



# DARKNESS OF LIGHT TAROT

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Guide to the Tarot

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Designed and illustrated by Tony DiMauro, 2017.

Edited and co-authored by Mark DiMauro.

## THANK YOU

A very special thank you to Lydia Gschosmann in Edinburgh, UK, who has graciously allowed me to use her photography as reference for my paintings.

Thank you to Sierra Selene for a beautiful photography collaboration and promoting the deck.

Thank you to Rachel Quinlan for modeling, and for an absolutely fantastic Tarot reading and help promoting.

Thank you to Alison for your support and encouragement, even when my ideas for projects seem strange.

Thank you to my brother, Mark, for editing, fixing, editing, writing, and editing the guidebook.

Thank you to my parents for your help and support in this project and throughout my entire life. I wouldn't be where I today if it wasn't for you.

And finally, thank you to everyone who stuck with me and supported me. By far, this has been the most challenging and rewarding project I have ever had the pleasure of working on.

I am in your debt.

-Tony

## WELCOME

In this book you will find explanations and an examination of the Darkness of Light tarot deck, an overview of the concepts and meaning behind each card, the philosophy of the deck as a whole, and what inspired it to come into being. You will learn about the message, symbolism and method behind the artwork as well as background information on the artist.

Section one focuses on the deck's background: where it came from and what inspired it. Section two focuses on the cards as individual pieces, breaking them down by symbology and narrative element, and adds notes about patterns and unique touches found within the deck. The third section (available only in the printed version) includes a short story ("The Journey of the Fool"), and the fourth section includes the original Tarot card game rules adapted from Italian, ready for play with the Darkness of Light tarot deck (available only in the printed version). The fifth section includes a brief overview from the artist on how the images were created, showing techniques and explanations of stylization (available only in the printed version).

The third section is included to help "fill in the gaps" of meaning that simple empirical analysis of card dissection cannot. Arguably, the deeper meaning of the deck is found in this section. Much as the deeper meaning of nature cannot be fully understood by simply examining its contents, one must experience it holistically to truly grasp the essence of the balance, harmony, and grandeur it represents.

I hope you enjoy reading this guidebook and learning about my process as much as the deck itself. You have all been a great inspiration whose support was instrumental in creating something of this magnitude.

Blessed be,  
-Tony DiMauro

## FOREWORD

I have known Tony DiMauro for years, both as an undergraduate and more recently as a colleague who has brought his vital energy and fresh vision to the Art Department at IUP as a professor of graphic design. Tony's work in a faculty exhibition at the University Museum captured my attention, and I was impressed with the scope of his project and his use of both traditional and digital painting techniques. I am honored to write the foreword to his ambitious new work, the Tarot deck *The Darkness of Light*.

While researching my dissertation on Georgia O'Keeffe's early abstractions, 'Music That Makes Holes in the Sky: Georgia O'Keeffe's Visionary Romanticism, I discovered that the first painter shown at Alfred Stieglitz's photographic '291' Gallery was Pamela Coleman Smith, a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and designer of the classic Rider-Waite Tarot deck. During that time a major exhibition, "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985," with a catalog edited by Maurice Tuchman, inspired my investigation of O'Keeffe's connections to mysticism. Eventually, I bought the Rider-Waite deck and used it privately to contemplate its archetypal imagery in relation to my personal life struggles and goal seeking. I never mastered reading complicated spreads, but was once fortunate to experience an enlightening personal reading by a woman from Cornwall who was visiting friends in the U.S.

As an art historian, I look for connections between the art of the past and today. Tony's images remind me of Victorian medievalism, especially the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, and their paintings of women, goddesses, witches, and sorceresses. At the same time, they evoke the popular "Game of Thrones" fantasy saga of our own time. Nature plays a significant role in each image; for example, tree branches sprouting leaves represent the minor arcana of wands, while cups are filled with flowers. The natural landscape and its seasonal and atmospheric changes provide the backdrop to the central figures. As Tony has said, creating this work provided a journey of self-exploration, and his own image appears in the series of wands. Like Tony, I am also interested in what contemporary artists can teach us about what it means to be human in today's world. *The Darkness of Light* provides compelling imagery for those seeking a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in our complex and confusing world.

Brenda Mitchell, PhD  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
July 11, 2017

In darkness, we are eclipsed.  
In light, we eclipse another.

There is what is, there is not what is not.  
Nature is the creator, destroyer, and the only law.

The brightest and darkest paths are the same.  
They are blinding.

“Meditations on Existence”  
-Tony DiMauro

# PART THE FIRST

## CONCEPTS

“Fear is dangerous, not the tarot. The tarot represents the spectrum of the human condition, the good, the evil, the light, and the dark. Do not fear the darker aspects of the human condition. Understand them. The tarot is a storybook about life, about the greatness of human accomplishment, and also the ugliness we are each capable of.”

-Benebell Wen, *Holistic Tarot: An Integrative Approach to Using Tarot for Personal Growth*

### OVERVIEW

The Darkness of Light Tarot is a treatise on the balance found in all things in the universe. It strives to bring an unapologetic portrayal of the symmetry found in nature to the reader, weaving together darkness and light to tell the story of the Fool's Journey, via a tapestry of stark and dramatic imagery.

The deck adopts a non-Zoroastrianistic philosophy, which is to say it eschews the well-worn binary concepts of “good and evil,” cosmogonic dualism, or eschatological monotheism. These ideas are viewed as relativistic by the artist; dark in this context does not symbolize “evil,” and light does not symbolize “good.” Rather, they are archetypes of what we do and do not understand about the world, experiences we find pleasant and unpleasant, and the favorable and unfavorable moments of our lives. Ultimately, the goal of art is to express and share shades of human experience.

This is what it means to be human, which is to exist in the measurable natural world, on this mortal coil, and in this space and time.

The artwork of this deck is designed to share said shades of humanity, but in addition, exist within an interactive format into which a viewer may project herself. By nature, the tarot lends itself well to this type of pragmatic artistic expression. Through the use of narrative, archetypal forms and esoteric symbols found (in the tradition of Rider-Waite-Smith and historical occurrences of the tarot) throughout a variety of (mostly Western) cultures, the meaning and impact of art on an audience continues to live on in powerful, functional ways beyond even what the artist could have imagined.

### HISTORICAL ROOTS

Originally known as Trionfi (Italian for “triumphs”), and later as the Tarocchi, Tarok, and by other names, the tarot began to surface in Europe as a card game around the mid-15th century, particularly in Italy and France. From the earliest known cards commissioned by the rulers of the Renaissance, images have always played a central role in the essence of a deck, and by extension, its interpretation by the reader and player.

Given my personal interest and experience with narrative art, the decision was made to model images in the Darkness of Light on the stories told by Pamela Coleman Smith in the legendary Rider-Waite-Smith deck (so named for the deck's originators, mystic and member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Arthur Edward Waite, his publisher, William Rider and the Son of London, and the deck's artist and major content contributor, Pamela Colman Smith) published in 1909.

Using the Rider-Waite-Smith deck was an easy choice, not simply because Smith's illustrations are universally understood and timelessly beautiful, but because her work masterfully constructs a relatable story of the Fool's journey. While the Rider-Waite-Smith deck is known by a wide variety of names, I wish to credit the deck's artist, Pamela Colman Smith, as a major contributor, if not the major contributor. Having illustrated the Major Arcana and single handedly both generating content,

symbolism, and illustrating the Minor Arcana, her influence cannot be overstated.

Images were carefully chosen from my favorite inspirational mid to late 19th century Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite painters such as John William Waterhouse and French academic painter Charles Mengin, known primarily for his painting “Sappho,” which is honored in the Darkness of Light tarot as the Queen of Blades. These works served as a basis for a few cards, which were reworked and repainted to fit this specific narrative structure and provide additional historical context and depth to the reader, with a nod to the art history aficionado.

Additionally, Belgian Symbolist and graphic artist Leon Spilliaert would also serve as inspiration for the deck. Most of Spilliaert's works include an oppressively alien and certainly elegiac atmosphere, serving as a template through which the viewer can mirror, and then cloud, their own respective state of mind. Spilliaert not only reinforces the mood, philosophy, and imagery of this deck, but his background as a Symbolist painter and graphic artist were particularly appropriate, as was his visual vocabulary - something which speaks volumes for readers of the tarot - reaching “across the aisle” from the domain of Fine Arts to the esoteric and commercial spheres.

## INSPIRATIONS AND INFLUENCES

After living near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as a child, my family relocated some three hundred miles west to the Pittsburgh area when I was in grade school. It was here I spent the majority of my childhood, growing up in the rural countryside. Dense forests, bitter gray winters, and abandoned steel mills in poverty stricken towns provided the backdrop for my life and art.

Incidentally, the Pittsburgh area is one of the cloudiest cities in the United States, behind only Seattle, Portland, and Buffalo. With an average of two hundred and three days per year (56%) of heavy cloud cover, this grim backdrop presents an alternative meaning to the title of the deck, eluding to the oppressive gloom on what would have been a sunny day almost anywhere else.

Country life brought more darkness than just the clouds, however. In high school, I lamented the lack of culture and stifling atmosphere that covered my teen years like a blanket. I was

constantly an outsider, struggling to fit into a narrow, predefined role of what my (usually blue collar) purpose in society must be. I rebelled. While I knew in my heart who I was, this proverbial fog didn't lift until I moved to New York City, replacing cultural woes with newfound personal perspective and confidence in my identity as an artist. It wasn't until this realization came that I was able to appreciate nature more fully, outside of the societal limits I pressed against in my youth.

It could be said, then, the art found in the deck is an amalgamation of expressions based on the work of Pamela Coleman Smith, various occult sources and symbols, the grit and harshness of New York City, the cold, gray void of rural western Pennsylvania, and a sprinkle of painting inspirations from art history, all told through the prism of my life, and executed by the brush in my hand.

## CARD TITLES

The titles of the cards presented a unique opportunity to build a bridge between my personal history and the history of the tarot. Historically speaking, the Italian language is not only arguably the foundation of the tarot in its modern, codified form, but also, as a Romanticized language, shares strong roots, meanings, and linguistic tendencies with Latin. By titling the trump cards in Italian, I was able to explore meanings in a more introspective way than English alone might have permitted. Roman numerals have been in existence for thousands of years, and are still used for indicating editions of important and landmark events. Thus, the decision was made to use them as the numbering system in the Major Arcana, born out of tradition and formality.

The decision to keep Italian relegated to the Major Arcana is primarily for usability and clarity among English speaking countries, and an attempt to elevate the Majors above the Minors, giving them a sense of grandeur and importance that transcends

language, referencing ethos by way of tradition. Additionally, it is an acknowledgment of the storied history inherently brought to the reader each time the deck of cards is shuffled.

On a personal level, the decision to use Italian titles is also an homage to my family's heritage. To escape widespread damage plaguing much of Europe after the second World War, my grandfather immigrated to the United States in the 1950's. After serving in the Korean War to gain his US citizenship, an effort was made to "settle down" and assimilate into American culture as much as possible, essentially working to "become an American." Therefore, the decision was made to not teach Italian in the home, but rather English. While I am not fluent in Italian, I have grown up with a number of close native speaking Italian relatives, and have studied the language to help grow my connection with my own past.

## WOLF ICON

The double-headed wolf icon was created before the deck was considered, and held special significance to me as an artist. The doubling of the wolf represents symmetry and balance found in nature, portraying both light and dark.

