diminution, smallness, pettiness, obscurity. Mediocre, commonplace, low quality. Indifference, lazy, sloppy. Shortage of funds. Hazardous, uncertain. Wasteful, extravagant.



## Four of Pentacles

The constructive work in the *Three* is consolidated in the *Four of Pentacles* in the form of goods and power. In modern decks this is about the control and protection of resources, and about stabilization and setting boundaries. However, you could also withhold affection in relationships. Traditional interpretations, on the other hand, emphasize kindness and generosity but, according to modern thinking, this might be self-serving. You may focus energy on accumulating material goods, power, and wealth, and on assuring you can keep them. This could involve retirement and savings plans or investments, or establishing a business or political empire; security is paramount. Called the “miser card,” it suggests King Midas, whose touch turned everything to gold, including his daughter. The need to collect things can possess you more than you possess it. Along with greediness and hoarding come fear of loss, constipation, and lack of compassion. You might be unable to relax and let go. In the RWS card the figure holds a shield over his heart to protect himself from attack. It is like a logo or trademark, which asserts territoriality.

Conversely, you may welcome the protection, comfort, and self-centeredness of this card. It demonstrates stability, security, and inner strength, coming from a power center in your body. Such deep rootedness may explain its association with underground vegetables.

**TRADITIONAL:** Kindness, generosity, liberality. Gift, grace, present. Offering. Bonus. Lunar medicine. Underground plants. Pleasure, gaiety. Successful establishment of business or enterprise. Investments. Fear of loss.

## Four of Pentacles Reversed

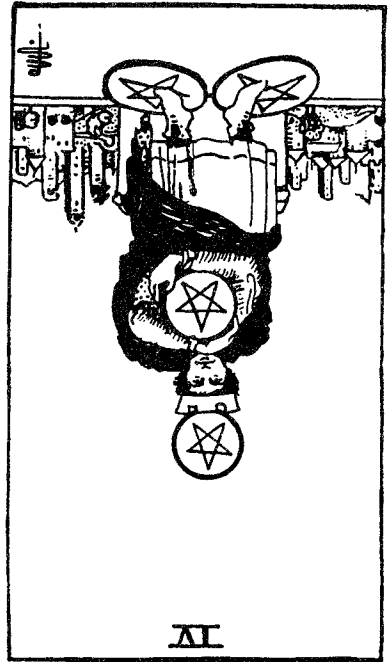
The *Four of Pentacles Rx* signifies release, risk, and change, which neither Pentacles nor *Fours* find easy to accept. You might react through either extreme: even more fear, greed, and defensiveness, or letting go of power and possessions in the manner of Siddhartha and other ascetics. Traditional meanings suggest constraint that is not your fault, but leads to obstructions, delays, and setbacks. There may literally be clogged drains. You might feel blocked at every turn, or circumscribed by limits. You could hit a glass ceiling at work, preventing advancement.

On the other hand, you may be prone to rash spending, speculation, or gambling. Some commodity may depreciate or payments be withheld. This is not a good indicator for investments. Impracticality or powerlessness (a lack of grounding) could hamper decisions. For whatever reason, you are probably dissatisfied with financial matters or material concerns. If projected on to others, you may see them as needing to be in control, and clinging desperately to what is theirs.

If supported by other cards, the *Four of Pentacles Rx* may signify relaxation and relief of tension. You could be divesting yourself of stocks or responsibilities that have been consuming your attention. Or, stripping away defenses and protections, as you begin to express your feelings. Although no revolutionary, you may resist or overturn some consolidation of power, or break a monopoly. It is time to reconsider what you need to feel secure, and where your center of power lies.

From the magical or shamanic perspective, this suggests power through having magical tools and talismans. It could literally signify possession by a deity or spirit that demands luxury items, prestige, and power in return for healing. Thus, a person with few rights and little control can achieve, through such spirit possession, symbols of privilege.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Enclosure, circumference. Obstruction, clogging. Monopolizing. Cloistered. Fixed, imposed. Milestones, limits. Hindrance, delays in payment. Financial loss. Failure in exams.



## Five of Pentacles

In overturning the establishment of the *Fours*, the *Five of Pentacles* represents financial crisis, physical instability, and “disturbances in the field” requiring adaptations on the material plane. In the RWS card, an illuminated church window overlooks the hardship of people “out in the cold.” You could be caught in scarcity consciousness, afraid of being a “have not,” or a social pariah. Waite calls the figures *mendicants*, meaning “those with flaws,” and so you may feel alienated, flawed, and scorned. This can also be “voluntary simplicity,” an unconventional lifestyle eschewing luxuries for the sake of higher values. The *Thoth* card is named “Worry,” depicted by wheels or gears “worrying” against each other. You might be worried about your physical well-being; you could face bankruptcy, homelessness, or a crippled spirit, although help could be just around the corner. Information may be delayed and resources inaccessible or you could have problems with transportation and communication.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest meanings are radically different, calling this marital love, affection, and friendship. Because marital vows require fealty, even in poverty and sickness, this card can be interpreted as “good for love but not for money,” or it refers to business loss through personal relationships.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, this card can refer to caring for the ill. The *Spiral Tarot* depicts a person looking through a window at a party, and one querent described how she literally stood outside a dance-hall window watching her former boyfriend with his new love.

**TRADITIONAL:** Lover, mistress, spouse, friend. Affection, affinities. To love, cherish, adore. Suitability. Propriety. Perilous passion. Material trouble, poverty. Destitution. Material obstacles to a love affair. Loss.

## Five of Pentacles Reversed

The *Five of Pentacles Rx* suggests persisting through vicissitudes, returning to work after joblessness, or emerging from bankruptcy. It can be the turning point in facing material or spiritual troubles. In the RWS card the snow is now above, the darkness falling away, and the window becomes a door into shelter. It could conceivably recommend that you find sanctuary. One person saw it as a hidden possibility that was now accessible. It may herald the reversal of a bad trend, and a renewed interest in material



matters. Poinsoot claims you will have an unexpected gain found on the road.<sup>10</sup>

The other extreme suggests losses through disorder or misuse and squandering of resources. If you project this on to others you might see them as dissolute, and may blame their misfortunes on their own lack of moderation or morals, and social ills on the profligacy of the people. Or, you pity them as victims of society.

Situations with friends or loved ones who are considered unsuitable or diseased might change either through a separation or through an intensification of your commitment. Many issues surrounding AIDS can be seen in this card (upright and reversed). On the other hand, if alienated from loved ones, you may overcome disharmony and be reconciled. It suggests a period of amnesty during which malefactors return to the fold or find acceptance. A querent saw this card as representing the organized religion as a source of difficulties engendering feelings of rejection and betrayal.<sup>11</sup>

At the shamanic level, this is a literal depiction of how illness or affliction is, for a potential shaman, usually the starting point of their calling. In ceremonial magic it suggests the dangers of working with lower entities. In Jungian terms it advocates deep “shadowwork.”

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Misconduct. Disorder, confusion, chaos, havoc, ruin. Consumption, decline. Dissipation, libertinism. Disgraceful love. Imprudence, license, profligacy. Disharmony, disaster. Troubles in love. Reversal of a bad trend.



## Six of Pentacles

The two mendicants in the *Five* have found a charitable source in the *Six of Pentacles*. The Golden Dawn considered each *Six* as the peak of its suit and element. *Six* is a number of harmony, reciprocity, and social concerns, just as a patron needs someone to patronize and a benefactor needs a recipient. You could be giving or receiving money, gifts, or assistance. Perhaps you are receiving financial aid, royalties, or a paycheck. It could signify getting a loan. Or you give donations, or share profits, or divide possessions in a divorce settlement. At worst this is a situation of dominance and submission, haves and have nots, token reforms, or codependency. The picture looks different depending on with whom you most identify. At best we have material abundance resulting in shared resources, cash flowing through all levels of society, and true charity with fairness and generosity. Other meanings include repaying a loan, winning a case, or receiving a legacy. The scales are balanced, problems resolved.

You could be asking for a raise or kowtowing to the boss. It may involve sponsors and investors, or making contributions. Deals are made and favors exchanged. What is being distributed need not be money—and so this card can also refer to scheduling, time management, and allocations of other resources.

**TRADITIONAL:** The present, currently, now, suddenly, today. Attentive, vigilant. Presents, gifts, gratification. Present prosperity. Philanthropy, kindness, charity. Loan payment.

## Six of Pentacles Reversed

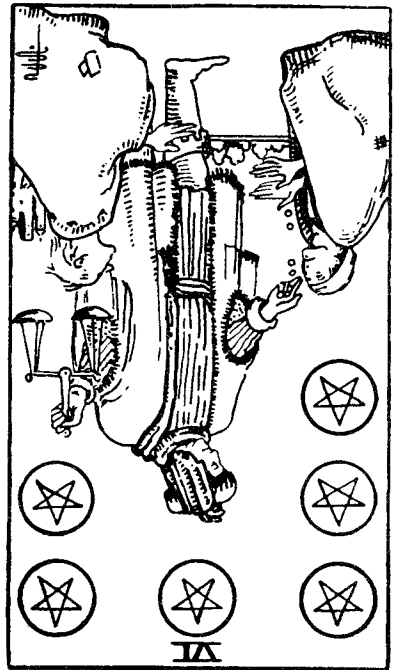
One aspect of this reversal is like Robin Hood—redistributing wealth from the rich to give to the poor. The disparity in power can increase, along with a desire to tip the scales. You may feel shortchanged or denied. At one extreme, covetousness overpowers the fairness of the upright position. At the other extreme, there are bad debts and “get-rich-quick” schemes or financial expectations that fail to materialize. You may have to plead, deal, or do favors, or there are unpleasant strings attached. Money could be misappropriated or misused. Loans go unpaid, inheritances disappear. The payoff could turn out illusory, or you may be ungrateful. Like trying to fill a bottomless pit, there seems to be a perpetual gap between desire and fulfillment.

You might refuse charity, denying your needs or the needs of others. If you project this on to others you may see them either as lacking in generosity or never satisfied.

If treated shabbily or ignored in the past, you may be hungry for attention. Consider giving yourself a present. If asked for a loan you may not be repaid, so perhaps turn it into a gift or donation. This card can also indicate breaking through the stratifications of society and equalizing rank. Reconsider how you spend time and money, and how to upgrade conditions to meet standards. Still, this card might counsel not making a loan, or holding back a reserve. In healing matters, pay attention to the possible spread of contagious disease and to proper dosages of your medicines.

At the shamanic and magical level this is about discerning what each student is ready for and can handle. Clients and students may expect quick solutions that the wise practitioner knows better than to provide. Or this could represent the charlatan who reveals a bit as a lead in to extort larger sums of money.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** Desire, wish, ardor, passion. Eagerness, longing. Greed, envy, jealousy, avarice, cupidity, covetedness. Selfishness. Ambition, aim. Illusion. Bad debts. Disputed inheritance. Lack of balance. Injustice.



## Seven of Pentacles

The *Seven of Pentacles* is a card of exertion, patience, and appraisal. You could be assessing your harvest to determine if the effort was worthwhile. As a card of tests and challenges, it calls on skill, courage, and determination to prove yourself successful. This card generally bodes well for the results of hard labor. In the RWS image a farmer is watching his crop, perhaps waiting for the peak of ripeness before picking. You might be watching an investment or taking inventory. Ventures have begun to bear fruit, but you may need patience and trust because natural cycles of completion cannot be hurried. The Golden Dawn had a gloomier take, suggesting decreased profits, or promises destroyed. You may not get what you planted. Psychologically, it is “fear of success,” in which you sabotage your own potential because you do not believe or trust that the payoff can be yours.

Older meanings stress purging or eliminating things, like getting rid of damaged goods, clearing out your closets, or culling to ensure quality. Tend whatever you are cultivating with care. Sometimes this card simply means taking a break or waiting to see what comes next. There can also be perfectionism and procrastination. The meaning depends a lot on the other cards around it.

**TRADITIONAL:** Money, wealth, finance, currency, profit. Purge, purification. Slow progress. Gain through hard work. No success in farming. Obstacles to enterprise. Ingenuity.

## Seven of Pentacles Reversed

The reversal is almost universally seen as increasing both anxiety and the possibility of loss. You may be experiencing an unspecified sense of uneasiness, worry, and melancholy. Impatience afflicts you, or procrastination becomes endemic. You might believe people are out to steal your ideas, crops, or goods, keeping you constantly on guard. If supported by other cards, your distrust and suspicions could be warranted. Complications arise. There is always more to do—to the point of exhaustion. Whatever the cause, you may find it difficult to rest.

Often there are problems at work. Profits or remuneration don't warrant the expenditure of time and effort. One client saw herself as just the laborer. “Those aren't my crops,” she said. “Despite my labor, I don't get

the money, recognition, or reap the benefits when the work is done.”

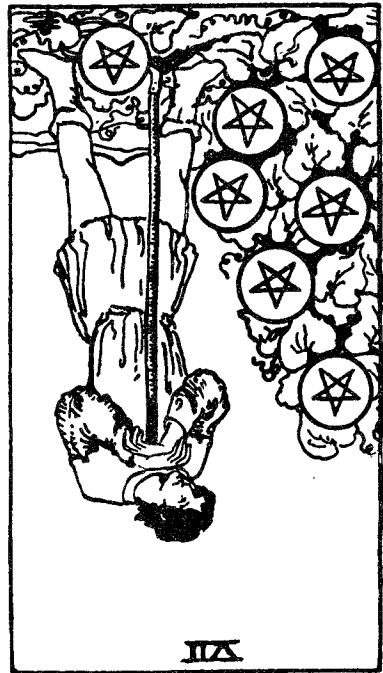
There may be overdevelopment of resources, creating an unused surplus. Weeds or waste products could be proliferating wildly. At the other extreme, nothing will grow. Investments and procedures do not go as planned. Likewise, the amount of work that lies ahead, or the amount of financial outlay with no return might overwhelm you.

If projected on to others, you may see them as lazy or investing in the wrong places, or, alternatively, as paranoid about potential loss. Healthwise, it is dwelling on your infirmity. On the inner planes, this is about putting the same focus and

energy into whatever you do, as epitomized by the aphorism: “Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water; after enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.”

In the shamanic and magical world this refers to building altars, which serve as focal points for altering consciousness. After carefully imbuing an altar (or spell) with your intent, and then invoking and feeding the spirits, you must let the process alone, trusting it to do its work.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Anxiety, disturbance, worry, melancholy. Torment of spirit. Impatience. Affliction, complications, setbacks. Distrust, suspicion. Care, attention, diligence. Unwise investments.



## Eight of Pentacles

Once the harvest from the *Seven* is in, you can concentrate on filling orders and quality control. You could be achieving goals, meeting quotas, or perfecting techniques. You might also be preparing for slumps or retirement, with prudence as a major theme. Perhaps you are involved in home improvement. Like the *Three of Pentacles* this is about work and craftsmanship, but emphasizing precision, punctuality, and detail. Perhaps you are studying or gathering research. One person saw the pentacles on the RWS card as his diplomas on display. Traditional meanings, such as a chaste and modest girl, may describe an “ideal” worker—one who follows orders, works hard, and doesn’t ask questions. You could be filling sales orders, amassing stock and inventory, or safeguarding your work and investment. On the other hand, this could be bodybuilding, exercising, or practicing for a performance. In fact, any kind of scorekeeping, repetition of tasks, or daily progress applies, along with persistence, diligence, and step-by-step development. However, even new skills can become repetitive, tedious, and boring. You can develop efficiency and streamline production, but then you are back to daily maintenance.

For the Golden Dawn, this was about being “penny-wise, pound-foolish.” This card is also about maintaining health: eating right, counting calories, exercising, and, as the *Thoth* card depicts, protection from the sun.

**TRADITIONAL:** Brunette girl. Chastity, innocence, modesty. Candor, frankness, practicality. Equality. Fair division of property, legacies. Late marriage. Good position. Purposefulness. Apprenticeship, scholarship, learning.

## Eight of Pentacles Reversed

With the reversal you could be tired of working, working too hard, or stuck in a dead-end job. Maybe you want to change jobs or occupation, or create new work habits. Perhaps you are not trained for the work you want. As the upright card suggests prudence, so the reversal may be imprudence and recklessness. Traditional meanings indicate that vanity, a desire for money, and lack of ambition might lead to meaningless jobs. Income may be short-term and short-lived. Tedious and boring tasks become deadening, resulting in shoddy products, cutting corners, and

accidents. You might lack concentration. It could be time to take a break. On the other hand, you could be idle or out of work. There might be a strike, or jobs are scarce.

You could be using flattery, hypocrisy, and intrigue to get ahead. It can also indicate pyramid schemes where you or someone else convinces others to invest.

If you have commissioned work, it may not get done or could encounter problems. Bills could be weighing heavily on your head, and you may have run up your credit card.

If you are projecting this on to others, you might see them as the ant to your grasshopper, or vice versa—too industriousness or too flighty. In regard to inner work, you could be in therapy, examining and working through old patterns, or perhaps you write daily in a journal. Alternatively, you could be keeping a scorecard of praise, slights, or coups.

From the shamanic or magical point of view, this is about making and consecrating sacred tools and preparing potions and remedies. It is meticulous work with the best materials, appropriate planetary alignments, and proper intention and invocations. You may be the overzealous sorcerer's apprentice. Coyote would say you are taking yourself too seriously.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Vacuum. Vapourousness. Avarice. Usury. Flattery, hypocrisy. Vanity, conceit. Unreliability, idleness. Insincerity. Rashness. Lack of training. Lack of ambition. Intrigue, dishonesty. Small risks. Work problems.



## Nine of Pentacles

The *Nine of Pentacles* represents the fruition of the previous cards, in an image promising prosperity and affluence. You are safe now. You have gained material rewards, and enjoy leisure time. This can signify retirement, a vacation, or a relaxing afternoon in your garden. The person in the RWS card is elegantly dressed, the grapes are ripe, the falcon ready—these represent luxuries, pleasures, and hobbies. It bodes well for health and all forms of physical well-being and contentment. *Nines* are also the number of the *Hermit*, so you could cultivate solitary pleasures or pursue self-fulfillment. Land and property are significant here, so you may be buying or caretaking these.

The RWS image contains several paradoxes. The gown is decorated with Venus symbols, but the person is alone. Birds usually represent spirit and freedom, but this one is a hooded predator. Signs of enclosure are everywhere: the ample gown, the walled garden, the glove, and the hood—as both protection and entrapment. A snail crawls in the foreground, prudently carrying its shell; yet it is a lowly creature that despoils gardens. Comfort and refinement versus a rapacious instinct—kept under wraps—and the desire to be free may be issues for you. The card points to an innate sense of order and discipline.

**TRADITIONAL:** Effect, consequence, result. Realization. Achievement, accomplishment. Success. Discretion, circumspection, prudence. Discernment. Roving disposition. Property. Contentment. Business expansion. Maturity. Grandmother.

## Nine of Pentacles Reversed

The *Nine of Pentacles Rx* tends to intensify the sensation of entrapment and the desire for freedom. You might be resisting the temptations of the rich and the lure of sequestered luxury. Prosperity still reigns, but the values seem false or cover up a certain disquiet. Perhaps all is not well in your environment. You could be bored, or curious about other ways of life, with a desire to roam. Or, perhaps you are being taken advantage of. Others may see you as easy prey. Contentment and safety may be threatened, whether from within or without. Property damage is possible, either through natural events, or dishonest practices. There could be environmental problems affecting your physical health. You might be the victim



of deceit, or you may have gained something through your own deceptions. Swindles and robbery are possibilities. If you are buying property, you may want to review the situation carefully.

Occasionally a person denies their well-being, or good fortune. Contrariwise, prosperity might seem just out of reach. You may find it difficult to relax, even if you have earned it. Perhaps you have no time for vacations or hobbies. On the other hand, you could be completely self-indulgent; thinking that everything is yours for the taking. Healthwise you may not be getting enough exercise.

When projected on to others, you could see them as having it all, possibly by being born into it, or by doing something underhanded or exploitive to get it. Or you might think they covet what you have. In terms of inner work, you are likely to experience peace and serenity.

On the shamanic or magical level this signifies the fairy queen or queen of the underworld whose wondrous boons are equalled by their great cost. From a different perspective it can refer to working with animal allies or familiars.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Swindles, theft. Deceit, bad faith. Artifices. Guilt. Theft. Disappointment. Promises without effects. Projects aborted. Threat to safety. Storms. Loss. Overindulgence. Superficial rather than real gains.



## Ten of Pentacles

The prosperity achieved in the *Nine* becomes “old money” and “family values” in the *Ten of Pentacles*. While it might be seen as fortune and property, this card has more to do with inheritance and legacies in their broadest sense. It suggests what endures and is permanent. You might be concerned with financial, genetic, or cultural inheritances of any kind, or wisdom and knowledge handed down. This extends to matters involving family, friends, community, and traditions. Domestic affairs, relationships, and property can be at stake. Old treasures may increase in value. Perhaps you are tracing your family tree or examining archives. You could be attending a reunion. Family responsibilities might have you thinking about legacies and insurance, or other ways to benefit future generations.

