

Practical Tarot for the 21st Century

**by
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Disclaimer.

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Note on Chinese transcription

In this book I use the Hanyu Pinyin system of Chinese Romanization for the following terms:

Dao, Daoism = Tao, Taoism

Laozi = Lao Tzu

Yi Jing = I Ching

Chuangzi = Chuang Tzu

Chapter 1. How Not to Be a Stupid Idiot.

Have you ever wished that you possessed psychic ability? Do your extrasensory abilities seem nonexistent? Are you the sort of human being who cannot ever get an intuitive flash about anything? Do other people seem to be more talented at picking up on hidden energies or coming events than you do--and live better lives as a result?

Well, all of the above used to be me. Once upon a time I was the sort of idiot who made disastrously bad decisions about her life. I could never accurately interpret what was going on in the world around me, nor did I ever have a clue what was coming in the future. Was my friend telling me the truth? Was I managing my money wisely? Did I make good choices about my diet? Was I working the best possible job? As for my personal relationships, would you like to hear how many times I have had to go to the county building to bail one of my boyfriends out of jail?

Fortunately, those days are history. My life started working beautifully when I realized that (1) like every other human being on the planet I actually do possess psychic abilities, and (2) I am able to enhance these abilities with the use of an oracular tool. Learning how to work with an oracle has turned my life around in ways I never thought possible. It can do the same for you as well.

At this point the rational reader is probably starting to wonder: *Can she be kidding? What kind of idiot messes with something as insane as fortune-telling in this day and age? Hasn't humanity moved beyond such prehistoric hocus-pocus into the clear light of enlightened rationalism?* People who ask such questions are always ferociously certain that psychic ability is a useless waste of time. But such scoffers are the true idiots of this world. Any human being who has learned how to develop his or her innate psychic abilities can easily start to pick up on what are usually non-perceptible energies. And once you become proficient with this skill, everything about your life can change for the better.

Here you need to understand that *everyone* is psychic. Just because you have never tried to intuitively interpret a situation or peek into the future doesn't mean that you cannot do it. I never used to think that I

possessed any kind of special intuitive ability. I did not have a Scottish grandmother with second sight, nor had I ever experienced a glimpse of a future event. I am as ordinary as ordinary gets, and I never bothered with divination until I was in my thirties. But when you start to work with something over and over, your skills improve, and that is what happened to me when I started working with an oracular tool. It can happen to anyone else as well. All it takes is time and practice.

I am aware that the only thing most rationalists would say about the preceding paragraph is . . . bunk. Well, such rationalists do not realize that they are usually stumbling blindly through their lives, being constantly misled by a booby trap called cognitive illusion and relying on little more than guesswork to make their decisions. The unhappy fact about our earthly existence is that we humans can never trust our overly emotional selves to accurately perceive the world around us. We focus on what we want to believe is true, or we interpret information in a way that confirms our preconceptions. This means that not even the most careful deliberation can stop us from making mistakes time and again. One thing I have learned over the years is that perception is intentional. Most people make determined (if unconscious) efforts to see only what they want to see, not what they need to see. And they get things wrong time and time again.

There have been several books written in recent years which describe the untrustworthiness of our rational-thinking skills. These include *Don't Believe Everything You Think: The 6 Basic Mistakes We Make in Thinking* (2006) by Thomas E. Kida, *A Mind of Its Own: How Your Brain Distorts and Deceives* (2008), by Cordelia Fine, and *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions* (2009) by Dan Ariely. These mind-as-deceiver books make uncomfortable reading, especially when you realize that their authors have no viable solutions for the problems they describe. Kida recommends the underwhelming solution of "a skeptical and critical approach", Fine suggests that you "remain alert", Ariely tells you to be "more vigilant".[1] Guys--is this the best you can come up with?

Well, may I make a suggestion? I am convinced that there is a solution to the problem of our deceptive minds, which can work for

everyone. If you want to perceive the truth of the world around you and use this truth to live a better kind of life, what you need is a reliable tool which will give you not only the plain honest facts about your mind and your desires, but insight into the authentic reality of the universe. Such a tool really does exist. It is called an oracle.

Whenever I look at American society today, all I see are disastrous situations or events which could easily be prevented if people started working with oracles. Fifty percent of American marriages end in divorce, but that would not be happening if people knew in advance whether a potential relationship was going to work. Millions of people overextend themselves into bankruptcy, which also would not occur if they consulted an oracle before they made any kind of financial decision. Horrible loss of lives and property in natural disasters would be greatly lessened if people were able to pick upon the likelihood of disruption in their vicinities in the near future. Buyer's remorse, voter's remorse, Murphy's Law, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to would greatly diminish if people only knew how to make practical and rational use of their innate psychic skills.

Think for a moment how your life would improve if you could always tell whether or not someone was lying to you. Or whether a financial investment was going to be reasonably secure. Or whether your life, family or property would be safe during the next month or so. Or whether your carefully-considered plan of action will produce the expected results. And the estimated 90% failure rate of new businesses should tell you that relying upon that nonsense called your best judgment is not the best way to evaluate your financial options. If our heavily-educated MBA's would simply start utilizing their innate psychic abilities every time they made a decision, chances are that their companies' profit margins would start looking a lot healthier than Pan Am, Borders, or Studebaker.

Here are some other examples of the ways in which divination can provide the kinds of practical, day-to-day answers you need to live a more successful life:

- Your sister's town has been hit by a hurricane, and you cannot contact her. Is she okay?

- Your consultant's reorganization plan will cost a very pretty penny, but he keeps swearing that it will turn your business around. Is he correct?
- Is your therapist truly helping you?
- Is it the right time to purchase the latest electronic hardware, or should you wait several more months for the next generation?
- Will you be happy if you accept the new position in Ohio?
- Do you have any unsuspected allergies?
- Will your flight from Denver to Chicago proceed safely?
- If you purchase a product which claims to be green, will it honestly help the environment?
- Can you trust the statistics? The expert? The teacher? The doctor?
- Should you co-sign the loan?

You would not drive yourself crazy with questions such as these if you knew how to work with an oracular tool. And working with an oracular tool just happens to be the easiest thing in the world. Here it is important to remember that divination has always been a perfectly normal human activity throughout human history. There has never been a civilization in which people did not consult oracles, not even our secular humanistic one. It is also interesting to remember that most classical philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, recommended or practiced divination. The great prophet of Chinese rationalism, Confucius, also spoke reverently of the Yi Jing and expressed a desire to study it at the end of his life. It is interesting to see that the Yi Jing is based on the kind of mathematics which are the basis of our digital

reality. The 17th century German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz was the first Western thinker to study the Yi Jing, and his insights into its patterns helped him formulate theories of the binary system. In other words, that laptop of yours which you adore so much just happens to be the descendant of an oracular tool.

Another interesting thing to realize is that whenever we analyze the most famous oracular pronouncements in history, we can see that they were usually accurate. One of the most famous was the prediction given to the Athenians during the Persian Wars of the 4th century BCE. The Greek historian Herodotus tells us that when the city was in danger of attack, the people were panicking, and the Athenian leaders were at a loss about what to do. Fortunately they decided to consult the Oracle of Delphi for guidance, where they were told that they should place their trust in "the wooden wall." Like most oracular pronouncements, this response was not a masterpiece of clarity, and the Athenians hotly debated what it was supposed to mean. Herodotus tells us that some leaders felt that the acropolis would escape since it was defended by a wooden barrier. Others believed that they should fight the Persians at sea in wooden ships. Eventually a general named Themistocles convinced everyone that it would be best to do battle at sea near Salamis, where the Athenians eventually destroyed the Persian fleet. Salamis was one of the decisive battles in history, one which preserved the glories of Greek culture for future generations. Their oracle helped the Athenian leaders to make the best possible decision, and their city was saved.[2]

But what is an oracular tool? How can we find one that works for us? Well, people have used all kinds of objects over the centuries to help them reveal what are usually non-perceptible energies. Ancient Hindus would press flowers to a wall and wait for them to fall to get their answers. The rustling of the leaves of a celebrated oak tree in Dodona were considered oracular for many generations in ancient Greece. The pythonesses at Delphi saw visions in smoke, Roman augurs studied flights of birds, medieval Vikings threw runes, and African tribesmen scattered shells. In Europe the practice known as the *sortes Virgilianae* was used for hundreds of years: you formulated your question, opened up a random page of Virgil's Aeneid, put your finger

on a verse, and you had your answer. In more recent times, people have worked with tea leaves, pendulums, dice, Ouija boards, and cards. My guess is that these various tools worked more often than not.

And as astonishing as it might seem to the other rationalists out there, you can remain both sensible and practical when you work with an oracular tool. My idea of being psychic is that it should always be combined with rational thinking: no psychic without logic. Our rational thinking skills explain why the human race is no longer living in grass huts, so they are not something to be jettisoned. But our logic can be greatly supplemented by intuitive information. All of which means that when working with an oracle, you must first give your assumptions the test of reason, and only then subject these assumptions to an oracle. If you think you can rely upon divination while jettisoning your common sense or your rational mind you are asking for trouble.

But here comes the catch. The infuriating thing about consulting an oracle is that it will never hesitate to tell you that you are being a stupid idiot every single time that you actually are a stupid idiot. In other words, it can be even more judgmental than Cotton and Increase Mather combined. But since the only way you can identify the best plan of action or extricate yourself from a mess is by hearing the plain unvarnished truth, this is much to be desired. Mind you, it is not pleasant to hear that you are being a moron yet one more time, but it does not hurt as much if you get it from an oracle than from the assorted nags in your life.

As for me, the stupid idiot thing is the main message I have gotten from my oracle for over forty years now. I have been repeatedly informed that I am wrong, I am foolish, I am not eating right, I should not buy this, I should not buy that, don't do it, don't try it, don't go near it, it will not happen, stop feeling sorry for yourself, forget about it, get over it, deal with it, don't associate with that person, don't get involved with him (and him and also him), and--worst of all for someone who suffers under the delusion that she is a writer--rewrite! In short, my oracle has never exhibited much admiration of either my sense or my abilities. However, I have learned that if it is a case of me interpreting reality correctly or the oracle, the oracle wins.

Well, all I can say is thank heavens for that. My oracle has helped

me grow and develop, change my perspectives, stay healthy, and concentrate on what really matters. Mind you, consultation of an oracle has not made me infallible, nor has it kept me wrapped up in a cocoon of perfect safety. Whatever oracular tool you choose to work with will never be accurate 100% of the time. But once you become familiar with the practice of divination, you will discover that your tool will usually give you valuable information about energies or potentials in your life. If you are one of those people who has made your fair share of mistakes in your life, you will discover that your ordinary humdrum life can start to come alive with transformative possibilities once you start working with an oracle.

My oracular tool of choice is tarot. My tarot cards have consistently given me reliable answers about innumerable issues in my life for over many decades now, and I have learned to rely upon them for everything. I have discovered--and boy, have I ever!--that when the cards tell me something I do not expect to see, I need to reexamine whatever decision I have reached. There have been innumerable times when the cards have insisted, to the point of complete and utter obstinacy, that I am wrong about something. Guess what. They almost always prove to be correct. The money I spent on my first tarot deck was the best money I spent in my life.

It is not difficult to learn how to work with tarot, as long as you realize that the only thing you need is a deck of tarot cards. In other words, you should forget about the thousands of brain-dead books which have been written about tarot over the years. The problem with most tarot books is that they are filled with bad thinking and worse advice, written by halfwits who exhibit all the intellectual integrity of a shampoo commercial. Tarot does not need anything spooky to make it workable. If you can forget about the occult mumbo-jumbo which you might think is a part of psychic reality, you can learn how to start working with the cards in both a practical and rational fashion. To do this, you simply need to focus on what truly matters in successful divination: picking the best possible oracular tool, devising the right kind of question, and dealing with the answer.

But before we get to the workings of tarot, we must first examine something else, since this something helps to explain why divination

actually works. This means we have to examine that interesting state of being called . . .