Both wolves are locked in an eternal spiral that will repeat infinitely for as long as time exists. There is no "winner" and no "loser,": there just is, as nature just is.

# PART THE SECOND

## THE MAJOR AND MINOR ARCANA

“It’s said that the shuffling of the cards is the earth, and the pattering of the cards is the rain, and the beating of the cards is the wind, and the pointing of the cards is the fire. That’s of the four suits. But the Greater Trumps, it’s said, are the meaning of all process and the measure of the everlasting dance.”

-Charles Williams

### THE MAJOR ARCANA

As with most tarot card decks, the first twenty one cards, known as the Major Arcana, represent the Fool’s journey. “The Fool’s Journey” is another way of saying: “the universal journey through life we all must inevitably experience.” Events encountered in this journey include spirituality, love, reflection, and loss, culminating with death and the time after death. In short, the Major Arcana represent major life events we are bound to experience at one point or another during our time on earth.

Aesthetically, the Major Arcana of the Darkness of Light tarot is designed to be void of color and neutral of the seasons represented in the rest of the deck, allowing it to exist outside of the calendar year. As a result, the implication is that it also exists outside of time as we understand it on earth. Therefore, the Major Arcana is timeless, essentially representing time itself. By extension, the Major Arcana are cyclical, and will continue to repeat forever throughout conscious existence in this mortal realm.

The Fool card in the Darkness of Light tarot omits a number entirely. Seeing the Major Arcana as a progression through time means a Fool with no mark can enter and leave any of the events at any time, much as how life actually occurs: messy and chaotic, but always complete.

Additionally, omitting a number allows time to start over once the Fool understands his purpose with the final trump card: The Universe. It is my feeling The Universe is not taken as literally “the last” card within the Major Arcana, but a signal to begin the cycle over again, reliving events on earth in a different body or in

a different way. If it assists understanding, you can think of The Universe as the number 12 on a traditional clock; it is midnight, simultaneously both the end of one story and the beginning of the next.

For the most part, the Major Arcana within the Darkness of Light tarot follow the symbols and archetypes first pioneered by Sir Arthur Waite of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in the Rider-Waite-Smith deck. There are, however, influences from a variety of sources in the DoL version, including changing the final card in the Major Arcana, XXI The World, to XXI The Universe, in accordance with Aleister Crowley’s Thoth deck (published in 1969 by Ordo Templi Orientis and illustrated by Lady Frieda Harris). It was felt that The Universe gave a better sense of scope and power to the card, as opposed to the The World from the Rider-Waite-Smith version, which felt limited in its place in the greater design of things. It should be noted that although Crowley completed a great deal of work in magical thinking and systems, his legacy largely glosses over a dark past that isn’t intended to have been imbued into the Darkness of Light tarot.

Work on the Major Arcana began in autumn 2015 with Death. It concluded in late fall of 2016 with The Universe, after work on the Minor Arcana had been completed. Box artwork, reverse artwork, iconography, and work on the deluxe edition design was completed in Spring of 2017. The guidebook was publicly released October, 31, 2017, after the deck had been publicly released for approximately four months.

## THE MINOR ARCANA AND THE SUITS

The Minor Arcana are much more granular in meaning, and have direct and concrete associations with our temporal and spatial experience, aligning with Earth's natural calendar, as illustrated and charted by the concept of the **Wheel of the Year**.

The Wheel of the Year is a method of marking time by dividing each calendar year into quadrants and then subdividing those quadrants, resulting in eight distinct dates spaced at even intervals from one another. These dates are celebrated as holidays (or sabbats), and are determined according to significant points of the sun's position in the sky. This position is of utmost importance, as it determines growing conditions for crops necessary to sustain life.

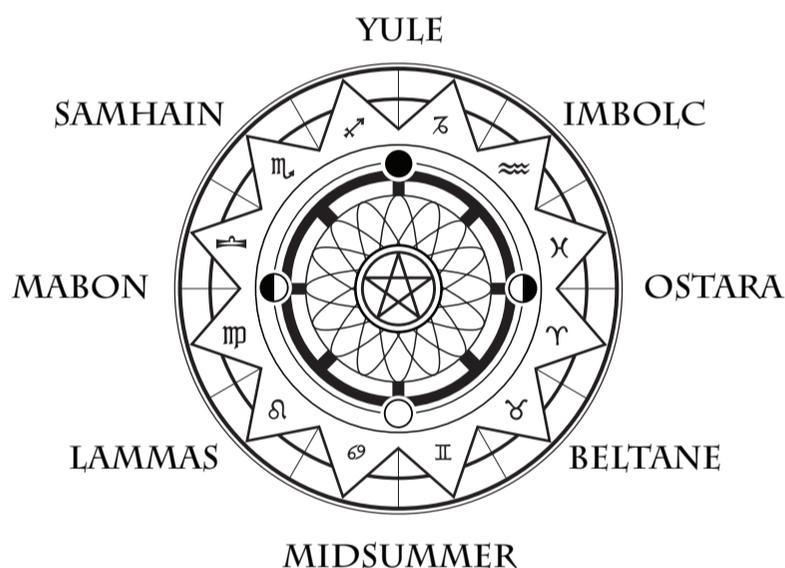
The Wheel of the Year can be read starting at any point, but it is most usually read beginning with Yule and Winter Solstice (to

align with the Gregorian calendar year), or Samhain (to align with the Pagan New Year).

Beginning at Samhain and moving forward in time, you will encounter eight sabbats, four generally considered larger holidays (called major sabbats). The major sabbats are celebrated at the mathematical midpoints between each equinox and solstice, while the minor sabbats, or lesser sabbats, are celebrated on the date of each equinox and solstice. The major sabbats generally coincide with the "meteorological seasons" - typically in months of the year when weather patterns feel similar to what we might traditionally associate with each season.

After Samhain, the Wheel of the Year moves forward (in order) to Yule, Imbolc, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lammass, Mabon, and finally, Samhain, when the cycle is begun anew.

## THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR



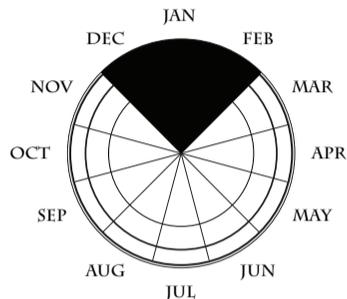
YULE	Winter Solstice, also known as Midwinter, birth of the year, opposite of Litha
IMBOLC	First of the major sabbats, the midpoint between Winter Solstice and Vernal Equinox, sometimes called <i>Candlemas</i> or <i>Brigid</i> .
OSTARA	Vernal Equinox, sometimes called <i>Eostar</i> or <i>Oestarra</i> .
BELTANE	Second of the major sabbats, the midpoint between Vernal Equinox and Summer Solstice, sometimes called <i>May Eve</i> or <i>May Day</i> .
LITHA	Summer Solstice, also known as Midsummer, height of the year, opposite of Yule.
LAMMAS	Third of the major sabbats, also known as Lughnasad(h), midpoint between the Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox.
MABON	Fall Equinox, sometimes called <i>Harvest Home</i> .
SAMHAIN	Fourth and final major sabbat, midpoint between Fall Equinox and Winter Solstice, also known as <i>All Hallows' Eve</i> or <i>Hallowmas</i> . New Year celebration

## SUIT/SEASON CORRESPONDENCE

Each suit corresponds with a season of the calendar year, and is an important part of the deck's philosophy. Blades align with winter, Wands with spring, Cups with summer, and Coins

with fall. Each card was created in the season it is designed to represent, as creating artwork during a particular season imbues energy from that time and place into the art.

### BLADES



**Blades** (Swords in Rider-Waite-Smith) correspond with winter, and are meant to communicate rational, calculating thought. The blade is exact and precise, and is a powerful weapon that can be regarded as both friend and foe, much as objective fact can be both helpful or harmful depending on context. Blades are not concerned with feelings, perceptions, or ego, only with completing their work cleanly and efficiently.

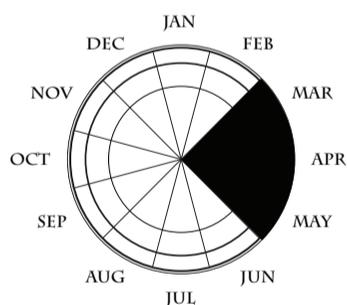
Aesthetically, Blades are powerful, unforgiving, and unsurvivable, but fair and equitable should the rules of nature be followed and carefully understood. Emotionally charged images such as the Nine and Ten of Blades are understood to illustrate an emotional reaction to an event, and less so the emotion itself. Blades are

closely associated with masculine energy, as the image of the blade invokes the idea of a phallus.

Blades follow the Major Arcana, as the winter marks the beginning of the traditional western New Year and Yule, in which the sun is born and begins to grow throughout year. In this way, the Winter Solstice is thought of as the beginning, or genesis.

There is a sharpness and crispness to the edge of a blade, as there is also a sharpness and crispness to the winter air. The Blades represent carefulness, rationalization, calculation, thought, reason, logic, contemplation, science, and study.

### WANDS



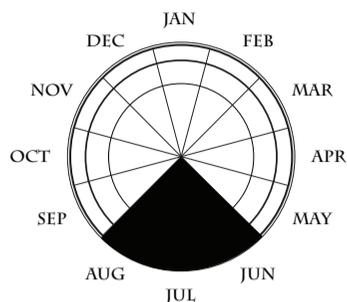
**Wands** represent spring and is embodied as a branch, or, taken symbolically, the fuel a fire needs to burn. The wand symbolizes potential energy and outcomes, as opposed to kinetic energy, just as the spring brings potential and early stages of growth. It is the spark of what is to come, romantically, chemically, reproductively, creatively, and opportunistically.

Wands depict hope and eagerness and are creative and powerful, young and enthusiastic. The color palette is composed of tones found in nature during spring and communicate growth of foliage as the world emerges from winter and sees color again. Wands are thought to present a masculine energy, and much like the blade, the wand image represents a phallus.

Following the Neo-Pagan narrative, the sun has now grown to a child/adolescent, learning and growing, and showing great potential of what is to come. The world is still cold, but hope endures, and exuberance begins to take focus. The wand is full of potential opportunities. It embodies creation, birth, genesis, creativity, potential, sexual potency, romance, and opportunity.

Cups are associated with summer. The summer brings warmth, particularly in the night when living things don't struggle to stay warm or survive under harsh conditions. Rivers are flowing, plants are in full bloom, animals roam the world, food is abundant and the world is friendly. Your cup will flow with abundant waters and never grow dry, and you will look at the stars with wonder, and dream about all the things in your life.

## CUPS

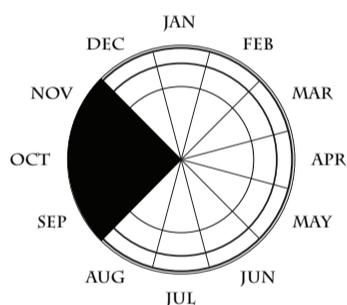


**Cups** are associated with summer. The summer brings warmth, particularly in the night when living things don't struggle to stay warm or survive under harsh conditions. Rivers are flowing, plants are in full bloom, animals roam the world, food is abundant and the world is friendly. Your cup will flow with abundant waters and never grow dry, and you will look at the stars with wonder, and dream about all the things in your life.

Aesthetically, Cups are robust and use saturated, warm colors to represent heat and abundance. Cups are expressive and based on emotion rather than logic and calculation. Cups are associated with feminine traits, as the form of the cup implies the shape of a uterus.