Situations involving institutions, corporations or a family business can affect you personally. Sometimes loyalties are involved. Your sense of “belonging” or desire to fit in might be influencing you. One man wanted his long-dead father to approve of all he had accomplished, depicted literally on the card as the couple, their young son, two dogs, and the old inn that was now their home.

Perhaps you are executor or beneficiary of a will, or need to care for an elderly parent. This card emphasizes home. It is about providing a stable environment for your loved ones. You could return after a journey, move to a better house, or extend your household. Referents may be characterized by words such as “big,” “grand,” “whole,” and “comprehensive.”

**TRADITIONAL:** House, domicile, habitation, home. Family, race, ancestry, posterity. Archives, records. Riches, economy, savings. A legacy. Wills, deeds, pensions, insurance. Wisdom. Security, honor. Travels.

## Ten of Pentacles Reversed

The *Ten of Pentacles Rx* can indicate turning away from family situations or rejecting traditions. Either you are unwelcome or estranged from clan beliefs and heritage. There are often problems with the family or community, or with an organization or institution. This could involve quarrels and feuds, or marital difficulties. Loyalties may be in conflict, and you feel like an outsider. Or, you could be deprived of aid or goods. Wisdom and advice gets ignored.

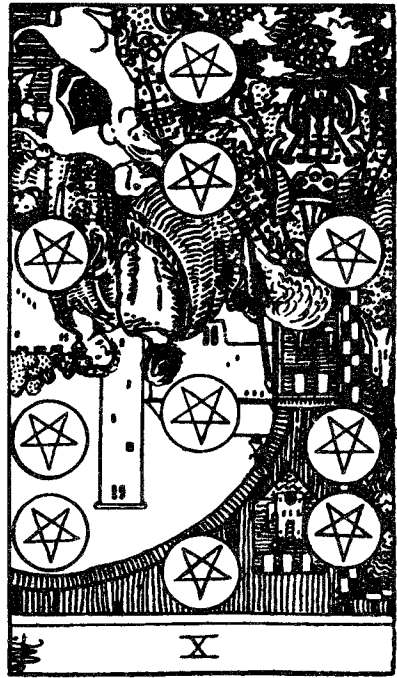
From a different perspective, you could be withholding talents and skills or, at the other extreme, seeing the material world as your ultimate source.<sup>12</sup> For instance, when reversed, the Tree of Life pattern in the RWS card puts Malkuth, the material world, at the top. With this card, you are either stuck in matter, or just beginning the evolutionary journey back to Spirit, leaving material concerns behind.

If projecting this on to another, you may see them as an elderly burden to take care of, or as someone encumbered by heritage and obligations. At the inner level everything in the physical world reflects aspects of yourself and has its correspondences in the cosmos.

If other cards concur, losses can be major, and have to do with home, family, or savings. A legacy or treasure may prove worthless. Perhaps you squander everything through lotteries or gambling. You could feel that fate is against you or the gods are playing games, but maybe it is simply a garage sale! With health issues, look to genetic influences. Examine the emotional baggage you've inherited.

On the shamanic or magical level, this card's riches are its spiritual blessings. The ancestors and their concerns for the tribe are indicated. This is a doorway into your inner landscape, where you can encounter your psyche or communicate with those who have gone before.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Chance, hazard, fortune, destiny, fate. Games, gambling. Dissipation. Robbery, loss. Taxation. Disputed or worthless inheritance. Gift, dowry, pension. Uncertainty, insecurity.



## ENDNOTES

1. This was suggested by Julie Cuccia-Watts, artist-creator of the *Ancestral Path Tarot* deck.
2. Thanks to Ruth Ann Brauser, of the Tarot School in New York City.
3. These health concerns were suggested by Ruth Ann Brauser of the Tarot School.
4. From the *Grand Etteilla Tarot* published by Grimaud.
5. Thanks to Elizabeth Hazel of TarotL.
6. Florence Farr was at one time head of the London Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Richard Cavendish is the author of *The Tarot* and *The Black Arts*.
7. See commentary on Etteilla in the history section of chapter 1.
8. Thanks to Elizabeth Hazel who mentioned this on TarotL.
9. I owe this insight to Christine Payne-Towler whose understanding of the value of traditional meanings first led me to reconsider their usefulness.
10. M. C. Poinsoot is the editor of *The Encyclopedia of the Occult Sciences*. His interpretations summarize those of nineteenth-century French authors, especially Elie Alta and Eudes Picard.
11. Thanks to James Ricklef (aka “KnightHawk”) for pointing this out.

Minor Arcana  
Interpretations

The Court Cards

## Page (or Princess) of Wands

The *Page of Wands* is a free spirit—ardent, fervent, and zealous, having the youthful and immature characteristics of the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius). Although all the *Pages* represent news and messages, this one especially carries the import of an envoy, agent, or bringer of news. You or someone you know could be curious about or focus attention on a particular object or goal. You could be intrigued by new ideas or impetuously caught up by some new enthusiasm, willing to try anything at the first opportunity for a little excitement or adventure. With a drive to know yourself, you could search for new directions for self-growth and improvement. Perhaps there is someone you are looking up to and regard with esteem. You might be in a subordinate position, but ambitious to work your way to the top. You are likely to be frank and candid, artless and unstudied. You might explore things that are close at hand with a certain fearless grace, and could be in strange surroundings where everything is unusual and fascinating. This card can signal the beginning of passion, or a young person's idealized worship of someone. You may experience the zeal of a fan or devotee, or be captivated by a hobby. As news or a messenger, it suggests unexpected information, surprises, and new possibilities that might require immediate action. Often this news or its bearer acts as a catalyst for positive change. As a child this person is especially energetic, outgoing, and demanding of attention.

**TRADITIONAL:** Stranger. Unknown, anonymous. Extraordinary, unusual, unprecedented. Surprising, wonderful, marvelous. Prodigy. Episode, digression, story, tale. Envoy, emissary, postman. Strange tidings. Faithful, consistent. Pleasure, satisfaction. Disaster. Second-rate.

## Page (or Princess) of Wands Reversed

The *Page of Wands Rx* could throw a tantrum if she (or he) does not get what she wants or if someone takes her toy away. Or she might be jaded and unenthusiastic, refusing to play. You, or someone you know, might resist something new, or fear change or disappointment. You could reject an opportunity or plan, yet feel like the one rejected. Perhaps you lack curiosity or concentration, and become bored with details and drudgery. You might see the idea of starting over as beneath you or requiring too

much effort. You may not want to appear childish, naïve, or gullible. Perhaps you present a studied, blasé attitude of superiority or disdain. Or you could be thoughtless, rash, or insensitive.

On the other hand, you may try anything, but in a hasty, impatient, and indiscriminate way. Wanting it now, you may not take the time to make good judgments. You could enjoy the thrill and adrenaline rush of taking risks and gambling. In your recklessness you might overlook things of value or not appreciate the finer points of the matter. This is the person who has experienced a lot but savored little, a dilettante or dabbler, mimicking and discarding the latest fads. You can be unreliable and drift in and out of relationships without knowing what you are looking for. Alternatively, you are at the point of developing something beyond the inspirational stage.

Children could be wayward or delinquent. As a child, your enthusiasms may not have been shared, and your fingers could have been burned or slapped when reaching for things. Alternatively, you got your own way, becoming spoiled and overindulged.

As a messenger, she (or he) traditionally brings bad news, such as a letter of rejection. Or, the news may consist of just the first or partial accounts of a situation. It can also suggest a braggart who speaks indiscriminately.

Healthwise, there could be burns, minor accidents, dehydration. There may be hyperactivity or attention deficit, or, conversely, a lack of energy. At the shamanic and magical level, this can be the sorcerer's apprentice, who takes on more than they can handle. It is also the bard-in-training who recounts tales of far-off lands, fabulous creatures, and strange deeds.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Bad news, as of a lost lawsuit. Indecision, instability, inconsistency. Powerlessness. Displeasure. Announcement, notification. Instruction, advice, admonition. Anecdotes, chronicle, story, history, tales, fables. Reviews, teachings, precepts. Unfaithful. Charlatanism. Worry.



## Knight (or Prince) of Wands

The *Knight of Wands* is a bold adventurer—spontaneous, creative, and hot-headed—representing the dynamic energies of the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius). He is also a lover—ardent, impulsive, and exciting. He makes sparks fly, but shuns commitment. You, or someone you know, may be interested, or involved in, a passionate encounter. Alternatively, you could plunge into projects with great expectations and flare, but finish few of them. Perhaps you crave freedom of action and the opportunity to explore new realms. You are not likely to let anything stand between you and what you desire. Given a challenge, you will invent or improvise a way to meet it but, like an impetuous crusader, might have problems with details, routines, and follow-through. You might rebel against stodgy or old fashion things, and thus revolutionize a system or procedure. You might urge others to be more spontaneous and experimental. You could act in a flamboyant, hasty, arrogant, unpredictable, or impatient manner. There is a tendency to clown around, amuse, or entertain. You may be interested in business campaigns, competitive sports, or theater. You would probably rather sell ideas than things, and might be striving for new approaches and challenges. This card suggests that you are being forward thinking and future oriented, and good at motivating people to rebellious causes and quests. It can also indicate taking journeys, changing residence, or putting ideas into action. You might be traveling about, meeting interesting people, and facing challenges requiring on-the-spot improvisation. It suggests hot, dry weather or journeys over land in combustion-engine vehicles.

**TRADITIONAL:** Departure, flight, removal, separation, distance. Trip, journey, change of address. Abandonment, desertion, emigration. Remote, absent, foreign. Moving into the unknown. Transpose, translate, transplant. Alteration. Evasion. Change of position.

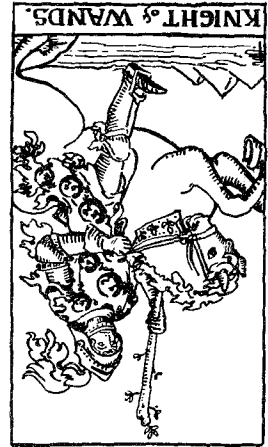
## Knight (or Prince) of Wands Reversed

The *Knight of Wands Rx* can be a haphazard dabbler or a smashing rogue, a champion, or a rebel without a cause; a self-serving thrill-seeker and showoff, or a rowdy and contentious bully.

You may have no place to go and no energy to get there. Or, foolhardy, you charge too fast. Like a flash fire, you could indiscriminately scorch



everything you touch. Through impatience, recklessness, or thoughtlessness, you may bring discord and disunity to a situation, leaving breakups and fractures when you depart. Perhaps there is even gang involvement. This card describes a state of turmoil in which desire seethes and simmers beneath the surface without focus or outlet, or surfaces randomly and unpredictably. You could be involved in a “love ’em and leave ’em” situation in which sex is a recreational or competitive sport. Passions are either faked or a flash-in-the-pan. You temper might be on a short fuse, flaring into rage if events move too slowly and you feel frustrated. Disagreements lead to quarrels, arguments, and jealousy. You may feel unseated and unsettled.



On the other hand, the fire may not catch. You could resist or deny opportunities for change and excitement, squelching and putting the brakes on new endeavors. You may ride off as soon as passion threatens. A journey could be cancelled, delayed, or interrupted. You might reign in your impulses and desires. By slowing down you can stop to “smell the flowers” rather than perpetually focusing on future progress. The slower pace of the reversal could make you more effective and allow for deeper experiences. Still, procrastination could keep you from getting anywhere. The paradoxical phrase, *festina lente*, “hurry slowly,” might apply. With salamanders now uppermost, the figure can become an agent of passion rather than a human who is passionate.

Healthwise, there could be imbalances in the body that suddenly erupt as boils, sores, rashes, or inflammations. At the shamanic and magical level, this is like fire-walking, wherein you feed your fear to the fire to walk unscathed. This is a pioneer explorer on the inner planes who discovers how far their sigils, talismans, and passwords will take them.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Disunity, quarrel, discord. Misunderstanding, estrangement. Row, brawl, rupture. Dissention, division, parting, separation. Strife, contention. Contest. A faction or party. Discontinuation, interruption. Break in relationships. Loan not repaid. Unexpected change.

## Queen of Wands

The *Queen of Wands* likes to play the romantic lead with theatrical flair, and wants life to be full of passion and excitement. The card is about the fiery feminine, with characteristics of the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius). More than the other *Queens* she has leadership ability and a fierce determination to make her own decisions or get her own way, while remaining friendly and optimistic. When you, or someone you know, are acting as this *Queen* you may be intent on your desires, expressing your passionate nature with boldness, or self-confidently communicating creative visions and original ideas. You might be chairing a committee or overseeing a big production. The sunflower scepter on the RWS card indicates your radiant, outgoing qualities, center-stage presence, and love of drama. You may feel optimistic and full of ideas, with high energy and self-esteem. You could assert your enterprising spirit by endorsing or promoting a product or service. If more concerned with personal development, you may be drawn to spiritual endeavors and inspirational philosophies. Although you vigorously pursue your own interests, you also have the power to influence others. The black cat indicates independence, self-possession, and opposition to restraint. Additionally, you can be ferocious when attacked or if defending others. You can be ardent in love. As a mother and partner, you are generally warm, courageous, and loving, but can become haughty, domineering, and can overmanage your children's lives and futures.

**TRADITIONAL:** Countrywoman. Companion, consort. Honorable, virtuous, respectable. Feminine charm and grace. Sympathetic, understanding. Friendly, loving. Civility, good manners. Sweetness, meek and mild, good-natured. Chaste. Love of money. Business success. Thrifty, frugal, economical.

## Queen of Wands Reversed

The *Queen of Wands Rx* can be a charming, dangerous schemer like Anne Boleyn whereas her daughter, Elizabeth I, characterizes the upright card. The dynamic drive and success of the upright leads, in the reversal, to labels of witch, bitch, or ball buster. And, like Zeus's wife Hera, she may become jealous and vengeful because she has been violated, dishonored, and co-opted as creator. She transforms from fire into conflagration or ice.

Your struggle for personal growth and self-development could be strained and difficult. Your ambitions may be frustrated and thwarted, or you lack opportunity to prove and challenge yourself. Plans could be deliberately undermined or undercut by those who are jealous or want to “keep you in your place.” Rivalry and competition can create ill will. As a result, you either feel directionless and weak willed, or you become self-centered, overbearing, angry, or even hysterical.

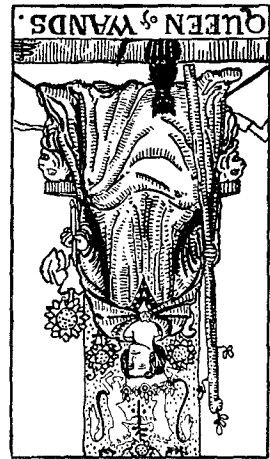
You, or someone you know, could be acting self-important and pushy, or catty and malicious. There is a certain unpredictability about the reversal, so that you may blow hot and cold as your energy shifts. Alternatively, there is a danger that by focusing so intently on future possibilities, the present situation and immediate needs are slighted. Or, you procrastinate, avoid decisions, or put off changes.

A wild fervor may plunge you into promiscuity, infidelities, or deceit. There is a tendency to become volatile or overdramatize situations. Interactions can escalate into confrontation or you withdraw into solitude. Selfishness is either increased or, its opposite, in which case you give up self-determination and become weakened and ineffectual. You could become scattered, or your indomitable will leads to burnout. On the other hand, you could delay or put aside your own needs to serve others. As a mother or partner, you can be overly domineering, angry and irritable, self-righteous and self-absorbed, or unavailable.

Healthwise, you might find fevers, hot flashes, viruses, infections, growths, and manic-depressive behavior, but also spontaneous healings.

At the shamanic and magical level, this is the card of the shaman/sorceress with her spells, charms, and enchantments, chants and incantations. She also represents the fiery, destructive, and predatory forces of Nature, which are necessary to thin or decrease excessive growth.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Good woman. Kind, benevolent. Obliging, helpful. Benefit, favor. Courtesy, obligation. Possible deceit, infidelity, envy, instability, fickleness. Hindrance, obstacles, resistance. Misplaced charity. Extravagant (sometimes given to the upright).



## King of Wands

The *King of Wands* expresses the established maturity of the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius), and suggests the generosity, courage, and magnanimity of the legendary Richard the Lion-Hearted. He is regal, stately, and imposing, a kind of benevolent dictator or autocrat, a take-charge kind of guy who will walk through fire for something he believes in. He maintains power.

You may be an entrepreneur who gets to the top by taking risks and being creative. You can dominate a situation with vitality and self-assurance, and may appear pushy and aggressive until you have clearly established your territory and expertise. Perhaps you are on the lookout for new projects, activities, or procedures. You or someone you know could be acting with confidence and taking a leadership role, dominating others by strength of will or mastery of your field. You could be called upon to make important decisions and set goals, although you may try to do it all yourself. Perhaps you are advising groups or individuals, and lending them your support. You might be handling something with pride, dignity, and self-respect, or are being publicly recognized for your abilities. Often there is a strong desire to express yourself and your ideas, and to create something that will distinguish you from others.

As a parent or partner this card epitomizes the “father-knows-best” attitude—firm and controlling, yet inspiring, indulgent, and caring. As a developmental stage it shows an established paradigm, an idea that has become dominant, but whose assumptions perhaps need to be challenged.

**TRADITIONAL:** Country gentleman. A good, correct, pure man. Serious, stern. Honest, with good intentions. Conscience, integrity. A farmer, laborer, agriculturist. A married man and/or father. Talent, genius. Knowledge, education.

## King of Wands Reversed

The *King of Wands Rx* has exaggerated regal tendencies, making him arrogant, autocratic, and dictatorial. He brooks no interference and self-righteously insists on his authority. The Fire sign penchant for pride becomes overbearing. Underneath it all he is the “emperor who wears no clothes”; his power, ego, and vanity depending on a bluster, show, and flattery.

You or someone you know may use power unwisely or make foolish decisions. You might oppose others simply as a display of one-upmanship. You can be aggressive and abuse others, like a bully or a commandant with no humanity. If pushed, you may lose your temper. Boundaries and limits are often an issue, being either too aggressively established and strictly enforced, or weak and ineffectual, even nonexistent. You might have difficulty adjusting to retirement or loss of a job. Like King Lear, who lost his identity when he gave up rulership, you can look foolish. You may become ineffective when your world no longer operates according to expectation. Seemingly insignificant matters can be overlooked or magnified, or errors in judgment come to light that weaken your position. You might focus all your energies on dominating a tiny niche or sphere of influence, ignoring the larger world as you sink into a decline. At worst, one slip or lapse and an empire comes crashing down.



On the other hand, you could retreat from positions of authority and let others take charge, preferring to follow rather than lead. Or you might recognize your lack of expertise and knowledge, and relinquish control. Feeling uncomfortable with a rank or position thrust upon you, you could shirk power. Alternatively, you might seek to overthrow a leader or idea.

As a boss or father you might be an absolute authority, demanding unquestioning obedience. Or, like other reversed *Kings*, this can indicate an absent father or the lack of a positive male role model. On the other hand, you may be excessively lenient, a pushover. Healthwise, there could be heart problems and stroke. In the shamanic and magical realm, this card indicates a mastery of fire, such as fire-swallowing, and reminds us that regal wisdom often embraces the wisdom of the fool, or acknowledges its own foolishness.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** A good, serious man. Lenient, indulgent, correct, tolerant, compliant. Bad investments. Excessive and exaggerated ideas. Counsel, advice. Dogmatism. Severe, austere. Vicious.

## Page (or Princess) of Cups

The *Page of Cups* is a romantic dreamer, or a child or young person having the characteristics of a Water sign (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces): sympathetic, sensitive, cooperative, and charming. You could be attending to voices from your dreams, intuition, or the unconscious. Or you might be a good listener to a friend. You may act lovingly by supporting and nurturing someone's process with caring concern and a willingness to be involved. You could be asked to keep secrets. Perhaps you are open to a love relationship. It might feel like puppy love, or going on a first date, starting over after a long relationship. You may be emotionally vulnerable or naïve. There is a tendency to idealize relationships or long for romance. You can bring joy and pleasure into the lives of others through your lighthearted playfulness, friendship, and a desire to serve. You may be eager to avoid conflict or unpleasantness, and promote harmony and good feeling. You might be getting advice, or fishing for compliments. Occasionally it refers to dressing up and cosmetic improvements.

As a student, you learn best in an atmosphere of sharing and affection, when your emotions are engaged. As a message this can be a social invitation, love letter, or news of an engagement, marriage, pregnancy or birth. With supporting cards it can be a sign of fertility. It also signifies gossiping, or reading romance novels. The card can also refer to a sensitive, imaginative, and loving child in your life.

**TRADITIONAL:** Blond youth. Studious. Loyal. Devoted. Learning. Application. Work, occupation. Reflection, observation, consideration, meditation, contemplation. Probity. Discretion, integrity. Willingly offers their services.