Chapter 2. Quantum Reality.

And we have to start with this highly complex topic, or nothing else about this book will make any sense. But fortunately I am only going to stress those aspects of quantum physics which are relevant to divination. And the first thing to examine is the idea that everything is energy. Contemporary physics tells us that at the atomic level all "physical" forms in our spacetime universe are dynamic processes composed of swirling atomic particles. Moreover, these particles are moving through mostly empty space: studies indicate that atoms are 99.99999999999999% empty, which makes for a lot of emptiness.[3]

Furthermore, no atom is ever in contact with another atom--there is always some kind of space between them, which makes for even more emptiness. This means that an atom is more a system or a field than a thing. The fact that we perceive wood, stones, or our human bodies to be solid objects in space is only an indication of the inadequacy of our senses. The differences between the manifestations of what we call "matter" result from their varying rates of vibrations--the slower the rate, the denser the form.

In short, the materialistic view of the universe which was first promulgated by Aristotle and later by Sir Isaac Newton, is as wrongheaded as it gets. Our universe is nothing but a gigantic energy field, as so is everything in it, up to and including our physical bodies. This is something that most people simply do not comprehend. They are convinced that their bodies are weighted and solid forms which act like machines being controlled by some kind of inner mechanism. When I was a kid people imagined that they had a control panel inside their skulls; nowadays they think their brain is a computer.

Well, these are nothing but toxic illusions. Like everything else in our "physical" world, our supposedly solid bodies are nothing but energy fields composed of swirling atomic particles moving through mostly vacant space. This means that our consciousness is not something which is imprisoned in matter but simply one form of energy permeating the slower energy field which we call our physical bodies. I have heard of psychics who can see human beings not as solids but as transparent entities, and my guess is that they are seeing

the vacant spaces at the atomic level. Other psychics are able to discern the human aura, the energy field that envelopes our "solid" bodies and which can even be photographed these days thanks to Kirlian photography. These photographs show that the energies which make up our living reality extend about fifteen to eighteen inches outwards from our skin, enveloping us in an egg-shaped field which is as much a part of our being as our sensations or our consciousness. We humans are not two-legged critters--we are egg-shaped energy forms.

All of this means that if you want to work successfully with an oracular tool, you have to start thinking about the world around you in terms of energy and nothing else but. One thing I have learned over the years is that a mechanized and objectified world view invariably gets people into trouble. You are asking for endless difficulties in your existence if you go through your life perceiving nothing but those illusions known as things or objects. But if you can make a shift in your perceptions from matter to energy, not only will you not get into messes in the first place, you will be able to get out of them much more easily. And one thing I am certain of: there is a way out of everything, including financial woes and desperate unhappiness.

But there is still more to examine here. Quantum physics also tells us that all the energy forms in the universe are somehow "entangled" with each other. In other words, there are no such things as separateness, borders, or barriers anywhere in our spacetime universe. Instead universal interconnection is the reality in which we live.

This notion has been around since the beginning of the 20th century, when physicists were flabbergasted to discover that the presence of an observer could change the events of an experiment. In other words, they realized that there was some kind of connection between the observer and the experiment being observed. Eventually they had to conclude that these kinds of imperceptible connections were indeed the reality of our universe.

But this notion was nothing new in human history. For millennia sensitive people have realized that in some way or other all the "objects" in our universe are connected. This interlaced reality is similar to the Buddhist idea of *pratityasamutpada*, or independent co-arising, as well as the Hindu belief of Indra's Net, a glittering

interconnected web of jewels, each one of which not only binds them all together but constantly reflects the light of the other gems. No (hu)man is an island.

Fortunately, people nowadays can understand the idea of universal interconnectedness much more easily, thanks to the internet. For the first time in history, modern technology has given humanity a glimmer of what universal interconnection actually feels like, which is for the best. And I find it amusing that the word *internet* is almost a clone of the phrase Indra's Net. I doubt that the similarity of the two terms would have occurred to the anonymous Defense Department staffer who decided to start calling networked computers the internet, but both terms refer to the same kind of interconnected energy.

Still, on a practical level, the idea of universal interconnection is not easily grasped, especially if you are the sort of person who looks out at the world and sees people or objects as Others. That's Others with a capital "O". The vast majority of us 8 billion human beings perceive the spacetime universe as being filled with objects or life forms which do not seem to be connected to our own personal energy fields in any way. Unfortunately, when a human being is identified as an Other, he or she can also be seen as some kind of enemy, who must be resisted or even destroyed. After all, your senses tell you that the living breathing consciousness which exists inside your bag of skin is absolutely separate from the other bags of skin out there, right?

Well, of all the cognitive illusions which beset poor deluded humanity, our Otherness delusion is one of the worst. We need to remember that our existence is a constant blending of our own energies with the energies of other fields: air, food, water, warmth, light, sound, and the actions or communications of other people. No human being could survive without any of these. As we go through our lives, we are constantly entangled with the energies that surround us, even though they do not seem to physically penetrate what we mistakenly think of as our "solidity". Well, the sooner you can accept the idea of universal interconnection, the more successful a life you will live.

This brings us to the next step. If everything is interconnected, then it is not possible for one particular energy field to be greater or more

important than another. This means that every energy manifestation in our universe exists in terms of absolute equality with all the others. At the quantum level there are no glitterati, no Brahmans, no royals, no particles with Ph.D.'s. There is only universal and eternal equality to be found everywhere, in everything, at all moments, all times, all places, all directions, and all manifestations. There are no big shot jewels in Indra's Net. Correction: there are *only* big shot jewels in Indra's Net.

This idea is also found in countless spiritual visionaries, from William Shakespeare, who demonstrates very clearly in *King Lear* that there is no difference between king and fool, to Walt Whitman, who found equality in all things, men and women, black and white, child and aged, one nation to another, and even human beings with God. One of the most famous of 17th century Sufi mystics, Dara Shikoh, summarized his vision with three simple words: "Mysticism is equality." [4] In more recent times Hindu guru Ramana Maharshi greeted all seekers who came to him with equal respect, explaining that a "jnani (enlightened one) sees no one as an ajnani. All are only jnanis in his sight" . [5] Have you ever seen a tree where one leaf is superior to another? Then why do you think one human being can possibly be superior to another.

Of course, universal equality is another idea which runs contrary to our ordinary human experience. We are always encountering Others who are smarter, richer, prettier, or more successful than we are, as well as those whom we label as dumber or poorer. Hierarchies are everywhere in human cultures and have existed since the dawn of history. They have always been immensely popular, too, especially for (1) those at the top and (2) those aspiring to the top. But Bigs and Littles are energy manifestations which have no reality at the quantum level. What is up today will not necessarily be so tomorrow. All this means that if you want to perceive the Reality of our universe with any kind of accuracy, not only do you have to accept the idea of universal interconnection but also universal equality.

So far, so good. But there is one final component of quantum physics which you need to understand before you can begin the practice of divination. This is the idea that form or pattern can *spontaneously* form out of the chaos which surrounds us everywhere in

our universe. And yes, chaos does surround us everywhere, especially at the quantum level, where the movement of particles is absolutely unpredictable.

Of course this idea is simply unbelievable to most people these days. They want to live in that universe described by Sir Isaac Newton, where solid matter actually exists and there is a cause for every effect. Well, nothing is as outdated these days as Newtonian physics. We live in a universe which is an amorphous stew of endlessly unpredictable and transforming energy.

And if ever there were a painful truth to assimilate, this is it. Quantum unpredictableness continues to be so difficult to accept that even those people who understand something about its reality constantly shut its implications out of their minds. This holds true for the most prominent scientists and medical people among us. They accept the facts of quantum mechanics but are still unable to connect these facts with the circumstances of their own personal existence.

Well, they are missing out on a lot of fun. Indeed, when you remember that there is nothing more pigheadedly determined to do exactly what it pleases than a subatomic particle, the more fun you are going to have. I like to think that the chaotic reality which exists at the quantum level conjures up visions of earlier human types, namely our dadgum great-grandpas who would not be shoved around by anyone or anything, and especially not by Washington bureaucracy, liberals, and cops--as Jack Kerouac says.[6] Nobody can shove subatomic particles around, either. Contemplating the cussedness of the quantum field always makes me happy.

All of which means that while causality does exist in our quantum universe, there is also an energy which can best be called spontaneous self-organization, where something can manifest in our world without a preceding cause. This is an insight which was originally made by Lama Anagarika Govinda in *The Inner Structure of the I-Ching* (1981):

In fact, the more we observe the laws of the world and of our own thinking, feeling and experiencing, the more we shall become aware that what we call reality operates on two levels or in two directions. The first proceeds horizontally and

corresponds to the law of cause and effect on which our logic is based; the other may be called the law of synchronicity. While the first proceeds in time, and more or less in a straight line of successive events which condition each other (logic), the second connects events that occur simultaneously, without logical connection, but for reasons that are beyond our understanding and observation. This second level of reality connects events that are not subject to our time-sense, and can therefore not be associated with our horizontal line of successive events in time, but with lines that stand perpendicular to our assumed time-line. The connection belongs to the world of our intuition, rising up from the dark abyss of our inner being, in which the cosmic laws find their individual expression.[7]

Lama Govinda is telling us that the primal energies of our universe are always aligned to concepts of causality on the one hand, or to noncausal reality on the other. And noncausal reality can best be described by a word you have probably never heard of: ectropy.

The word *ectropy* is easy enough to define--it is the opposite of entropy. And we all know what entropy is, right? Entropy is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that all systems eventually wear down or decline into disorder. This is an obvious fact of nature, and it happens to all energy fields, up to and including the spacetime universe in which we live, which is heading into a Big Crunch in another few billion years. Here on planet earth we constantly perceive entropic energies of one kind or another, in the fall of a leaf, in the decay of an abandoned building, or in the death of a human being.

Ectropy is entropy's opposite. It is defined as the tendency of a chaotic system to self-organize. Whenever you find chaos in our universe, it never remains chaotic for very long. Sooner or later it usually spontaneously starts to self-organize into some kind of new pattern or form, and when this happens, ectropy is manifesting. Stars do not hang loose in the universe--they self-organize into spiral galaxies. Water forms vortices when it starts to sink to a lower level. Seeds grow into plants, and trees arrange themselves so that each leaf

receives the maximum amount of sunshine. Ants spontaneously form colonies, fish gather into schools, and sand ridges turn into dunes. A minuscule amount of freezing water turns into a symmetrical snowflake, no two of which are ever the same. Just like entropy, ectropy is happening every second of our lives.

But chances are that most of my readers have not encountered the term ectropy until now. And the idea of ectropy's matrix, chaos, is probably a terrifying thought to most people, our most intelligent scientists included. Chaos means that there are manifestations in our universe which are beyond our paltry human control. Nobody likes to admit such a possibility. The scientific paradigms which have been with us since the Renaissance are premised on the idea that it is possible to make physical reality both manageable and safe. To be reminded that something like chaos surrounds us at all times and that it acts in an unpredictable and mysterious manner would nullify a lot of scientific effort. As for form spontaneously emerging out of chaos . . . how can that be possible?

All this means that ectropy is probably the single most ignored scientific concept in the world today, and not just by scientists. Fortunately in recent years there have been some members of our scientific establishment who have started to pay attention. Books which examine how complexity emerges from chaotic systems are getting written, one of the first being James Gleick's *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1988). Dr. Gleick doesn't use the term ectropy in his book, but he does recognize that the study of chaotic systems is a worthy subject for investigation. Not just worthy, but of monumental importance. He tells us that along with relativity and quantum mechanics, many scientists believe that chaos theory "has become the century's third great revolution in the physical sciences." [8] I agree wholeheartedly with this statement, and I find it laudable that our most respected scientists are finally starting to examine the phenomenon, even if it continues to resemble somebody's idea of a cosmic joke.