The sun is now fully grown and at his strongest form. He enriches himself with deeper, more contemplative aspects of life such as empathy, love, dreams, self reflection, and spiritual awareness, thus the long, sunny, lazy days of summer spent living in light, and the association of the Cups with intuition. Cups are associated with summer as an analogy for being full of life, vigor, energy, and cheer. Nature provides in abundance, filling our cups (and our hearts) to the brim. Cups symbolize realization, completion, fulfillment, and intuition. Cups is an emotionally driven suit, and is unconcerned with rationally justifying its inherent power.

## COINS



**Coins** (Pentacles in Rider-Waite-Smith) are associated with autumn and harvest season. While harvest generally provides an abundance due to crop yield, there remains the looming specter of winter. This gives the season a bittersweet quality that transitions from warm glow to hollow emptiness.

The suit of Coins uses brown, gold, orange, and muted earth tones. Wood, rust, leaves, cornfields and burned or shriveled foliage provide the backdrop. Coins are associated with feminine energy, as the form of a coin is circular and without angular lines generally associated with masculine forms.

The sun god is now at the twilight of his life, and reaping the rewards of his time lived. The understanding of his inevitable death looms closer, but he still celebrates all that has been

accomplished: materialistically and spiritually. While his strength wanes, he partakes in a great harvest feast to celebrate the life and memories of those who came before us, and the realization of the destination at which we must all someday arrive.

Coins symbolize money, value, possessions, and worldly material things. In antiquity, the coin represented harvest, or the physical manifestation of reaping what we have sown (being paid for our efforts). Coins represent worldly matters, and embody a sense of nostalgia, clouded by the oncoming darkness of winter.

THE MAJOR ARCANA  
CARD BY CARD

# THE FOOL

Zero (nulla)



The Fool is the first card in the Darkness of Light tarot deck.  
The deck is based on the Fool and his encounters through life.

## CONCEPT

The tarot itself is sometimes referred to as the “Fool’s Journey,” or the path that every living person takes through life. In this context, being a “fool” is to say that we are all students of life, forever learning the mysteries and lessons nature has to teach us. Given the overwhelming scale of this task, we are all perpetually “fools” in the immense design of all things. By extension, the Fool symbolizes every man and woman, which is to say that he is an archetype for all human beings, a symbol

for us to project ourselves into, a lens for viewing the narrative of the tarot.

The Fool exists outside of the timeline established in the Major Arcana, and can enter or exit this timeline at any point. It also implies that from the Fool’s perspective, the order of the cards are arbitrary, meaning the order in which we experience major life events are also arbitrary and exist on their own timeline, unique to each of us.

## AESTHETICS

The Fool carries a pack over his right shoulder, which could be said contains his personal belongings. This implies that he, as all of us, are travelers through this world. It also implies he carries with him what he needs to survive, as philosophically speaking, we all are equipped to make it through the journey of life - we should not be burdened by extraneous material possessions.

We are all imminently in danger, blissfully unaware and the better for it, as we rely on those around us (or a loyal friend), to help us avoid inevitable pitfalls in life.

A dog accompanies the Fool. The dog is a loyal creature, faithful companion and best friend. The dog also watches the Fool, helping him and alerting him of danger. In this case, the dog is looking forward towards the future, about to alert the Fool of the danger of stepping off the cliff. The Fool, blissfully unaware of his precarious path forward, continues to walk forward, despite the dog’s vigilance.

The ocean behind the Fool symbolizes the great unconscious shared by us all. The Fool walks in this ocean, but on his own small corner of land. While he is positioned above the water, it forever surrounds him, enveloping the small conscious thought he knows and gives him his footing. The Fool is ignorant of the vast expanse of unconscious energy that surrounds him. The sky is partly cloudy and sunny, meant to represent the mixture of positive and negative energy in the path through life.

## READING

Wonder, ignorance, innocence, unconscious energy, peacefulness, naiveté, friendship, trust

### URANUS

*Intuition, Change, Idealism*

**Positive:** Originality, Inventiveness, Independence

**Negative:** Stubbornness, Delusion, Impracticality

**Ruler:** Aquarius

**Energy:** Masculinity, Wet, Beneficial

# THE MAGICIAN

One (I)



The Magician is the second card found in the Darkness of Light tarot deck and is the first encounter of the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Magician symbolizes the connection between the physical and spiritual plane. Narratively speaking, The Magician explains to the Fool that there are multiple planes of existence in the universe which are linked, but in ways shrouded from (or forgotten by) the masses. The

Magician's work is to discover methods of communicating between these planes, thereby binding together conscious and unconscious energy.

## AESTHETICS

The Magician accomplishes his work through the use of the instruments on the rock in front of him, which are the sword (athame), wand, cup, and coin (pentacle). His right hand, which symbolizes conscious thought, extends to the heavens, which symbolizes the spiritual plane, therefore connecting the conscious, physical realm with the spiritual. The Magician's left hand, which points to the ground, illustrates the same message, inverted.

the unconscious energy surrounding the Magician (and by extension, the Fool), has been awakened from its slumber, and is now an active part of the picture, in which the central figure is actively interacting rather than passively traveling through.

The sea which surrounds the Magician is the same sea that surrounds the Fool. This time, however, the sea is rough and stirred, as if to say that

The Magician uses a rock as an altar to do his work because of his connection with, and respect for, nature. His robes represent purity of conscious, and his expression is stern and serious, as he concentrates on the seriousness of his work.

## READING

Transference, skill, application of skill, focus, concentration, resourcefulness, talent, manifestation, communication

### MERCURY

*Reason, Communication, Self-Awareness*

**Positive:** Eloquence, wit, good memory, organizational skill

**Negative:** Learning difficulty, fickleness, cunning

**Ruler:** Gemini and Virgo

**Energy:** Neither masculine or feminine, cold and dry, malleable

# THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Two (II)



The High Priestess is the third card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the second encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

After the encounter with the Magician and the Fool's discovery of multiple planes of consciousness, he begins to investigate the path toward which the Magician points him, and he encounters The High Priestess, who sits guarding the door to the unconscious. The High

Priestess sits as the "thin veil of awareness," which is all that separates our conscious everyday selves from our inner, individual and shared unconsciousness.

## AESTHETICS

The High Priestess sits between darkness and light, as symbolized by the ray of light cast over the top half of her body in what would otherwise be darkness. The cross on her robe symbolizes the meeting place of opposites: darkness and light, male and female, and conscious and unconscious, among others.

High Priestess sits on a boulder to indicate she cannot be forced from her position, and access is only granted with permission. The moon is traditionally associated with unconscious energy, and sits at her feet to underscore her control over unconsciousness. To meet the High Priestess is to touch the moon and understand its mysteries.

The High Priestess reads from a book on her lap, traditionally understood to be the Torah, which represents spiritual knowledge, or special recorded instruction, which, if properly understood, will allow entry through the gate into the unconscious realm behind her. The

The High Priestess raises her arms to acknowledge the power of nature, and how the door to the unconscious she guards, while great in mystery and power, is still only part of the great design of things.

## READING

Intuition, unconsciousness, mystery, convergence, opposites meeting, divinity

### THE MOON

*Emotion, Self-Nourishment, Instinct*

**Positive:** Sensitivity, caring, compassion, artistry, intuition

**Negative:** Emotional instability, self-absorbance, weakness, confusion, fear

**Ruler:** Cancer

**Energy:** Femininity, coldness, moist, beneficial (waxing), mildly malefic (waning)

# THE EMPRESS

Three (III)



The Empress is the fourth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the third encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

After the Fool encountered The High Priestess and learned about his own and the shared unconscious between humans, he begins to gain a deeper and more focused sense of what it is to be human. The Fool

uses this knowledge to explore his unconscious more deeply, starting with his feminine side: the essence of femininity. It is here the Fool encounters the Empress.

## AESTHETICS

The Empress sits in the forest not just because she is the embodiment of femininity in humans, but of nature itself, representing the Earth Mother and the Goddess of Fertility.

The Empress peacefully plays the harp, as creativity and art are closely associated with this card. Her audience consists of a small family of birds and a school of fish, further reinforcing the encompassing connection to nature and fertility through both sea and air, and her lovely, graceful, peaceful existence that draws them in.

The forest she sits in is dense and lush, but not dangerous. This demonstrates that she is at peace in nature, and draws strength and calm from its features, living in harmony within it. The Empress sits facing from left to right, toward the future and her counterpart yet to come: the Emperor.

## READING

Fertility, peace, femininity, beauty, art, creativity, nature, harmony, kindness

### VENUS

*Relationship, Inner Strength, Personal Choice*

**Positive:** Physical beauty, manners, diplomacy, nurturing

**Negative:** Laziness, jealousy, arrogance, debauchery

**Ruler:** Taurus (at night); Libra (daytime)

**Energy:** Femininity, moderately cold, moist, beneficial

# THE EMPEROR

Four (IV)



The Emperor is the fifth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the fourth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Emperor sits on a throne representing power and authority. In this context, it demonstrates patriarchal wisdom gained through life

experience. The Emperor is stern and formal, and stands in contrast to the organic, natural essence of the Empress.

## AESTHETICS

The Emperor's throne is found on high ground with mountains in the background, symbolizing the heights to which the Emperor has climbed through hard work and dedication. His beard symbolizes maturity as a man, one who has learned about the world through experience and hard work, and is now wise and old. The Emperor wears golden greaves designed for battle, demonstrating his strength and weariness of the world, particularly his experience persevering through conflict.

The Emperor wears a crown to symbolize formal and organized power. He holds a scepter in the shape of an Ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life. The cross on his robe also symbolizes formality and structure.

The Emperor is wise, powerful, and stern, but not difficult or menacing.

## READING

Father, structure, organization, power, wisdom, authority, principles, experience

### MARS

*Assertion, Drive, Control*

**Positive:** Physical power, courage, decisiveness, fairness

**Negative:** Wrath, ruthlessness, violence, dishonesty, tyranny

**Ruler:** Ares

**Energy:** Masculinity, hot, dry, malefic

# THE HIEROPHANT

Five (V)



The Hierophant is the sixth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the fifth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

In Ancient Greece, the word Hierophant represents an official expounder of rites of worship and sacrifice. In modernity, it is an interpreter of sacred mysteries or esoteric principles: a mystagogue.

In the Darkness of Light Tarot, both of these meanings are present,

but with the additional layer of organized religion and the political and military control it exerts over nations. The Hierophant represents the (perhaps male) counterpart to the High Priestess as the guardian of unconscious wisdom, but on a much larger scale, under the direction and supervision of a governing body.

## AESTHETICS

Using modern religion as his tool and conduit, The Hierophant channels spiritual power into and through society.

In front of the Hierophant kneels an initiate, and behind him there is cathedral vaulting, symbolizing organized religion as an institution. There is a hole in the ceiling through the light of the moon shines.

In this context, the moon symbolizes unconsciousness, demonstrating the power of the human unconscious finding its way into organized dogmatic philosophies. The image itself is derived from *The Death of Socrates* by David, whereby Socrates, the great father of philosophy, is executed by way of a hemlock-poisoned tonic.