## Page (or Princess) of Cups Reversed

The *Page of Cups Rx* can be afraid of and resist love, or deny her (or his) emotional vulnerability. Sometimes it indicates a loss of innocence and trust. On the other hand, it could signify being sexually experienced, boy/girl-crazy, or needing constant reassurance that you are loved. You could be tormented by an attraction, or use seduction and flattery to ingratiate yourself. Perhaps you exaggerate foppish mannerisms, or are dressed up when everyone else is in jeans, or love someone from "across the tracks." This can also indicate oversensitivity and sensibilities that are

too highly refined for normal functioning. Alternatively, you could be unromantic, callous, and unfeeling in the face of protestations of love and affection. You may have decided you will never be vulnerable again.

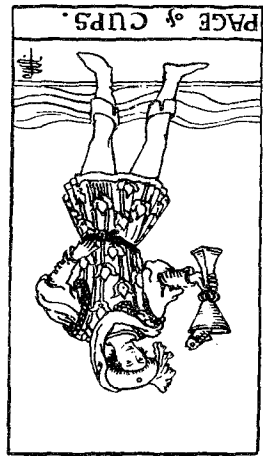
You could be escaping from a person or situation. You might refuse to listen to advice, a story, or news. Your intuition could be communicating something that you cannot or will not hear. Or you could be mesmerized by, or obsessed with, guides, spirits, Ouija boards, and divination. You might withdraw into fantasies or romance, or a private kingdom filled with imaginary friends.

This could be a child who reached out lovingly in the past, and was spurned or laughed at. They can be easily swayed, influenced, and hurt by others. They learn best from things they are attracted to and when their imagination is engaged. Inwardly it speaks of listening to your dreams, even when the imagery is disturbing or frightening, and learning to hear, love, and bring comfort to your own inner child

Healthwise, it can be pining away for, or even making yourself sick from love, including nausea, fainting spells, and stomach upsets. Messages can include a "Dear John" letter, or cancellations of invitations and social engagements. News plays on your sentiments and not your reason. Psychic messages may prove false.

At the shamanic and magical level, this represents puberty and menarche rituals. In one tradition, this card signifies the "corn dolly" used in initiation rites, probably to represent the annual renewal of fertility within a tribe.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** A weak youth, easily influenced. Inclination, penchant, propensity. Attraction, taste, style. Sympathy, affection, attachment. Love. Heartache, envy, jealousy. Attraction, charm, seduction. Invitation, consent. Flattery, fawning, adulation.



## Knight (or Prince) of Cups

At best, the *Knight of Cups* is the pure and perfect grail knight on a spiritual quest, or the troubadour who dedicates all to love. He is the idealistic dreamer, ruled by inner values and emotions, adventuring through realms of romantic pleasure. You, or someone you know, may be in a caring mode, evincing a calm, gentle, poetic, and artistic nature like the Water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). Gallant and amicable, you might be initiating social contacts, making a proposal, or extending an invitation to an event. Situations could include music, dance, spiritual and devotional practices, counseling, catering, and fantasy entertainment like movies. Perhaps you are wooing someone with gifts and offerings, “wining and dining” the object of your affections. You could offer them your deepest feelings, creative imaginings, soulful recreations, and the fulfillment of psychic and emotional needs. You might be especially sensitive to another’s emotional state, and practice people-pleasing skills to promote harmonious relationships and avoid conflicts. However, you may see love as a diversion, while adoration and flattery become tools to achieve your ends. Even upright, this can indicate the “love ’em and leave ’em” type, for conquest is the goal. Alternatively, you might be “on a quest” for a congenial or artistically inspiring environment, or taking something of great value to a new location. You might be guided by a spiritual or otherworldly vision, or psychic awareness, and be seeking spiritual and healing solutions to practical problems. The card can indicate journeys over water or through wet weather.

**TRADITIONAL:** A seductive, charming lover. Invitation, proposal. Advent, arrival, approach. Attraction. Conquest. Landing. Meeting. Reception, welcome, greeting. Access. Drawing or bringing together. Agreement, compliance, congeniality. Accession, adhesion, union. Affluence. Comparison, similitude.

## Knight (or Prince) of Cups Reversed

The *Knight of Cups Rx* may be a deceitful schemer or an overly sensitive esthete chasing illusions. He could wear his heart on his sleeve, hide his love, or use love simply to achieve his own ends. In fact, there is a traditional interpretation for this card as “the love that dare not say its name”—a nineteenth-century euphemism for homosexuality. It emphasizes both



the tender and the secretive aspects of a reversal. If, with the reversal, you become more forthright, then it can indicate “coming out of the closet” with whatever you have been hiding. Alternatively, an invitation may be withdrawn, or you may look upon a proposition with suitable suspicion and restraint. There can be unrequited love, or cheating and deception. The situation is often not as it seems. You, or someone you know, could be wary of commitment. Perhaps you are being emotionally dishonest, fawning and obsequious, disingenuous, or duplicitous. This could arise from your constantly moving with and adapting to the situation in a pliant, liquid way, making you hard to define or grasp. You could be “in love with love,” or narcissistically in love only with yourself, and thus unable to give to anyone else. You could be overcome by moodiness, tears, nostalgia, or emotional insecurity. You may drift lethargically, beset by dreams and fantasies. Perhaps you are moving away from emotional involvement.



Healthwise, and with supporting cards, there can be abuse of sex, drugs, or alcohol for pleasure or to escape harsh realities. Imbalances make one anemic or bloated, prone to colds and discharges, nauseous, hung-over, and confused. This card as an inner expression, as shown by the fish-covered robe and water uppermost, can signify an agent of fertility or of the subconscious rather than a person. Thus, you may feel overtaken by poetic fancies, submerged in an undersea realm of psychic significances and watery connections.

In the shamanic and magical realm, this could be journeying for soul retrieval, or dream-work, in which you explore dream symbols for their deeper meanings. It is also the mystical poet who writes of spiritual union in terms of sexual love.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Guile, seduction, deception, fraud, cunning. Cheating, knavery, villainy. Ruse, artifice. Finesse, craftiness, trickery. Sensitivity, ingenuity. Suppleness, compliance. Artfulness. Heinousness, atrocity, treachery, slander.

## Queen of Cups

The *Queen of Cups* is like the damsel in the ivory tower: sensitive, romantic, dreamy, and contemplative with great emotional depth. She can be loving, gracious, kind, and caring with esthetic sensibilities and a refined appreciation for poetry, beauty, and the arts. She can also be self-indulgent, impractical, unfocused, and unworldly. You or someone you know could be evaluating things through emotional responses and personal values. Sensing nuances and undercurrents, you might be especially affected by moods and feelings—your own as well as others. People might turn to you for intuitive insights; perhaps you use psychic and empathic abilities to understand them. Being receptive and wanting to please, you might assume other people's projections, reflecting their unconscious feminine back to them. It can be difficult to know yourself because you flow into whatever form or container offers comfort and security. To some, this impressionability may appear as dissembling. Or, you might protect your sensitivity by becoming reserved and self-reliant. You could be attending an inner rhythm and flow rather than clock-time. This card suggests that you are shy, sentimental, gullible, whimsical, and dreamy. You could prefer an environment of peace and harmony, but you can live equally well in the realm of fantasy and the imagination. Occasionally there is a fascination with mysticism. Perhaps you are seen as glamorous, alluring, enchanting, and fascinating. You may be flirting with or dreaming about your beloved. In relationships you want to be cherished, pampered, and adored. As mother and partner, you can see no wrong in your loved ones, for whom you create an artistic and beautiful environment.

**TRADITIONAL:** A fair-haired woman. Kind, honorable, virtuous, warmhearted, respectable, modest, decent, chaste, honest, becoming, seemingly, decorous, devoted, and comely. A paragon of virtue.

## Queen of Cups Reversed

The *Queen of Cups Rx* can be so ethereal and angelic that she seems not of this world. Ironically, she can also be the fallen woman or the seductress. In Victorian literature she is seduced by love, and when betrayed, drowns herself, turning into a watery ghost or siren that lures men to destruction. On one hand, she is a vamp, on the other, she withholds favors.

The reversal suggests you could deny your emotions, or are vapid, enervated, and weak willed. It can equally indicate refusing to succumb to feigning maneuvers, and rejecting beliefs that are not your own. At one extreme, you might retreat into unrealistic fantasy and self-pity, or abuse alcohol or drugs. A tendency to merge psychically with the object of your desire can leave your body untenanted and subject to possession by entities or vices. At the other extreme, you could be sharp and competent, letting no one take advantage of you, overcoming illusions, and refusing to be swept away by feelings.



Perhaps you are impractical, hypersensitive to criticism, or oblivious to time considerations and regulations. You could be frivolous and inconstant, or you might drink up the psychic energy of others for self-sustenance. You might use passive resistance, pouting, or sexuality to get what you want. Emotional insecurity could make you jealous, envious, or bitter in rivalry, and possibly vindictive, or else clinging and grasping. Alternatively, you could alienate yourself from others, becoming hardhearted, cold, unfeeling, or vindictive. You may hide your love.

Healthwise, there can be indigestion, moodiness, water retention, or anemia. As a parent or partner this *Queen* can be withdrawn, resentful, self-serving, and may blame others for her unhappiness. She can smother her loved ones with her own emotional neediness or codependency. Inwardly, there can be a deep mystical connection and devotion to God or Spirit that may involve denial of the senses.

On the shamanic and magical level, this is a card of mediumship, trance channeling, and psychic healing through taking on another's illness or pain. In some forms of shamanic possession, she marries a benevolent spirit-husband or falls into the clutches of a demon lover. It also signifies teas and tinctures.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** A woman of distinguished rank. A virtuous woman. Also: vice, dishonor, dishonesty, depravity, immodesty. Dissolute, immoral. Corruption, scandal, licentiousness, intemperance, intrigue. Inconsistent and inconstant. A married woman of high position offers her love.

## King of Cups

The *King of Cups* can be likened to Dionysus, the god of wine, poetry, and wild abandon, but who got drunk just once and, alone among the Greek gods, stayed faithful to his wife. Or like Poseidon, he is full of hidden depths and deep currents, asserting the mature authority of the Water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). You may be striving to remain steady amidst waves of emotion that threaten to sweep over you. When you are in a position of authority, current culture rarely encourages you to be artistic, affectionate, intuitive, and nurturing, since, in doing so, you might be perceived as weak. To keep yourself from being overcome by emotions, you may need to exert rigid self-control, seemingly as cold as the fish hanging around his neck. On the other hand, you might be acting in a dependable, sensitive, loving, and compassionate way, or serving as a genial host, good friend, and confidant to others. This card epitomizes the poet or artist, merchant prince, priest or minister, family doctor, or counselor.

You, or someone you know, could be anticipating and satisfying the needs of others, or being a source of comfort. You could be directing cultural activities, offering loving and wise counsel, or deliberately stirring the emotions of others to gain sympathy for your objectives. There may be a tendency toward nostalgia and old-fashioned values. As a father, the *King of Cups* can be either loving and nurturing, or, because of cultural upbringing, afraid of showing just how much he cares.

**TRADITIONAL:** A fair-haired, honorable man. Honesty and integrity. Equality, fairness. Artist. Scientist. Lawyer. Religious. Fair dealings, kind, responsible, considerate. Supportive, affectionate.

## King of Cups Reversed

The *King of Cups Rx* may close himself off from others and seem heartless, or he may plumb the depths of his own psyche—at the expense of outward relationships. You might be feeling sentimental or maudlin. Alternatively, you could act macho to avoid being perceived as wimpish, weak, or ineffectual. Perhaps, tossed by waves of feeling, you fear loss of emotional control. You may be disappointed in yourself, and thus melancholic and depressed—so that your “heart isn’t in it.”

You could be looking for love in all the wrong places, or expressing love uxoriously, like John Lennon's devotions to Yoko Ono. On the other hand, you might believe love should come to you while you sit back and wait. Seeing the world as uncaring and exploitive, you can take advantage of others—hence traditional meanings of embezzlement and swindles. You might hide behind a caring facade, or publicly pretend congeniality. If you have been faking a role to fulfill someone else's needs, you may lose track of who you are. Perhaps your sense of sacrifice to your family is not appreciated. You may simply want sympathy. This is like Walter Mitty, the hen-pecked husband who retreats into fantasies.



As with the other *Cups*, you could escape into dependency on drugs, alcohol, or workaholism. You can assume a “poor-me” attitude and submerge into passive-resistant self-pity. It can be especially hard to take direct action, so you may act covertly. Or, you could passively drift through life.

As a father or partner, this reversal can make you overprotective and smothering, or emotionally unavailable (possibly through alcoholism), and moody. There can be withholding of sexual favors, or kinkiness and debauchery. On the other hand, it can indicate breaking through societal concepts about the masculine role in caregiving and male friendships. Healthwise, you may be considering unconventional healing practices. The reversal suggests seeking the underlying causes of “dis-ease” or disharmony. On a literal level you may get seasick or have problems with fertility.

At the shamanic and magical level, this is the priestly role of devotion in action. It refers to the Fisher King of grail legend, who cannot be healed until someone asks the question, “Whom does the grail serve?”

**TRADITIONAL RX:** A man of business or in office. A dishonorable man. Double-dealing. Extortion. Embezzlement. Bribery. Injustice. Highwayman, robber, thief. Rogue, cheat, swindler. Vice, corruption, injustice, scandal. Ruin.

## Page (or Princess) of Swords

The *Page of Swords* looks like a baseball batter with his (or her) eye on the ball, waiting for whatever comes. You, or someone you know, could be curious about what is next or, if expecting confrontation, defensive and on guard. Or, you might be acting with audacity and daring. In personal interactions you are alert, quick witted, and agile, but if threatened, cutting or spiteful. Perhaps you are trying out new ideas or technologies to which you must adapt quickly, or playing games that combine both physical and mental challenges, and require cunning and dexterity. You may be engaged in troubleshooting or crisis management, or gathering facts and data before committing yourself to a job or project. You could be learning or using logic, languages, writing and speaking, research, design, investigation, computers and technology. Or, you could be involved with spying or surveillance. At best, you have developed discrimination, repartee, and wit, with the ability to improvise “on the fly.” You are ready to seize the moment using mental prowess and rapier-like tactics.

This card might literally be about using a sword, knife, or other cutting instrument. You may need to keep vigilant and watchful. As a child, the *Page of Swords* can represent someone who is defensive or suspicious, perhaps because of early betrayals or wounding. This card may also signify precocious and inquisitive children, or immature expressions of the Air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius). News may arrive about difficulties, negotiations, contracts, or legal matters, or could include gossip and tales. Usually there is an openness and hunger for new ideas.

**TRADITIONAL:** Espionage, secrecy, curiosity. Surveillance. Observer, investigator, vigilance. Stewart, bursar. Examination, note taking. Speculation, reckoning, calculation, computation. Learned, scholar, scientist, actor.

## Page (or Princess) of Swords Reversed

The *Page of Swords Rx* can be caustic, vituperative, and scathing, or vulnerable and at a loss for words. You might lower your guard, or lay down the sword of battle. Perhaps you find it difficult to speak up for yourself. Alternatively, you use delay tactics in order to think things through.

The defensive posture of the *Page of Swords* may indicate wounding in childhood and an inability to deal with old hurts effectively. You, or some-

one you know, can lash out unexpectedly, and may derive satisfaction from hurting and belittling others. Tale bearing and gossip may have malicious or slanderous intent. You might enjoy argument for its own sake, or be bent on revenge. On the other hand, you could be unaware of the effect of your words and actions.

You might avoid social or interpersonal engagements, hesitate to speak before a group or share ideas, or you become tongue-tied. You may be secretive and withhold information about yourself. Contrariwise, you speak aimlessly or illogically. Your bravado may be recognized as a pose.

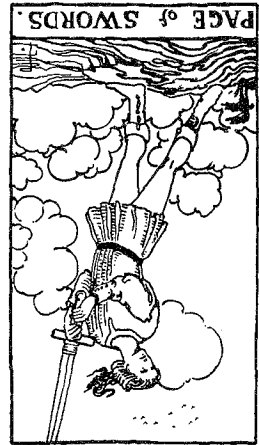
Verbal or written misunderstandings can occur, and you could cut corners at work. You may lack the confidence to air your ideas. When projected, you could see another as sly, cruel, lying, or capable of betrayal. Or, you see conspiracies everywhere. You might deem yourself unprepared, lacking in some mental or technical ability, and thus be overly defensive.

This can signify a young person in trouble with the law, or negatively impacted by divorce or estrangement. They may have been belittled, derided, and shamed, and could refuse to communicate, or could be overcoming such a background.

Healthwise, this can indicate speech difficulties, autism, stuttering, and psychological or physical abuse. It can also indicate a weakened immune system. If other cards concur, there might be suicidal thoughts. News can be sudden and unexpected—coming “out of the blue” to cause distress and unsettlement. A project or process cannot “get off the ground” because it lacks logic or planning, or falls into disagreement.

At the shamanic and magical level, this card represents coming of age ordeals, like Arthur pulling the sword from the stone or vision quests. It is also the ability to think in imaginal realities.

**TRADITIONAL Rx:** A weak, feeble person. An imposter. Lack of defenses. Illness. A plot, attack. Sudden, suddenly. Unexpected, unawares. Astonishing, surprising, extraordinary. Speaking and acting without preparation.



## Knight (or Prince) of Swords

The *Knight of Swords* rides “hell-bent-for-leather” into the middle of a fray, like a hero sworn to kill a dragon, or a messenger carrying warnings. He shows the revolutionizing energies of the Air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius), which focus on mental and verbal action. This represents an aspect of yourself or another, who thinks, analyzes, discriminates, and measures everything critically. You may be assertive and forceful, but headstrong and impatient. Perhaps you are trying to right some wrong or cut through obstructions. You could be intent on making a point or communicating your ideas or philosophy, but, being hasty and impetuous, with a tendency to “know it all,” you may not pause to listen to someone else’s perspective, or to look where you are going. You might be defining principles or classifying things. On the other hand, you could be in a situation that brings forth your cynicism and ironic wit. You might righteously defend your version of the truth or enjoy rescuing an idea-in-distress. You could rush to debate anything for the sake of argument. You may wield logic, criticism, and analysis as weapons, to slay irrationality and fuzziness. This card indicates an interest in, or access to, research, analytical works, planning agencies, law enforcement, or communications. You could lead a crusade or champion a cause. Perhaps you have efficiency in mind, eagerly shaving off minutes or eliminating ineffective behavior. As a mode of travel this card represents airplanes, motorcycles, or going anywhere in a hurry. The weather or atmosphere may be windy or stormy.

**TRADITIONAL:** A swordsman, soldier, henchman, bully, assassin. Combatant. Enemy. Dispute, war, battle, duel. Heroic action. Fanaticism. Attack. Defense. Opposition, destruction, ruin. Impetuous rush. Overthrowing. Rudeness. Hatred, ill will, grudge. Anger, wrath, fury. Skill. Courage, valor, bravery.

## Knight (or Prince) of Swords Reversed

The *Knight of Swords Rx* may be fanatical or out of control, or he may eventually “run out of steam.” This suggests the football player who rushes to a touchdown the wrong way, or delusional Don Quixote, battling windmills. Ultimately, this *Knight* comes to be seen as ridiculous, imprudent, or inept. You, or someone you know, could be full of hot air, battling clouds, flailing at straw horses, and arguing theories that are irrelevant or



empty. You might be “all riled up” over some injustice or unfair practice, without, however, checking the facts or your source. Your words may sound like nonsense, your arguments irrational. Or, you may be battle-worn or wounded by sharp words, wanting merely to retreat from the front lines and lay down your sword. You could be trying to overcome impulsiveness or tame your metaphorical “runaway horse,” whether this be instincts or ideas. You may deliberately become more thoughtful and careful, and less hurried.



However, you may fall into a temper-tantrum and rashly seek to cause pain, injury or damage. You could become ruthless or vengeful, blaming mistakes on others, or using cruel logic to destroy. If in too much of a hurry, you could find yourself wasting time and making mistakes. When showing off, you may recklessly endanger others. The horse on the RWS deck looks even angrier when reversed, suggesting that you are charging ahead without listening to advice from others. You may try to “get away with something”—even a swindle or a con—by thinking you are quicker and smarter than anyone else. Or, oppositely, find yourself victimized by such a person. You could be angrily trying to get even for some injustice. On the other hand, you could be falling back rather than advancing, hastily retreating from a threatening situation. The reversal does not bode well for transportation; you could get derailed, deplaned, or detoured.

Healthwise, there is a proclivity to violence, accidents, and wounds, especially to arms or legs, and where speed is involved. It could also indicate strokes (also known as brainstorm). At the shamanic and magical level, this indicates a spiritual warrior, battling in the upperworlds. It also suggests psychic self-defense.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Pickpocket. Swindler. Cardsharp. To play the fool. Imprudence. Incapacity, ineptitude, ignorance. Weakness. Impulsive mistakes. Silly, simple, foolish. Nonsense, ridicule. Conceited, vain. Extravagant. To live by one’s wits. News of a disaster.