But it is not a joke, nor should it be frightening. As a matter of fact, it can even be a blessing, especially when it appears in our human civilizations. What is war or rebellion but the throwing of chaos at an oppressive political structure? Martin Luther tossed chaos at a sclerotic

religious institution and initiated a whole new type of human spirituality. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the movements of Impressionism and Surrealism cracked open an ossified artistic establishment. The United States went counterculturally chaotic in the 1960's, and out of that disorder came the vision necessary to create our computerized world.

So chaos can be a blessing. Still, there are two things about chaos which most people will probably find utterly bewildering. The first is that organized pattern can *spontaneously* start to form out of chaos. In other words, form just starts manifesting without any kind of preceding cause. And if ever there were an incomprehensible idea, this has to be it. But not even this uncomfortable fact is as baffling as asking yourself *why* chaotic forms spontaneously self-organize. Why does order arise out of disorder? Why do galaxies arrange themselves into spirals instead of just hanging loose in the universe? People are not spooked by the laws of gravity, nor the speed of light, nor entropy for that matter. But ectropy? Ectropy happens to be the single most uncanny mystery about the spacetime universe which we inhabit.

Unsurprisingly, those members of our scientific establishment who have gotten interested in chaos theory in recent years have attempted to provide us with some explanations. They tell us that ectropy happens because of . . . well, maybe the laws of physics, or the laws of mathematics, or even the workings of Mother Nature. Mind you, no scientific evidence is given for these brilliant surmises, which are nothing more than evidence-free hypotheses. They just make people feel comfortable, I suppose. Somehow they mean that chaos is not really chaos since it is still subject to the laws of physics, or something like that.

Well, it just so happens that a more persuasive explanation for the ectropic phenomenon already exists, one which has been around for quite a while now, several millennia in fact. Here the reader must understand that the observation of chaos is nothing new in human history. It is one of the oldest activities known. People have been observing chaos--and the patterns which emerge from it--for thousands of years. Moreover, they have studied these patterns as carefully as they can for help and inspiration. But they never regarded their activity

as a scientific experiment. They called it divination.

The perception of a pattern in chaos is the soul of divination. Think for a minute about what people do when they consult an oracle. Regardless of what kind of oracular tool they use, they always follow two steps. First, they generate some kind of chaos, such as burning laurel leaves, shuffling cards, swirling tea leaves, or throwing yarrow stalks. Then they try to find meaning in the patterns which have manifested in the chaos. In other words, whenever anyone creates chaos in order to divine, he or she is working with the same kind of spontaneous self-organization which occurs when galaxies form into spirals.

This idea gets more interesting when you realize that the term for this activity is divination. No one has ever called it *futurization* or *mathematicalization*--the word used is *divination*, which just happens to contain the idea of the godhead. This tells me that whenever people have perceived a pattern emerging out of chaos, they regarded it to be a manifestation of Divine energy. And in innumerable creation myths, from the Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* to Hesoid's *Theogony* to the *Book of Genesis*, one thing seems to happen at the beginning of everything: the creation of form out of chaos by the Divine. Creation is simply what the Divine does, as far as countless generations of human beings have been concerned.

Okay, but aren't the preceding statements as evidence-free as claiming that the laws of physics/mathematics are responsible for that nuisance called ectropy? Yes, no question about that. So which theory explains why ectropy happens? Well, since neither hypothesis can be empirically verified, all we can do is pick the one we like best. But it should be obvious which interpretation I prefer. If you ask me, when a particular manifestation has been interpreted as Divine energy for two or three thousand years, and not just in one but most human cultures, I feel that there is something to it. As far as I'm concerned, when form spontaneously emerges out of chaos, what we perceive is not self-organization--it's Self-organization. Self with a capital S, as an indication of the godhead. We really and truly are perceiving the energies of the Divine.

Nevertheless, I am sure some of my readers are skeptical that it is none other than the Almighty who is arranging those tarot cards or tea leaves into some kind of form. Therefore let us examine what none other than William Shakespeare tells us about divination. On three different occasions in his last plays, Shakespeare gives us an oracular scene where the Divine, as personified by the pagan deities of Apollo, Jupiter, and Diana, gives assistance to the protagonist by telling him either (1) the truth, or (2) how to get out his mess. Leontes is lost in illusion in *The Winter's Tale*, but Apollo gives him the information he needs to hear, while Jupiter and Diana tell the heroes of *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* how to solve their problems.[9] I was once disappointed to realize that when a supreme genius like Shakespeare imagined the Divine speaking, all he could come up with were platitudes about getting out of messes. Why couldn't Shakespeare have the Divine pronounce something interesting, such as the meaning of life or the destiny of the human race? Nope, all we get is how to live happily ever after.

But then I realized something. Two of the main messages I had gotten out of my tarot cards over the years were (1) the truth and (2) how to get out of my messes. And here was William Shakespeare telling me that this is what happens when the Divine speaks. So if you are still wondering what exactly happens when you divine, may I suggest that it's the Divine? When you shuffle and pull those colored pieces of tarot cardboard, you are communicating with nothing less than the Godhead. And believe it or not, the Divine is always willing to help you live a better life in any way possible. Don't forget that in a universe where everything is equal, you are just as important as the Milky Way. So if you have ever wished that you could see an honest-to-God example of Divine energy in action sometime, why don't you go buy yourself a deck of tarot cards?

* * *

Most people in our secular humanist world will probably reject everything I have said so far. They will especially want to blow off the most painful truths which quantum physics tells us about our universe:

all the stuff about how everything is energy, "matter" does not exist, everything is not only interconnected but equal, and ectropy exists as well as entropy. Indeed, the facts of quantum reality have never penetrated the thick human skull to this day. How often do people think of universal interconnection when they are watching the NBA playoffs, or spontaneous self-organization when they are developing a new career matrix, or non-materiality when they have got a toothache? This holds true even for those people who understand that things seem kind of, well, *weird* at the quantum level. They might even get an occasional gut feeling about something beyond the everyday reality they are familiar with. But they are not about to let any of that spooky stuff interfere with their career goals or their pursuit of the almighty dollar. As a result, the negative energies that they are putting out means that their problems will start to pile up.

This is something we can see repeatedly in our postmodern mess of a culture. Huge numbers of people in the world today are constantly and quite unwittingly putting out all sorts of what I would consider to be negative energies, but they do not have the slightest clue that they are doing it. You see this most especially in public life, where assorted politicians, journalists, and celebrity wannabes seem to be determined to rack up the most ghastly karma a human being can acquire. But the rest of us do it as well, whenever we rely upon that failure called *our best judgment* when we make our decisions. How can we ever know if we are behaving as ethically as we can in any given situation? Is it ever possible to tell whether one of our proposed plans of action will actually accomplish what it is supposed to?

More importantly, how can we find happiness in our lives? Happiness is something that we all want, right? Happiness is why we want more money, a decent relationship, a worthwhile education, and numerous other externals. The catch is that what we actually think will make us happy is usually nothing but more cognitive illusion. Countless books have been written about getting happiness, innumerable studies have been made, and thoughtful people have pondered these questions over the centuries--without anyone reaching an adequate answer. Well, me being me, I am convinced that there is only *one* thing that can make us deluded humans happy, namely the

kind of naturally flowing energy which exists in full and complete harmony with the quantum field. Universal interconnection and equality, in other words. If you want to go with the natural flow of the universe, you must keep thoughts of universal interconnection and equality in your mind at all times.

This means that the first and best use of divination is in identifying the kinds of energies you have got within your own field so you can align yourself to this harmony. If you are disrupting the universe with negative energies, there is no way your life will be successful, regardless of the size of your bank account. The malevolent energies which you are putting out will rebound upon your own energy field hour after hour, day after day.

Some malevolent energies are worse than others. The negative energies of cold-blooded sociopaths are, needless to say, the ultimate bad vibes. A genuine sociopath who possesses not a trace of remorse, pity, or mercy is the absolute pits as far as positive energy goes. But there are a host of lesser negative energies which the non-sociopaths among us indulge, myself included. I am talking about the kinds of energies which most people consider to be only minor foibles: like overeating on weekends, or indulging in a few luxuries that you do not really need, or telling an occasional fib, or taking some justified revenge. We all do this, right? How can little nothings like these create problems in our lives? Well, if you put out any kind of negative energy into the universe, you are inevitably going to get some kind of payback, which is otherwise known as karma in action. And if you keep putting out negative energy week after week, year after year, even those minor little foibles of yours are going to keep adding up until they turn into a colossal karmic whack.

Chances are that without realizing it, you have been wallowing in negative energies for a good many years now. Once again, this is the problem with bad energies: most people are completely unaware that they have got them. I should know. Based upon my extensive experience in dating sociopaths, there is one thing I have learned: these guys always consider themselves to be very decent and responsible members of the human race (it is only the serial killer or the terrorist who is bad). Granted they will lie their heads off and screw anyone

they can, but that does not count, it is only temporary behavior or something, and not the real them. They sleep well in their beds since it never occurs to them that they are doing anything wrong. So what if their behavior is somewhat less than ethical, they do not have to think about that.

The other problem is that most people enjoy their negative energies so much that they do not have the slightest intention of giving them up. After all, most of us relish getting a chance for revenge upon someone who has hurt us, or making an impulse purchase, or eating that extra donut. Think for a moment about what is making you happy in the present moment? Chances are it is some kind of bad energy, as in getting more money or indulging in yet another desire. When your "happiness" is based on these kinds of negative energies, those Cosmic Boomerangs which are the result of bad karma are heading your way whether you like it or not.

But if you can identify the negative energies you have got knocking around in your psyche, and then do something about them, you will start leading a more successful life. So how can you tell what kinds of energies you have got within? That is easy. We now need to examine the various strategies we pathetic humans use in order to live what we think will be successful lives . . .

Chapter 3. Toxic Energies.

Yeah. If you are a typical American, and you probably are, you are probably so lost in toxic energies that you are accumulating bad karma by the bucketful. The very best use of an oracular tool is not to help you get your hands on more money or enjoy better relationships, but assist you in identifying and then eliminating the numerous toxic energies which probably tyrannize every second of your existence.

What's that? You do not think you have any toxic energies since you are a nice person? As well as being ethical and educated? If your life is not working, it is not your fault! It's all because of the idiot and crooks you have to keep dealing with!

Well, not quite. Vast numbers of contemporary humans go through their lives these days quite unconsciously putting out the most negative energies any human being can wallow in, but their feelgood culture, as well as their social media validators, always persuade them that it is never their fault when something goes wrong. Which is utter nonsense. You and you alone are responsible for the circumstances of your life. And if you want to change your life for the better, you have to identify what you are doing wrong and then stop doing it. This is always and forever the best possible use of an oracular tool.

So what might be wrong with your life? Let us start with the ever popular . . .

Narcissist Personality Disorder. This nastiness appears whenever you become addicted to the most wondrous energy form in the universe, namely your own conceited little self. You are not just another jewel in Indra's Net--you are special! Narcissist Personality Disorder blankets our country everywhere you look these days, as it is bred into the citizenry from over-indulgent parents and an educational system fixated on ideas of self-esteem. Have you ever told yourself that people do not like you because they are jealous? Allow me to congratulate you on your rock-solid American narcissism.

Egos egos egos. All I ever see in our American republic are egos. Egos to the right of me, egos to the left, egos before me, behind me, above me, egos at work, egos at play, egos in the government, in the

media, in sports, in entertainment, egos everywhere online, posturing egos, grasping egos, self-satisfied egos in pursuit of their substance of choice, egos certain that they are always right and the lesser people are wrong, egos in helpless thrall to a whole galaxy of desires, wanting, forever wanting more money, more luxuries, more travel, more amusement, more excitement, more of everything. Let's face it, one of the major ways people expend energy in our contemporary world is by inventing reasons why they are better than whomever their self-esteem requires them to label as lesser. Well, never mind that any kind of elitist self-congratulation is always a sign of insecurity and cowardice. Reality tells us that there is nothing but universal equality at the quantum level. People who invent reasons why they are special beings are as out of harmony with quantum energies as it is possible to be.

