

MAJOR ARCANA - life events - internal shifts - soul journey - deep contemplation.

[The Painted Tarot - sophiemckayknight.com/tarot](http://sophiemckayknight.com/tarot)



The Fool is the first card in the Major Arcana, he/she symbolises new beginnings, taking a risk and embracing new adventures ! The Fool travels light and looks upwards to the sun; all his possessions are in his knapsack and he has a light, childlike energy. However, sometimes the Fool can be too quick to jump in, without thinking things through - literally being a fool.



The Alchemist (often called the Magician) is the first person the Fool meets on his journey through life, and it is through him that the Fool learns how to use the tools in his knapsack (coin, sword, wand, cup). The Alchemist shows you how to tune into your inner gifts and powers; he helps you to activate the magical, self starting energy you didn't even know you had!



Next, the Fool meets the High Priestess, who embodies all things mystery and intuition; she holds the sacred knowledge that manifests in our subconscious minds, through dreams and spirituality and refers to unrealised potential - sometimes secrets. The High Priestess was often seen as the young, 'virginal' woman - whereas the Empress and the Moon were the 'Mother' and 'Crone' respectively. However, I have made the three ages of womanhood in my deck ageless, and in their own timeless energy.



The Fool then meets the Empress, who is the mother archetype. She represents all things female - creativity, abundance and grace. There are printed images of pomegranates in the background to this piece, symbolising fertility, and she wears a crown of stars to connect her with the divine feminine. She has the Venus (female) symbol tattooed on her arm and within her face is the scientific equation for entropy, which denotes her energy and increasing connection to nature and the wider universe, she symbolises fulfilled potential, abundance, fertility, nature and love.



Just as the Empress represents the mother archetype, the Emperor relates to the father. He represents authority, structure, dominance and solid foundations. He sits in front of a mountain landscape (as opposed to the Empress' garden setting), so there is perhaps a certain rigidity in his outlook.



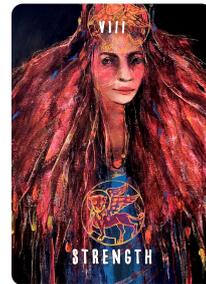
The Fool goes on to meet the Hierophant, who represents societal values, tradition, learning and groups. In the days before Universities, the Hierophant card was depicted as a Pope (religion), and in some ways he has retained that sense of 'higher' learning. I have depicted the Hierophant as more female than male and with one eye closed - for me, this is a reminder that any learning has to have an emphasis on inner wisdom, not just facts and figures.



The Lovers painting is based on two professional dancers from Joan Clevillé dance company. The movement and flow of the figures in the painting represents the changing nature of partnerships and relationships - closeness, attraction, lust, love and change - but above all, choice. In a spread, this card can be about a relationship, close friendship or partnership, where energy flows freely and communication is honest and open. It can also ask you to highlight your belief system and the choices you have to make in this world - sometimes letting go of a situation/person in order to gain something else.



I painted this piece after being in Venice - the four horses in my painting are based on the Roman bronze 'Triumphal Quadriga', the iconic sculpture on top of Basilica San Marco in St Mark's Square. In traditional decks, the Charioteer is more stationary (and is a man), but I wanted to feel the speed of a racing chariot through a moonlit night, looking only forward and never back. I was also thinking of the legendary strength and valour of the Roman Celtic Queen, Boudicca. If the Chariot comes up in a reading, it can signify determination, focus and drive - you are ready to take action on your decisions and there's no time like the present!



By the time the Fool encounters the lion in the Strength card, he is an adult, and has experienced many things, good and bad. Through Strength, he realises that gentle power, patience and tolerance might be what are needed in challenging circumstances. This card reminds us to take heart, use our inner resilience and courage, and keep going through any setbacks. You have the strength!



As the Fool keeps going through life, he realises that he must now look within, and retreat into himself in order to find true answers and meaning. The Hermit is a powerful card of spiritual solitude - away from the noise of the world, a time when we can only truly rely on ourselves. It may be that you need to retreat from a situation to give it true consideration - but trust that this withdrawal is a time of great spiritual growth.



The arrival of the Wheel of Fortune brings about a turning point - what could be perceived as a 'chance' or fated event. Often unexpected, the Wheel appears to remind us that the world keeps turning, throwing us this way and that, sometimes taking us in a whole new direction. I wanted to put a figure in the the middle of my Wheel of Fortune - her eyes are closed - almost as if she is surrendering to the chaos around her.