## READING

Religion, devotion, conformity, beliefs, tradition, scripture

### VENUS

*Relationship, Inner Strength, Personal Choice*

**Positive:** Physical beauty, manners, diplomacy, nurturing

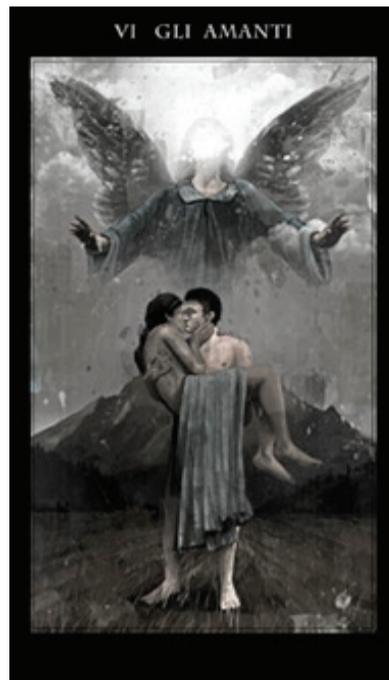
**Negative:** Laziness, jealousy, arrogance, debauchery

**Ruler:** Taurus (at night); Libra (daytime)

**Energy:** Femininity, moderately cold, moist, beneficial

# THE LOVERS

Six (VI)



The Lovers is the seventh card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the sixth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Lovers card represents the union between two souls, blessed by the Universe through forces greater and more mysterious than the earthly plane on which we live. The lovers are one with the world, and

their bond supersedes material things and that which we find on the earth alone.

## AESTHETICS

The Lovers stand at the foot of a mountain, and behind them an angel appears in the sky. In this case, the mountain represents fertility, but also the challenges and trials yet to come through life. The bright light and shining clouds demonstrate that with love, these challenges can be overcome.

The angel remains faceless to represent the mysterious and greater

power offered by the universe, but that it also recognizes and blesses the spiritual connection between two souls, either permanently or temporarily. Viewing the card from a distance (or while squinting) allows the figures to be seen as part of the angel, with the robe covering the woman becoming the lower half/legs of the angel. This symbolizes the duality between love and spirituality, and the deep and organic connection with nature.

## READING

Harmony, balance, love, union, values, spiritual power, relationships, cooperation

### MERCURY

*Reason, Communication, Self-Awareness*

**Positive:** Eloquence, wit, good memory, organizational skill

**Negative:** Learning difficulty, fickleness, cunning

**Ruler:** Gemini and Virgo

**Energy:** Neither masculine or feminine, cold and dry, malleable

# THE CHARIOT

Seven (VII)



The Chariot is the eighth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the seventh encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Chariot symbolizes victory through perseverance. Traditionally, it is associated with dominion, domination, and confidence, and can be

seen as an assertive, proactive card, focusing on power and the taking of initiative rather than passively settling into the background.

## AESTHETICS

The Chariot depicts a female warrior riding a horse, shooting an arrow at a target. The warrior wears a crown, and there are two moons visible in the sky. Behind her, there is a castle on the horizon.

The Moons in the background are a symbol of the triple goddess: past, present, and future. While the left moon represents the past, and the right moon represents the future, the warrior herself represents the present.

The female warrior rides a horse to emphasize power and speed, and wears a crown to demonstrate her ability as a conqueror. The bow and arrow symbolize power through confidence and action while the

castle in the backdrop symbolizes what she has acquired through her assertive actions. The warrior's formal dress indicates that power isn't always achieved through violence, but also that grace and elegance are worthwhile and meaningful pursuits. Taken together, these symbols should be understood to mean victory and acquisition of goals through persistence of assertive action.

It felt unnecessary to use a literal chariot to convey the meaning of this card, as the message seemed to be conveyed effectively through a single equestrian warrior. However, elements of the traditional Chariot were borrowed, in a nod to Rider-Waite-Smith.

## READING

Confidence, persistence, assertiveness, victory, action, presence, modernity

### THE MOON

*Emotion, Self-Nourishment, Instinct*

**Positive:** Sensitivity, caring, compassion, artistry, intuition

**Negative:** Emotional instability, self-absorbance, weakness, confusion, fear

**Ruler:** Cancer

**Energy:** Femininity, coldness, moist, beneficial (waxing), mildly malefic (waning)

# STRENGTH

Eight (VIII)



Strength is the ninth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the eighth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Strength card isn't focused on physical strength as much as it is inner strength. This is demonstrated by the woman peacefully inserting her hand into the lion's mouth, accompanied by the abeyance of the

lion. The woman is able to maintain composure and control while accomplishing her task, easily and peacefully keeping the lion at bay almost through graceful and delicate willpower.

## AESTHETICS

The woman in Strength is depicted nude to symbolize that she has everything she needs in life, and needs no assistance via tool or person through which she must exert control. She is comfortable with who she is, and expresses that through peace and serenity while she quite literally inserts her hand into the mouth of a lion. The lion, or threat, as it were, is under her control.

collected and in control of your circumstances despite overwhelming odds, believing in yourself, and expressing yourself honestly to ensure congruency with the external world.

The illustration takes place in the plains, to demonstrate that the woman is indeed alone and independent. The infinity sign over her head demonstrates the connection to the spiritual world, and the continuum that will forever carry us forward.

Strength as depicted here is about placidity in the face of danger, being

## READING

Compassion, inner strength, confidence, calmness, poise, patience, optimism, trust, honesty

### THE SUN

*Integrity, Self-Discovery, Action*

**Positive:** Creativity, independence, courage, success, generosity

**Negative:** Pride, overconfidence, selfishness

**Ruler:** Leo

**Energy:** Masculinity, heat, dry, mildly malefic

# THE HERMIT

Nine (IX)



The Hermit is the tenth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the ninth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Hermit symbolizes spiritual accomplishment, which is why he appears alone: he is comfortable with himself and his spirituality, and looks inward for growth rather than to externality. At this point,

the Hermit is ready to share his accomplishments with others, and searches for pupils - individuals in search of methods through which they may attain the Hermit's same enlightenment.

## AESTHETICS

The Hermit stands atop a mountain looking down at a village below. He holds a lantern to light his way, signifying the spiritual light that protects him from falling into darkness on the path forward through life. He appears to be an old man, wise with age and having worked his entire life to reach spiritual enlightenment.

looking for a pupil, or generally pondering his life and the greatness of his accomplishments from the high height of the mountain, where he is able to put his life and the natural world into a certain perspective that is unobtainable from the ground below.

It is implied that the Hermit is searching for something, given the fact that he is looking out over the village below, it could be assumed he is

There are nine stars in the sky to demonstrate the Hermit's place in the Major Arcana as the ninth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## READING

Spiritual attainment, enlightenment, searching, introspection, reflection, self-improvement

### MERCURY

*Reason, Communication, Self-Awareness*

**Positive:** Eloquence, wit, good memory, organizational skill

**Negative:** Learning difficulty, fickleness, cunning

**Ruler:** Gemini and Virgo

**Energy:** Neither masculine or feminine, cold and dry, malleable

# WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Ten (X)



The Wheel of Fortune is the eleventh card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the tenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Wheel of Fortune demonstrates the cyclical nature found in all things, and to a lesser degree, the perceived entropy in nature that cannot be perfectly predicted with empirical methods. While we are at

nature's mercy, however, Wheel of Fortune implies we are not helpless in changing our circumstances, and that the tides of fortune (our luck) can change.

## AESTHETICS

The Wheel of Fortune card depicts a woman spinning thread on a spinning wheel. This is symbolic of the Greek and Roman myths of the Fates: any of three goddesses who determined human destinies. The spinner of the thread, (Clotho in the Greek, and Nona in the Roman), is depicted on this card. Her blindfold prevents her from seeing what is to come, as she blindly continues to spin time forward,

and the ups and downs that life brings.

On the spinning wheel the letters T-A-R-O are carved in wood, with the final letter in the word, T, simultaneously occupying the same position as the first letter, completing the continuum.

## READING

Change, cyclical patterns, luck, destiny, entropy, fate, the unknown future, passage of time

### JUPITER

*Expansion, Generosity, Optimism*

**Positive:** Success, happiness, wisdom, honesty, justice

**Negative:** Vanity, self-indulgence, recklessness

**Ruler:** Sagittarius

**Natural:** Masculinity, hot, moist, beneficial

# JUSTICE

Eleven (XI)



Justice is the the twelfth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the eleventh encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

Justice represents fairness and equitability in the world, and is the bringer of balance and judge of actions. She represents truth and the law, and speaks through order and accountability. She embodies the

idea that all decisions have consequences, and that our life is shaped by the decisions we make in every moment. She seeks to bring balance to the laws of nature.

## AESTHETICS

Justice wears a blindfold to demonstrate fairness: she does not take into account whom she is judging, but simply their actions, be they favorable or unfavorable.

Her right hand carries a sword, pointed up in victory, and double-edged to demonstrate impartiality. It also invokes the same themes and meanings as the suit of blades: rational, impartial, unfeeling, and straightforward fact.

In her left hand are scales, demonstrating the balance she brings to the natural world and laws of nature. She stands between two pillars, paying homage to the image of justice first described by Plato in *The Republic*. The fire that burns at her feet reminds us of the ever burning human spirit: how we strive for balance and fairness, and how we must be held accountable, physically and spiritually for our actions.

## READING

Balance, honesty, justice, fairness, judgement, truth, law, discipline

### VENUS

*Relationship, Inner Strength, Personal Choice*

**Positive:** Physical beauty, manners, diplomacy, nurturing

**Negative:** Laziness, jealousy, arrogance, debauchery

**Ruler:** Taurus (at night); Libra (daytime)

**Energy:** Femininity, moderately cold, moist, beneficial

# THE HANGED MAN

Twelve (XII)



The Hanged Man is the thirteenth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the twelfth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Hanged Man is one of the most mysterious cards in the Tarot, offering intangible lessons that must be taken with care and finesse. The Hanged Man demonstrates indecision, but not indifference - it is not that he cannot decide, but rather chooses not to. Central to this

idea is that the Hanged Man is not in pain, but rather calmly hanging, as if to imply that he is content with not moving on in life, and letting time pass by. It is not known how the Hanged Man got to this place, or what it will take to get him down.

## AESTHETICS

The Hanged Man is suspended from a tree somewhere on the mountain top. From here he can see the entire countryside, and has a perspective of life that many others don't. Unfortunately, he doesn't put this knowledge into action, and instead hangs by his feet.

The tree he hangs from is dead, as if to say the man could hang forever, or that there is no future if he continues.

## READING

Indecision, impasse, patience, acceptance, pause

### NEPTUNE

*Inspiration, Obligation, Collectivity*

**Positive:** Sensitivity, compassion, emotion, spirituality, imagination

**Negative:** Delusion, deception, apathy, irrationality

**Ruler:** Pisces

**Energy:** Femininity, wetness, warmth, malleable

# DEATH

Thirteen (XIII)



Death is the fourteenth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the thirteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

Death represents change. One thing stops and a new chapter begins: in this case, it could be personal (as in literal death) or a habit or life event, or could represent the end of an era in culture, society, or something larger and more grand.

## AESTHETICS

Death comes in the flesh riding a white horse and waving a banner with a white rose, which symbolizes the purity that death brings. The rose is set on a black background, which symbolizes the darkness of the unknown, which we all face after death. possibly ever will) survive Death's touch. To that end, Death comes for all, the rich and poor alike, which is demonstrated by the figure on the ground that Death has "reaped." A crown lays on the ground next to him to demonstrate that even kings must eventually bend to Death's will.

Death is traditionally depicted as a skeleton since it is the only thing that survives the body after death. Additionally, Death wears armor to show that he is invincible and unconquerable: no one has yet (or The pillar in the background is a castle turret. It guards the horizon, or in the context of this card, the knowledge needed to gain immortality.