Drama Queenery. The yearning to create some useless drama in your humdrum life is another toxic tendency which is everywhere these days. A good drama queen is usually a person who has discovered a way to make his or her existence as exciting as possible, namely by picking fights every chance they get. Or even better: they can find new ways to be miserable. I once heard of a young woman who was desperately, frantically, passionately in love with a guy who treated her like dirt. Our heroine was so wretched about his lack of interest that she attempted suicide. Fortunately she was discovered in time and rushed to the hospital. Her boyfriend was so touched by her emotional excess that he became the most considerate lover in the world, visiting her daily, bringing her chocolate and flowers, and talking about marriage. So the two of them got married and lived happily ever after, right? On the contrary, once her beloved turned into a boring guy, our heroine started to lose interest in him. He was no longer supplying the delightful torments, the excitement, the up-and-down frissons which her masochist personality craved. She eventually broke it off with him and went off to pursue yet another sadistic loser, one who could supply her with some brand new thrills. The only way this particular bimbo could get her fix was from constant emotional turmoil.

Such is life as a drama queen and the masochism which goes with it. Being a masochist does not necessarily mean that you enjoy getting

beat up. Being a masochist means that you are constantly on the prowl for some topic or some experience in your life that will provide you with some exciting misery. You get to wallow in an intense experience for days or weeks at a time until, inevitably, you get bored with it. Then you are off and running to discover a new source of unhappiness, which, needless to say, you are always able to find. Your average drama queen never wants calm seas and clear skies, nor do they have any idea what to do with their time and their energies. They are forever in pursuit of endless turmoil. They will always do their tidy best to pick fights, keep their emotional wounds open and bleeding, anticipate disaster, or remain in situations where they will be abjectly unhappy.

Groupthinkers. Life is always so much more pleasant when birds of a feather enable themselves together, right? Whenever you find yourself in a sympathetic group of supportive people who think they way you do, the awesomeness you start to feel is colossal. It is no longer just you vs. the evil people out there--it is you and the members of your precious group. The feelgoodness which thereby develops can make you swoon with rapture even more effectively than a triple pistachio gelato.

Needless to say, the group you identify with can be based on any number of ego-gratifying scenarios, as in race, gender, religion, politics, education, ancestry, money, nationality, intelligence, dietary habits, or victimhood. But regardless of the group you find yourself in, you are always certain that it is a very special community of incredible wonderfulness, where you can remind yourself every day of your life that you are one of the good people of this earth.

Of course the most special of all groupthinkers are the ones who claim the high ground because of their victimhood. Mind you, you do not have to suffer anything *personally* to be a part of your wonderfully victimized group--it is perfectly okay if it was one your ancestors, no matter how remote, who did the suffering. This way you can still wallow in some very exciting masochism without having to give up your weekly facials. The catch here is that at one time or another, every single human group which has existed on planet earth has been both victim and victimizer. You cannot find a tribe, nation, or race which has

not only victimized an opposing group, but which has also been victimized by some other group. Who are the victims? Who are the victimizers? Why, everybody! Not that your inner groupthinkery will allow you to contemplate this awkward fact of human history. If you did, you would stop being special. And then--why, you're nothing but a groupless nobody!

One strange peculiarity I have noticed about hardcore groupthinkers is that they always expect *other people* to jettison their own groupthink illusions and treat them as . . . human beings. In other words, nobody must ever direct energies of discrimination, bigotry, or dehumanization against your own special group, since those kinds of energies are immoral. But it is okay when you and your buddies do it. It is only other people who are never entitled to wallow in their religion, their sexual orientation, or their race the way you do. Groupthink for me but not for thee!

Groupthink also engenders that wonderful something called us-against-them mentality, which is rampant everywhere in our culture these days. Drama, fiction, sports, business, politics, and video games could not exist without these kinds of energies. Everywhere you look you see that people simply have to have their enemies, if only of the digital variety, or else they are bored stiff. Besides, you just know that those rotten bad guys whom you have identified as your enemies are not connected to you in any way, so they have got it coming. In other words, people in thrall to their groupthink delusions never perceive the world through the eyes of St. Francis of Assisi or Ramakrishna, but with the kind of uncompromising us-against-them energy to be found in concentration camp guards. The true Reality of our planet is that universal interconnection and equality, which makes the human race one big family.

Fake humanitarianism. Groupthink usually leads us to one of the most popular of malevolent American energies, since it knocks both common sense and rational thinking clean out of people's skulls. And what is this energy? That's easy. It is the yearning you have to tell yourself that you are . . . a humanitarian!

That's right! You care about other people, I mean you *truly care*,

and you are fighting the good fight for their benefit! Everything you do, everything you believe in, is dedicated to this one noble goal. You have spent years of your life thinking about the awful misery of those less fortunate than yourself, and you want it to end for them! As soon as possible, too, or at least before you retire to central Florida. So never mind that your humanitarianism shares space in your psyche with your groupthink and your hatred. When you are a genuine lover of humanity, you are always perfectly justified in detesting your political opponents since they are nothing but a bunch of loathsome psychos anyway.

It also means that you get to grab every chance you get to advertise your humanitarianism. Not that you have to tattoo the word HUMANITARIAN on your forehead, but you do go through your days prodding friends, family, and co-workers into discussions about your politics or religion so you can silently telegraph the message that your humanitarianism is making the world a better place. *I am supporting the right candidates or the right religion! Let me tell you one more time about my political/religious beliefs so I can remind myself of my awesomeness! Feelgoodness for me! Feelgoodness!*

Hello to more toxic ego gratification. Back in the 1930's, a bunch of German clowns managed to persuade the populace that they were Übermensch, which eventually resulted in a nasty little disaster for all and sundry. But that was nothing compared to what is happening today, when the right politics means that you are just totally better than everyone else. O the rapture of knowing that you are not a racist or an imperialist or a capitalist or a sexist! The desire to see yourself as a superior human being is one of the most stupendously overwhelming ego desires there is. And of course everybody does it these days. Even the vilest and most contemptible of talking heads in our dismal culture see themselves as better than everyone else. In this they resemble nothing so much as those Marxist commissars who knew perfectly well that they were creating the ultimate in human goodness, the classless society, whenever they put another bullet through yet another brain. O what wonderful feelgoodness you get to experience whenever you can remind yourself that you are just totally a superior person who is

entitled to squash those scumbags whom you have identified as your enemies by any means possible.

Control freakery. Now we get to talk about that hugely popular energy called manipulation, which can be found even in reasonably sane people. I am aware that control freakery of one kind or another has always been seen as the universal human remedy when confronted with a problem. And I will admit that a certain amount of manipulation of our environment is necessary for our survival as a species. We need reliable food, clothing, and shelter in our lives if we want to survive. We also need to live in a society where we can exist in reasonable security. Making our environments as secure as we can is a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

But when the control freaks of this world attempt to tinker with life, consciousness, or self-organizing systems, things always go disastrously wrong. Always. In the 1930's, a group of well-meaning control freaks decided to "manage" the Los Angeles River by imprisoning it in a concrete straightjacket. Predictably it was a complete waste of time and money. Today the water is eroding the concrete which surrounds it and is slowly returning the river to its natural state. Any kind of artificial or unnatural solution to a problem will simply never work.

There is a very simple reason why this should be so, namely that we humans will never be capable of anything except a *partial* understanding of complex systems. It is not possible for us mortals to identify or control every last little thing that makes a living body tick or an ecological system to thrive. The desire for this kind of understanding, remember, is nothing but a legacy Newtonian paradigm where there is supposed to be a cause for each effect. But one of the cardinal rules of quantum physics is that of uncertainty. We are never in complete control of anything in our chaotic universe, which means that sooner or later most manipulation paradigms will meet with utter failure.

When I began to read tarot for other people, I was astonished to discover how many people came to me with control questions. They would tell me about a person in their environment, whether child,

supervisor, husband, or grandmother, who was not behaving the way the querent wanted them to behave. Needless to say, the querent's idea of suitable behavior was, predictably, the only correct way to act. But since efforts to manipulate the person were not working, they had come to the fortune teller to hear how to do it right. I was expected to provide them with some kind of manipulation strategy that would solve the problem. After all, it was only for the lesser person's own good.

For your own good. This is the mantra that those humorless scolds known as control freaks have uttered since the dawn of history. Control freaks will always want you to believe that they do not want to turn the screws on you out of a lust for power. No, they simply want to make you a better person. This especially holds true for parents who are so determined to tyrannize their children that they turn into what the rest of us would call child abusers, a process which has been described by at least one scholar.[10]

Alas, control freakery of all sorts has existed in America from Day One. It would be difficult to point to an era in our history when some kind of group was not expending furious energy to coerce the lesser people into betterness for their own good. Over the years our do-gooders have torn down maypoles, censored books, banned art, outlawed gambling, forbidden interracial marriage, and prohibited demon rum. This was the biggie. After the Civil War the control freaks of the time decided that nothing less than extreme political action was necessary to keep the drunken bums in their lives sober if it killed them, and this they proceeded to accomplish with the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1919. People do not pay much attention to the idiocies of Prohibition here in the 21st century, but let us pause for a moment and remember what a great legislative triumph it was for the hard-working progressives who got it enacted. Let us also give a reverent cheer to famed temperance advocate Mrs. Carrie A. Nation, who did not hesitate to raise her flaming hatchet and do battle against that most monstrous of human evils: beer. Our Carrie might have been nothing but an attention-whoring buffoon, but she was smart about something. She discovered a way to live a tremendously exciting life, filled with hair-raising adventures, monumental ego gratification, and a ferocious certitude that she was forever in the right.

Life does not get any better than that. So never mind the fact that she also delivered the republic straight into the arms of organized crime, where it remains to this day.

Here in our postmodern world control freaks are most especially to be found in those types known as Nurse Ratched. In case you have not heard of her, Nurse Ratched is the ice-water-in-her-veins heroine of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), she who knows perfectly well that shoving other people around is the only thing which makes life worth living. Way back in prehistory, this woman was not exactly someone to be emulated, but nowadays, sixty years later, she has become a role model for millions. We live in a culture where the Ratcheds among us are constantly doing their tidy best to make sure that everything is forced, manipulated, organized, disciplined, punished, or otherwise shut up into filing cabinets. And they will keep at it forever. After all, what the hell would they do with themselves if the lesser people did not keep providing them with interesting and exciting resistance? Give me control, or give me death!

We must also remember that the Carries and the Ratcheds of this world are never truly interested in making the world a better place. They are in hot pursuit of one thing only, namely their next feelgood fix. If they can persuade themselves that their manipulation efforts will improve the lesser people's lives, it probably feels more blissful than a jolt of heroin, cocaine, nicotine, and booze combined. This is why they never pay much attention whenever their schemes blow up in their face: they will perhaps blink for a moment and then move right on to the next manipulation paradigm, since *of course* the entire planet will collapse into . . . well, chaos . . . unless more control freakery is immediately implemented. The fantasy that control makes things better is one of the most toxic cognitive illusions ever to infect the human race. In the meantime, who cares that the rest of us get deprived of what Kerouac calls "the gayety that any respectable American wants in a life growing more arid by the year in Law Ridden America." [11]

You would think the human race would be over this kind of nonsense by now. There is no more perfect recipe for social disaster than endless and ever-increasing manipulation. When the control freaks get their way, what gets erected is tyrannical, non-sustainable,

and doomed to collapse. These are words which perfectly describe our American republic here in the second decade of the 21st century, which in case you have not noticed is currently crashing into the mountain.

But you probably do not believe a word of this, right? You just know that manipulation is good! It always makes things better! This means that you always need to add something, or prescribe something, or do something when there is a problem. Words need to be spoken! Plans have to be made! Action must be taken! Issues must be addressed! Initiatives must be devised! Money has to be spent! Pills need to be swallowed! Diets have to be followed! Workers must be supervised! Kids have to listen! Therapy is necessary! Surgery will fix it! Nature must be tamed! Microorganisms must be sanitized! Education must be administered! Laws have to be passed! Central planning must be implemented! Systems have to be organized! Economies must be stimulated! Business must be regulated! Cronies need to be financed! The Internet has to be censored! War must be waged against poverty or drugs! Randle P. McMurphy must be lobotomized! Unintended consequences? What unintended consequences? I'm a humanitarian!