Justice appears as the Fool must decide what's right and wrong in his world. This card is about taking responsibility, seeing the 'justice' in a situation and seeking truth, balance and fairness. The sword is upright, illustrating a decision might have to be made, and the scales are there to talk about how logic must be tempered with intuition.



The Hanged Man shows us that it's time to surrender, pause, accept delay and see things from a different perspective. He/she has a halo of light and warmth around his/her head, signifying that at some point we must get off the treadmill and simply listen to our intuition. Even though the Hanged Man is upside down, he/she is serene and calm. So rest assured that whatever you are facing, the right path will present itself the the time is right.



The Death card in the tarot does not mean a physical death - it is merely a reference to the things we no longer need in our lives - some situations or relationships must 'die' so that new opportunities life can have room to grow. Change might well be painful, but there is mystery and transformation within the Death card, which ultimately mean whatever happens was/is inevitable and necessary. I included a lot of green in this painting, to hint at the new shoots of life, visible in the demise of the old.



After experiencing 'death' followed by new opportunities and growth, the Fool finds himself much calmer and ready to accept balance and harmony into hi/her life. In a reading the Temperance card can point to a successful blending of opposites and the elements of mind, body and spirit. In many decks the figure is depicted as an angel, with one foot on land and the other foot dipped into water. That, in combination with the controlled flow of water between the Angel's vessels, alludes to the necessity to stay grounded and yet still flexible.



The Devil represents anything that 'chains' you - unhealthy patterns, relationships, addictions, sexual tension, negative thoughts. You may feel like someone or something has control over you when the Devil appears in a reading; he can hypnotise you with his penetrating stare! But this Devil is not evil - he simply reflects wherever you feel powerless and whatever it is in your own life that is causing those devilish tendencies .



Tower energy is notoriously disruptive, as it often signifies sudden and unexpected change - sometimes this change can be something we wanted - but the chaos it causes can be difficult. The tower is struck by lightning and everything is thrown into disarray; the crown flies off. My interpretation of the tower card depicts a woman breaking free from the constraints of a rigid structure; she is naked in her vulnerability and is crying tears of frustration. However, it is ultimately a hopeful depiction, because anything that is destroyed can always be rebuilt; rebirth can come in many forms and foundations can always be dug again.



The star represents the calm after the proverbial storm. The Fool has really been through the mill after his experiences with the Devil and then the Tower! Whenever the Star appears in a reading it signifies a beautiful and healing energy coming into your life. The peaceful and settled energy of the Star heralds a welcome sense of recovery and restoration.



We don't always see things clearly by the light of the moon, but we are nevertheless influenced greatly by its beautiful cycles and fluctuations. I was keen to depict my moon card as an older goddess - but one who is certainly NOT a 'crone'. The Moon archetype is traditionally depicted as over a certain age and may or may not have had children; she is full of mystery and grace.

In a reading the Moon card can traditionally allude to a period of anxiety or uncertainty; sometimes there is a period of deep confusion or dreamy illusion - a bewildering lack of clarity. However, by working intuitively, and by listening to your inner voice, you can turn any negative emotions into wisdom. Understand that cycles will inevitably wax and wane.



After the confusion of the Moon, the Fool steps out into the Sun and feels renewed and energised! There is a new clarity to all his/her decisions and actions, and a wonderful sense of energy, confidence and enthusiasm. However, there is a slight caution to add to this card - the Sun is incredibly powerful and can burn - so don't forget to consider whether you're getting carried away in the heat of the moment.



The Judgement card asks us to rise up and be born again! The Fool has been through so many challenges and this penultimate state is where he/she is being asked to let go of past mistakes and become ready to face the future without fear of judgement. It is time to start again, cleansed and renewed. This card traditionally shows an angel calling all souls to rise from the dead and hear the trumpet's call. There is an invitation to let go of your old self and step into the life you truly want and deserve.



The World card is the last in the major arcana and symbolises the end of the Fool's journey. He/she is able to dance freely within a womb like shape, ready to emerge again with new understanding and insight. In a reading, this card speaks to us of profound endings and beginnings. Looking back and yet embracing the new.