## READING

Change, transformation, endings, beginnings, transition, impartiality/indifference, literal death

### PLUTO

*The Unconscious, Transformation, Abdication*

**Positive:** Insight, health, radical creativity, expression

**Negative:** Obsessive tendencies, compulsion

**Ruler:** Scorpio

**Energy:** Masculinity, cold, dry, neither beneficial or malefic

# TEMPERANCE

Fourteen (XIV)



Temperance is the fifteenth card found in the Darkness of Light deck, and is the fourteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

Temperance represents the quiet balance found in things. Temperance avoids extremes in all cases; it guides the way toward personal and natural equilibrium, and it reinforces both the quality and health found in personal balance.

Special significance is placed on the water in Temperance, which is flowing upwards and essentially appears to be frozen in time. This illustrates the concept of ascension, as well as the suspension of physical time and space: we have crossed into another plane, separate from the physical one we understand on earth.

## AESTHETICS

On the Temperance card stands a woman who may or may not be angelic. This woman is actually a hermaphrodite (a child of Hermes and Aphrodite), demonstrating a balance between genders. With one foot on dry land and one foot in the water, the woman balances both the material world and the unconscious, respectively.

of humanity (a further aspect of balance, in which all things are represented equally), while the clouds behind the figure also indicate movement toward a higher plane of consciousness or existence. Further, the blurred face reinforces the idea this place and being are not of this earth, existing post-death and in the aether, frustratingly beyond our human ability to identify or comprehend. Finally, the blurring of the face also removes time, which is now narratively unnecessary. Without an identity or discernible features, the woman is eternally ageless.

The foot touching the water is “testing the waters,” so to speak, connecting two worlds, in contrast to the Fool, who leaps in headfirst without second thought (and steps off a cliff, separating himself from his world). The woman's pose represents calm and serenity whilst under duress - it is emblematic of the peace and ascension to a higher plane that personal balance brings. The pool of water could be thought of as a place of passage: a subconscious “portal” through which ascension occurs.

A single piece of foliage grows from the ground, representing Temperance's place in nature, and serves as a connection with the physical plane we know on earth.

The blurring of the woman's face could be interpreted as a “blending”

It should also be noted that Temperance represents patience. In this specific context, Christian readers might find Temperance analogous with the concept of purgatory.

## READING

Balance, moderation, patience, purpose, truth, ascension, planes/realms of existence, timelessness

### JUPITER

*Expansion, Generosity, Optimism*

**Positive:** Success, happiness, wisdom, honesty, justice

**Negative:** Vanity, self-indulgence, recklessness

**Ruler:** Sagittarius

**Energy:** Masculinity, hot, moist, beneficial

# THE DEVIL

Fifteen (XV)



The Devil is the sixteenth card in the Darkness of Light, and is the fifteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Devil card portrays a satyr, a creature from legend thought to be lustful and unclean, while simultaneously representing the image of the “scapegoat.” The Devil is the “fault” through which we blame the troubles in life.

## AESTHETICS

The Devil has the wings of a vampire bat, an animal that (quite literally) sucks the life from its victims. This process is emblematic of what happens when we give full dominion to our unconscious desires - our life force is sucked away. The Devil's stare is hypnotic, capturing the gaze of any that wander into his sphere of influence, while the inverted pentacle in his hand signifies the inversion of the natural flow of nature (with the top of the star representing the human spirit, and the other points representing the Aristotelian elements of earth).

At the foot of the Devil, bound, stand a man and woman, nude and chained to the Devil's podium. While the chains symbolize slavery and captivity, upon closer inspection the collars are loose and can be

easily removed, suggesting the voluntary nature of the Devil's captivity. The chain leading from the woman could also easily represent an animalistic tail, suggesting that the longer the two stay within the Devil's power, the further from humanity they get.

The pitch black cave which the Devil inhabits signifies his tendency to dwell in the most inaccessible, deepest part of the unconscious mind. Also significant is the Devil's podium, which positions him slightly above the figures in the foreground. This demonstrates how the figures put the Devil “on a pedestal,” giving him more power and credence than he is deserving.

## READING

Bondage, addiction, materialism, hedonism, unnatural forces, weakness, temptation

### SATURN

*Hardship, Conscience, Self-Discipline*

**Positive:** Discipline, patience, reliability, honesty, responsibility

**Negative:** Rigidity, narrow-mindedness, limitation, anxiety

**Ruler:** Capricorn

**Energy:** Masculine, cold, dry, melancholy, malefic

# THE TOWER

Sixteen (XVI)



The Tower is the seventeenth card in the Darkness of Light tarot, and is the sixteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Tower is the emblem of upheaval and change, representing sudden disaster or revelatory thought. It can be thought of as “the destruction of the tower,” as opposed to “the lasting nature of the tower” in design,

and its chaotic appearance and allusion to the story of Babel are not accidental.

## AESTHETICS

The Tower is a card symbolizing massive upheaval, the shifting of circumstance, tragedy, revelation, and modification. It stands atop a craggy rock amidst the rough sea of the unconscious mind seen behind the Fool in the first card. The card represents darkness and destruction on a physical, emotional or spiritual level, standing as a pillar of ambition built on false pretenses.

insight, if you will, illustrated by the bolt of lightning) during which one's world comes, literally, crashing down. The bolt itself is oriented from heaven to Earth - that is, from spirit to material - illustrating the origin of the truth.

The Tower is a sudden, momentary glimpse of “real truth,” (a flash of

The earth that the Tower sits on is purposefully eroded and falling away to show the extreme instability of the Tower, and in fact, it is seconds away from collapsing.

## READING

Upheaval, disaster, sudden change, revelation, tragedy, material loss

MARS

*Assertion, Drive, Control*

**Positive:** Physical power, courage, decisiveness, fairness

**Negative:** Wrath, ruthlessness, violence, dishonesty, tyranny

**Ruler:** Ares

**Energy:** Masculinity, hot, dry, malefic

# THE STAR

Seventeen (XVII)



The Star is the eighteenth card in the Darkness of Light tarot, and is the seventeenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Star is representative of hope, spirituality, renewal, and inspiration, eliciting placidity and calm after the upheaving storm that is the Tower.

It stands as a representation of the phrase "hope springs eternal," and can be said to be "optimism personified."

## AESTHETICS

After the Tower collapses, and the dust from the rubble has cleared, we can begin to see stars shining in the night sky where the Tower once stood.

The Star card illustrates a naked woman pouring water into the sea. Herself a symbol of fertility, the woman's action with the water - pouring it back into the Earth - is a nourishing act representative of not only Aquarius, the water bearer, but also of the rewards brought about by caring for one's surroundings through love.

The eight points on the star shining behind her represent the eight chakras in the human body, indicating a need to cleanse one's aura. Further, the eight points call back to the eighth card in the major arcana, Strength, indicating the personal quality necessary to recognize one's own strengths, accept them, and act accordingly. It is the application of strength through spirit.

The woman's pose as she pours mimics that of the Ibis, a sacred bird that is a symbol of thought and the mind.

## READING

Hope, spirituality, renewal, inspiration, caring, healing

### URANUS

*Intuition, Change, Idealism*

**Positive:** Originality, Inventiveness, Independence

**Negative:** Stubbornness, delusion, impracticality

**Ruler:** Aquarius

**Energy:** Masculinity, wet, beneficial

# THE MOON

Eighteen (XVIII)



The Moon is the nineteenth card in the Darkness of Light tarot, and is the eighteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Moon is the card of intuition, dreams and the unconscious. Representative of night (the time of dreams), shadow (through which things are not what they seem) and darkness (the insertion of mystery into life), this card gives us light - but only vaguely so.

## AESTHETICS

The moon shines, but not brightly. It illuminates our path, much like the sun, but whereas the Sun displays the truth of things, the Moon serves only to cloud our intuition further. By the dim light of the moon two hounds appear as one, a monstrous Cerberus intent to devour. One of the Cerberus' heads can be interpreted as a dog, while the other is a wolf - the "tamed" and "wild" sides of our subconscious, respectively. The path the monster travels down leads the way toward the subconscious mind, while its horrid appearance, coupled with the barren trees alongside the path, illustrate the tempestuous, vivid, and often frightening thoughts that spring from the unconscious in the form of anxiety and terror.

## READING

Illusion, fear, anxiety, insecurity, subconscious, paranoia, untamed energy

### NEPTUNE

*Inspiration, Obligation, Collectivity*

**Positive:** Sensitivity, compassion, emotion, spirituality, imagination

**Negative:** Delusion, deception, apathy, irrationality

**Ruler:** Pisces

**Energy:** Femininity, wetness, warmth, malleable

# THE SUN

Nineteen (XIX)



The Sun is the twentieth card in the Darkness of Light tarot, and is the nineteenth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

The Sun shines brightly following the darkness of the moon, as a new dawn succeeds every dark night. It is emblematic of warmth, joy, vitality, and truth, illustrating (much like the Star, and fittingly so) that hope springs eternal.

## AESTHETICS

If the Star card is representative of hope, then the Sun, the most important star for life on Earth, is hope realized. It is an image of both optimism and fulfillment, and as the source of life itself brings joy to both the inner spirit and the outer body.

The hound in the image enjoys the warmth of the sun's rays, standing amidst a field of nourishing grain. The two-headed Cerberus from the night before is replaced by the truth of things - a reliable companion for the journey through life. Thinking back, you will note the Fool's companion in the first card - he appears here again to signify his presence (and the presence of friends) at both the beginning of the journey and as the journey nears its end.

## READING

Fun, joy, warmth, nourishment, success, positivity, vitality

### THE SUN

*Integrity, Self-Discovery, Action*

**Positive:** Creativity, independence, courage, success, generosity

**Negative:** Pride, overconfidence, selfishness

**Ruler:** Leo

**Energy:** Masculinity, heat, dry, mildly malefic

# JUDGEMENT

Twenty (XX)



The Judgment card is the twenty-first card in the Darkness of Light tarot, and is the twentieth encounter on the Fool's journey.

## CONCEPT

Judgment is a card that personifies the ultimate change and calling to heaven of individuals, known to specific sects of Christianity as the

rapture, when all pure souls ascend to heaven. It is a powerful symbol of both rebirth and absolution.

## AESTHETICS

The angel blowing the trumpet on Judgment is sometimes believed to be the archangel Gabriel, the herald of heaven. The angel rises from the realm of the unconscious (the sea, made stormy by his visage) to call to all the pure souls, who rise from their graves to follow him to purity and absolution.

The figures supplicating themselves in the foreground are offering themselves to the figure and to nature in the hopes that they will be also be judged worthy. They are, of course, naked, symbolizing the naked truth of the judgment of spirit alone (and not wordy possessions, as the Tower indicates), as well as the nature of Judgment to call to those

who have previously passed on. Finally, the figures occupy the same position and area of space, indicating that all are equal before the gaze of Judgment.

The Ocean from which the angel rises is the end of the river that has flowed through all the major arcana, starting with the Empress. Note also that the cross on his banner is pale red and white, the same as the Magician's dress, indicating (as with everything in life) the beginning is irrevocably woven into the fabric of the end - and eventually into a new beginning.

## READING

Judgment, rebirth, inner calling, absolution

### PLUTO

*The Unconscious, Transformation, Abdication*

**Positive:** Insight, health, radical creativity, expression

**Negative:** Obsessive tendencies, compulsion

**Ruler:** Scorpio

**Natural:** Masculinity, cold, dry, neither beneficial or malefic

# THE UNIVERSE

## Twenty-One (XXI)



The Universe is the twenty-second card in the Darkness of Light, and is the twenty-first and final encounter on the Fool's journey.