## Queen of Swords

The *Queen of Swords* traditionally represents the divorced or widowed woman, or a spinster. While intelligent and discriminating, she is also reserved and aloof: an ice queen. Her no-nonsense self-reliance can be intimidating, yet you can count on her to speak frankly, and cut away the inessential so as to pierce through to the heart of any situation. She might wear a crisply tailored power-suit as easily as widow's weeds. She has gained wisdom by courageously learning from her pain and dealing with tragedy and loss, as symbolized by the hanging clouds in the background of the card. Her complex mind enables her to deal with complex situations. She espouses a rigorous professionalism and upholds truth and principle, heedless of the feelings of others. Her finely honed mind and self-discipline lend themselves to honest and meticulous criticism, research, writing, or business deals. You could demand honesty from others, challenging them to be competent, efficient, capable, and enterprising. Perhaps you are offering wise guidance, but meeting your perfectionist standards may be difficult. You may deal with situations impartially and handle disappointment well. Personal freedom and independence of opinion are qualities you could be valuing. You might be decisive, stern, judgmental, and unyielding, and sever contacts if necessary, even as you mourn their loss. However, you might also cut yourself off from your emotions. In partnerships, open communications are essential, although you could analyze a relationship to death. As a mother you are demanding, critical, and unyielding in your expectations.

**TRADITIONAL:** Widowhood, sadness, sorrow, privation, want, absence, separation, scarcity, barrenness, indigence, poverty, misfortune. Empty, vacant, unfilled, unoccupied, idle, dormant, free.

## Queen of Swords Reversed

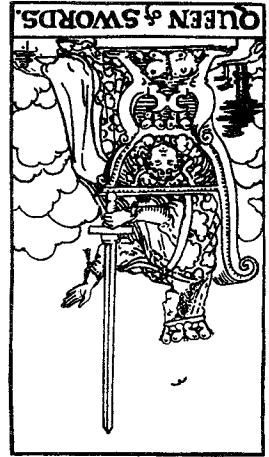
The *Queen of Swords Rx* when viewed traditionally is like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or Snow White's stepmother. She uses deceit and trickery to gain her fanatical ends. To see her only as evil, however, gives us melodrama rather than the greater tragedy of a human being with a fatal flaw. Cruelty and narrow-mindedness are not usually truly malicious, but rather arise from deep disappointments and self-deception. Ill-temper and

negative behavior most likely come out of frustrated ambitions, ideals turned sour, and abilities sacrificed or unused. Alternatively, this reversed *Queen* becomes more loving and emotional, less cut-off and more dependent, and can let her guard down.

At one extreme, you may be hiding your intellect and competence under the guise of artifice. At the other extreme, you may be an ascetic denying yourself comfort and company. You control grief and resist sorrow. Solitude and restriction, as well as intolerance, can result from heartbreak and disappointments. You might project hypercritical attitudes on to others, or be harshly self-critical. This card can indicate resisting an ending, or delaying decisions. You probably fear being alone or being rejected, yet may cut yourself off from those around you. You may resist overintellectualization, refuse to play mind games, or strive to overcome the distress of having a cold, disinterested parent or boss. If supported elsewhere, this card can refer to difficulties surrounding death, divorce, or separation, for they may not be “clean cut.” In personal relationships, there can be suppressed anger and cruelty, or lack of backbone and discrimination. As a parent she may carry great sadness that can emerge as either compassion or coldness and distance. She may be intolerant and unreasonable or vacillating and phlegmatic.

Healthwise, this reversal indicates asthmatic symptoms, allergies (especially to molds), and environmental hazards. At the shamanic and magical level, this is the ability to set wards, define a work, or learn what things should not be undertaken. It also refers to knowledge of poisons and toxins, whether for killing or curing. It can include the preparation and rites of the dead, traditionally overseen by older women.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** A wicked, ill-natured, spiteful woman. Malignant, malicious, vengeful. Cheating, knavery, deceit, trickery, artifice, ruse. Bigotry, prudery, hypocrisy, intolerance, fanaticism. Narrow-minded. Solitude.



## King of Swords

The *King of Swords* is “on duty.” He is a stern judge, an unflinching soldier, an editor, a surgeon, judge, or a philosopher. To say that he rules by the sword means that he has an ironclad yardstick by which to measure things. Like the other *Kings*, with this impartial arbiter of truth and justice; “the buck stops here.” He demonstrates the external expertise of the Air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius). As such he is a decision maker who bases his choices on logic and rationality, ethics, principles, and facts. At best he strives for honesty, fairness, strict and accurate definitions, and absolute rules and guidelines. This card can indicate the handling of legal matters, judgments, and negotiations, or police and military affairs. You or someone you know could be upholding standards or schedules, or be critiquing a work with an eye to catching any flaw, mistake, or weakness. You may be operating under strict requirements. You could set limits, and if necessary deprive yourself of something desired in order to honor a principle or decision. You face matters squarely and dispassionately, seeking to maximize efficiency, precision, and order. Discipline is essential. You evaluate carefully the consequences of planned actions. If required you could sever or cut off whatever is unnecessary, even if it entails making personal sacrifices. As a parent, this *King* has high standards and teaches that there is a consequence for every action. As a spouse he can be intelligent, honest, principled, but also critical and demanding.

**TRADITIONAL:** Man of the cloth or lawyer. Judge, councilor, senator, businessman, physician, jurist, litigant. Jurisprudence. Power, command, intelligence. Force.

## King of Swords Reversed

The *King of Swords Rx* takes order and discipline to extremes—through anger or by becoming inhumane—unsympathetic, unfeeling, and unwavering in his actions. Discipline could be harsh and cruel, and without mercy. Alternatively, he is unable to stand up for anything, is weak willed, lax, and cannot make decisions. This can also be the absent-minded professor: sharp in some areas, and totally oblivious in others, or the reversal can indicate a lack of intellectual ability.

You could have dealings with unscrupulous or tricky persons, especially in legal matters. Or, you may act lawlessly or do something criminal. Sometimes there is faulty thinking, or you accept prejudice as fact. It might signify you simply need to relax and crack a joke.

The world may appear unjust and corrupt. You or someone you know could be disillusioned by the justice system, politics, or business. You might feel principled but alone. Perhaps you have been treated unfairly. Judgments and decisions may not go your way, or there is unfairness and favoritism involved. You may be trying to “beat the system” or avoid the consequences of your actions. Perhaps you are unable to assert your beliefs or achieve goals except through subterfuge. You could act perversely or hurt someone, intentionally or otherwise. You might be hypercritical, sarcastic, unrelenting, and unforgiving.

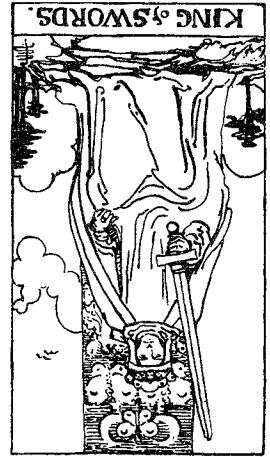
This can represent an attempt to disallow an inhumane or unfair rule. You may try to overturn a legal case, overrule the boss, or recall an elected official. Dissident political or militant actions could be indicated, for you may be uncomfortable with authoritarian positions.

Healthwise, there can be mental degeneration or senility. Pain can be an issue, perhaps from stiffness, old injuries, or back problems.

This is an ill-natured father figure that could disinherit or cut off his children, or exact unreasonable punishments. Alternatively, he is unable to stand up *to* anyone or stand *for* anything. He is either an excessive disciplinarian or unable to hold the line.

On the shamanic and magical level, this is about facing ordeals and swearing blood oaths. It also refers to spiritual warriors upholding cosmic law.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Evil intentions. A dangerous person. An enemy. Wickedness, spitefulness. Mischievous. Ill-natured. Perversity, perfidy. Crimes. Cruelty, inhumanity, atrocities. Sadism. Worry, grief. Conflict, disturbance. A lawsuit lost.



## Page (or Princess) of Pentacles

The *Page of Pentacles* is a student or apprentice representing the immature characteristics of the Earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn). He (or she) is cautious and realistic, loyal and steadfast, and believes something only when he can see and touch it. You, or someone you know, may be examining something with awe and wonder, but also common sense. Perhaps you are seeking facts, gathering data, or observing a process or experiment. You could take classes, consider careers, or learn new skills, possibly through on-the-job training, or you might apply for a job. You can be riveted and mesmerized by new technologies or other marvels. If considering a purchase you examine it carefully for quality and workmanship. You may collect things, like shells at a beach. You could take a risk but only if it serves a practical purpose and meets specific goals and criteria. Occasionally there is desire and longing without fulfillment.

As a messenger this card could be telling you to pay special attention to tangible things, such as your physical body, health, possessions, and down-to-earth practical matters. You may need to read business or financial communications or a contract very carefully, or follow instructions or diagrams. The card can also indicate the collection and dissemination of information and data.

It describes children who are watchful, studious, or pragmatic, and have a special curiosity about nature. They can often play alone and entertain themselves, and may like to take things apart and put them back together to see how they work.

**TRADITIONAL:** Brunette young man who comes to work for you. Study, instruction, application, meditation, reflection, concentration. Work, occupation, apprenticeship. School, disciple, pupil, scholarship, apprentice, amateur. Speculator, trader, negotiator. Bad company will lead you to gamble.

## Page (or Princess) of Pentacles Reversed

The *Page of Pentacles Rx* may lose his (or her) focus, stop being studious, or skip school altogether, and generally lose touch with practical matters and issues. Possibilities might not actualize and expectations or plans fall through, like a job prospect—or you could turn it down. You may have difficulty learning something new or find it hard to grasp necessary

information or facts. You might lose patience and interest in something worthwhile or valuable, and so “drop the ball.” Or, you could change your mind about something you really wanted and now find unappealing. Sometimes this refers to excessive fault-finding.

You could be coveting money and possessions to the extent that they possess you. You might form immature or neurotic attachments to people you know. You can find yourself owning more stuff and being involved with more matters than you know what to do with.

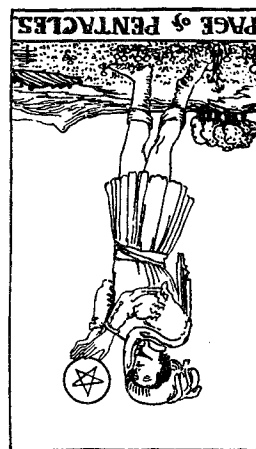
Alternatively, you could turn away from material matters and shift your focus to the spiritual and ephemeral. Inner sight may become more important than physical sight, so there could be a fascination with scrying, crystal gazing, or Ouija boards. You may tend to keep these interests to yourself.

Perhaps you are ignoring your health or hygiene. By extension, you may also ignore or disrespect Mother Earth, maybe by littering, trashing, or defacing your surroundings. Your vision could be impaired, either physically or metaphorically. You might get so absorbed with daily trivia that you feel bogged down. On the other hand, you might declare independence from trivial fixations and find a new world of perception awaiting you.

Healthwise, this can indicate depression and exhaustion from overwork. It can also indicate general childhood ailments. Messengers tend to bring bad news, such as cancellation of plans. If projected on to another, you might find them too materialistic or out of touch with reality.

On the shamanic or magical level, this is the apprentice or, in fairy tales, the youngest sibling who finds an object without realizing its true value but perseveres by keeping to a state of openness and wonder.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Profession. Bounty, munificence, luxury. Superfluous. Liberality, beneficence. Crowd, throng, multitude. Degradation, debasement. Damage, dilapidation, pillage. Dissipation. Rebelliousness. Bearer of bad news. Meddling in other people’s business.



## Knight (or Prince) of Pentacles

The *Knight of Pentacles* is useful. You can count on him to be where he says he will be and stay until he gets the job done. He either knows how to fix something or will figure it out, and can sometimes be a skilled craftsman with a fine esthetic sense. He is the mover and shaker of the Earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn): he may not move often but when he does, he is persistent. The oak leaves on his helmet tell us that his strength and wisdom is of the earth, and that he reverses the land and its issue. He is conscientious and reliable, yet very sensual, with a healthy appetite for physical pleasures. We see his pride in a well-plowed field, and he takes the time to observe things closely. In relationships he offers value, security, order, and dependability, which some people appreciate while others find dull and unexciting. You, or someone you know, may be tackling a project in a practical, methodical manner, or offering your loyalty and service to another. Conservation of resources, making an investment, or maintenance of property could be a concern. You are probably taking a commonsense approach and examining facts and details with care, focusing on what is truly achievable. Bodily well-being through exercise and nutrition could be important. Lack of initiative and stubbornness could slow you down. As a travel card it suggests moving overland by a bus or train; however, the preferred vehicle is either an off-road 4x4 or a black Mercedes sedan.

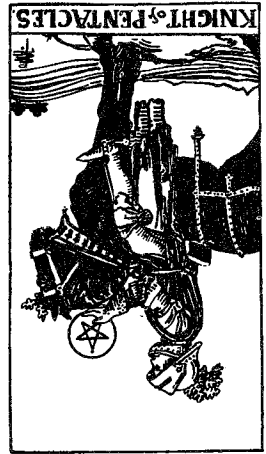
**TRADITIONAL:** Active man. Useful, serviceable, beneficial. Utility. Self-interest, concern. Interesting. Lucrative, attractive price. Advantageous, gain, profit. Important. Necessary. Obliging, kind, helpful. Success due to force, perseverance, will.

## Knight (or Prince) of Pentacles Reversed

The *Knight of Pentacles Rx* may be so caught up in materialism and the physical world that there is no room left for people, daydreams, or leisure. All his energy is focused on the product of his labors or his next acquisition. He can be an unresponsive stick-in-the-mud, a deadweight at a social gathering, or a couch potato—his entire universe consisting of television, beer, and snacks. Alternatively, he can concentrate solely on exercise and bodybuilding.



You, or someone you know, may be stubborn and intolerant, or simply feeling grumpy and antisocial. Perhaps you are tired, listless, and apathetic. Such fatigue and boredom often arises when work and life seem useless or meaningless. You can lack persistence and lose interest. Thus you may abandon people, projects, or efforts, and miss opportunities. Situations include unemployment, being stuck in a deadening job, lack of direction, or any kind of loss of mobility. You fear you are not getting anywhere. Expected aid may not come through. Time, efforts, and resources may be wasted, or an opportunity missed through inattention or negligence. You may lack the initiative to do something without prompting from others.



On the other hand, you could be overturning materialist obsessions, and focusing on inner worth and value, security of the spirit. You could practice meditation, seeking inner peace and repose. This reversal could indicate that work is done and it is time for you to play, seek diversions, and enjoy entertainment. If, however, significance is lacking then the result is empty play and meaningless diversions, something that merely distracts you from the lack of self-worth or any sense of purpose. You might be unearthing buried treasures, or making discoveries that others have overlooked.

Healthwise, this can indicate excess weight, lack of exercise, or over-exercising so as to become musclebound. The body systems can be sluggish and ponderous, the arteries clogged. You might experience chronic fatigue.

On the shamanic or magical level, the *Knight of Pentacles* represents tree spirits and the Oak King. It also refers to reading subtle signs and portents through a close observation of nature.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Peace, tranquility, repose. Sleepiness. Apathy, inertia, stagnation, inactivity. Idleness, unemployment. Leisure, recreation, play. Carelessness. Indolence, sloth. Placidity. Numbness, enervation. Discouragement.

## Queen of Pentacles

The *Queen of Pentacles*, like the convivial Martha Stewart, is about hospitality, gracious living, and material well-being. She has a pragmatic concern for conservation of resources, and an interest in business, nature, animals, homemaking, and interior or landscape design. This card often represents prosperity.

She represents an aspect of yourself or another that is concerned about economic security and the promotion of physical growth and well-being. You might be tending and caring for your body, food, land, or possessions. Or, you are enjoying comfort and social prestige. You can be generous and supportive. Others may count on you for a substantial meal, a comfortable environment, healing, nursing, caretaking, or even secretarial services, and you might even pay the bills. In addition, you could be practical and capable in business affairs and corporate management. Perhaps you are enjoying some form of wealth, luxury, or opulence. You may work on crafts or crafting a song, or cultivating tangible products or services.

Your sensuality, while boldly and naturally expressed, could contain a mothering element. Employing down-to-earth common sense, you help things flourish. You could be working to preserve something of great worth to you or your community. Perhaps you are calmly seeing that things look magnificent and run smoothly. Based on strong principles, you may uphold standards and provide refined amenities. Putting duty first, you use your resourcefulness to provide stability, and to safeguard or improve your standard of living. As a mother, this *Queen* wants her children to have every physical advantage, and to feel absolutely secure in themselves.

**TRADITIONAL:** Dark woman, rich heiress, courtesan, or nouveau riche. Severe but generous, liberal, greatness of soul. Economic freedom, security, safety. Opulence, riches, luxury. Confident, assured. Bold, daring. Frank, sincere. Prosperous. High status.

## Queen of Pentacles Reversed

The *Queen of Pentacles Rx* is not a homebody and hates the country. She cannot cook, does not garden, and lets everyone fend for themselves. You or someone you know may not be taking care of yourself or your

surroundings. You could look slovenly and keep your house an unorganized mess. You may refuse to nurture others or be a mother or caregiver. You may be in financial difficulties, squandering resources, or hoarding trash. You could feel that your efforts are never good enough, food or supplies will run out, or someone will not get what they need. Sometimes there is an irresoluteness and perplexity in the face of basic management requirements. On the other hand, you might be fanatical about housework, obsessive about food and exercise, and covetous and possessive of loved ones.



With possessiveness and a desire for security and status intensified, if someone threatens to take this away you might seek revenge or determine to get it back at all costs. At the other end of the scale, you could react with cowering timidity and self-abasement. Underlying these responses is a deep dread of privation. Perhaps you are longing for security or a sense of worth you never experienced. You may be feeling helpless and need care, or are not taking time for yourself. Your body could betray you through injury or illness. Sexuality can become debased or just a medium of exchange. Without strong principles, you could feel unable to make decisions. Contrariwise, you might abjure security or family values, and seek to enjoy a more carefree, adventurous existence.

Healthwise, this can refer to any digestive or nutritional issues, and general care and maintenance of the body. There might be increased sensitivity to environmental toxins. As a mother figure, her home may be chaotic and messy and her children unfed and running wild, but this does not mean they are not loved. Alternatively, this *Queen* could overmanage and control her children's lives, believing conformity, belongings, and appearances to be more important than they are.

On the shamanic or magical level, she leads others through rites of passage, is coven leader, and is skilled in kitchen magic.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Bad health. An evil, suspicious woman. Doubt, mistrust, disloyalty. Treachery. Depravity, fickleness, uncertain. Discord. Revenge. Evil. Dread, terror, apprehension. Timidity. Vacillating, hesitant, irresolute. Perplexed. Lack of attention to duty. An adventuress.

## King of Pentacles

The *King of Pentacles* has a beneficent Midas touch—everything he touches prospers and grows—as long as it is within the material realm. His manner is jovial, conservative, practical, and stable. This card can point to competence in money management. In fact, the term “bullish” can be applied here as it characterizes not only the Earth sign Taurus, but also optimism and confidence in rising stock-market prices. Although a provider and patriarch, this *King* may regard people as possessions or negotiable commodities.

You could be involved in finance, markets, real estate, or speculation. Your energy is applied to practical matters, and physical and material well-being. Your appetite is for the good things of life, and you could be concentrating on usefulness and value. You can be appreciating good food, good wine, and good living, deriving pleasure through your senses. Other terms for manifesting this Earth sign temperament can include: pragmatic, stalwart, steadfast, hardy, robust, staunch, durable, lusty. When expending money and efforts the emphasis is on quality and reliability. Sometimes there exists a deep love for land and a desire to caretake its bounty. There may be a focus on the body and health, sports and exercise. This person feels loved when someone lets them know how comfortable, valuable, and secure they feel. You could be providing a solid structure for a deep and lasting relationship or project. The card can indicate conservatism and an upholding of traditional values. As a father he seeks to provide for and protect his family with security and affluence.

**TRADITIONAL:** A dark-haired man. A merchant, trader, banker, stockbroker, accountant, speculator, usurer. Ability in the areas of the physical body, mathematics and science. Instructor or professor. Loyal.

## King of Pentacles Reversed

With the *King of Pentacles Rx* you can be acting miserly and exploitative, or flamboyant and ostentatious. This can be the corrupt boss or business leader who manipulates politics through power and money. Everything is buy and sell, including status. You might be possessive or jealous of persons or things, especially if you feel undervalued. Alternatively, through insecurity, you could retreat behind a superior attitude where no one can

reach you. This could be as simple as digging in your heels and refusing to budge on an issue.

The reversal can indicate the rape, exploitation, and abuse of land, resources, and people, or active opposition to such misuse. You may wish to overthrow materialistic values by rejecting signs of wealth. It is time to reconsider what you value. Although your life may look impoverished on the outside, it could be a period of inner security, contentment, and well-being. What some might call crude, others will call earthy. At the other extreme there is a deliberate flaunting of crass behavior, by being coarse, vulgar, boorish, and insensitive. You may feel dull and plodding, melancholy or dispirited, lacking in imagination and drably pedestrian, or stuck in tedious, dreary activities. Perhaps you are too blunt or insensitive concerning someone else's finer sentiments.



Finances can be sluggish or your business acumen off. Money worries arise, as dollars seem to slip through your fingers. The reversal has been known to indicate frustration at not balancing your checkbook or at an inability to fathom finances and taxes. You could feel overwhelmed and unsure about managing or taking care of your home, real estate, insurance, or other valuables.