* * *

Oh, well. Enough of this. I suppose there's no reason to go on with sundry other bad energies such as hypocrisy, self-pity, selfishness, envy, dishonesty, addiction, codependence, greed, or hatred. Freeing yourself from these ornery little nasties is not a place where most Americans want to go these days, since they just cannot live without the sense of superiority which their bad energies provide. Welcome to the world of the weaklings, the losers, and the phonies.

But you don't care about that, do you? You are not about to let anyone or anything break you free of your bad energies and the delightful little Comfort Zone they have established for you. That is the only way you will ever feel good! And you like feeling good! You have just got to keep feeling good! Life is not worth living unless you forever pursue good and more good and more and more and more . . .

Well, here comes a thought which has probably never occurred to

you, namely that *good* just happens to be the world's most uninteresting feeling. Yes, I know that you have spent huge amounts of time and energy in your life pursuing it, but that is only because you never realized how banal a feeling it is. I doubt that the crappiness of good has ever pointed this out to you, but that is only because your parents, your teachers, and those experts whom you trust are as desperately lost in illusion as you are. Good is nothing but a worthless four-letter word which is not worth anyone's time, effort, or attention.

Fortunately it just so happens that a much more delightful sensation exists, which anyone can experience. Not only does this sensation remain constantly with you, it never causes hangovers. And once you get it, you have got it for life. But . . . but . . . what can feel better than good? Ah, heck. You can't expect your author to give the secret away so early in this book, can you? That would not be any fun at all. Besides, even though this precious little something is the simplest thing in the world to acquire, you have to enter into something called Reality before you can experience it.

But how can you acquire it? How can you start to see both yourself and the world around you with any clarity? By now the answer should be obvious. You need to start working with an oracular tool. These kinds of tools are the only thing which can truly convey the Reality of the universe to all of us.

And in my opinion the single most effective oracular tool ever devised is that deck of cards called tarot. However, we must now examine a new problem. There is something monumentally wrong about the way most people work with tarot and other oracular tools here in the 21st century. Toxic energies do not exist only in people--they can also exist in the artifacts which people design. The unhappy fact about contemporary card divination is that some tarot decks are filled with such horrendously poisonous energies that they can do you a lot of harm. If you want tarot to work for you as a successful oracle, the first thing you need to do is find yourself a tarot deck which contains nothing but benevolent energy.

Fortunately this problem can be easily solved. Once upon a time a wonderful spiritual genius designed a tarot deck which to this day is the most effective oracular tool on the planet. It will kick those toxic

illusions out of your skull faster than you can say boo. The desk she designed is the only oracular tool which you will ever need. I am referring to that artist known as . . .

Chapter 4. Pamela Colman Smith.

But before we find a tarot deck which is filled with positive energies, we first need to say something about what can loosely be called the "tarot establishment" in 21st century America. The tarot establishment is as insular and as ineffective as most other contemporary groupings in our country, and in my opinion does nothing but hinder a novice diviner from working successfully with tarot. The problem is that not only are most contemporary practitioners of tarot utterly mistaken about the best way to work with the cards, but the sources of their misinformation, those hundreds of books about tarot which have been published in recent years, can only be described as harmful. As far as I can tell, they are all identical clones of each other as they invariably focus on a bit of nonsense called *what the cards mean*. Their authors suffer under the delusion that the meaning of the cards is the only thing which a novice diviner needs to learn in order to successfully divine with tarot. Well, whoever dreamed this one up had a cabbage in his skull instead of a brain.

We need to understand that trying to explain what an illustration "means" is a Newtonian paradigm if there ever was one. There was once a period in my life when I was determined to understand the meaning of every single syllable I encountered in a poem, or every dab of color I found in a work of art. I eventually realized that this was a complete exercise in futility. There is no way that a work of genius can ever be adequately "explained"--not that people will ever stop trying. Dylan Thomas tells us in his *Poetic Manifesto* (1961):

You can tear a poem apart to see what makes it technically tick, and say to yourself, when the works are laid out before you, the vowels, the consonants, the rhymes or rhythms, 'Yes, this is it. This is why the poem moves me so. It is because of the craftsmanship.' But you're back again where you began. You're back with the mystery of having been moved by words. The best craftsmanship always leaves holes and gaps in the works of the poem so that something that is not in the poem can creep, crawl, flash or thunder in.[12]

Moved by words or moved by an illustration--whenever a work of a genius grabs hold of your guts, you should forget about explanations. They will do nothing but confuse you. This also means that as far as tarot illustrations go, the ones which can be easily interpreted are weak and ineffective. It is always a sure sign that you are dealing with something second-rate when you encounter a work of art which can be "explained".

This problem is compounded with another weakness to be found in all those what-the-cards-mean tarot books: no two tarot explicators ever come up with the same explanation for the same card. When I first started working with tarot, I read every tarot book I could get my hands on, but I eventually realized that I was only growing ever more confused about the tarot holiest of holies: the final and definitive explanation of what-the-cards-mean. I finally ended up purchasing Bill Butler's *Dictionary of the Tarot* (1975) thinking that it would help. Butler extracted the most pertinent quotes about the meaning of each card from the most successful writers about tarot and then assembled their gems of wisdom in a single book. This idea was almost brilliant. You could see at once how various tarot authorities defined a particular card, and then, presumably, you could finally figure out what-the-cards-meant.

Well, it didn't quite work out like that. *The Dictionary of the Tarot* does nothing but list hopelessly inconsistent definitions of certain cards. Do you want to learn the definitive meaning of--for example--the Temperance card? No problem. Butler quotes eighteen tarot geniuses who tell us that, among other things, the card means: mantra, things connected with churches, frugality, vibration as the basis of manifestation, the solar spirit, the post office, the beauty of a firm basis, combination, tent-peg, distillation, purification of the soul, distribution, a fetus, the fish, wrath, the jacinth, and short-term stalemate.[13]

Jeeppers. If the most prominent writers on tarot can spout this kind of rubbish about what-a-card-means, then what are the rest of us supposed to do?

Well, take my word for it: trying to figure out what-the-cards-mean is nothing but a painful exercise in futility. It is based upon a false

assumption, namely that the cards are not sufficient unto themselves but must be accompanied by explanatory words in order to be comprehensible. These are words which you presumably need to memorize in order to successfully divine.

Words, words, words. You are not supposed to be able to work with tarot unless the right words have been drilled into your skull. Well, my experience tells me that there is nothing which blocks successful divinatory energy like a word, particularly a word written by an author out to make a buck.

What's that? How can you practice tarot divination unless you start *thinking* about what you see in a particular card? Dear reader, you would not be asking this question if you understood something about the difference between the left brain and the right brain of us *Homo sapiens*. The left side of our brains is concerned with the rational or mathematical side of our being; when we make a critical judgment about something, we are using our left hemisphere. The right side of our brains is concerned more with patterns, music, vision, and dreams. Words stimulate the left, while pictures stimulate the right. Logical energies emanate from the left, psychic from the right. While it is a distortion to describe the two halves of the brains in this fashion, the left/right dichotomy does help us to understand how our minds process information. It also tells us that divination is not going to work unless the right side of our brain, the intuitive side, is being stimulated. We do not want to experience something as unhelpful as a thought when we turn over a tarot card--we want an intuitive *flash*. T.S. Eliot tells us that ". . . genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood,"[14] and so can a tarot flash. The flash is what counts in card divination, that sudden burst of energy which ectropically explodes in your consciousness and which contains both meaning and power. But nothing is going to block your flash like a left-brain word.

All this means that if you want to divine successfully with tarot, you do not need books which explain what-the-cards-mean--you need a tarot deck which can deliver those flashes for all they are worth. This brings us to our next problem: of the thousands of tarot decks knocking around the world today, which one(s) should you choose? Alas, our 21st century tarot world happens to be swamped with thousands of

thoroughly rotten decks which will do nothing but harm the minds and the psyches of the people who work with them. They have been designed by artists with the best of intentions, but they exhibit nothing but awkward, inept illustrations, a materialist outlook on life, political agendas, or computer-generated fantasy visions which have no connection to the Reality which constitutes our lives. Worst of all, they exhibit a complete lack of spiritual vision. I have heard that a novice tarot reader should choose a deck which "speaks" to her, but in my opinion nothing could be more disastrous. If you decide that a deck is "speaking" to you, chances are that it will do nothing but enable you.

But why should this be so? Especially since many hundreds of tarot decks can have quite dazzling illustrations? Well, the difficulties come in several ways. First, there is the problem of too muchness in the illustrations. When there are too many visuals in a tarot illustration, you do not get any kind of divinatory flash--you simply lose yourself in the multitude of objects before you eyes. Then there is the problem of image reduction. Artists who design tarot cards do not paint miniatures--they always design fairly large illustrations, which are then photographically reduced when the deck is published. Alas, whenever a work of art is reduced, its vitality is lost--compare an original Velasquez with its reduced illustration in a book if you don't believe me. Finally, too many decks these days have been designed by the complacently self-righteous, and these decks do nothing but give you a gushy world where everything is sweetness and light. If you want to get Truth from your oracle, you need to work with a tool that will show you both positive and negative energies, or else you will never receive worthwhile information from it. The thing to do with toxic energies is identify them and then start dealing with them, not pretending that only those idiots with the wrong politics or religion have got them.

Well, enough about bad tarot decks. Let us now turn our attention to one that works. Once upon a time something unexpected happened to tarot. It landed in the lap of a genius. We will now take a look at an event which occurred in London around 1909, when a genius named Pamela Colman Smith set to work designing a new deck of tarot cards. In my opinion the deck which this genius produced just happens to be the only tarot deck worth using. Her tarot illustrations are now in the

public domain and are online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rider-Waite_tarot_deck.

Pamela Colman Smith (1878-1951) was born in England to an American father and a Jamaican mother. In her youth she studied under Arthur Wesley Dow and attended the Pratt Institute in New York. One remarkable aspect of Smith's life was that she treasured the Jamaican heritage of her mother: her best book is a collection of Jamaican folk tales called *Annancy Stories* (1899), which focus on the folk figure of Anansi the Spider.

Smith settled permanently in England when she was in her twenties. She initially worked as a book illustrator and then as a theatrical designer with actress Ellen Terry and the Lyceum Theatre group in London. She was apparently quite interested in alternative spirituality--one visitor comments on the statues of "Indian gods" in her studio.[15] After the First World War interest in her work unfortunately declined, and she lived out her life in southwestern England, fighting penury and isolation. By the time of her death in 1951, she had been mostly forgotten, except for her one miraculous accomplishment, the illustrations of her tarot deck.

Some of Smith's letters survive in various libraries, but they do not reveal much about her life. There was an exhibit of her work in New York in 1977, and a commemorative set of her illustrations was published by U.S. Games Systems in 2009. However, no definitive biography of Smith has ever been written. Her contemporaries respected her talents, but her pen-and-ink illustrations were frequently denigrated as time-bound and childish (Smith's nickname was Pixie). That this woman might have been a genius is an idea that most critics will probably reject. Artistic geniuses are not supposed to produce works that seem sentimental or syrupy, which is how quite a few people regard her tarot deck. Nowadays people tend to dismiss her as a minor talent.

But that was once the fate of William Blake. And once people took a good look at Blake, they realized that they were dealing with a talent of unparalleled brilliance. If you ask me, no one has ever taken a good look at the tarot illustrations which Smith produced and seen them for what they are: masterpieces of profound spiritual vision. I have learned

over the years that you can work with these images for decades but still unexpectedly find something new and startling when you turn a card over. This is always a sign of a very remarkable talent. The longer you study these pictures without preconceptions, the more astonishing they become.