### CONCEPT

Representing the terminus of the Fool's journey, The Universe could be said to be enlightenment, Nirvana, ultimate spiritual bliss, or perfection. It is the final result of the fool's journey, the destination

through life which can only be attained by undergoing such spiritual trauma and experience.

### AESTHETICS

In the center of the Universe is a dancing woman, rejoicing not only in the completion of her journey but also celebration of the new journey which promises to soon begin. Just like the Hanged Man, the dancer has one leg crossed over the other - in a sense, she is his opposite (woman vs. man, upright vs. hanging). She is surrounded by a thick green wreath, symbolic of success, victory, achievement, and accomplishment, tied with the red ribbons of eternity, which the dancer also holds in her grasp.

representative of the four elements, four suits of the tarot, four cardinal directions, four seasons, and four corners of the universe, all within the sight and power of the figure.

Essentially, this card "brings home" the essence of the "Fool's Journey," and embodies the concept of nature as an all-powerful entity, elegantly encompassing all things.

In the four corners are four symbols representing the four fixed signs of the zodiac - Leo, Taurus, Aquarius, and Scorpio. They are also

The banner surrounding the woman reads: "All light will turn to darkness, and in all darkness there is found light."

### READING

Completion, integration, accomplishment, travel, perfection, bliss, nirvana, understanding, enlightenment

#### SATURN

*Hardship, Conscience, Self-Discipline*

**Positive:** Discipline, patience, reliability, honesty, responsibility

**Negative:** Rigidity, narrow-mindedness, limitation, anxiety

**Ruler:** Capricorn

**Energy:** Masculine, cold, dry, melancholy, malefic

**THE MINOR ARCANA**  
CARD BY CARD

# BLADES

## THE ACE OF BLADES

The Ace of Blades embodies the essence of the suit, depicting a blade in its seasonal context of winter.

The cold, hard steel of the blade imitates the cold bitterness of the wintry air. As all the court cards may, the Ace of Blades could be said to represent an actual figure, or it could be a personification of the energy aligned with the Blades as a suit.

*Rationalism, logic, unwavering, decisiveness, control, focus, refinement*

## THE TWO OF BLADES

The Two of Blades represents a difficult decision, or the unknown outcome between multiple choices. The path forward is clouded - symbolized by the blindfold - and full of obstacles, symbolized by the rocks in the water in the background. The indecision is further complicated by the oppressive night during which the choice occurs.

*Unclear outcomes, choices, indecision, stalemate*

## THE THREE OF BLADES

The Three of Blades represents sorrow over that which was lost. In the Golden Dawn's Hermetic Tarot, the Three of Blades is known as the "Lord of Sorrow." The tree behind the girl is the same found in the card's opposite: The Three of Cups. In this version, however, a single figure is found rather than three, sitting at the base of the tree, lamenting the loss she has encountered. The ground is cold and bare, a mirror of her current feelings.

*Alienation, loss, removal, absence, division, sorrow*

## THE FOUR OF BLADES

The Four of Blades represents a respite from pain. In many decks, this "rest" is implied to be temporary. In the Darkness of Light, the rest is implied to be permanent (death). It could also be taken to mean peace, either thanks to personal death or the death of another. In either case, a burden has been lifted, and pain has been permanently or temporarily eased.

*Rest, solitude, exile, peace, respite, patience, calm, remembrance, memory, mourning*

## THE FIVE OF BLADES

The Five of Blades represents the confrontation that will eventually result in the destruction of self or another. While one man doesn't have a distinct advantage over another, the battle shifts back and forth, raging at a pace more feverish by the second, until one of the men falls. While the cause of the confrontation remains a mystery, it regardless must now be seen through to its end.

*Confrontation, (self) destruction, infamy, battle, struggle, contest, skirmish, toil*

## THE SIX OF BLADES

The Six of Blades represents the exploration of a new frontier. While motive is unknown, she explores new ground, and abandons or evacuates a familiar place. The birds guide her from their vantage point, but simultaneously circle looking for death, symbolizing the consistent specter of danger in the unknown. The mountains ahead are mysterious and dense, and, due to their obfuscation, could harbor either a positive or negative future.

*Escape, evacuation, travel, exploration, danger, transition*

## THE SEVEN OF BLADES

The Seven of Blades represents futility, but through folly rather than design. Thus, the outcome is negative, but not perhaps as frustrating as that of the Seven of Wands. The image depicts a man stealing swords from a cabin in the background. He smiles, believing he is going to get away with his spoils, but doesn't realize he drops two blades on the ground and leaves footprints in his wake as he escapes.

*Folly, futility, poor decisions, mistakes, attempt, failure, lack of purpose*

## THE EIGHT OF BLADES

The Eight of Blades represents paralysis. In the Darkness of Light tarot, it is demonstrated by a woman who is trapped by a "cage" of blades stuck in the ground. She is blindfolded and bound, and therefore lacks the ability to move forward and free herself. It is important to note that which binds her is temporary, and arguably of her own device, meaning that sometimes we hold ourselves hostage with our own thoughts for a variety of reasons.

*Obstacles, sickness, difficulty, treachery, interference, bondage*

## BLADES (continued)

### THE NINE OF BLADES

The Nine of Blades focuses on desolation. A woman sits up in bed reeling from a nightmare, and while we don't know what the nightmare was, the carving on the foot of the bed of a jousting duel suggests loss due to tragedy or accident. Nine blades skewer the bed like large nails, pinning it down and preventing the woman from laying down and sleeping or relaxing.

*Death, despair, desolation, despondence, depression, bad omen*

### THE TEN OF BLADES

The Ten of Blades represents ruin. It symbolizes loss of hope and health, and the ruin of a person, thing, or place. The image is similar to that of the Rider-Waite-Smith version, showing a man on a beach, stabbed to death by ten blades. He lays near the ocean (emotion and the unconscious mind) thus, ruin due to hopelessness. This is a card of pain, sadness, and despair. However, even in the darkest nights there is hope for dawn, and the darkness in the background gives way to light, suggesting that one must only begin to hope to regain his sense of self.

*Death, hopelessness, ruin, destruction, violence, grief, anger*

### PAGE OF BLADES

The Page of Blades represents youth, vigor, coming of age, and learning new skills. The Page doesn't yet entirely understand who he is or his role in the universe, hence the blurred face. He also holds up a sword in the air with both hands, examining it, trying to understand its power and purpose. He stands in the middle of a forest, as the questions in his life haven't yet been clarified, and he must navigate a dense path. The Page of Blades is depicted as a male, because the suit is associated with masculine energy.

*Youth, curiosity, restlessness, identity confusion, youth angst, purpose*

### KNIGHT OF BLADES

The Knight of Blades traditionally represents haste, and is depicted as a man on a horse charging into battle. In the Darkness of Light tarot, the Knights are much more subtle, and instead of focusing on speed, the Knight of Blades represents survival. This is depicted by the Knight traveling through a desolate wasteland, sporting full battle armor with sword drawn, and riding from the right to the left. It is unknown whether the knight is male or female, but represents the exact opposite of the Knight of Cups.

*Survival, necessity, focus, travel, preparation, protection, reality*

### KING OF BLADES

The King of Blades sits on a throne carved from wood. He holds a sword different from all the others in the suit, emblematic of his power, presence and importance, and his weathered face and tired expression suggest he is wise with age. The pelts hung behind him suggest power over his kingdom and his enemies. His blade should not be crossed. The King of Blades commands respect, and is traditional in his role as an authority and of a being that is both powerful and in control.

*Professionalism, control, power, strength, dominance, wisdom, authority*

### QUEEN OF BLADES

The Queen of Blades stands in front of Greek columns, implying she is a powerful figure, perhaps a judge. The blade in her right hand could be used at any moment, while her opposite arm rests on a great immutable and impenetrable boulder in her court. She is focused and fair, but stern and not someone with whom you may jest. As the matriarch of the blades (a masculine suit), she is both respected and feared, but also righteous, ruling with power, grace, and control. This particular image is based on a painting by French academic painter, Mengin.

*Impartiality, balance, respect, authority, power, equitability, nobility, rationalism, emotional control, professionalism, wisdom*

# WANDS

## THE ACE OF WANDS

The quintessence of the suit, the Ace of Wands embodies the purity of the masculine energy of spring, burgeoning with life, presence, and hope underneath a beautifully vivid sky. The Ace depicts growth, energy, youth, optimism, and generative energy.

*Growth, youth, energy, young love, optimism*

## THE TWO OF WANDS

The Two of Wands depicts a man looking to the right toward the ocean, which stretches over the horizon. He is holding onto a branch sticking out from the ground, and a globe appears about his head. The globe symbolizes a thought or exploration - the man desires to see the world. The Two of Wands must decide between the mountains, which is the known, well worn path on the left, or the ocean, which is the unknown path to the right. The figure is facing to the right, which indicates to us he is leaning towards the unknown, or (since we read from left to right), it could be interpreted that he is pursuing his natural future.

*Planning, decisions, discovery, wonder*

## THE THREE OF WANDS

The Three of Wands depicts a man standing on the beach looking at the ocean, with a branch tied to his back and two more growing from the soil. The man holds a spy glass, and mountains can be seen on the horizon. In some ways, this card is the continuation of the Two of Wands; the voyage has started, and the man is working his way through his travels. The man faces left, implying he is reflecting on his past, while still moving forward on a great mission of discovery. The branch the man carries implies he is healthy and has all the tools he requires. He continues to look for opportunity with his telescope, and seizes whatever fortune comes his way.

*Opportunities, potency, good timing, favorable conditions, exploration*

## THE FOUR OF WANDS

The Four of Wands represents celebration. This is one of my personal favorite cards in terms of artwork, and aims to capture a sense of celebration, cheer, goodwill, festivity, and good fortune. Flowers are blooming, the days are getting longer, plants are springing back to life, and the "journey" begun with the Two of Wands and continued with the Three of Wands is now complete. The pear on the windowsill symbolizes inner peace and affection.

The artwork for the Four of Wands was started on March 20, 2016 (Ostara), and completed March 27, 2016 (Easter Sunday).

*Celebration, completion, good fortune, peace, goodwill, cheer*

## THE FIVE OF WANDS

The Five of Wands focuses on the mystery of nature, spontaneity, genesis, and creation. The branches are arranged in a pentagram to symbolize the elements of nature: air, water, fire, and earth, with our human spirit occupying the top position of the star. The pentagram is created from branches, which are an unchanged part of nature itself, suggesting nature controls and is the essence of all things - even the human spirit. Further, it is the harmonization that turns regular sticks and branches into Wands, thus, the spark of creation and creativity. The flowers on top of the pentagram suggest purity and resurrection (in a Christian context), and reincarnation or cyclical patterns of rebirth (in a Pagan context).

*Nature, cycles, purity, spontaneity, creation, mystery, genesis, design*

## THE SIX OF WANDS

The Six of Wands shows a man riding into town on a horse. The townspeople cheer for him as he rides, victorious, holding a branch - a wand - in his hand for all to see. In this card, the man represents the result or fruits of his labor, victorious and returning home. It could also be understood that the man bears great news, or perhaps a sense of hope, rendered unto others at the start of a journey.