Healthwise, a love of fine foods can lead to overeating and digestive upsets. There may be aging symptoms such as reduced vigor and stamina, arthritis, inflammation of the joints, and prostrate problems. As a father, this figure can be weak, cold, and unfeeling. He either fails to provide and protect, or rules with an iron thumb and heavy foot. On the shamanic or magical level, this is the abundant Green Man, as well as king of the gnomes or of the mountain. He may give you the treasures of the earth but always requires something in return.

**TRADITIONAL RX:** Vice, avarice. Lack, default, deficiency, imperfection. Weakness, feebleness. Corruption. Defective shape, ill-formed nature. Irregularity, disorder, ugliness, deformity, perversity. Stench, stink. An old and vicious man. Unfaithful.

## Chapter Three

# Spreads

YOU CAN USE reversals with any spread. I am including a few spreads here that work particularly well, and one, The *Hanged Man Spread* that is designed to give you insights into the deeper meanings and motivational factors that reversals offer. You will find the *Celtic Cross Spread* in the sample reading in the next chapter, where the significance of each position is clearly stated.

### Asking Questions

Use your normal method of asking questions. In addition, here are a few things to keep in mind:

I use a general all-purpose question for most of my readings: "What do I most need to look at in my life right now? This question can be easily modified to emphasize any issue, such as: "What do I most need to look at around my career?" Or, "Concerning my relationship with \_\_\_\_\_?" This is what I call an "issue-oriented" question. I prefer these to more specific questions that tend to limit your considerations and thus do not always touch on what would benefit you most.

If you are looking for specific advice then ask a question as precisely as possible and, since oracles tend to answer questions quite literally, write it down to ensure its exact phrasing. Most readings are accurate only up to six months or a year, since each choice point opens a whole new set of

options. Still, it is best to specify time limits. For instance, “What can I do to improve my chances of promotion at work within the next two weeks?”

In general, use open-ended questions rather than those that can be answered by “yes” or “no,” unless you deliberately use a *Yes-No Spread* (see page 216).

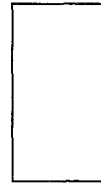
## An All-Reversed Spread

Just as you can do readings in which you keep all the cards upright, so you can do readings in which all the cards are reversed. See the *One-Card Spread* in chapter 1 for a simple example of this technique. *All-Reversed Spreads* may be especially appropriate for readings exploring:

- something you find disturbing, distressing, difficult, or delayed.
- the metaphors around an illness or “dis-ease.”
- what you are denying in yourself and projecting on to others.
- what you can breakthrough or overturn.
- underlying causes, motivations, and needs.
- the shamanic, magical, dream-time realm.
- a little “dark” humor.

## Basic Three-Card Spread

Many people rely on three-card spreads for quick responses. They can show linear development, options, or the center card can mediate the other two. Here are just a few possibilities. Use an all-reversed deck and combine the previously suggested purposes with the positions given below.

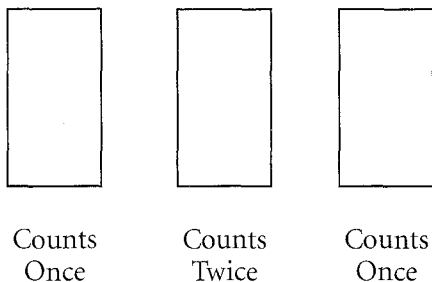


Past	Present	Future
Beginning	Middle	End
Thesis	Antithesis	Synthesis
Body	Mind	Spirit
Subconscious	Conscious	Superconscious
Problem or Issue	What Hinders	What Helps
Situation	Advice	Outcome
Option One	The Issue	Option Two
Self	The Relationship	Other



## Yes-No Spread

Since this spread depends on reversed or upright meanings to obtain an answer, and since the answer can often be verified at a later date, it is good for testing the effectiveness of your card meanings. Pick any *odd* number of cards, depending on the amount of information you want; usually three, five, or seven cards. Shuffle, cut, then deal from the top, laying the cards in a line from left to right.



Upright cards signify yes and reversed cards, no. The middle card counts twice which means you can have a tie. If there is a tie:

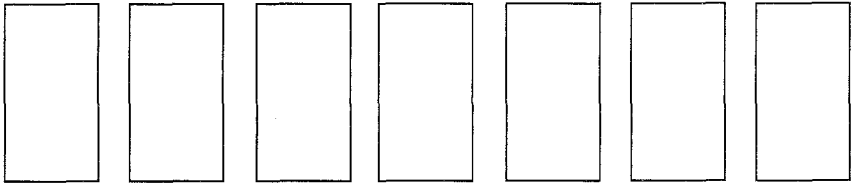
- a) the outcome is not yet determined,
- b) your best interests are not served by an answer at this time, or
- c) your question is not clearly stated.

**HINT:** Pay careful attention to your reaction to the answer. You can sometimes gain clarity simply by observing your own relief or disappointment.

After obtaining your yes/no answer, read each card according to a basic timeline in which the center card is the present, the card(s) to the left depict the past, and the card(s) to the right, the future. Prior to the reading you can also specify particular meanings for each position, for instance, each card can represent an option, a person, or an aspect of the situation.

## Life Inventory Spread<sup>1</sup>

The following seven areas of life can be, at any particular time, sites of strength and well-being or places of stress. The appearance of a reversal in a position indicates there might be resistance, lack of energy, compensation, or a change occurring in that area of life. The reading helps you get in touch with your feelings about the situation, decide if adjustment is necessary, and consider how a problem could be a blessing in disguise. If there is something you want to change you can continue with the *Problem-Solving Spread*, which follows or try the “Ways to Rectify a Reversal” in chapter 2.



Support,  
Relation-  
ships.

Nutrition,  
Absorbing,  
Digesting.

Play,  
Joy,  
Silliness.

Life Purpose,  
Spirituality.

Imagery,  
Meditation,  
Dreams.

Exercise,  
Body,  
Energy.

Work,  
Obligations,  
Respon-  
sibility.

**Position 1:** Social and Family Support; Relationships

**Position 2:** Nutrition; What You Are Absorbing and Digesting

**Position 3:** Play; What Brings You Joy; Silliness

**Position 4:** Life Purpose; Spirituality

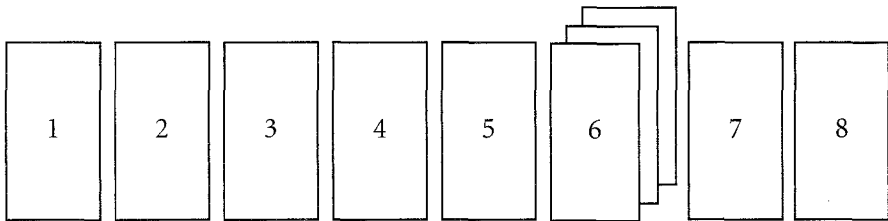
**Position 5:** Imagery; Meditation; Relaxation; Intuition; Dreams

**Position 6:** Exercise; Employment of Your Physical Body; Energy Expended

**Position 7:** Work; Obligations; Responsibilities

## Problem-Solving Spread<sup>2</sup>

You can use this spread on its own or in conjunction with the *Life Inventory Spread* on the previous page. If the latter, place the most troublesome card from that spread in Position 1 or 2 of this spread, if in doubt, use Position 1. It is important to write down all ideas suggested by the cards you draw. In fact, brainstorming with one card might generate several possible solutions. In this particular spread, when a card is reversed try inserting the word “not” or “don’t” in front of the upright meaning, and then ask, “If you are *not* doing something, *what are you doing instead?*” For instance, if you are “*not* in bed feeling depressed” with the *Nine of Swords* Rx then what are you feeling and doing?



Symptom or effect	Underlying cause	Shoulds & oughts	Who said so?	Based on what?	Alternate solutions	Craziest solution	Your desire
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### Step One: Define the problem

**Position 1:** The symptom or visible effect.

**Position 2:** The underlying need, motivation, or cause of that effect.

### Step Two: Delineate the problem

**Position 3:** What does it seem that you “should” or “ought to” do?

**Position 4:** Who said so? Where does this response come from?

**Position 5:** Based on what? What idea or belief is behind the “should”?

### Step Three: Determine alternate solutions

**Position 6:** Draw two to four cards to represent alternate solutions.

**Position 7:** What is the craziest solution to this problem?

NOTE: What advice do the cards in position 6 and 7 recommend? After

listing all possible solutions, prioritize them according to which ones you want to try first. Go wild and be silly with the card in Position 7.

#### **Step Four: Desire**

**Position 8:** What do you desire as the result of your solutions? What will energize you and give you the impetus to take action?

Note: You can either choose this card at random from the deck, or turn the deck face-up and look through the deck until you find the card that most inspires you to action. Which solutions does it most support?

#### **Step Five: Do**

No card is needed here. Instead write down something you will do, no matter how small, and as soon as possible (preferably within forty-eight hours). This action may be practical, symbolic, or ritualized. Then do it!

## Hanged Man Spread

This is an unusual spread in that each card is read twice: first as a problem and then as an inner response to Spirit. It is based on an idea mentioned in chapter 1 that every adversity is an opportunity for gathering wisdom and understanding.

When inner growth is the enemy of the conscious personality then the self-will of the conscious personality has to surrender to the process of inner growth or die. When an inner psychological conflict gets too bad, life gets suspended; it can't go on. "You wish to move with the right leg and the left refuses, and vice versa," which means a stoppage in the flow of life and intolerable suffering.<sup>3</sup> The *Hanged Man* requires you to surrender to the process of inner growth and change. This spread helps you see below surface appearances. It may bring about a reversal of your thoughts and interpretations of yourself, especially concerning the source of pain and reasons you experience it. By seeing each card from two perspectives it helps you let the conscious personality, the one in misery and pain, die and be reborn into the sacred, spiritual dimension. I also call this the *Ecstasy Spread* because through recognizing the gift or blessing in the wounding the soul blossoms, which is an ecstatic experience.

See the spread diagram on the following page.

Respond to the card in each position from two perspectives—an outer or upright perspective and an inner or reversed perspective.

### **Position 1:** The Tree From Which He Hangs

What am I *depending* on in the **Outer** World (upright)?

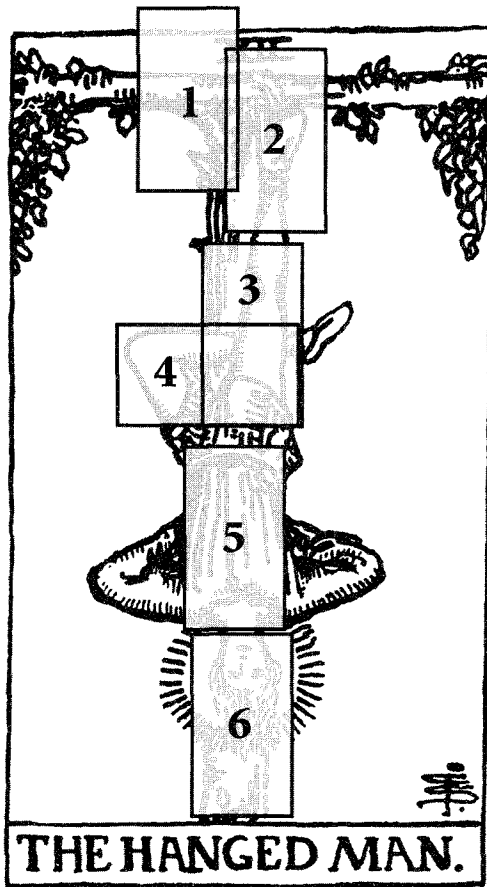
What am I *depending* on in the **Inner** World (reversed)?

NOTE: *Depend* means "to rely, as for support or aid; to place trust; to hang down."<sup>4</sup>

### **Position 2:** The Rope That Ties Him

**Outer:** What is suspending, baffling, or hanging me up? What is the adversity?

**Inner:** What is the opportunity here for gathering wisdom and understanding?



**Positions 3 and 4** tend to issue counterdirections, as demonstrated in the quotation from Marie-Louise von Franz: "You wish to move with the right leg and the left refuses, and vice versa."

**Position 3:** The Conscious/Right Leg

**Outer:** What have I consciously assumed? What are my beliefs about this?

**Inner:** What doorway am I stepping through into the realm of the sacred?

**Position 4:** The Unconscious/Left Leg

**Outer:** What are my unconscious beliefs that are in conflict with my conscious will?

**Inner:** How is this conflict an inner growth process?

**Position 5:** The Hidden Hands

**Outer:** What am I sacrificing, giving up, or letting go of? Where do I feel powerless?

**Inner:** What is the inner work that needs to be done?

**Position 6:** The Illuminated Head

**Outer:** How am I forced into patience and humility?

**Inner:** What is the new, opposing idea that illuminates the darkness and accomplishes the Great Work?

## Hidden Influences Spread

Pick a card to be your significator. Any card with which you currently identify will do. If in doubt, use the *Magician* if you are male, and the *High Priestess* if you are female. Keep your significator in the deck.

Shuffle the deck. Cut into three stacks as evenly as possible. (HINT: hold the deck sideways and estimate one-third and two-thirds divisions.)

Look through the three stacks for the one containing your significator. Keep the cards in order. Discard the other two stacks.

With the cards face down, lay all the cards on a large table in the pattern and order shown on the following page. As you lay the cards, place them face-up by turning from right to left.

Note that your pattern will look different depending on how many cards are in your stack. You will probably have twenty to thirty-two cards (twenty-six is exactly one-third).

Look for your significator. This is you! Specifically, it is your key point of awareness. The cards that surround your significator (a minimum of three and maximum of eight) are your major concerns. These cards affect you most directly. You also act as a link or mediator between any two opposing cards like the ones above and below you, and those to the left and right.

### Horizontal Rows:

Top: Creative desire, inspiration, intention. Fire.

2nd: Emotions, feelings, fantasies. Water.

3rd: Mind, thoughts, attitudes. Air.

4th: Physical manifestation, results, form. Earth.

5th: Unconscious motivations, needs, underlying causes.

6th: Same as the fifth row but even more deeply underlying.

The row containing your significator assumes extra importance as does its element. For instance, a significator in the fourth row places an emphasis on the Earth element and strengthens cards in the Pentacles/Earth suit.



past  $\longleftrightarrow$  future

<b>Row 1</b> Intention Inspiration	1	4	9	16	25
<b>Row 2</b> Feelings Fantasies	2	3	8	15	24
<b>Row 3</b> Mind Attitudes	5	6	7	14	23
<b>Row 4</b> Physical Results	10	11	12	13	22
<b>Row 5</b> Underlying Motivations	17	18	19	20	21
<b>Row 6</b> Deeper causes	26	27	28	etc.	

### Vertical Columns:

Your significator is always in the present. If it is all the way to the left then each column to its right is further in the future. If your significator is all the way to the right then the reading is only about the past and present.

If the significator is in the center column then you have:

Far Left: Distant Past

Near Left: Recent Past

Center: Significator's Present

Near Right: Immediate Future.

Far Right: More Distant Future.

### Diagonal Lines:

- Any cards in a diagonal line from lower left to upper right indicate energy movement from underlying causes in the past to future inspiration, or vice versa.
- Any cards in a diagonal line from upper left to lower right indicate energy movement from old intentions to future manifestations (row five), or, perhaps, to future needs (row six), or vice versa.

### Indicator Cards:

Certain cards will point to specific kinds of events. For instance, the *Lovers* and *Two of Cups* will tell you where relationship issues are. The *Chariot* or *Six of Swords* can indicate where, when, and why travel or “getting ahead” might be likely. Money cards will show you where the money is. Balance and choice cards, like *Justice*, *Temperance*, or the *Two of Pentacles* suggest where options lie—look to the cards on either side. Court cards can indicate your style or way of handling the situations that surround them, or they may represent other people.

If you have exactly twenty-six cards, then the single card on the sixth row assumes extra importance as a motivating factor, and points directly to an outcome at the twenty-fourth position, which instigates a new direction taken by the card in the twenty-fifth position.

## Further Suggestions

- 1) **Cards nearest the significator** tend to be ones that influence you most strongly and immediately, but you can also work with and modify them most easily. If your significator is in the third (Mental) row, you are using logic and reason to figure things out, but you will have to go through Emotions (second row) to influence your intentions (top row).
- 2) **If your significator is reversed** you are going to be more conscious of the story told by the reversed cards. These are things you can see and understand, and they represent how you are experiencing the situation. Upright cards, in this case, tend to be about things that happen to you. A reversed significator may indicate, however, that the entire reading is about one's inner or spiritual life. Try reading it as a shamanic or mythic journey.
- 3) **If your significator is upright** you are more active, and upright cards tend to represent the choices you make. In this case, reversed cards are more likely to be challenges or obstacles.
- 4) **Examine only the reversed cards** by turning all upright cards face-down so you cannot see their pictures. Try to tell a story using only the reversed cards. Adjacent cards will influence each other, and so their meanings can be blended.
- 5) **Examine only the upright cards** by turning all the reversed cards face-down. Tell a story as in step 4. These cards tend to be more event oriented, occurring in an overt, straightforward way. Note groupings and blend their meanings.
- 6) **Turn all cards face-up** and notice how the two sets affect each other. Read cards in triads with the center card mediating, linking, balancing, or relating the other two. Flanking cards support and modify center cards. Some triads operate in the same time period (columns) but at different functional levels (rows), while others show how the different functional levels operate through time.
- 7) **If you use Elemental Dignities** then apply these principles to important triads, especially those triads centering on the significator or a card representing something the querent wants.

## ENDNOTES

1. This spread was inspired by Dr. Carl Simonton's list of six categories for designing a personal health plan, as described by Dean Shrock in *Doctor's Orders: Go Fishing*. This book is a wonderful compendium of research and techniques regarding mind-body influences that can affect the quality of life and health. Shrock was director of Mind-Body Medicine for a group of forty cancer centers and has done original research on antistress groups in support of cancer survival.
2. This spread is derived from Ken McCaulley's "Four D's to Problem-Solving," also described by Dean Shrock in *Doctor's Orders: Go Fishing*.
3. This concept is discussed in Marie-Louise von Franz's *Shadow and Evil in Fairytales*, p. 46.



Sarah's Spread (pp. 229-240)

## Chapter Four

# Reading for Sarah

SARAH IS A fifty-two-year-old grandmother who looks forty. She is optimistic and leads a creative and enjoyable life. She travels frequently and is self-employed in a combination of alternative careers in which she believes deeply. No one of them supports her completely, but together they give her the variety and freedom she craves.

### Q: What do I most need to know about “opening to magic”?

We used the RWS deck and the *Celtic Cross Spread* as I have adapted it over the years. Six out of ten cards were reversed, which puts it only slightly above the “average” number of reversals we could expect in a reading. Although Sarah has had readings before, she does not use the Tarot herself; for instance, she asked if the *Empress* was one of the “major” cards. The reading took a little more than an hour and a half, so the text here represents only the barest summary of what we discussed.

Before I give you my version of the reading, I have provided meanings from a typical “little white book” that comes with a Tarot deck. I want you to see the contrast between my techniques and those that a beginner might use. I suggest you lay the cards out from your own deck to get the most from these examples.

## The “Little White Book” Interpretation<sup>1</sup>

- 1) Heart Issue: *Seven of Cups Rx*: The issue is about desire, determination, a nearly attained result, and pursuance of goals.
- 2) Crossing: *High Priestess*: What crosses is hidden wisdom, both intuitive and subconscious, the power of insight, and a lot happening beneath the surface.
- 3) Beneath: *Ace of Cups Rx*: At root there is clouded joy, emotional upset, emptiness, and loss of faith.
- 4) Behind: *Four of Pentacles Rx*: In the past there were financial setbacks, delay, and opposition to gain.
- 5) Above: *Empress Rx*: She is thinking about infertility or some lack. Wasteful energies (in her mind) breed lack of success, which encourages depression that could affect home and income.
- 6) Before: *Three of Swords*: In the near future she will feel alienated, confused, distracted, sad, and disordered as she struggles for clarity and seeks the trust needed to heal.
- 7) Self: *Wheel of Fortune*: She sees herself as going through change, with fortunes coming and going, and keeping the faith that “this too shall pass.”
- 8) Environment: *Nine of Wands*: Someone else anticipates difficulty, but they will be victorious against opposition (from her?), perhaps by maintaining control and discipline in the environment and by establishing order (upon her?) to achieve productivity.
- 9) Hopes, Fears, Lessons: *Six of Wands Rx*: She will fear delayed rewards and disappointment because of a victorious rival and also loss of position. She needs to learn about red tape.
- 10) Outcome: *Two of Cups Rx*: The outcome will be the dissolution of a relationship, infidelity, misunderstandings, or opposition and quarrels. Her love will be unrequited.

### Brief Summary

Sarah has intuitions about reaching her goals and desires though, in the past, there have been emotional upsets and financial setbacks. She expects

a lack of success that will, in fact, only get worse in the near future. She is changing, but others anticipate difficulties and will try to control her to make themselves victorious. As a result she will lose position. Additionally, she will lose a relationship and her desire will be unrewarded. The advice is that she needs to: trust in order to heal, keep the faith that this too will pass, and learn about red tape.