The trouble is that it is almost impossible to take a good look at Smith's cards without any preconceptions. The brilliance of her deck is usually credited to the man who hired her to design it, occultist Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942). As a result, her cards have always been seen as the product of Waite's vision, not Smith's. The fact that Waite predictably wrote a book to explain what-the-cards-mean (*The Key to the Tarot*, originally published in 1910 and later called *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*)[16], has muddied the waters.

Arthur Edward Waite was another expatriate American who lived out his life in Britain. He was a mildly competent poet, a prolific writer on numerous arcane subjects, and a friend and supporter of Evelyn Underhill, whose volume on *Mysticism* (1914) I consider to be one of the greatest books ever written.[17] The problem with Waite was that he was also an occult-obsessed ego utterly drenched with control freakery of the worst possible kind: magical.

Waite's *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* is unlike his other books in that it is fairly brief. However, it is as silly as much of the other occult stuff he wrote. What is worse is that this unintentionally funny book has done a lot of damage, not only to the Smith deck but to tarot in general. What we find in this text is Waite's ego on full and resplendent display, especially when he takes potshots at other occultists who have dared to interpret the cards in their own "tawdry" fashion. When Waite does attempt to explain Smith's visuals, he bungles badly, as when he tells us that the Ace of Cups has "four" streams of water pouring out of the cup, instead of the obvious five. It is also painfully clear that most of his verbiage is so addled by his esoteric claptrap that it becomes meaningless, as in the following what-the-cards-mean descriptions:

The Sun: "It is the destiny of the Supernatural East and the great and holy light which goes before the endless procession

of humanity, coming out from the walled garden of the sensitive life and passing on the journey home."

The High Priestess: "She represents also the Second Marriage of the Prince who is no longer of this world."

The Devil: "What it does signify is the Dweller on the Threshold without the Mystical Garden when those are driven forth therefrom who have eaten the forbidden fruit."

Wow, what magnificent examples of English prosody. Never mind what-the-cards-mean--what the heck do these statements mean? Boy, what I wouldn't give to hang out in a mystical garden threshold place and eat some weird fruit. Too bad I am just an illiterate hick who gets irritated by flaccid prose. That means there's no chance of me ever being able to work with tarot successfully, right? Tarnation.

Well, let us give Waite some credit. He did pick Pamela Colman Smith to design a tarot deck, which has benefitted us all. But that is about all we can credit him. My own feeling is that Smith designed her tarot cards not because of, but in spite of, Arthur Edward Waite. Should a pixie lock horns with an anal, the pixie will inevitably emerge triumphant. The illustrations in the Smith tarot are Smith's creation and Smith's alone.

But why are her tarot illustrations the only ones that count? Many commentators complain that Smiths' illustrations are too gossamer, the drawings are childish, the colors are flat, the pen-and-ink illustrations belong in comic books, the figures don't show reality, they're Victorian, they're medieval, they seem to exist in a dream world, and--predictably in our era--they're too patriarchal. In other words, critics of Smith focus upon everything they think is supposed to be in a tarot deck, not what is actually there, nor what Smith was attempting to do with her illustrations.

So what is going on in Smith's deck that makes it special? Let us forget Smith for a moment and examine what kinds of energies are needed to generate a good old ectopic flash. We will start with the idea of . . .

Beauty. Like many abstract terms, beauty can never be precisely defined, but we can probably agree that it is connected to ideas of harmony and an indefinable something which gives pleasure. This is the kind of feeling which bursts within you whenever you encounter a perfect rose, or when a mathematical theory feels elegant. In one way or another beauty surrounds us every moment of our lives, and in my opinion, the experience of it is always filled with Divine energy.

So do we find beauty in the Smith deck? As far as I am concerned we do. We find graceful figures, dazzling landscapes, and wonderful patterns of color, form, and space. Everything about the illustrations seems rhythmically balanced. The figures easily fit into their landscapes as if they truly lived in it. Forget the fact that some of the images are painful or horrible--if you look carefully enough you can still find something wondrously sublime in even the darkest cards, all of whose elegant lines come together with rich spiritual energy. Smith was also smart enough to realize that beauty is most often found in simplicity, so her forms come together with restrained finesse. Too-muchness, in other words, is not a problem in this deck.

The fact that Smith's illustrations are pen-and-ink drawings adds to their impact. When pen-and-ink is the artistic medium, the reduction problem does not matter that much. Something is still lost when the image is shrunk, but the forceful black lines of an ink drawing are still able to jump out right at you. Pen-and-ink was Smith's forte, and as a result her illustrations have a power which you do not find in other tarot decks--her images drill right into your brain the minute your retina absorbs them.

Illustrations which are sufficient unto themselves. You flash most intensely upon an illustration which is complete in itself and needs no explication. In Smith's deck you can see at a glance exactly what is going on in each of her illustrations, including the minor cards. Most tarot decks before Smith showed only the card suit and number on the minor cards, much like the decks of regular playing cards today. This meant that in pre-Smith days, inexperienced tarot readers had to rely upon left-brain energy to identify both the suit and the number when they turned a minor card over. This was probably not a problem for

gifted psychics, but less talented readers could only stumble along with what they had once memorized until they became skilled at using the deck. This does not happen with the Smith deck. She was not the first tarot artist to put illustrations on the minor cards: the 15th century Sola Busca tarot deck also shows illustrations.[18] Smith was familiar with this deck and based some of her designs on it. Nevertheless, she was the first tarot artist whose illustrations convey instant meaning through an integration of the human figures with the numbers and the symbols of the suit.

Body language. One of the first things that scalds your eyes when you turn over a Smith card is the body language of the figure which you see. Whether the figure is bent over in sorrow or jumping for joy, you get a wordless jolt the moment you make eye contact with the human forms in Smith's cards. Her genius at conveying meaning through body language must have come from her theatrical experience. One thing you discover when you read her letters is that Smith was theater obsessed: it is all she wants to talk about in the letters which I have been able to examine. She probably spent the happiest days of her life working with Ellen Terry and other performers.

All of which means that her tarot deck owes a lot more to the British theatrical tradition than it does to the occult discombobulations of Arthur Edward Waite. Smith designed a deck which is not so much an esoteric artifact but a miniature human theater. And in this theater you discover a whole galaxy of vividly distinct sentient beings, each one of whom comes equipped with an individualized personality. Many tarot illustrators have difficulty differentiating between their characters, but Smith never gives us the same person twice. We see a wide variety of people inhabiting dissimilar environments, doing different things, and thinking original thoughts. These disparate figures seem to be interested in nothing but personifying their particular kind of energy. And yes, most of the time you simply see ordinary people doing ordinary things, but behind that ordinariness is a distinct spiritual vision, just as it is in real life.

It is also interesting to see that it is not just the people in Smith's deck who have well-defined personalities--so do the animals. Every

animal in Smith's tarot deck is a recognizable character, from the alert cat in the Queen of Wands, to the protective dog in the Fool, to the contented horse in the Sun card. I have always been especially impressed with Smith's horses. Of the ten horses portrayed in this deck, each one is an individualized being who wordlessly communicates meaning to us.

Ambiguity. It is intriguing to realize that while the body language of Smith's figures instantly conveys meaning, the faces of most of her figures are blank. They seem to be empty of emotion, thought, everything. Of course, in the theater facial expressions matter as much as does the body, but Smith bestows only blankness on the faces of her characters. What is even more interesting is that you frequently cannot figure out whether the figure is a male or a female. In Smith's world men and women are not just equals, they blur into each other. Facial blankness, gender blurring . . . if you ask me, this ambiguity is not accidental--it is both deliberate and brilliant. Smith was smart enough to realize that her cards needed ambiguity as much as clarity. One thing I have noticed over the years is that depending upon the kind of question I am asking, I project my own feelings into the facial blankness of the figure I turn over. Sometimes they seem happy, sometimes sad, other times they can display dozens of other emotions. When I can sense the emotion of the figure I see, I realize that I have got my answer. I have also learned that some of the figures also change gender depending on the kind of question I am asking. When you go to the cards frequently about your ever-changing issues, you will discover that you can get a variety of different flashes out of any one card.

Color. There has been one persistent criticism about Smith's deck, namely that her colors are flat and uninteresting. The inadequacies of color printing in the early 20th century are blamed for the lack of shading and the simplistic effects of the illustrations. All those unnuanced and monotonous colors! How awkward can you get? Smith just could not work with color, right?

Really? Pen-and-ink drawings with flat colors are nothing but a drag? Stop showing your philistinism, guys. You need to remember

what happened to the Western art world in the middle of the 19th century. Until that time, art meant only one thing only: the art of the Renaissance, and more specifically the art of the High Italian Renaissance. This was the only art worth emulating, and emulated it was, so much so that it was institutionalized to death, most especially at the Académie des Beaux-arts in France. Nobody quite realized that nothing kicks the living guts out of an aspiring artist like being told you cannot paint unless you can paint like Raphael. All of which explains why Western academicism was completely exhausted by the 19th century.

But then something unexpected happened . . . spontaneously. Artists and designers discovered that there was a very different way of looking at the world which was completely at odds with the academic tradition. Artists in a foreign culture were capable of seeing something besides Giorgione pigments or Rembrandt shadows. That foreign culture was Japan. When Japanese artifacts began to make their way into the Western world during the mid-19th century, people were astounded by the genius in what the Japanese had created, from the ceramics to the fabrics, the furniture, and the woodblock prints. The influence of these woodblock prints has continued nonstop into our postmodern world, where we can still see their traces in what is arguably the most universally popular form of art these days, Japanese manga and anime.

In her excellent analysis of the impact of Japanese art on 19th century Europe: *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics* (2004), Jan Walsh Hokenson summarizes the new "Japanese way of seeing" as "(a) a non-European relation to nature, (b) imaginative activity in the mind, and (c) evanescence and fugitive impressions in art." It was an aesthetics of "simplicity, suggestion, indeterminacy, and impersonality . . . the emphasis [in Japanese art] is no longer on resplendence but on simplicity, purity of line and form, spare vivid contrasting colors, delicacy of method, and suggestion of unstated essence . . . the artwork therefore entails, radically requires, two moments in time, the moment of creation and the moment of affective recreation." In other words, the greatest value of Japanese art was the way it stimulates the viewer's imagination: "the artist's economy of

means and radical simplification operate suggestively to provoke, in the viewer, an affective experience--comparable to the artist's at the moment of creation--and an imaginative completion (of the image, locus, motion) in the mind." People who responded to art like this were then able to enter into "a new order of reality." [19]

If you ask me, the qualities that Dr. Hokenson enumerates are also the exact qualities which turn an illustration into a successful divinatory tool. Which brings us back to Pamela Colman Smith. The influence of great Japanese woodblock masters like Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai is everywhere in her deck, and most especially in her landscapes: in the conical mountain forms which are derived from Mt. Fuji, the use of diagonal lines to indicate rain, fabric patterns which seem to float over the clothing instead of being integrated with it, wind blowing through black silhouetted trees, waves indicated by serpentine black lines, and even the shape of the benches. All of which means that the simplicity you find in Smith's tarot deck is not a sign of incompetence--it is a technique which is derived from the Japanese way of seeing. And the "flat" colors in Smith's deck are not a sign of inadequate printing--they are a very effective way to give you a visual jolt. They increase the impact of the image instead of diminishing it.

The meontic. One thing which very few people notice about Smith's tarot illustrations is that most of them depict some kind of supernatural event. When she designed these cards, I doubt that Smith was consciously aware that she was giving an otherworldly aura to her deck--this was probably how she saw the world, as a theater not just for the natural but for the miraculous as well. In this she was simply following the time-honored meontic interpretation of reality. Meontic refers to the kind of perception which is more "supernatural" than naturalistic. The opposite of meontic is the mimetic, a naturalistic depiction of a place or an event. If you have never heard the term meontic before, you are probably thinking that art or literature has to be grounded in our normal non-spooky reality to be effective, right?