*Hope, peace, victory, success*

## THE SEVEN OF WANDS

The Seven of Wands illustrates bravery or valor in the face of danger. Additionally, it could suggest that the combatant is succeeding against his enemies (or against odds), and has moved himself to the highest position possible at the top of the mountain. Others cannot reach him, and he fights diligently to maintain his standing. The man is faced away from us because although he fights hard and is achieving success, is drained and weary from the battle itself. It is also unclear for what motives the man to fight, and whether such motives are ethical or warranted.

*Bravery, negotiations, bartering, competition, valor, sacrifice*

## THE EIGHT OF WANDS

The Eight of Wands depicts a nude man shooting an arrow from a bow. He has a branch next to him, and seven others floating above his head, forming the shape of a halo. Should he need the ammunition, they are available to him when he is ready. These symbolize the idea of communication through efficiency.

The river in which he stands represents the flow of time, and he shoots an arrow from the left to the right, demonstrating the path forward in time. The archer invokes a facet of the Greek god, Hermes, messenger to the gods and ruler of athletes.

*Communication, speed, efficiency, athleticism, clarity*

## WANDS (continued)

### THE NINE OF WANDS

The Nine of Wands communicates a sense of grit, determination, and endurance. It depicts a man standing wounded after fighting in battle. Eight branches stand strong, growing from the ground, while the soldier holds a ninth in his hand. The branches demonstrate determination in the face of difficult circumstances by their refusal to wither and die. The castle in the background is also badly damaged, but still stands, showing that even when things become difficult, we must continue to both persist and endure.

*Stability, endurance, persistence, struggle, grit, determination*

### THE TEN OF WANDS

The Ten of Wands depicts a man carrying branches through the field. He is working hard, perhaps too hard, and the business that supports him and his family has become a burden to his well-being. The man is posed in a manner similar to Atlas, as if to suggest he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. While the Ten of Wands is generally viewed as oppressive, it is depicted as a burden in the Darkness of Light tarot, specifically, an excessive burden derived from goodwill or production.

*Contradiction, burden, overwhelming labor, responsibility*

### THE PAGE OF WANDS

The Page of Wands stands in a forest holding a branch. The image symbolizes youth and discovery, exploration and the free spirit. The young man is confident, and looks forward to the future, although he isn't entirely sure of how his identity will manifest itself. This "coming of age" is symbolized by the forest he stands in: metaphorically, he is finding his way through the undergrowth of life. The boy holds the branch in a pose that demonstrates inexperience. The boy is ready to explore the world, and offers a huge amount of potential for discovery and finding new places and opportunities, in the true spirit of the suit of Wands.

*Discovery, youth, identity, coming of age, exploration, carefreeness*

### THE KNIGHT OF WANDS

The Knight of Wands rides through a green, verdant field. The counterpart to the Knight of Blades, both riders face left, toward the past, but face it, undaunted. The Knight carries with him or her a branch of growth, similar to the one depicted by the Ace of the suit, suggesting that the Knight may use the intrinsic qualities of the suit as his or her weapon.

*Application, defense, protection, guardianship*

### THE KING OF WANDS

The throne of the King of Wands is but a stump amidst the forest. In contrast to the Page of Wands, who stands in a dim green light, the King of Wands is illuminated by a vivid sky. He can, it could be interpreted, see "beyond the trees;" life and its various mysteries have become more clear in his sight. He holds a long branch, outstripped only by the Queen, signifying his power, but simultaneously demonstrating his subservience to the natural instinct of sexual desire. His passive pose represents his willingness to not only accept what life brings, but to enjoy it as it comes. The King of Wands is earthy and rugged, embracing nature's primal qualities with a gentle and sincere hand.

*Sexual maturity, knowledge, vision, passivity, optimism, earthiness*

### THE QUEEN OF WANDS

The Queen of Wands cuts an alluring figure, standing amidst a blossoming orchard. She carries with her both a bouquet of flowers and a long branch, indicating both her position in the suit (her branch is longest). She stands facing the viewer, unafraid, as the royal color of her clothing suggests her demeanor is one that commands respect. She stands simultaneously welcoming and powerful. At her feet sits a black cat, a powerful occult symbol, which is fully under her control, but also harbors mystery and mystique. The burgeoning world is hers to command, as is the burgeoning love of her subjects.

*Love, passion, power, marriage, mystique*

# CUPS

## THE ACE OF CUPS

The Ace of Cups embodies the essence of the suit, and depicts a cup in its seasonal context of summer. This particular object is made of shiny, warm gold, much as how the warm, golden sunlight feels on our skin. As all court cards, the Ace of Cups could represent an actual figure, or it could represent a general sense of energy aligned with the Suit of Cups.

*Intuition, emotion, creativity, freedom, love, life, spirituality*

## THE TWO OF CUPS

The Two of Cups depicts a young couple in love. Next to the couple is a dock leading into water, and above the couple is a symbol of Caduceus, representative of the staff of Hermes. This card is about passion and romance, focusing on the eternal bond, union, sharing of resources, and becoming one.

The young figures are sharing their physical attraction, coupled with the emotions that come with adolescence. The dock projecting into the water suggests this is an emotionally turbulent time, with adolescent behaviors reflecting emotion more than rational logic.

*Passion, attraction, connection, spontaneity, unpredictability*

## THE THREE OF CUPS

The Three of Cups illustrates an extremely joyous event, with three friends dancing happily around a tree in full bloom. In this particular illustration, the tree bears fruit, signifying a worry-free lifestyle, complete with the company of friends. The maidens dance holding golden cups raised in a “toast” to happiness, and are almost entirely nude, conveying a sense of the “carefree” nature of the suit itself. It is a direct inversion of the Three of Blades, even depicting the same tree in the background.

*Friendship, celebration, accomplishment, recognition, community*

## THE FOUR OF CUPS

The Four of Cups shows a young woman sitting on the ground at the base of a tree in full bloom. She is lost in her own daydreams, stubbornly refusing to acknowledge the reality of that which is directly in front of her. The universe presents her with an opportunity, which she either rejects or doesn't notice. In general, this card indicates apathy, or being bored with the status quo.

*Boredom, apathy, disengagement, indulgence, weariness, aversion, imagination, discontent, irritability, restlessness*

## THE FIVE OF CUPS

The Five of Cups shows a figure in a dry field with tall grasses. She kneels on the ground and holds blue flowers symbolizing friendship and connection. A shawl covers her head in grief, and a castle in the background sits in disrepair, symbolizing that which was secure and sacred is now lost. Three of the Cups are tipped, spilling out their contents - in this case, blood - onto the ground. The blood symbolizes a personal loss, and the fact there are more spilled than not communicates that this loss is not insignificant.

*Loss, disappointment, loneliness, emptiness, bitterness, grief, defeat*

## THE SIX OF CUPS

The Six of Cups depicts a woman walking through a field filled with flowers. In the distance is an old farmhouse, possibly the house she used to live in as a child. As she walks she looks to the right and sees the apparition of a small child sitting picking flowers, symbolizing nostalgia and pleasant memories of the past, and the events that led you to be who you are today. The sun is about to set, setting everything in the scene aflame with a golden glow.

*Nostalgia, memories, time, reflection, meditation, inner peace*

## THE SEVEN OF CUPS

The Seven of Cups illustrates a young woman sitting on the ground in front of a lake, with a castle appearing on a cloud in front of her. Surrounding the castle are orchids and chalices. This suggests the girl is day dreaming about her ideal life. The lake symbolizes the unconscious energy present during her dreams, and the castle symbolizes physical goods the girl desires in her life. The flowers symbolize fertility or sexuality, an emotionally driven feeling at home in the heat of the summer months. The girl doesn't seem motivated to take action, or, at the very least, she is indecisive.

*Indecision, melancholy, daydreaming, desire, lack of motivation*

## THE EIGHT OF CUPS

The Eight of Cups shows a woman in a gown walking into a forest, away from eight chalices placed on the ground. It is implied the woman has turned her back on the chalices and left them for someone else to find. She is walking into a forest, which symbolizes the unknown and potentially confusing landscape of the future. The gown she wears implies the woman has wealth or is sophisticated, and while the reason the woman left the chalices behind is unknown, she has made up her mind and moves forward with her life.

*Indolence, lack of interest, low expectations, abandonment, quitting, instability, idleness, lethargy*

## CUPS (continued)

### THE NINE OF CUPS

The Nine of Cups depicts a man sitting in a fancy wooden chair, surrounded by nine cups on the ground. He has worked hard to acquire these cups, and he is proud that he owns them, so he shows them off wherever he goes. The cups may or may not represent actual physical possessions, and could instead symbolize deeds or events. The man is dressed sharply and sits on a well-made wooden chair, suggesting wealth, wise business and financial decisions, or the living of a rich and fulfilled life. The old man is content and happy with his actions and the outcome of his life.

*Contentment, happiness, enchantment, advantage, triumph, success*

### THE TEN OF CUPS

The Ten of Cups shows a married couple walking on the beach, holding the hand of their child as they walk towards the water amidst a sunset. The sunset demonstrates a peaceful and happy closure to a day fruitful and well-lived. The family is holding hands, representing love, security, stability, and support. The ocean represents the great and vast unconscious we all share. In this particular moment, it represents the unconscious and unspoken love the three share together. The cups surround the family, suggesting that they are protected and have all they need as long as love is present.

*Love, family, stability, security, happiness, unspoken bonds, cheer*

### THE PAGE OF CUPS

The Page of Cups depicts a girl holding a cup in a marshy, boggy area. The Cups are closely associated with water and unconscious energy and emotion; the girl standing in a marsh demonstrates that she isn't yet entirely confident in her intuitive abilities. To that end, the girl looks into the cup, but is surprised to see a fish inside instead of an orchid. This symbolizes the surprises life brings, and the unpredictable and unexpected feelings and emotions youth often brings. The fish in the cup is also traditionally understood to symbolize the arrival of someone or something. The Page of Cups is a female to reflect the energy of the suit.

*Arrival, surprise, unpredictability, youth, unexpected emotions*

### THE KNIGHT OF CUPS

The Knight of Cups rides calmly along a beach while wearing her armor. Her helmet is off, and we can see that she is a female knight. The Knight of Cups carries a chalice with an orchid, and does not present a weapon of any kind. In this respect, she represents love, romance, strong character, honor, and many of the traditional meanings associated with knights, sans violence and war. The Knight rides on a path close to the water, symbolizing her relationship with the unconsciousness, and its importance in being honest and true to yourself.

*Honor, truth, inner strength, romance, strong character, love, hope, security*

### THE KING OF CUPS

The King of Cups sits on a wooden throne made from a cargo box on a dock projecting into the sea. He holds a scepter on his lap, and wears the mask of a seal. In the background, seagulls flock, looking for food.

The King of Cups is young and testy. While he wields the power of a king, he lacks experience, demonstrated by his crude throne. What he lacks in experience, however, he makes up for with passion. His scepter symbolizes power, but also violence. He isn't always in control of his emotions, thus, unpredictable and sometimes dangerous. The seal mask shows his connection to water, and the unconscious.

*Emotional energy, awareness, sensitivity, unconscious awakening, art*

### THE QUEEN OF CUPS

The Queen of Cups stands on a rocky shore while waves crash behind her. She holds a chalice in the air while raising her arms above her head and chanting an incantation. The Queen of Cups is depicted pregnant, and the moon shines overhead during daylight hours. The Queen of Cups (along with the Empress), arguably contains the most feminine energy in the tarot. Additionally, the moon above is traditionally associated with feminine energy. The fact it is visible during the daylight hours is a testament to her unstoppable power and grace.

The waves crashing behind her symbolize, of course, the unconscious. In this case, however, the crashing waves demonstrate immense power, enough to change and shape unconscious energy itself.