### Commentary

The above sounds pretty dire, but is typical of readings containing a lot of reversals. Will this reading help Sarah improve her situation? Knowing Sarah, I would consider it a soulless, and relatively hopeless, response to a vibrantly creative person who continually learns from her experiences, working at making her life more meaningful, and who supports and nurtures others in the community. No growth seems possible, whereas I clearly see Sarah triumphing through her experiences, which are not nearly so baleful as they sound above. Notice below how it is much more empowering for Sarah to identify her own concerns than for the reader to state them in an “objective” description, which usually sounds judgmental. What do you think? Which reading style do you prefer, or would you want something in between?

## Sarah’s Reading

### Position One, What Covers You

Sarah’s first card, the inner focus of her heart and of the reading, is the *Seven of Cups Rx*. I have her look at the card upright and ask her to simply describe the picture. She sees the card as full of gifts emerging from the cups—all the things she wants and feels she deserves, like a fine home (the castle), honor (the wreath), and money (the jewels). Right away she identifies herself as the shining figure under the white cloth and doesn’t like that the snake is coming toward her. In response to my question about how to remove the cloth, she believes it will happen appropriately in its own time—like coming into bloom.

I ask Sarah to imagine what might be the mood or feelings of the figure in the foreground. She says she can’t see him because he’s dark and hidden, but she feels sure he’s the soul mate she longs for. He can’t see her



either since she is under the cloth. “He will accept me totally and make sure I have all the treasures I want.” Of course, she adds, these will not include the snake and dragon that remind her of childhood fears.

In terms of the reversal, several points emerge *based on Sarah’s own descriptions* that we might identify as reversed characteristics. I listen carefully to see if these themes will be repeated.

- 1) The role reversal is unusual in that she doesn’t identify with the viewer in the foreground but, instead, is the veiled figure who even she can’t see.
- 2) She sees the objects in the cups as representing unfulfilled longing, which is intensified by the two figures who can’t see each other.
- 3) The treasures are things she can’t have without help from an unknown other.
- 4) The snake and dragon are undesirable and threatening.

NOTE: the first two cards of the *Celtic Cross*, to me, represent the issue rephrased, or sometimes redefined, in the Tarot’s own language. It is what the Tarot intends to talk about.

### Position Two, What Crosses You

The second or crossing card is the *High Priestess*. This card, which is associated with the moon, intensifies the water element in both cards. When making the appointment Sarah asked me if I have a reading list on Goddess-spirituality, so I am not surprised at its appearance. For Sarah, the *High Priestess* represents mystery and memories, which bring up her belief that she was a priestess in a past life and is now being called back to this path. She is curious about the meaning of the scroll, which I see as pointing to her current search for knowledge, as well as her work as a writer. She explains she has just sold her first article to a major national magazine—on women fulfilling postponed dreams late in life. She put off her junior year abroad during college when she got married and had a child. Last year, at the age of fifty-one, she fulfilled her own unfulfilled longing by living in Italy for a year, and, in the process, resolved many old resentments and buried angers.

We talk about the *High Priestess* as her own inner wisdom serving as a guide in “opening to magic,” the theme of the reading. She finds it significant

that the term “virgin” originally meant “whole, belonging to herself and not to any man.” It seems the reading might be about her doing inner (spiritual temple) work around unfulfilled desires.

In relating this card with the *Seven of Cups Rx* it is interesting that moon or oracular priestesses were often depicted with snakes and may have derived insight from snake venom. In archetypal psychology, the snake and dragon represent the most hidden, mysterious parts of the psyche.

### Position Three, What Is Below You

In the base or root of the spread is the *Ace of Cups Rx*, which is the third water image. Sarah immediately sees the core symbols of the Catholic Church: dove, host, and chalice which represent the Holy Ghost and the body and blood of Christ. For her, these are the transubstantiation mysteries of the Mass rooted deep in a pre-Christian past. “It’s pure magic, but they won’t call it that,” she says. So the reversal can be seen as *unacknowledged* mystery and magic arising out of past traditions. It also represents her current longing for fulfillment through love, which is still being frustrated. We briefly discuss the grail mysteries and I mention that the grail represents the womb, which she hadn’t realized before.

In the reversal, the hand appears palm-down and she feels the cloud keeps the cup “under wraps,” just as the veiled and hidden figure in the *Seven of Cups*. Likewise, she has always felt hidden, unseen, and unacknowledged since she was a small child, when even her own mother refused to really see her.

### Position Four, What Is Behind You

The card in the past is the *Four of Pentacles Rx*. So far, there are three out of four cards reversed, suggesting that this may be a “Reversed Reading” where the inner, shamanic, and magical aspects of the cards are dominant. It makes sense to Sarah since her question about magic is all about an inner reality. She immediately sees this card as a child waiting; “I’ve always felt like I’ve been waiting.”

I ask Sarah to assume the upright position of the figure in the card and tell me how it feels. She places her feet on imaginary pentacles, one goes on top of her head, and she holds the fourth in front of her chest. “It feels

strong,” she says. “And powerful. These are my sources of strength—knowledge, magic, and depth that I’ve brought from my whole history but which were hidden.” I ask Sarah to look at the pentacles with her inner sight to see what experiences they represent in her past. “They are my former consulting work, the business workshops I was promoting, and my putting my husband through medical school.” In the past she has always worked through another vehicle or someone else, but is now opening to herself.

I affirm that she has developed real skills as well as inner worth and ask if there was any problem with her expressing and using these strengths in the past. “Definitely,” she answers, explaining how she is no longer involved with these businesses. In addition, she felt her male teachers and collaborators eventually betrayed her in ways that demonstrated they did not really see her or appreciate her worth. Everything she learned is still with her but, unfortunately, associated with deep wounds received from her male mentors whom she had greatly admired.

### Position Five, What Is Above You

The fifth card, representing what is in her head and what she is thinking about, is the *Empress Rx*. Sarah sees this as herself on her farm with its creek and clover and rye mixed with wild flowers. She sees the jewels and crown as the wealth she desires, then notes the scepter of power, which the *Empress* holds with a casual, gracious authority that Sarah has not yet completely established.

“What’s in my head and on my mind is achieving and ‘having’ because I feel I’m on the brink. I want to ‘have’ now. This *Empress* has power but in a very feminine, soft way that’s linked with nature.”

Her eye is drawn to the shield with the Venus sign. “It would be nice for me to know I have a shield. I feel like that will help me know that I can have my power because I can protect myself.”

Since the central pentacle in the preceding card is also like a shield, we talk about her actually creating one (in both the inner and outer realms) that both identifies who she is and protects her.

With both the *Empress* and the *High Priestess* in the spread, Sarah is in company with the two initial female archetypes of the Tarot who represent, among others, Demeter, the Greek grain goddess, and her maiden

daughter Persephone. When Persephone is abducted into the underworld, her mother grieves so much that Nature stops producing.

The reversal signifies that Sarah still does not feel she is really seen or acknowledged for her beauty, mastery, and gifts. Her own mother refused to see her (another *Empress Rx* attribute). And although she has a friend who is also her lover, both have agreed that they are waiting for their true life partners to come along. Furthermore, having raised her own daughters (and having spent many years resolving family issues), Sarah has no desire to mother her lover's young son. So, while she clearly identifies herself with the *Empress*, she knows that she does not want to take on some of the traditional attributes of this card. I suggest that, with the emphasis on her inner psyche, as shown by there being so many reversals, her task might be first to explore her relationship with her inner male, before she will be ready for the kind of life partner she is seeking.<sup>2</sup>

### Position Six, What Is Before You

The *Three of Swords* is in the sixth position of the Near Future. This is the first card to be upright (since the *High Priestess* is turned crosswise and is therefore neither up nor down).

"I think my biggest sorrow about getting married so young, although now I look at it as my destiny, is that I didn't choose a man who was really right for me, that I could really be myself with, and grow with. I wonder, is there still time for me? I feel that part of my soul journey is to have a deep relationship with myself and another."

We both recognize this card as painful thoughts in the near future; "I am so invisible in terms of who I really am." There may also be some kind of further wounding which could somehow relate to her former betrayals. Its source possibly relates to the sorrow depicted in the statues of Maria Dolorosa in which Christ's mother has a similarly wounded heart. I mention this motif and Sarah is immediately reminded of the statues of the Virgin Mary all over Europe that look very much like a combined *High Priestess* and *Three of Swords*.

I suggest to Sarah that if we assume that "opening to magic" means experiencing the *Three of Swords*, then, "You need to follow where this leads you. The next time you feel the kind of wounding where you aren't seen, or someone does not acknowledge your work, or you fear that you

won't find a life partner who totally accepts you, stay in the pain and follow it back as if it were a guide rope, noting the memories that flash past, until you get to the earliest possible image, and explore that memory." Sarah has done this kind of work in the past and sees how it could be important here.

### Position Seven, Yourself

The seventh position is sometimes called "Yourself as You See Yourself," and Sarah has the *Wheel of Fortune*. Sarah mentions at this point that she had coffee this morning, which she never does, and is feeling uncomfortable with the buzz. Since I believe in the importance of synchronicities, I ask how her life is like this coffee buzz. "I have a lot of things I'm working on all at once, and if I am not careful I just go too fast. Everything wants to happen at once."

I affirm that she is experiencing this process of change as too fast. She agrees, while noting that the card seems optimistic, as if things are going to improve soon. As a card of seasonal change it supports an earlier statement where she noted that in the *Seven of Cups* the veil would come off the figure in its own time. And when she talked about the *Empress* she said how she felt something would happen in the spring when the flowers bloomed.

The Hebrew letters and alchemical symbols on the *Wheel* are like the identification markings on the shield we already discussed. Books appear in the corners, reminding her of the *High Priestess's* scroll. Their study can bring an expansion in consciousness. The snake, cycling down, reiterates the snake in the *Seven of Cups*, which was reaching out toward her. The sphinx at the top of the wheel might be holding one of the three swords of the *Three of Swords* and so models the process of following her pain into the depths in order to release it.

NOTE: If Sarah were to make a shield it would be worthwhile seeing if she could integrate the snake on her shield and as an animal ally in her inner work. The sphinx might also be a power animal for her to work with in meditation.

## Position Eight, Your Environment

The eighth position is known as the Environment, which I contrast with the seventh position by calling it the “Not You” card (in some versions of the *Celtic Cross* it is “how other people see you”). Here we find the *Nine of Wands*, another upright card, depicting a wounded figure who seems to stare straight at the *Three of Swords*. If it had turned up anywhere else in the spread, this figure would probably have represented Sarah herself, but instead Sarah is the *Wheel* rolling with her changes toward this man, who is standing guard in front of a barrier or stockade. The question is, “Who is he and what is the barrier?”

According to Sarah, “He’s not very trusting. He looks like he’s ready to strike out if he needs to. He’s harboring a grudge.”

I ask her, “What if this stockade is between you and the opening to magic and he’s the guard? Who’s keeping you from going through?”

“What comes to me,” Sarah responds, “is blaming someone else. Like one man I worked with. I blame him for not living up to what he preaches, and I blame myself for not having our agreements really clear. I don’t feel visible because he didn’t really acknowledge my contribution. Old stuff—not feeling visible goes back to my Mom. So this could represent letting go of blaming anyone and just going for what I want.”

“So the *Wheel* could point to the need for a change in feeling there is someone between you and what you want. You have the opportunity to use the pain you experience in those contexts (*Three of Swords*) and follow it through to deeper understanding.”

Sarah identifies this figure as her former husband and the two men with whom she had been in business. “They never wanted to share the power, but they really represented my fear of my own power.”

How might they have felt hurt by her? In fact, one man betrayed her because his wife became jealous. In general, this card represents the wounding and defensiveness she has yet to overcome in herself (reflecting back to the *Empress Rx*), and so she has been projecting her dissatisfaction on to these men who equally might have been hurt in the process. It is this which is blocking her. Perhaps she needs to integrate this figure back into her own psyche, since ultimately all symbols in a spread are part of herself.

### Position Nine, Hope and Fears

“Hopes and Fears,” which can also be seen as “Lessons to be Learned,” is the ninth position with the *Six of Wands Rx* filling the spot. To Sarah, the card feels hopeful and victorious. The man riding the horse looks like he’s just returning from Italy, and he is clearly being seen by those around him. He wears the same laurel wreath as in the *Seven of Cups* and *Empress* cards, signifying that Sarah hopes her new business venture will succeed and that others will see and honor her for the fine work she is doing.

“You regained the part of yourself that was an unfulfilled longing when you went to Italy,” I tell Sarah. “Now you are on a journey to regain the part of yourself that isn’t seen.”

Sarah imagines the figure riding into his future—a place he belongs and is now claiming. Because of the way he faces in the reversal, he is looking toward the *Seven of Cups*, which are, literally, her *hopes*. Her *fear* is that she might slip back into trouble since the reversed card also looks at the *Three of Swords*. She wants to *learn* how to ride up to the guard in the *Nine of Wands* with such confidence that he will stand aside to let her pass effortlessly.

### Position Ten, Outcome

The final card is the *Two of Cups Rx*. Sarah recognizes the caduceus immediately, commenting grumpily, “I’ve been in relationships with two doctors, and I put the first one through medical school.” Then she sees the green wreath around the head of the woman, saying, “That’s me again, but why does the man have pink flowers in his hair?” I tell her it could indicate he is sensitive and caring. I also mention that the lion’s animal passions and instincts have been spiritualized (the wings) through the healing power of love. It elevates the animal passions up to the realm of Spirit.

The reversal indicates, however, that healing needs to happen first within herself, between her inner masculine and feminine, before she can hope to find someone with these characteristics outside herself. The *Wheel of Fortune* card suggests it is time for such a change, and the reversals (six cards out of ten) show that she is ready to do the inner work. I point out that in the *Seven of Cups* the snake is reaching for her and, as she mentioned, the

dragon eyes the male figure. These are powerful forces that ultimately need to be integrated and resolved. In the *Two of Cups* the veil and darkness are gone and both figures can see each other clearly.

I ask her, "If the *High Priestess* represents the wisdom of the Goddess, and if she is like those statues that show Mary with the wounded heart, what is the advice of the *High Priestess* to the figure under the cloth in the *Seven of Cups*?"

Sarah answers right away, "Come out. It's safe now. Don't wait."

"What if you asked her how to do that?"

"She says, 'You will know how.' She says, 'It will be spring,' and to keep preparing for that."

## The Breakthrough Process

To complete the reading I ask which card out of the whole spread represents the greatest problem, block, or obstacle that could appear in her near future. She points to the *Three of Swords* "because it looks like pain." I remove it from the spread and ask for an example of how it could come up in an actual situation. It takes her a moment to get specific but then she answers, "I'm going to a party tonight for organizers of the business workshops. I haven't seen these people in a long time, and I made my disappointments clear when I left. There's one woman who I'm afraid I'll get pierced or stabbed by, or misunderstood."

I ask her to select one card from the spread that shows her breaking through this problem and handling it in the best way possible. She picks the *Six of Wands*, saying, "He's strong, he's got the wreath, and he's just riding on through. I know the quality of the work I do and that I deserve recognition for it."

"How do you act if you are the person in the *Six of Wands* and the woman makes cutting comments?"

Sarah straightens her back and laughs, "I don't even notice. I know where I am going, and I have other things to do."

"What does the *Six of Wands* recommend that you do if this woman says something that stabs you in the heart?"

"I'm going forward, I'm not going back. She's trying to pull me back. I'm on the horse, I'm headed forward, I've got the wreath, I've got the wand with the new growth. It feels like—'don't forget my own power and



who I am.' If I give in to her, I'm giving away my own power. I'm not the same person I was before I went to Italy, and I don't want to be seen as the same person."

As one last step, I ask her to pick a card that represents the qualities she would most like to develop in herself in the near future. She quickly selects the *Two of Cups*. Asking her to name these qualities, we end the reading with an affirmation based on her statements:

*"In the balance of my masculine and feminine, I know myself as fully and completely whole."*

## Commentary

Note that, while Sarah's initial question was about a work project and conceptual theme she called "opening to magic," the reading itself emphasized relationships, which were also on her mind. It suggests that the state of her relationships is a major way in which she determines if "magic" is truly happening in her life.

## Followup

That night at the party, Sarah "didn't even notice" if the woman made derogatory comments or not. At first I was disappointed that she did not have more feedback, but then I realized she repeated the same phrase that she had used in the "Breakthrough Process."

## Exercises for Deeper Learning

If you would like to use this spread for an advanced learning experience, do one or more of the following exercises:

- 1) Try your own interpretation for this reading, or use your favorite book of interpretations to generate a reading for Sarah. What advice would you give her?
- 2) Examine this reading using different Tarot decks. How is it the same and how is it different? Which version do you prefer? This will also help you find a Tarot deck that works best for you.<sup>3</sup>

- 3) Go through the two versions of the reading and find all points in common. What warnings and recommendations are suggested by both? How are they different?
- 4) Go through my reading with Sarah and, for each reversed card, find among Sarah's own words phrases that point to the reversed meaning. I have already done this for the card in Position 1.
- 5) Make a list of all the symbols and themes that appear in more than one card (actual or implied). Rank them according to importance and summarize Sarah's situation according to what you have found.
- 6) Are there any additional suggestions or exercises you would recommend to Sarah to help her get the most out of this reading? The best suggestions are those implied by Sarah herself (but which she might not have recognized) or those involving symbols and themes that seem to call for attention.
- 7) What do you make of the fact that the spread has cards in all suits but that the Water element predominates? Or that there are: one *Ace*, two *Twos*, two *Threes*, one *Four*, one *Six*, one *Seven*, one *Nine*, and one *Ten*? Or that there are no *Fives* or *Eights*?
- 8) For astrologers, what do you make of the fact that astrologically, using Golden Dawn correspondences, the Major Arcana cards relate to three planets and no zodiac signs: Moon (*High Priestess*), Venus (*Empress*), and Jupiter (*Wheel of Fortune*). And, that the Minors are Venus in Cancer (*Two of Cups*), Saturn in Libra (*Three of Swords*), Sun in Capricorn (*Four of Pentacles*), Jupiter in Leo (*Six of Wands*), Venus in Scorpio (*Seven of Cups*), and Moon in Sagittarius (*Nine of Wands*), representing three cardinal, two fixed, and one mutable signs? If you use a different system of astrological correspondences, how does it change the overall interpretation of the spread?
- 9) For those who use Elemental Dignities (see Appendix C), what do you make of the following triads based on how friendly or contrary the elements are to each other? How does this analysis support or conflict with the reading as given?

- 7C, High Priestess, AceC (positions 1, 2, 3)
- 4P, Empress, 3S (positions 4, 5, 6)
- Wheel, 9W, 6W (positions 7, 8, 9)
- 7C, 2C, High Priestess (positions 1, 10, 2 or 1, 2, 10)
- AceC, 7C, Empress (vertical positions 3, 1, 5)
- 4P, High Priestess, 3S (horizontal positions 4, 2, 6)
- Empress, 3S, 2C (future positions 5, 6, 10)
- 4P, AceC, 6W (past positions 4, 3, 9)
- Wheel, 9W, 2C, Priestess (positions 7, 8, 1, 2)

## ENDNOTES

1. These interpretations are based on those in the booklet that comes with *The Gendron Tarot*, created by Melanie Gendron.
2. Some people find the categorization of aspects of the self into male and female limiting, distracting, and counterproductive. Most decks have polarized gender images which may or may not be appropriate for an individual. I emphasized Sarah's inner male and female because it expressed an experience to which she could easily relate. I want to thank Eva Yaa Asantewaa of [ComparativeTarot@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ComparativeTarot@yahoogroups.com) for pointing out the potential limitations of this approach.
3. Thanks to Valerie Sim-Behi, moderator of [ComparativeTarot@yahoo-groups.com](mailto:ComparativeTarot@yahoo-groups.com), who teaches many variations of this technique.

## Appendix A

# Reversed Keywords

THE WORDS ON the following pages are sometimes used when modifying upright card meanings to obtain reversed meanings. You may wish to photocopy these pages and use them as a handy reference.

### Divining for Keywords

Rather than scanning all the words that follow, try this divination technique when you wish to interpret a reversed card. With the keywords before you, close your eyes and turn the book or photocopy to a different angle. Circle your finger over the page as you ask for the most appropriate keyword to be revealed, and, when you are ready, point. Use the keyword(s) nearest your fingertip to modify the upright meaning of the card in question.