Well, you'd better think again. Envisioning something beyond our "material" world just happens to be how the greatest human geniuses

have perceived the universe over the centuries. Allow me to present you with a list of some of the masters who put "supernatural" events or beings into their creative endeavors: Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Mozart, Goethe, Ovid, Dickens, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Molière, Tolkien, Raphael, Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Eliot, Poe, Van Gogh, Manet, Monet, Spencer, Kalidasa, Lady Murasaki, Cervantes, Cao Xueqin, Wu Cheng'en, the Brontës, Yeats, Rilke, Valery, Schiller, and Baudelaire. So if you ask me, it is the meontic which shows us the true Reality of our universe, not the mimetic.

As for Pixie, she gives us angels, resurrections, miracles, and otherworldly creatures throughout her deck. The King of Cups floats on water, Wands fly through the air, the Moon and the Sun have faces, the World's dancer floats in empty space, giant disembodied hands offer gifts in the Aces, leaves sprout on sticks, and two figures have the symbol of eternity floating above their heads (the Magician and Strength). How very brilliant of our Pixie. And how very Real.

Humor. Apart from divination, there is another way we humans can experience an ectropic flash, namely by hearing a joke. Yes, believe it or not, the punch line to an effective joke is something which can fill you with sudden illumination, which is otherwise known as getting a burst of Divine energy. And when divination and humor are combined . . . well, that is what you get in Smith's deck. Quite a few of her illustrations just happen to be very funny. Arthur Edward Waite, who never cracked a joke in his life, completely misses the humor in Smith's deck and would probably have gone cold with shock if it had ever been pointed out to him.

O the horror, the horror! Humor! Wit! Fun! Right here in Occult City, where everything esoteric has to be taken with grim seriousness and furious egomaniacal power-tripping. Not just in Occult City, mind you, but also in Religion City, where those endless martyrdoms and religious wars and stuff are not something to laugh at. I mean, spiritual stuff is, like, you know, a life and death kind of thing and has to be taken *seriously*, for heaven's sake. Nobody did any laughing during the Inquisition or the Reformation, right? Nope, our religions are always

real, real heavy, just all the other heavy stuff in our civilization, including painting and classical music.

Fortunately pixies are much lighter than the rest of us, which is why they keep having fun. Smith puts something clever or witty in practically every one of her illustrations. My favorite Smith joke has got to be the armadillo underneath the King of Pentacles' foot. Good grief. What in the name of all that's cowboy is a little bit of Texas doing in a medieval European landscape? Some tarot commentators have turned themselves blue trying to explain the momentous significance of the armadillo in this particular card, but if you ask me, the critter can be explained very simply: he is one of Pixie's jokes.

We find numerous other bits of fun in Smith's deck, usually in conjunction with what I like to call the Stupid Idiot Syndrome. A lot of Smith's characters can only be described as Stupid Idiots. They are shown as doing something so supremely moronic that you wonder how they are still breathing. Look at the heroine of the Eight of Swords. This is a forbidding image: our heroine is tied up, blindfolded, and surrounded by weapons. But when you look closely you see that she is not bound to the swords and could simply walk away from her misery any time she likes. Something that never seems to happen, of course, with a hard-core masochist. Hello, Stupid Idiot.

Then there is the sociopathic hero of the Seven of Swords. This guy has got a smirk on his face, so you might think he is actually happy about something, but just look at what he is doing. He has grabbed a whole armful of swords and is trying to run away with them. But Stupid Idiot that he is, he is holding these swords by their blades and points, which is a guaranteed way to cut himself most painfully. The rational way to hold a sword is by its scabbard, but rational is not the way that our hero comes across, to say the least. He is inflicting needless and useless pain upon himself.

We also find a Stupid Idiot in the Four of Pentacles--this halfwit has managed to balance one pentacle on top of his head while he hangs onto three others for dear life. You would think he might get tired of this uncomfortable posture after a while, but that does not happen when your average Stupid Idiot is absolutely obsessed about money.

Then there is the rider in the Knight of Pentacles card. He is sitting

on a motionless horse and obviously does not have the slightest desire to urge his animal onwards. The problem here is that this Stupid Idiot has apparently been sitting in this position for so long that his horse has got green leaves growing out of his ears. Leaves in a horse's ears? How many months have you two idiots been stuck here, doing nothing?

And now we come to the Chariot. What on earth is going on in this card? I have struggled and struggled with this damn illustration over the years, but so help me, I cannot figure it out. The only thing which strikes me as obvious about this card is that in no way is it an illustration of a "chariot". Since when is a chariot a block of concrete? That is what Smith gives us, a square of solid rock, with half a human being perched above it. And he is not 100% there, mind you--there is no opening in the block to provide room for his lower extremities. He is just half a human being floating above an immovable monstrosity, with two utterly recalcitrant sphinxes settled in front of him, neither of whom are about to budge for all the catnip in Egypt. This is a chariot?

Well, at least our hero does not seem to mind. He (or is it a she?) has got a faint smirk on his face, plus lots of astral energy keeping him content (stars in his hair, half moons on his shoulders). But what this illustration is supposed to mean when you put it all together, I do not have a clue. I have heard people say that the card is telling you to get your chariot moving, but if you ask me not even a thermonuclear explosion would propel this particular setup into mobility. What-what-what-does-this-card-mean? It means that Pamela Colman Smith had the most delicious sense of humor, and all you can do is laugh.

This brings me to the funniest card in the deck, that of the Devil. I have known a few poor frangible souls whose exquisite sensibilities simply *cannot* deal with this particular card. Well, if you ask me, the Devil in Smith's deck is not frightening or evil--he is simply the culmination of Smith's ideas about Stupid Idiocy. The so-called devil she gives us is a brilliant example of how to take a frightening image and turn it into something howlingly funny.

Which is obviously what the creature is. Once you take a close look at this card, the first thing you will notice about our "devil" is that he is precariously balanced on some kind of perch. And like all the other

Stupid Idiots in the deck, this is something he does not have to do if he doesn't want to. But obviously he is exactly where he wants to be. Dear sir--you have forced yourself into one of the most uncomfortable positions possible, and you need to climb down into a more sensible way of being in the world. But that is not going to happen any time soon, right?

Well, of course not, especially because our Stupid Idiot is not alone--he has got two smaller demons standing beneath him, both of whom have got a chain around their respective necks. But you will observe that our Devil is not bothering to jerk the chains of these creatures, or even paying them attention, so much so that he does not notice that he has set the guy's tail on fire. As for the two lesser beings with the chains, it is painfully obvious that neither of them have a brain in their respective heads. Horns yes, but brains--not a chance. They are not paying attention to their Devil any more than he is paying attention to them. Our heroine is just sort of standing there, while the man is apparently trying to explain something to her with the most obnoxious body language possible. Our hero also does not quite seem to be aware that his tail is catching fire. Well, come on, baby, light my fire--but don't hold your breath waiting for me to pay attention.

Our guy also does not notice that he can throw off the chain around his neck any time he feels like it. So can she--these chains are loose. And there are no confining prison walls in this card, just a vast empty blackness into which our smaller devils could disappear if they wanted to. But like a certain whatsit squatting above them, they want to stay right where they are. Which is exactly what happens when you have imprisoned yourself in the energies of addiction or obsession, which strikes me as the clear message of this card.

As for the rest of us, all we can do when we pull this card is smile and shake our heads, which is pretty much all we can do with the other Stupid Idiots in Smith's deck as well. This brings me to the point of the jokes in this deck, namely that the humorous just happens to be an integral part of the spiritual. Yes, I know that this statement will raise a lot of hackles, but as far as I am concerned, laughter is a sign of Divine energy.

I am not alone in this opinion. Some of the most profoundly

spiritual people who have ever walked the earth have had quite a delightful sense of humor, including mystical visionaries such as Chuangzi with his endless Daoist jokes, all those Zen lunatics with their koans, Teresa of Avila and her wisecracks, and G.K. Chesterton, who informed us that "angels can fly because they take themselves lightly." [20] I will grant you that we humans have a knack for inflicting endless horror and pain upon each other, but knowing how to laugh is one of the best ways to survive the inanity known as human civilization.

Room to maneuver. There is another aspect to Smith's deck which gives it a distinct spiritual vision: there are no dead ends in any of these illustrations. Smith was clear-sighted enough to see that in our spacetime universe, there is no such thing as permanence, let alone permanent entrapment. On every card where Smith portrays some kind of negative energy, she always gives us an escape hatch into a new kind of space.

And what places these are! Has anyone ever noticed how spectacular are Smith's landscapes? In practically every card we see amazing vistas of land, water, and mountains, plus endless skies and far horizons. Smith usually places her horizons low in the illustration, so we get an immense amount of sky and light. In giving us these visions of vastness, Smith seems to be emphasizing that there are endless possibilities for renewal, redemption, and new beginnings in our lives. Edgar Allan Poe would have hated the vitality on display in Pixie's landscapes. It might even have knocked him out of his skull into something like sanity.

This sense of potential helps to reinforce the spiritual intensity of the deck. Many artists over the years have painted landscapes not in any kind of naturalistic sense but as revelations of spiritual Reality. In particular, the world of nature as portrayed by Daoist painters, with their mysterious vistas, misty outlines, and incredible verticals. When you look at a Daoist landscape, you always get a sense of the living consciousness of the earth, as if it were as alive as you are. You also get a sense of kinship between the land and the human figures upon it. There have been a few Western artists who have also been able to

portray this kind of natural spiritual reality, especially the French Impressionists and the artists of the Hudson River School. These painters were doing much more than illustrating trees, land and sky-- they were making Divine energy visible through their use of color and form. As does our Pixie.

Universality. Whenever you get an unexpected reminder of the interconnectedness of the quantum field, you always get a flash of Divine energy. Smith accomplishes this feat very easily in her deck, which constantly gives us a feeling of unity in variety. In all the cards you inevitably see some kind of communion, even in those cards which contain a solitary figure. Now I will admit that the deck is bound by both time and place, that of medieval Europe, but why should this be a weakness? Since in a holographic universe the part is always the whole, one of the best ways to sense the universal is through the particular. Smith's vision of interconnectedness also strikes me as a perfect manifestation of what we now call globalism. This deck was created by a woman who combined Moslem playing cards, Italian triumphs, medieval European costume, Japanese landscapes, and the ancient Greek concept of the four elements to produce nothing less than a harmonious planetary oracle which can work for anyone regardless of race, religion, or ancestry.

* * *

So what you find in Smith's deck makes it not only an artistic masterpiece but also makes it the perfect tool to help you flash on Divine energy. Still, I expect that many of my readers are dismissing these words, especially the ones who think that they have been successfully working with a different tarot deck over the years. So may I now remind you of one other remarkable fact about Smith's deck? In one way or another, most 20th and 21st century tarot decks are derivations of Smith's original vision. Subsequent artists have taken her images and done their tidy best to make them somehow "better". This has been also been the fate of Shakespeare's plays over the centuries: the hacks have done everything they can to water down,

butcher, adapt, redesign, or sentimentalize the original vision, one of the most infamous being Nahum Tate's bestowal of a happy ending on *King Lear* in 1681.

Smith has had thousands of "improvers" as well, and in my opinion their versions of tarot are something you need to avoid like a Hollywood remake. The problem with the post-Smith tarot decks is that the aim of the artist is very much different from Smith's intention. She wanted to give people a psychic tool which stimulated their spiritual vision; subsequent artists want to be told that they have made Smith's deck more contemporary, or more colorful, or more workable. Artists who fall into this trap never seem to understand exactly what Smith was up to, nor the unquestioned brilliance of her illustrations. All they are after is a pleasant little ego-boost. If you want to divine successfully with tarot, stick with Pixie.

All right, already. The Smith tarot deck is the only one to use. So what's next? Is it finally time for me to start explaining how to work with this deck? Well, not quite. The next thing we have to examine is what happens in divination.

What happens in divination? Why, hasn't that already been explained? What happens when you divine is the Divine--right? All you have to do is create a little chaos in an oracular tool, look for the patterns which have ectropically formed, and then you get valuable information directly from the Center of the Universe. Easy as duck soup.