*Emotional energy, confidence, femininity, power, grace, intuition, spiritual awareness, unconscious awakening*

# COINS

## THE ACE OF COINS

The quintessence of the suit, the Ace of Coins embodies the purity of the feminine energy of autumn, a warm, welcoming, rich (in both senses of the word), and bountiful time. The Ace depicts the transitional period from one year to the next - it connects the warmth of summer (cups) to the icy grasp of winter (blades). In addition to being warm and welcoming, however, the Ace holds within in a darkness, or ominous chill, as the promise of winter is not far away.

*Weariness, twilight of life, bounty, fulfillment, wealth, warmth, food, harvest*

## THE TWO OF COINS

The Two of Coins depicts a girl standing on a steep bluff, holding a wooden scale above her head used for carrying weight. On each side there is a large coin, demonstrating balance and control on the part of the girl. There is a lighthouse in the distance, implying the girl is clear in her thoughts and intentions, and knows exactly where she is going, without getting distracted or lost in her mission. Note the water in the background of the image. This represents the unconscious, and in this case, balance between the conscious and unconscious energy necessary to maintain order and focus.

*Balance, order, adaptability, change, focus, clarity in decision making*

## THE THREE OF COINS

The Three of Coins shows three men in a brick hall facing the viewer. The man on the left holds a hammer, the man in the middle holds a coin, and the man on the right holds a scroll. This card implies the men are working together to build (or have already built) the great hall in which they stand. The man holding the hammer was the laborer, the man holding the coin is the banker, and the man holding the scroll is the architect. While this card demonstrates cooperation and hard work, it also signals employment for financial gain. It should be mentioned that this card is an homage to Leon Spillaert's work of the early 20th century.

*Cooperation, work, labor, employment, gain, planning, trade, persistence*

## THE FOUR OF COINS

The Four of Coins shows a man sitting on a rock in the garden of a great walled castle. Behind him are immaculately trimmed hedge bushes, emblematic of wealth and power, also demonstrated by the man's white and gold robes. The man sits with coins at his feet, presumably guarding them from passers-by. By guarding the coins, the man is able to protect his wealth, with the caveat that the man cannot leave his post - standing up would mean abandoning his treasure. To that end, the man is a prisoner of his own device, blinded by greed and stubbornness.

*Gift, inheritance, legacy, greed, grit, wealth, assertion*

## THE FIVE OF COINS

The Five of Coins illustrates a cold, tired, and possibly lost dog walking into a warmly lit home (or chapel) on a cold autumn night. The widows of the chapel contain three pentacles, and sitting next to the door are two coins. The fact that the coins are openly displayed outside suggest that whoever owns the building isn't concerned about monetary or financial wealth, but rather helping others in times of need. The cottage seems warmly lit and cozy, as if to suggest that the inhabitants are not only well cared for and healthy, but as a result of the pentacles in the window, also spirituality healthy as well.

*Worry, destitution, charity, help, spiritual aid, salvation, stress*

## THE SIX OF COINS

The Six of Coins demonstrates a chasm between the wealthy and those in poverty. In this deck the focus is on the need of the poor and the unwillingness of the wealthy to give up their fortune.

Ironically, coins are found on the ground, but the poor lady is unable to see them for what they are, and instead focuses on what she does not have. Essentially, this card suggests covetous behavior, but also suggests sharing and distribution of wealth on the other. It also depicts greed and narrow-mindedness.

*Jealousy, envy, illusion, desire, greed, desperation, deception, reliance, aristocracy*

## THE SEVEN OF COINS

The Seven of Coins shows a farmer growing a crop of produce. He is tired and dirty, but pleased with his handiwork. Behind him is a row of plants that resemble corn, but instead of ears, coins are found. This demonstrates that hard work and effort will result in tangibles that can be harvested and retained for personal gain. The card is closely associated with business and opportunities. It shouldn't be overlooked, however, that this card aligns closely with the chronology of the suit: coins are associated with autumn, which is the time of the fall harvest and reaping what you sow.

*Reward, fruits of labor, business, negotiation, purity, finance*

## THE EIGHT OF COINS

The Eight of Coins depicts a man hammering coins in a forest. One coin hangs on the tree next to him as an example of his best work, and six lay on the ground at his feet while he works on an eighth. The man is naked, symbolizing the sacrifice he has put into his passion: nothing else matters but moving forward on his endeavor.

It could be said the man is a hard worker, perhaps to the point of obsession. The man is productive and not afraid to get his hands dirty to achieve an outcome. The forest in which he works symbolizes his isolation from others and intense focus on the task at hand.

*Passion, skill, craft, business, prudence, economy, obsession*

## COINS (continued)

### THE NINE OF COINS

The Nine of Coins shows a woman walking through an apple orchard holding a falcon on her wrist. She holds a book in her right hand, symbolizing her wisdom, and she is dressed in luxurious robes, indicating her wealth, taste, and intelligence. The falcon symbolizes her ability to rise above the status quo and her sharpened instincts to hunt what she is after with single-minded precision. The orchard in which she walks indicates her life has been productive and bountiful, as the coins on the ground resemble produce, almost as if they had fallen from the tree.

*Planning, wisdom, taste, class, accomplishment, certitude, success, safety*

### THE TEN OF COINS

The Ten of Coins depicts a warm hearth and a friendly dog waiting to keep the owner company. The coins in the illustration are scattered about the home, as decorations, heirlooms, and perhaps even holy symbols. This home, and its owner, has benefitted greatly from the wealth accrued during the year of plenty, and all that remains is to reflect upon the labors and rest with companions.

*Reflection, pause, satisfaction, wealth, companionship, pleasant company, inviting*

### THE PAGE OF COINS

Depicted as a woman to reflect the feminine energy of the suit of Coins, the Page of Coins depicts a woman standing in a mountain clearing. The trees behind her indicate that she is either walking into, or walking away from, indecision - most likely brought about by the massive coin under her arm. The woman is not in rags, but also not richly dressed. This card could potentially symbolize the wealth gathered on the journey through life (as the coin grows larger), or perhaps a sudden windfall and the indecision that accompanies it.

*Windfalls, indecision, accumulation of wealth, forward progress, aging*

### THE KNIGHT OF COINS

The Knight of Coins is a helmet-less rider carrying a white banner through a harvested field of golden brown. Her horse is clad in leather, indicating she is proficient as a huntress and craftsmen. The massive coin under her arm is even larger than that of the Page of Coins, perhaps indicating a narrative element in which the Knight continues to move forward through life, collecting further wealth. The banner she wields is not one of surrender, but rather neutral, indicating the disconnected nature of wealth - that it may be utilized for both acts of charity or cruelty.

*Impartiality, forward progress, artisanship, skill*

### THE KING OF COINS

A very old, very bent man, the King of Coins stands almost in opposition to the warmth of the rest of the suit. He sits, contemplating his life now that he has reached the end of it. His staff is enormous, as is the coin he bears, almost protectively. He could be said to be a "miser king," who stares into the distance, unaware of the beauty of the harvest surrounding him. His throne is carved wood, and the trees behind him are barren, suggesting the emptiness that lies ahead. This is a man that has placed wealth above all else, and not only regrets his decisions, but misses the beauty of the now and has only despair to look forward to.

*Despair, solemnity, miserly, sadness, regret, hoarding, aging, the twilight of life*

### THE QUEEN OF COINS

Depicted as an old woman, the Queen of coins holds under her arm a massive coin as she might have once held a child. She wears a shawl over her head, which could be emblematic of either mourning or age. The animals gathered around her feet are comfortable with her presence, seeing her as both protector and nourisher. The Queen is the ultimate embodiment of maternal energy, acting as overseer and nurturer. As with the King of Coins, the woman's age embodies the twilight of life - a life well-lived - but one also marked with tragedy. This card represents both maternity and the experience of life, both good and bad. In this context, the rabbit represents fertility, of both materials and for humans.

*Aging, tragedy, ominous future, maternal instinct, nurturing, peace*

## ARTIST'S NOTES

- 1) Note the passage of time throughout the deck, particularly the King of each suit, who are simultaneously designed to uniquely exist within their suit, but also within the larger scope of the deck as a single person who ages through time. The King of Cups, for example, is young and full of vigor, who grows into the King of Wands (still a young man, but now mature and strong). The next stage is the King of Blades, a wise but weary man, tired from battle and effort, slumping in his throne, and finally, the King of Coins, a very old man waiting for the end, who has gathered not just monetary wealth, but spiritual and material wealth as well.
- 2) Note numerically equal cards in opposite suits. The Three of Cups, for example, depicts three friends dancing happily around a tree, enjoying the warm weather and each other's companionship. The card's opposite, the Three of Blades, depicts only a single woman, alone and sad under the same tree rendered cold and desolate in the winter. Winter (Blades) and summer (Cups) are opposite suits, and thus, the card occupying the same place - but in an opposite season - possesses an opposite meaning.
- 3) Note the gender differences between each suit. While the Blades and Wands are traditionally associated with masculine energy, we can see this come to bear in the Pages and Knights, who are male. Accordingly, the Pages and Knights found in the feminine suits (Coins Cups) are female.
- 4) Note the weather represented in each suit. Clouds tend to move in on the cooler suits associated with the later part of the year. The Wands are partly sunny, the Cups sunny, the Coins partly cloudy, and the Blades dark and overcast.
- 5) Note the dog's journey throughout the deck. It exists as a way for us to project ourselves into the story, as well as a point of consistency assisting in the communicative of narrative.
- 6) Note the pieces from art history painted into each suit as a way to honor those artists who came before myself and contributed to this great tradition.
- 7) Note the Roman numerals printed on the inside of the box flaps, which represents the date in which the deck was first published.
- 8) Note the order in which the suits are first placed: Major arcana, Blades, Coins, Cups, Wands. This order is demonstrable of the Wheel of the Year spinning backward through time. This is to help us understand our role in the great design of things, and while time will never move backward, we are able to use the tarot to look at previous events, learn from them, and apply that knowledge to change the future.
- 9) Note the order of each the cards in each minor suit. 1-10, Ace, King, Knight, Page, Queen. This order is alphabetical, and places the Queen at the end of the suit, as it is my belief she most closely embodies the energy of each suit and oversees it as the most powerful figure in the lineup.
- 10) Note the repetition of the wolf and dog throughout the deck (Sun, Moon, The Fool, card back, etc). In some instances there is a dog, at others, a wolf. This is no accident; it recalls the dualistic nature of the conscious and unconscious energies of all humans. The wolf represents the unconscious, the dog its opposite. We are simultaneously bound to both, which crop up at various times throughout our lifetime.
- 11) Note patterns in numbers between suits. Each number contains certain energies which manifest themselves in similar ways throughout each suit, and align with the philosophy of each season, respectively.
- 12) Note the physical appearance of individuals represented in each suit: warmer suits tend to feature figures with lighter hair, while colder suits tend to feature figures with darker hair.

## THANK YOU

Thank you for your time and support with the Darkness of Light tarot. I sincerely hope this guidebook helped shed more light on the deck, and brings a deeper and richer vision to you the next time you read the cards.

If you'd like to continue to learn more about the deck, I'd suggest you take a look at the physical copy of the Darkness of Light tarot Guidebook, found for purchase on [www.darknesstarot.com](http://www.darknesstarot.com). It greatly expands on the content found within this guide, with a written story of the fool, game rules for playing tarot as a game, artistic process notes from the artist, and more.

Blessed be.

-Tony