Blocked	Passing	Humorous
Stuck	Unavailable	Trickster
Stymied	Unable (inability)	Coyote
Thwarted	Inaccessible	Joke
Struggled with	Unexpected	Topsy-turvy
Denied	Unforseen	See through
Avoided	——	Unconventional
Defied	Inner	Contrary
Resisted	Inward	Iconoclastic
Repressed	Unconscious	Crooked
Refused	Internal	Crazy
Rejected	Personal	Baffled
Suspended	Private	Twisted
——	Deep	New perspective
Hesitated	Secret	——
Delayed	Covert	Overtured
Held back	Illusory	Overthrown
Set back	Unreal	Overcome
Transitory	Unexpressed	Broken through
Made difficult	Withdrawn	Put down
Rough road	Indirect	Changed
Indecisive	Inert	Adjusted
Distracted	——	Toppled
Obstructed	Under	Out from under
Hindered	Underground	Turned away from
Undermined	Underlying	Falling away
Abused	Concealed	Unseated
Uncertain	Deceived	Breached
——	Unseen	Loosened
Subverted	Beneath	——
Sabotaged	Below	Retreated
——	Projected	Reconsidered
Immanent	Shadowed	Redone
Almost	Dark side	Reviewed
Ended	Feared	Retracted
End of	Wounded	Retrograde
Discontinued	Hurt	Reverse direction
Impulse not taken	Unresolved	Countered
Broken off	——	

Unlimited	Misdirected	Converted
——	Misunderstood	Empowered
No	Misplaced	——
Not	Mistrust	Caused
Negated	Mishap	Motivated
Inverse of	Mistaken	Provoked
Lacking	Miss	Engendered
Absent	Instability	Incentive
Lessened	Irresponsible	Impetus
Problematic	Unreliable	Preparing for
Inappropriate	Ungrounded	Impulse
Narrowed	Out of control	Fated
Feared	Corrupted	Destined
Not limited to	——	——
Without	Impatient	Resented
——	Imbalanced	Disbelief
Immature	Inhibited	Bored
Underdeveloped	Pathological	Clouded
Diminution of	Dis-eased	Skeptical
Weakened	Distressed	——
Unrealized	Anxious	Words beginning
Tentative	Worried	with:
Softened	Apprehensive	Mis-
Toned down	Depressed	Dis-
Embryonic	Angered	Un-
Passive	Frustrated	In-
Soured	——	Im-
Stagnated	Freed	Ir-
——	Released	Non-
Too much	Renewed	Ob-
Too strong	Remedied	Ex-
Overwhelmed	Rectified	Re-
Overly	Relieved	Over-
Excessive	Relaxed	Under-
Exaggerated	Returned	Sub-
Intensified	Redeemed	Con-
Overindulged	Cured	Counter-
——	Corrected	
Misused	Emended	

## Appendix B

# Suit and Number Keywords

### Major Arcana

#### **Upright**

Principles, laws, and lessons. Human potential. Psychospiritual needs. Archetypes of the collective unconscious.

#### **Reversed**

Abuse or lack of principles and needs. Diminished capacity. Unresolved issues. Unactualized and unrealized potential. Fear. Deepening. Surrender to a higher purpose. Alternate realities. Seeing beneath surface appearances. Breakthroughs.

## Minor Arcana

### **Wands**

Self-growth, spirit, creativity, enthusiasm, desire, energy, inspiration, impulse.

### **Cups**

Emotions, imagination, intuition, dreams, visions, relationship, receptivity, reflection

### **Swords**

Thought, reason, struggles, conflict, decisions, wit, analysis, communication.

### **Pentacles**

Physical, material, results, sensation, security, manifestation, skills, rewards.

### **Ace**

Beginning, seed, focus, gift, opportunity

### **Two**

Duality, choice, balance, response, reflection.

### **Three**

Creativity, action, cooperation, fertility, integration.

### **Four**

Consolidation, rest, realization, foundation, order.

### **Wands Rx**

Too much or little: energy, action; selfishness or selflessness; overwhelm, burnout.

### **Cups Rx**

Overly emotional, unfeeling, unrealistic, maudlin, addictive, escapism, unworldly, dispassionate.

### **Swords Rx**

Anger, guilt, harsh judgment, punishment, lacks compassion, release, jealousy, uncompromising.

### **Pentacles Rx**

Material loss, fiscal problems, envy, overindulgence, lack of exercise, exploitation, not valuing.

### **Ace Rx**

Delays, ungrasped, impotency, infertility, materiality, inner focus, longings, preconscious.

### **Two Rx**

Imbalance, inharmony, indecision, opposition, duplicity, reflecting spirit, inner balance, breaking the tie or stalemate.

### **Three Rx**

Nothing works, uncooperative, distress, overindulgence, inaction, sterility, recovery, healing the past, building inner support.

### **Four Rx**

Discontent with limitations, insecurity, rashness, loss of control, premonitions of future opportunities, divesting of restrictions, a strong inner foundation.



**Five**

Crisis, conflict, trials, change, adaptation.

**Six**

Reciprocity, exchange, support, knowledge, perfection.

**Seven**

Challenge, test, temptation, mastery, power.

**Eight**

Progress, adjustment, extension, re-evaluation, distribution.

**Nine**

Completion, solitude, wisdom, integrity, protection.

**Ten**

Dénouement, result, heritage, harvest, fulfillment.

**Page**

Children, messengers, students, physical body, catalysts, beginnings, immature, naïve, take risks, receptive, open, learn, serve, try out, develop.

**Five Rx**

Inertia, dogma, repression, victimization, squandering, conformity, licentiousness, stalemate, hope, renewed interest, accord, reconciliation, gratification.

**Six Rx**

Self-centeredness, vanity, estrangement, superficiality, frustration, self-actualization, free will appearing as selfishness, insubordination.

**Seven Rx**

Arrogance, deceit, paranoia, embarrassment, perplexity, cowardice, focus, design, intent, resolutely resisting temptation, constancy, implementation.

**Eight Rx**

Lack of persistence, progress stymied, stockpiling, poor judgment, precipitous action. Spiritual progress, generosity, comprehension, inclusivity, expansiveness.

**Nine Rx**

Undisciplined, no self-awareness, impaired defenses, dependency, hostility, inner wisdom, humane compassion, release of toxins, nonphysical gain.

**Ten Rx**

Overdose of the element, rebellion, losses, privation, family quarrels, short-lived results, inner harvest, released, liberation, absolved, unburdened, alleviated.

**Page Rx**

Pretense of maturity, easily hurt, depressed, tantrums, act out, close down, refuse to learn, vulnerable, gullible, deprived, poor start, bad news, inner child, undeveloped potential.

### **Knight**

Energies, journeys, quests, actions, movement, adventure, revolutionize, expand, aggression, headstrong, task or goal oriented. For a woman, the animus; for a man, the ego.

### **Queen**

Inner mastery, personal competence, interpersonal management, adult feminine, mother, matriarch, authority, self/shadow/anima, magnetic, attracting, nurturing.

### **King**

Outer mastery, public competence, external management, adult masculine, father, patriarch, authority, self/shadow/animus, aggressive, ordering, ruling.

### **Knight Rx**

Agents of elemental forces, fanatical, reckless, destructive, irresponsible, misdirected, purposeless, insensible, don't get anywhere, slowed pace, inner quests, reined-in impulses.

### **Queen Rx**

Selfish, smothering, unwise use of power and control, insecure, ineffectual, foolish, unfaithful, inconstant, disloyal, weak, unreliable, absent, violated, virgin or whore, bad mother, overthrowing parental or societal strictures and authority, inner feminine.

### **King Rx**

Selfish, tyrannical, unwise use of power and control, insecure, ineffectual, foolish, unfaithful, inconstant, disloyal, weak, unreliable, absent, bully, arrogant, lenient, bad father, overthrowing parental or societal strictures and authority, inner masculine.

## Appendix C

# Elemental Dignities

ELEMENTAL DIGNITIES (known as EDs) determine the strength or weakness of cards when examined in pairs or triads based on whether the suit elements are friendly or contrary to each other. MacGregor Mathers, of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was the first to describe this method of interpreting Tarot card combinations or interactions in a paper known as *Book "T"—The Tarot (Comprising Manuscripts N, O, P, Q, R and an unlettered T.A.M. Instruction)*.<sup>1</sup> Major Arcana affinities are based on elemental correspondences to the zodiac sign or planet related to the card. The quotations below are from the original text.

The basic concept is quite simple, but to understand how it actually works it is essential to study the examples given by Mathers, or check out the webpages devoted to this technique that are given in the Bibliography. As more people use this system they are adding to our understanding of how it works in practice.

When the suits/elements are the same, they are “very strong for either good or evil, according to their nature.”

**Wands/Wands** (Fire/Fire)

**Swords/Swords** (Air/Air)

**Cups/Cups** (Water/Water)

**Pentacles/Pentacles** (Earth/Earth)

When the suits/elements are both masculine/positive, or feminine/negative, they are “moderately strong” because they are “friendly to each other.”

**Wands/Swords** (Fire/Air)

**Cups/Pentacles** (Water/Earth)

When the suits/elements complement each other, they are “somewhat friendly.”

**Swords/Cups** (Air/Water)

**Wands/Pentacles** (Fire/Earth)

When the cards are of “contrary elements” they tend to “weaken each other greatly for good or evil, and neutralize [or cancel out] their force.”

**Wands/Cups** (Fire/Water)

**Swords/Pentacles** (Air/Earth)

As described in the Golden Dawn manuscript: among three cards “if the contrary element is only in one flanking card, then the other becomes a connecting card so that the first is not weakened, but is modified and therefore fairly strong. If the main card is *Cups* and the flanking cards are *Wands*, then the person may be lacking the qualities shown by the *Wands* cards. If a card passes between two that are naturally contrary, it is not affected by either much, as they weaken each other.”

## **Elemental Correspondences to the Major Arcana**

<b>Fool</b>	Uranus	Air
<b>Magician</b>	Mercury	Air (Earth) <sup>2</sup>
<b>High Priestess</b>	Moon	Water
<b>Empress</b>	Venus	Earth
<b>Emperor</b>	Mars	Fire
<b>Hierophant</b>	Taurus	Earth
<b>Lovers</b>	Gemini	Air
<b>Chariot</b>	Cancer	Water
<b>Strength</b>	Leo	Fire
<b>Hermit</b>	Virgo	Earth
<b>Wheel of Fortune</b>	Jupiter	Fire (Water)
<b>Justice</b>	Libra	Air
<b>Hanged Man</b>	Neptune	Water
<b>Death</b>	Scorpio	Water
<b>Temperance</b>	Sagittarius	Fire
<b>Devil</b>	Capricorn	Earth
<b>Tower</b>	Mars	Fire (Water)
<b>Star</b>	Aquarius	Air
<b>Moon</b>	Pisces	Water
<b>Sun</b>	Sun	Fire
<b>Judgement</b>	Pluto	Water (Fire)
<b>World</b>	Saturn	Earth (Air)

## Appendix D

# The Heroine's Journey

TAROTISTS HAVE DEvised many versions of the Fool's Journey through the Major Arcana, some of which are based on the "Hero's Journey" discussed by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell.<sup>1</sup> While writing this book many of the reversed cards reminded me of scenes in myths and fairy tales that epitomize an archetypal Heroine's Journey. The "heroines" whose stories influenced this piece include Rapunzel, Snow White, Psyche, Andromeda, Persephone, Isis, Ishtar, Inanna, and many more. The following is an attempt to sketch out some of the details of such a journey as it appears in myth, fairy tales, and modern life. It is meant to stimulate your own ideas, not to be definitive, nor should it be assumed that the reversed Major Arcana only refer to the feminine. This is just one of many possible tales.

0 — **The Fool Rx** — The Heroine sets out on a journey, or in many cases, she escapes. Rather than being encouraged, forced, or celebrated as in the hero's departure, the departure, for most heroines, may go unnoticed.

### The First Group of Seven

*Reversals at this stage of the journey tend to oppose the upright meanings.*

1 — **The Magician Rx** — She is not given credit for her intelligence or skills, nor is she trained to use tools that would enable her to make her own way in the world. If she is trained, it is in secrecy or through trickery

and despite society's approbation. She has strange interests and does not fit. She expresses her wit by scorning the young men who court her, claiming that their talents and skills are not good enough.

2 — **The High Priestess Rx** — She is kept isolated and innocent of the ways of the world, not out of respect or reverence, but either as a valuable possession (whose value is lost if contaminated) or as a worthless drudge whose value or birth heritage is denied her. She may chafe at the only roles she is told are possible for her. Somewhere in the environs is a hidden or disguised magical woman—this may be the heroine's true mother or a witch or fairy godmother or a goddess.

3 — **The Empress Rx** — Her mother dies or gives her up, and/or she gains a wicked (devouring) stepmother. She herself will not gain a position of respect unless she gives birth to a son. In our modern world her babies are in daycare while she is in the office trying to prove herself in a patriarchal world.

4 — **The Emperor Rx** — Her aim is to see the world and to gain the boons and bonuses of men or through a man. Her assertive skills and ability to rule and order her environment are seen as unfeminine. In myth, her father, though sometimes adored, is usually weak willed or absent.

5 — **The Hierophant Rx** — She is told all the things she should not do and is a slave to society's laws. In myth, some kind of contest or trial is established that will determine her fate (i.e., who she is to marry).

6 — **The Lovers Rx** — In myth, she must wait until she has been selected as a bride, or she rebuffs all lovers. In the modern world, she has lost her relationship to love by being seen as either the virgin or the whore. She looks for an ideal soul mate who does not exist and spirals down into sexual excess, divorce, etc.

7 — **The Chariot Rx** — She loses the prestige she thought she had built up in the patriarchy, falls out of the driver's seat, loses the reins. She is told her place is in the home, protected or jailed by men, not able to drive, or, in some countries, even to travel. In myth, she must wait for a handsome stranger to "rescue her" since she cannot do it herself.

## The Second Group of Seven

*Reversals may be seen as projections onto others of her own strengths and abilities.*

8 — **Strength Rx** — She discovers her passions, but is accused of being deluded. She denies her own strength. She discovers there are those she cannot beguile and enchant. Her only friends and helpers are animals who she first distrusts. She clings to her animal survival. She is ready to enter the jaws of the beast, the chthonic feminine, rather than think she can subdue it.

9 — **The Hermit Rx** — She is banished, locked up in a tower or within a briar-covered castle, goes off into the wilderness or the underworld. She is at a loss and unpredictable forces arise in the dark. Her curiosity leads her to shine a light on something forbidden, which precipitates both her fall and her ultimate salvation.

10 — **The Wheel of Fortune Rx** — Her circumstances radically change, she falls from her station, is disoriented, and nothing was as she thought it to be. Her fate is given into the hands of others.

11 — **Justice Rx** — She is judged harshly by others for her mistakes and found guilty. Perhaps she is set up or framed, for it is man's law that often blames the victim (like those who have been battered or raped). She accepts all blame on herself.

12 — **The Hanged Man Rx** — She is castigated and punished, abandoned, or tied and left for the monster as an involuntary sacrifice. The cause may be futile, unjust, or unenlightened.

13 — **Death Rx** — She dies, is killed, or falls into a long sleep, or gives up, or descends to the underworld. This is where she begins to find her real self as she plumbs an unexpected depth.

14 — **Temperance Rx** — In myth, the gods have compassion or the fairy godmother reappears behind the scenes and unbeknownst to the heroine sets in motion circumstances that will ultimately assist her. In reality, she recognizes the imbalance and begins to take responsibility for her own healing, by opening to her own intuitive nature.



## The Third Group of Seven

*Reversals no longer oppose but operate on an inner level, speaking to her deep transformation.*

15 — **The Devil Rx** — Her adversary (negative *animus* or shadow) blames her as the villain, and sets up a series of impossible tasks that bring up all her fears of her own inadequacy. In myth this is the dragon that keeps the maiden captive, along with a great treasure. If she has evolved enough she recognizes the dragon as the guardian at the threshold of her own creative abilities and befriends it.

16 — **The Tower Rx** — In myth, she falls into despair and believes she can never accomplish her tasks. If she has evolved, she is struck by the realization that her old attitudes and self-image are flawed and must shatter. Her belief that a hero will liberate her also must go. This frees both her and her animus (along with everything she has projected on to men) from the false constrictions of social expectation.

17 — **The Star Rx** — She must empty a pool with a sieve, or separate different kinds of seeds, or obtain the beauty box from the queen of the underworld. In the evolved heroine, she shines even in the underworld. She gives and receives healing force from the land and the waters and comes to recognize her true beauty, and to know herself as a spark of the divine.

18 — **The Moon Rx** — Animals (and a tower) come to her aid in the wilderness, guiding her or doing the tasks for her, with each teaching her the wisdom of her instinctual nature. In the evolved heroine, no longer afraid of unconscious forces, she guides others through their dark night of the soul, bringing them the hope of their own rebirth.

19 — **The Sun Rx** — She is radiantly successful and is accepted into the royal/divine family. She gives birth to the divine child that is completely in touch with its instinctual nature.

20 — **Judgement Rx** — Her family is reunited—self, lover, child. She may become divine herself, and a new era begins. She has gained many experiences and a wider perspective that will aid her in future decisions. Her

story will be told, so that both story and the work of her tasks continue to serve all humanity.

21 — **The World Rx** — She knows herself as a wiser, fully integrated person with appropriate boundaries. She keeps her animal helpers around her in gratitude and to remind her of their wisdom. She ascends and takes her place among the gods and in the cosmos (perhaps as a constellation), or descends back to the earthly realm as a conscious incarnation.

## ENDNOTES

1. In addition to works by Jung and Campbell, the following book was helpful in defining the heroine's journey: *The Heroine's Journey* by Maureen McDock (Boston: Shambhala, 1990). Also recommended: *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* by Christopher Vogler (Studio City CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 1992). Special thanks to Sharyn McDonald for brainstorming this with me.

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## Additional Resources

Many of these resources are mentioned in the text. Internet site addresses as well as street addresses change frequently. If you cannot find a resource listed below try searching on names and other keywords listed below.

American Tarot Association, POB 102, Stoneham CO 80754. [www.ata-tarot.com](http://www.ata-tarot.com). Publisher of *The ATA Newsletter*.

Builders of the Adytum (correspondence course). 5101 North Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90042. [www.bota.org](http://www.bota.org).

Daughters of Divination and Bay Area Tarot Symposium (BATS), POB 471221, San Francisco CA 94147, [airndarkness@yahoo.com](mailto:airndarkness@yahoo.com). Publisher of *The Belfry*.

Elemental Dignities: [www.spiritnet.freemove.co.uk/ED\\_Tarot/](http://www.spiritnet.freemove.co.uk/ED_Tarot/) and [lonestar.texas.net/~r3winter/edig.html](http://lonestar.texas.net/~r3winter/edig.html).

The Hermitage: A Tarot History Site. Articles by Tom Tadfor Little. Includes *The TarotL History Information Sheet*. <http://www.tarothermit.com/>.

International Tarot Society, POB 1475, Morton Grove IL 60053. [www.tarotsociety.org](http://www.tarotsociety.org). Publisher of *ITS News*.

Los Angeles Tarot Symposium (LATS). [hrrabarb@earthlink.net](mailto:hrrabarb@earthlink.net).

Moonstruck. Articles by Nina Lee Braden and others. [www.geocities.com/~ninalee/](http://www.geocities.com/~ninalee/).

Tarot Celebrations. Newsletter by Geraldine Amaral. [www.tarotcelebrations.com](http://www.tarotcelebrations.com).

Tarot Certification Board. [www.tarotcertification.org](http://www.tarotcertification.org)

Tarot Course by Joan Bunning. [www.learnatarot.com](http://www.learnatarot.com).

Tarot Guild of Australia, POB 369 East Kew, Victoria 3102, AUSTRALIA. Publisher of *The Magician*. [www.tarotguild.org.au](http://www.tarotguild.org.au)

The Tarot School (correspondence course). [www.tarotschool.com](http://www.tarotschool.com).

Tools and Rites of Transformation (T.A.R.O.T.), POB 720, Nevada City CA 95959. [www.marygreer.com](http://www.marygreer.com) or [marygreer@tarot.com](mailto:marygreer@tarot.com). Publisher of *The T.A.R.O.T. Newsletter*.

Villa Revak. Translations of the Papus/Etteilla interpretations and other articles by James Revak. <http://jwrevak.tripod.com/>.

[www.tarotpassages.com](http://www.tarotpassages.com) (reviews and articles). Maintained by Diane Wilkes; formerly Michele's Tarot Page and [artoftarot.com](http://artoftarot.com). A good place to start exploring Tarot resources on the Internet.

[www.tarot.com](http://www.tarot.com). Computerized Tarot and I-Ching readings and Tarot articles by Christine Payne-Towler.

[Yahoogroups.com](http://Yahoogroups.com). Features many Tarot e-mail discussion groups, including TarotL and ComparativeTarot.



# Index

- 2 of Cups Rx, 27, 120–121, 230,  
238–242 passim
- 2 of Cups, 120, 122, 225
- 2 of Pentacles Rx, 160–161
- 2 of Pentacles, 113, 160, 162, 225
- 2 of Swords Rx, 140–141
- 2 of Swords, 140, 142
- 2 of Wands Rx, 100–101
- 2 of Wands, 100, 102
- 3 of Cups Rx, 26, 122–123
- 3 of Cups, 26, 32, 122, 124
- 3 of Pentacles Rx, 162–163
- 3 of Pentacles, 162, 164, 172
- 3 of Swords Rx, 32, 142–143
- 3 of Swords, 142, 144, 230, 235–242  
passim
- 3 of Wands Rx, 102–103
- 3 of Wands, 102, 104
- 4 of Cups Rx, 124–125
- 4 of Cups, 124, 126
- 4 of Pentacles Rx, 164–165, 230, 233,  
241, 242
- 4 of Pentacles, 164, 166
- 4 of Swords Rx, 144–145
- 4 of Swords, 144, 146
- 4 of Wands Rx, 104–105
- 4 of Wands, 30, 104, 106
- 5 of Cups Rx, 126–127
- 5 of Cups, 126, 128
- 5 of Pentacles Rx, 32, 166–167
- 5 of Pentacles, 166, 168
- 5 of Swords Rx, 146–147
- 5 of Swords, 3, 146, 148
- 5 of Wands Rx, 30, 106–107
- 5 of Wands, 106, 108
- 6 of Cups Rx, 128–129
- 6 of Cups, 128
- 6 of Pentacles Rx, 28, 168–169
- 6 of Pentacles, 168
- 6 of Swords Rx, 148–149
- 6 of Swords, 148, 150, 225
- 6 of Wand Rx, 32, 108–109, 230,  
237–242 passim
- 6 of Wands, 3, 108

- 7 of Cups Rx, 130–131, 230–242 passim  
 7 of Cups, 130, 132  
 7 of Pentacles Rx, 170–171  
 7 of Pentacles, 170, 172  
 7 of Swords Rx, 28, 150–151  
 7 of Swords, 150, 152  
 7 of Wands Rx, 28, 35, 110–111  
 7 of Wands, 110
- 8 of Cups Rx, 26, 32, 132–133  
 8 of Cups, 132  
 8 of Pentacles Rx, 172–173  
 8 of Pentacles, 172  
 8 of Swords Rx, 27, 152–153  
 8 of Swords, 152, 154  
 8 of Wands Rx, 112–113  
 8 of Wands, 112, 114
- 9 of Cups Rx, 134–135  
 9 of Cups, 33, 134, 136  
 9 of Pentacles Rx, 32, 174–175  
 9 of Pentacles, 174, 176  
 9 of Swords Rx, 32, 154–155, 218  
 9 of Swords, 154, 156  
 9 of Wands Rx, 114–115  
 9 of Wands, 114, 230, 237–242 passim
- 10 of Cups Rx, 136, 137  
 10 of Cups, 136  
 10 of Pentacles Rx, 3, 176–177  
 10 of Pentacles, 176  
 10 of Swords Rx, 32, 156–157  
 10 of Swords, 156  
 10 of Wands Rx, 27, 116–117  
 10 of Wands, 116
- Ace of Cups Rx, 118–119, 230, 233, 238, 241, 242  
 Ace of Cups, 118  
 Ace of Pentacles Rx, 3, 158–159  
 Ace of Pentacles, 158  
 Ace of Swords Rx, 138–139  
 Ace of Swords, 138, 140  
 Ace of Wands Rx, 98–99  
 Ace of Wands, 32, 98, 116  
 Ace Rx, 26, 248  
 Aces, 30, 248  
 adversity, 16–17 (see also reversed cards as –)  
 air, 7, 138, 196, 198, 202, 223, 251–253  
 alchemy, alchemical, 29  
 Alliette, Jean-Baptiste, see Etteilla  
 All-Reversed Spread, 214  
 Alta, Elie, 178  
 ambiguity, importance of, 31  
 American Tarot Association, 30, 37  
 anima, 3, 6, 46, 47  
 animus, 6, 51  
 anomalies, 33  
 Aquarius, 196, 198, 202, 253  
 archetype(s), 6, 8, 15, 23, 31  
 Aries, 180, 182, 184, 186  
 Asantewaa, Eva Yaa, 23, 37, 242  
 astrological correspondences, 241  
 ATA News, 37
- Ballantree, John (*Tarot for the Millennium*), 37  
 Bellenghi, Alessandro (*Cartomancy*), 5  
 Blake, William, 120  
 Book “T”—*The Tarot*, 251  
 Braden, Nina Lee, 37  
 Brauser, Ruth Ann, 178  
 Brotherhood of Light, 7  
 Builders of the Adytum (BOTA), 23

- Campbell, Joseph, 255  
 Cancer, 188, 190, 194, 253  
 Capricorn, 204, 206, 210, 253  
 cartonomanie, 7, 18  
 Cavendish, Richard (*The Tarot and The Black Arts*), 152, 178  
 Celtic Cross Spread, 20–21, 213, 229, 232, 237  
 Chang, Susan T., 95  
 Chariot Rx, 57–58, 256  
 Chariot, 57, 59, 95, 225, 253  
 Coins (see Pentacles)  
 Comparative Tarot, 23, 37, 242  
 Constant, Alphonse-Louis (see Lévi)  
 correspondences, 6, 7, 253  
 Court Card keywords, 249  
 Court Cards Rx, 3, 30, 179–212, 249  
 Court Cards, 6, 8, 179–212, 225, 249  
 Crowley, Aleister, 7, 64, 153, 156  
 Cuccia-Watts, Julie (*Ancestral Path Tarot*), 178  
 Cups Rx, 248  
 Cups, 7, 11, 31, 130, 248, 251–252  
*Daughters of the Moon Tarot*, 37  
 Davies, Ann (*Inspirational Thoughts on Tarot*), 23  
 de Gébelin, Antoine Court (*Le Monde Primitif*) 18  
 Death Rx, 73–74, 257  
 Death, 4, 72–73, 253  
 Decker, Ronald, et al, (*A Wicked Pack of Cards*), 24  
 describing a card, 34  
 Devil Rx, 78–79, 258  
 Devil, 77–78, 253  
 dialogs, 34  
 Dickson, Elinor (see Woodman, Marion)  
 dis-ease, 10, 16, 29 (see also health)  
 Disks (see Pentacles)  
 divination, 7, 243  
 Douglas, Claire (*Translate this Darkness*), 12  
 Downing, Christine (*Mirrors of the Self*), 23  
 dreamtime, 14  
 duality, 15  
 earth, 7, 204, 206, 210, 223, 251–253  
 eights Rx, 249  
 eights, 249  
 Elemental Dignities, 6, 35, 19, 226, 241, 251–254  
 elements, 6, 11, 251–252  
 Eliade, Mircea, 17  
 Ellis, Normandi (*Dreams of Isis*), 95  
 Emperor Rx, 26, 28, 50–52, 256  
 Emperor, 49–50, 253  
 Empress Rx, 31, 48–49, 230, 234–242 passim, 256  
 Empress, 47, 229, 253  
 enantiodromia, 7, 15–16, 34, 78  
 esoteric, 8–9, 29 (see also occult)  
 Etteilla (Jean-Baptiste Alliette), 5, 11, 18, 152, 178  
 Farr, Florence, 152, 178  
 feminine, 27, 31, 255  
 fire, 7, 138, 180, 182, 184, 186, 223, 251–253  
 Five D's, 32 (see also Ricklef, James)  
 fives Rx, 248  
 fives, 248  
 Fool Rx, 41–42, 255  
 Fool, 14, 30, 40, 253  
 Fool's Journey, ix, 255  
 Fortune, Dion (Violet Firth), 44

- fortunetelling, 18  
 Fournier Publishers, 5  
 fours Rx, 248  
 fours, 164, 248  
 French Tradition Tarot correspondences, 7, 8, 81  
 Gemini, 54, 196, 198, 202, 253  
 Gendron, Melanie (*The Gendron Tarot*), p. 242  
 Gilbert, John, 30, 37  
 glossary (see "specialized terms")  
 Golden Dawn, see Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn  
*Grand Etteilla Tarot*, 5, 178  
 Grand Orient (pseudonym, see Waite)  
 Gray, Eden (*Tarot Revealed*), 4, 24  
 Grimaud, B. P., 5, 178  
 Guler, Maritxu, 5  
 Hanged Man Rx, 71–72, 257  
 Hanged Man Spread, 213, 220–222  
 Hanged Man, x, 4, 14, 16, 17, 69–71, 220, 253  
 Harris, Frieda (*Thoth Tarot*), 3  
 Hazel, Elizabeth, 178  
 health and disease, 1, 2, 29  
 Heraclitus, 7, 15  
 Hermetic axiom, 6  
 Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, 4, 7, 8, 12, 19, 54, 112, 170, 172, 251  
 Hermit Rx, 62–64, 257  
 Hermit, 26, 61–62, 174, 253  
 Hero's Journey, 255  
 Heroine's Journey, ix, 95, 255–259  
 Hesse, Hermann (*The Glass Bead Game*), 12  
 Hidden Influences Spread, 223–226  
 Hierophant Rx, 29, 53–54, 256  
 Hierophant, 52, 54, 61, 253  
 High Priestess Rx, 3, 45–47, 256  
 High Priestess, 44–45, 49, 52, 223, 230–242 passim, 253  
 Hillman, James (*Re-Visioning Psychology; The Puer Papers*), 17, 23  
 history (see Tarot history)  
 Hughes-Barlow, Paul, 254  
 illness (see health)  
 inner planes, 8, 14  
 interpretations, modern and traditional, 1, 5 (see also reversed meanings)  
 issue-oriented questions, 213  
 Johnson, Robert, 23  
 Judgement Rx, 26, 34, 91–92, 258  
 Judgement, 90, 253  
 Jung, Carl Gustav (*Man and His Symbols; On the Psychology of the Unconscious*), 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 23, 42, 85, 255  
 Jupiter, 10, 253  
 Justice Rx, 67–69, 257  
 Justice, 66–67, 70, 225, 253  
 Karlin, Jess, 254  
 Keaney, Patty, 37  
 keywords, 243–245, 247–249  
 King of Cups Rx, 194–195  
 King of Cups, 194  
 King of Pentacles Rx, 210–211  
 King of Pentacles, 210  
 King of Swords Rx, 202–203  
 King of Swords, 202  
 King of Wands Rx, 186–187  
 King of Wands, 186  
 King, Francis (*Techniques of High Magic*), 12

- kings Rx, 187, 249  
 kings, 6, 202, 249  
 Kingsford, Anna, 87  
 Knight/Prince of Wands, 182  
 Knight/Prince of Cups Rx, 190–191  
 Knight/Prince of Cups, 190  
 Knight/Prince of Pentacles Rx,  
     206–207  
 Knight/Prince of Pentacles, 206  
 Knight/Prince of Swords Rx, 198–199  
 Knight/Prince of Swords, 198  
 Knight/Prince of Wands Rx, 182–183  
 knights Rx, 249  
 knights, 6, 249  
  
 layouts (see spreads)  
 Leo, 180, 182, 184, 186, 253  
 Lévi, Eliphas (Alphonse-Louis Con-  
     stant), 7, 8, 85  
 Lewis, I. M. (Ecstatic Religion), 70, 95  
 Libra, 196, 198, 202, 253  
 Life Inventory Spread, 217, 218  
 Little, Tom Tadfor, 37  
 Lo Scarabeo Publishers, 5  
 Los Angeles Tarot Symposium, 4  
 Lovers Rx, 55–56, 256  
 Lovers, 54–55, 225, 253  
  
 magic, 6, 8, 34, 43  
 Magician Rx, 28, 43–44, 255  
 Magician, 42–43, 44, 223, 253  
 Major Arcana, 8, 31, 39–95, 247, 253,  
     255–259  
     keywords, 247  
 Marius, Docteur, 5  
 Mars (the planet), 253  
*Marseille* (also *Marseilles*) *Tarot*, 5, 8, 9,  
     17  
  
 masculine, 27  
 Mathers, MacGregor, 5, 11, 19, 251  
 Matthews, Caitlín (*Celtic Wisdom  
     Tarot*), 24  
 McCaulley, Ken, 227  
 McDonald, Sharyn, 12  
 meanings (see reversed meanings)  
 meanings, memorized, 31–32  
 Mercury, 253  
 metaphysics, see occult  
 meter, interpretation via, 34  
*Minchiate Tarot*, x, 12  
 Minor Arcana, 8, 11  
     court cards, 178–212, 248–249  
     number cards, 97–178, 249  
 Moon (the planet), 27, 253  
 Moon Rx, 86–87, 258  
 Moon, 27, 85, 253  
 Moore, Barbara, 4  
 Moore, Rita, 37  
 Morgan, Christiana, 3, 12  
*Motherpeace Tarot*, 37, 160  
 multiple meanings, value of, 31–33  
 Myss, Carolyn, 128  
  
 Neptune, 253  
 nines Rx, 249  
 nines, 62, 116, 249  
 numinous, 8  
  
 occult metaphysics, 6, 8  
 One-Card Reversed Spread, 22, 214  
 Page/Princess of Cups Rx, 188–189  
 Page/Princess of Cups, 188  
 Page/Princess of Pentacles Rx,  
     204–205  
 Page/Princess of Pentacles, 204

- Page/Princess of Swords Rx, 196–197  
 Page/Princess of Swords, 196  
 Page/Princess of Wands Rx, 180–181  
 Page/Princess of Wands, 180  
 pages Rx, 249  
 pages, 6, 30, 249  
 Papess/Popess (see High Priestess)  
 Papus (Gerard Encausse), 5  
 Pauli, Wolfgang, 11, 15  
 Payne-Towler, Christine, 178  
 Pentacles Rx, 31, 248  
 Pentacles, 7, 31, 164, 223, 248, 251–252  
 Persephone, 64, 234, 255  
 Petrarch (*Trionfi*), 11  
 Picard, Eudes, 5, 178  
 piquet, 18  
 Pisces, 188, 190, 194, 253  
 Pluto, 253  
 Poinot, M. C. (*The Encyclopedia of the Occult Sciences*), 5, 167, 178  
 polarities, 27, 28  
 Pollack, Rachel, xi  
 Pope (see Hierophant)  
 preceding card, 30, 34  
 prefixes, 27–28, 245  
 Prince (see Knight)  
 Princess (see Page)  
 problems, 2  
 Problem-Solving Spread, 217, 218  
 projection, 9, 10, 26, 37  
 psyche, 6, 7, 9  
 psychology, 9  
 psychomachia, 130  
 psychopomp/psychopompos, 9, 64  
 puella/puer, 9, 42  
 Queen of Cups Rx, 192–193  
 Queen of Cups, 192  
 Queen of Pentacles Rx, 208–109  
 Queen of Pentacles, 208  
 Queen of Swords Rx, 200–201  
 Queen of Swords, 200  
 Queen of Wands Rx, 184–185  
 Queen of Wands, 184  
 queens Rx, 249  
 queens, 6, 249  
 range of meaning, 14, 34, 36  
 Rapp, Barbara, 4  
 rectification/rectify (a reversed card),  
   2, 25, 29, 33–35, 217  
 Regardie, Israel (*The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic*), 254  
 remedy, 9, 10, 19, 29, 33, 37  
*Renaissance Tarot*, x, 12  
 Renault, Mary, 70  
 repetition, 32, 35  
 retrograde, 10, 28  
 reversed cards  
   a majority of, 21–22  
   alternate ways of obtaining, 22  
   as adversity, 3, 220  
   as choice points, 25  
   as mistakes, 28, 30  
   as negative and ill-dignified, 30–31  
   as red flagged, 25  
   defined, 13–14  
   multiple meanings, 31–33  
   origin of, 18  
   shuffling for, 19  
   ways to read, 25–31  
   ways to rectify, 33–35

- reversed
  - Court Cards, 178–212, 248–249
  - Keywords, 32, 35, 36, 243–245, 247
  - Major Arcana, 8, 31, 39–95, 247, 253, 255–259
  - Number Cards, 97–178, 249
- reversed meanings, 19, 255, 257, 258
  - applied to upright cards, 25–36
  - as anomalies, 33
  - as questions, 32
  - which to use, 31–33
- Ricklef, James (“Ask *Knighthawk*”; Five D’s), 37, 178
- Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*, 4, 7, 9, 19
- Roberts, Jane (*The Nature of Personal Reality*), 72, 95
- round Tarot decks, 27
- Rudhyar, Dane, 27
- RWS, see *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot Rx*, 10, 24, 37
- Sagittarius, 180, 182, 184, 186, 253
- Saint Ambrose, 68
- Saint Paul, 78
- Saint-Germain, 5
- Sarah, 21, 229–242
- Sardello, Robert (*Facing the World with Soul*), 12
- Saturn, 253
- Scepters (see Wands)
- Scorpio, 188, 190, 194, 253
- scry, scrying, 10
- selecting cards, 20
- senex, 10, 61
- sevens Rx, 249
- sevens, 249
- sex reversal, 30
- shadow, 10
- shaman/shamanic, 2, 10–11, 29
- Ship of Fools Tarot*, x
- Shrock, Dean (*Doctor’s Order’s: Go Fishing*), 1–2, 12, 227
- shuffling, 19, 20
- significator, 225, 226
- Sim-Behi, Valerie, 242
- Simonton, Carl, 227
- sixes Rx, 248
- sixes, 108, 148, 168, 248
- Skinner, Stephen (see King), 12
- Smith, Pamela Colman, 7, 9
- Smith, Sherryl, 37
- Sola-Busca Tarot*, 142
- Songs for the Journey Home* (Tarot deck), 37
- soul, 9, 15
- Special Topics in Tarot*, x
- specialized terms, 6–11, 15, 24, 37
- Spiral Tarot, The*, 166
- Spreads, about, 20, 213
  - All-Reversed Spread, 214
  - Celtic Cross Spread, 20–21, 213, 229, 232, 237
  - Hanged Man Spread, 213, 220–222
  - Hidden Influences Spread, 223–226
  - Life Inventory Spread, 217, 218
  - One-Card Reversed Spread, 22, 214
  - Problem-Solving Spread, 217, 218–219
  - Three-Card Spread, 215
  - Yes-No Spread, 213, 216
- Star Rx, 30, 32, 83–84, 258
- Star, 82–83, 253
- Starhawk (*Dreaming the Dark*), 95
- Strength Rx, 60–61, 257
- Strength, 59–60, 68, 95, 253

- stress (see health)  
 suits, 6, 8, 11, 251–252  
 Sun (the planet), 253  
 Sun Rx, 88–89, 258  
 Sun, 4, 14, 87–88, 253  
 Swords Rx, 3, 248  
 Swords, 7, 11, 31, 142, 248, 251–252  
 synchronicity, 11, 15  
  
 tarocchi, 11, 57  
*Tarot for Your Self*, ix  
 Tarot history, 18–19  
*Tarot of the Cloisters, The*, 37  
 Tarot School, The, 178  
 TarotL, 37, 95, 178  
 Taurus, 204, 206, 210, 253  
 Taylor, Jeremy (*The Living Labyrinth*),  
     15, 23  
 temenos, 11, 129  
 Temperance Rx, 76–77, 257  
 Temperance, 75, 225, 253  
 tens Rx, 249  
 tens, 30, 116, 137, 249  
*Thoth Tarot*, 3, 7, 14, 19, 136, 166, 172  
 Three-Card Spread, 215  
 threes Rx, 248  
 threes, 142, 248  
 Tower Rx, 81–82, 258  
 Tower, 4, 30, 80, 253  
 traditional meanings, about, 11  
 Trumps/Triumphs, 11, 57 (see also  
     Major Arcana)  
 twos Rx, 248  
 twos, 160, 248  
  
 upright cards, 14, 25, 33, 247  
     as positive & well-dignified, 30–31  
     reversed meanings applied to, 35–36  
     Major Arcana, 247  
 Uranus, 18, 253  
  
 Venus (the planet), 253  
 Venus-Aphrodite, 47  
 Virgo, 204, 206, 210, 253  
 visualization, 34  
 von Franz, Marie-Louise (*Shadow and  
     Evil in Fairytales*), 17, 23, 227  
  
 Waite, A. E. (Arthur Edward), 5, 7, 9,  
     11, 64, 130, 166  
 Wands Rx, 248  
 Wands, 7, 11, 31, 248, 251–252  
 Wang, Robert (*An Introduction to the  
     Golden Dawn Tarot*), 254  
 water, 7, 188, 190, 194, 223, 241,  
     251–253  
 ways to read a reversed card, 25–31  
 ways to rectify a reversal, 33–35, 217  
     (see also rectification)  
 Western Magical Tradition, 7  
 Wheel of Fortune Rx, 26, 65–66, 257  
 Wheel of Fortune, 64–65, 230,  
     236–242 passim, 253  
*William Blake Tarot*, 14  
 Williams, Brian (*Renaissance, Minchi-  
     ate, Ship of Fools Tarots*), x, 12, 85  
 Wise Old Man, 10, 61  
 Woodman, Marion (*Dancing in the  
     Flames*), 23  
 World Rx, 93–94, 259  
 World, 92–93, 253  
 Wounded Healer archetype, 16, 70  
  
 yang/yin, 30  
 Yes-No Spread, 214, 216



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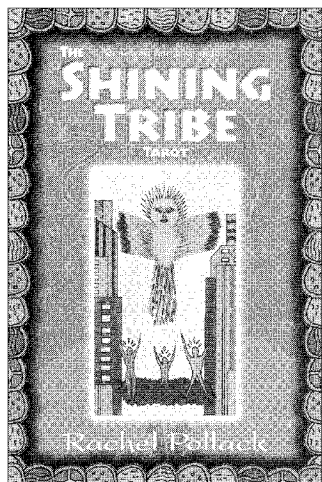
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