Ah, if only. It is time for me to relate an interesting story about myself, which will reveal some of the unexpected and seldom mentioned problems in divination. And is this going to be a merry little tale.

Chapter 5. Adventures with the Mussolinis.

I will start this chapter with a conversation I had with a friend who asked me if my tarot cards had ever let me down. I replied, truthfully, that this had never happened. Not once in all the years I had been working with the cards had I ever got a disastrously wrong answer from my oracle. On the contrary, I had always gotten helpful advice, reliable information, and accurate short-term predictions about the future.

That was my answer several years ago. If someone asked me the same question today, my answer would go like this: yes, the cards did let me down, not just once but repeatedly, over a several year period, and the answers I got from them not only turned my life into a living hell, they also convinced me that there was nothing I could do to change it for the better.

Oh, wow.

But . . . but . . . how could this have happened? Doesn't turning psychic help you to make better decisions and live more successfully? No, not always, not in a universe which contains sentient beings who exist at higher rates of vibration than us "physical" entities.

What am I talking about now? That's easy: human personalities who exist in the spirit instead of the flesh. This means that a human being can exist as both a "solid" as well as a spirit. I will grant you that these are yet more evidence-free assertions. But the experience which I am about to relate has convinced me that our universe is home to entities whose energies vibrate at higher levels than us physical *Homo sapiens*. Given the circularity of our spacetime universe, chances are that most of us have experienced both the slow and the rapid vibrational phases of existence many times over the centuries. We incarnate into physical reality, learn our lessons during our sojourn upon this earth, pass back into spirit, and eventually again incarnate. This means we are familiar with both the spiritual and the physical phases of existence, even if we come back into the world unable to remember our past lives, not to mention what we experience in the afterlife.

It also means that spiritual beings are present in our earthly reality along with us "solids", and that if we develop our psychic abilities, we

can learn how to communicate with them. I say this as someone whose psychic skills have grown and developed over the years to the point where I can sense non-corporeal sentient beings. That's right--I can pick up on spooks.

The overly cerebral who are reading these words are probably sneering with derision. *Does this idiot woman actually think she can persuade us that there are zillions of phantoms roaming around in this world? Great Caesar's Ghost! She actually wants us to believe that she can see ghosties and ghoulies? She needs to go bump in the night.*

Sorry. We are going to continue with this recital whether you like it or not. Besides, you might feel less skeptical when I add that I am not able to see or hear non-corporeal beings. There are psychics among us who possess the ability known as clairvoyance, the ability to see spiritual beings, or clairaudience, the ability to hear them speak. But at this point in human evolution only the tiniest fraction of us 8 billion physicals have these skills. I am not one of them: I have neither seen nor heard a spiritual being in my life. So I ask you to suspend your skepticism and hear me out. If nothing else, what follows is going to make an entertaining recital, especially since I eventually discovered that the spirits among us are not all that they are cracked up to be.

The first thing we need to examine is what the heck a spiritual being actually is. Ghosts maybe? Well, it just so happens that belief in ghosts is universal in all human cultures and in all historical periods, including our own. The fact that there has never been a society where people have not sensed some kind of non-corporeal beings tells me that in some way these have been valid perceptions. Chances are that at least some of my readers have had a personal experience of hauntings, poltergeists, or other supernatural events. Or maybe when you were a kid, you enjoyed playing with an "imaginary" friend. And when you remember that people tend to find valid emotional truth in the meontic variety of artistic creation, you must allow that at the back of everyone's mind is a sense that there is more to human existence than the illusion which we call solidity.

So who or what are these spirits? Are they dead human beings? Why are they here? Wouldn't they rather be in heaven instead of floating around on this tiresome third rock from the sun--assuming, of

course, that there is such a thing as heaven? Is this what we are in store for when we die? We turn into a ghost who wanders the earth at random? How could this be a rational form of existence?

Well, I have some tentative answers for these questions, but before we get to them, we need to examine another non-corporeal concept which is also universal in human cultures, the idea of a companion spirit or guardian angel. None other than Socrates was convinced that he went through his days accompanied by a guardian spirit. He apparently felt that this spirit was some kind of Divine being, who was not only external to himself but who could give him guidance. At his trial he stated that his spirit was "an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment." [21] Of course, none of this adds up to empirical evidence that Socrates truly did possess a guardian spirit, but it is interesting to see that the father of Western philosophy believed that he did. It is also intriguing that Socrates did not feel that this spirit was the ghost of a former human being but some kind of entity who was wiser than a human mortal and even connected to the idea of the Godhead.

Socrates was not the only figure in history who picked up on a guardian spirit. Ancient Zoroastrians and Sumerians believed that each person went through life accompanied by some kind of spiritual companion, and the latter built altars to these spirits in their homes. The Romans felt that every man had a *genius* and every woman a *juno*: these were considered to be ancestral spirits who watched over their descendants. Belief in guardian spirits has continued into the present day, most usually in the idea of the guardian angel. Here even in our relentlessly secular world, millions of postmoderns are convinced that they are accompanied by a personal angel as they go through their lives.

There have been occasions when a few people have managed to perceive their companion spirits, most frequently during times of crisis. In *The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible* (2009), John Geiger recounts stories of people who sensed some kind of supernatural being at a moment of extreme peril, whom he calls "the third man". Geiger tells a story of one man who was trapped in the World Trade Center after the attack on 9/11 but who then felt someone

or something grab him by the hand and lead him to safety. He was the last person to escape the South Tower before it collapsed.[22]

This kind of experience has repeatedly occurred throughout history. At moments of crisis, aviators, polar explorers, divers, soldiers on the battlefield, mountaineers, sailors lost at sea, and astronauts have perceived a companion or a guardian who helps them escape their peril. My guess is that at times of life-threatening stress, some kind of shift occurs in a person's energy field which enables them to pick up on what are usually non-perceptible energies. The person in danger is able to apprehend one aspect of Reality which has probably never occurred to him, that he is never alone.

As for me, when I was in my late forties I started to perceive signs of spiritual presences in my life, and I was soon convinced that they were very much real. It started when I went to a professional psychic for a consultation. It is true that I like to think of myself as an expert in tarot, but I have learned that an occasional visit to a psychic can be helpful. One thing I have noticed over the years whenever I consult a professional psychic is that s/he will always start to tell you about your companion spirit(s). The first time this happened, I watched in surprise as the psychic focused on the empty space behind my head and then began to tell me what my spirits wanted me to hear. This was not what I had expected--I simply wanted to ask about the assorted issues in my life. Instead she was staring at vacant air and apparently listening to inaudible words. "We are never truly alone," she explained. "Our guardian spirits are always with us, and you have three of them." I think this was the first time I realized that I always had companion spirits with me as I went through my days, even though I could neither see nor hear them. I was neither alarmed nor skeptical when I heard this--I liked the idea and found it vaguely comforting.

But in the years that followed I only rarely thought about these spirits. Indeed, the idea that *I am not alone* never once came into my head when I took a shower or engaged in a popular activity which I thought was private. I also never bothered to research the phenomenon or try to figure out who or what my guardian spirits were. During these years I also continued to work with tarot, but it never occurred to me to use the cards to communicate with my spiritual companions. Tarot

never seemed to be some kind of telephone line to the non-corporeal. It did not even seem like a connection to the Divine. It was just a tool to help me decide what to eat, what to buy, and whom to dump.

However, by the time I was in my mid-forties, something odd started happening in my life. I would get jolted out of my sleep during the night, so strongly that I was instantaneously wide awake. I would then toss and turn restlessly for a couple of hours until I finally went back to sleep. I had always enjoyed getting up early to do my chores before leaving for work, but when the jolts started happening I barely had enough time to get my act together, and I started to go through my days feeling cranky and exhausted. I assumed that the interrupted sleep was being caused by menopause. I made this assumption despite the odd fact that I always woke up at exactly the same time every night. Exactly.

So there did not seem to be anything I could do about the situation except wait until my hormonal adjustments were over and done with. But after it had been going on for about a year, I got some unexpected information about the problem. I had gone to see another psychic for a new consultation, and as we talked she announced out of the blue: "Your interrupted sleep is being caused by something spiritual." I asked for an explanation, and she said that my spiritual companions were waking me up every night.

Well, hearing these words was the first reminder I had had in years that I was going through my life accompanied by companion spirits. However, the idea that they were responsible for my interrupted sleep sounded like nonsense. Why would my spirits, assuming I actually had some, want to wake me out of my sleep? How could they do it? Spirits were airy nothings. It was not as though they were capable of sounding an invisible alarm clock next to my head every night, I mean, come on. No, the problem had to be menopause. I did not say as much to the psychic, however, and the discussion switched to other matters.

But that night something unexpected happened: I slept the whole night through without waking. And for the rest of the week, and then the rest of the month, I slept without waking. This was the first time I had had uninterrupted sleep in over a year. I could only conclude that what the psychic had told me was correct: my guardian spirits had

somehow been waking me up. Now that I understood why the jolts were happening, they had stopped inflicting them upon me. Was this ever the most wonderful change in my life! I started sleeping like a rock again as I had always done.

But after a few weeks the wakeups resumed. This time, however, they did not happen every night. I would get a jolt during the night only once or twice a month, and I soon realized that they happened only when the spirits wanted to communicate something to me. They were trying to tell me that they did not want me to eat something, or do something, or wear something. Once I purchased the most gorgeous chenille sweater, but then I noticed that the spirits were waking me up every time I wore it. So goodbye, sweater. Other times I would get a jolt if I tried a new food which they did not think was right for me. Once when a former boyfriend called me unexpectedly I got a colossal jolt the following night, which was their way of saying *avoid at all costs*. Thanks guys, but you didn't have to bother--this one I had already figured out. Still, it was nice to know that they had the same opinion of my former Mr. Wonderful as I did.

I quickly learned to welcome the jolts. They meant that I had done something wrong or stupid the day before which I needed to correct. I still had to drag myself out of bed the next morning whenever they happened, but I did not mind it that much. It was good to have some guidance other than my cards about what was going on in my life. I soon realized that most of the wakeups were about dietary matters, so eventually I worked out a schedule where the spirits could communicate with me according to the following key. If they woke me up at a particular time, I knew that I needed add fruits or vegetables, fats, nuts or seeds. Or I needed to subtract certain of these foods.

This arrangement worked very well. I started getting NO's about common foods like bananas, olives, coconuts, corn, spinach, grapes, chicken, beets, and dairy. YES's came for strawberries, salmon, quinoa, turkey, cabbage, apples, and oranges. I was always careful to follow the advice the spirits gave me, and after a few months I felt better and stronger than I had in years. It seemed like I was eating the healthiest possible diet for the first time in my life.

several years. Even though I could not see or hear them, sometimes when I was alone I did talk to them, and I expressed my gratitude for their care. I also told some of my tarot-reading friends how they were communicating with me, and one of them mentioned that she wished her own spirits could communicate with her like this as well.

This arrangement lasted until about the end of 2008. At this time everything started to go haywire. The spirits began to wake me up more and more frequently, until by mid-2009 they were waking me up every damn night of the year. In the early days of our arrangement, whenever I figured out what they wanted to tell me thanks to the key I had developed, they would let me sleep for the next few days or even weeks before they felt it necessary to give me a jolt about a new problem. This kind of pattern eventually evaporated. Even when I figured out, for example, what kind of food to subtract from a 1:45 wakeup, the following night they would be after me about a new problem, and I would have to wrack my brains to figure out what it was.

By 2010 I was a wreck. I was going through every day of my life with burning eyes and an unfocused mind. Even when I managed to get back to sleep after a wakeup, I never experienced the deep REM stage of sleep which comes during your final minutes of sleep and which everyone needs to stay healthy. The endless wakeups were aging me, blocking my creative ability, and causing endless physical torment--all of which were much worse than any benefit I might get from a new dietary change.

There was something much worse: whenever I begged the spirits for an occasional night off, right before a day when I had something special planned, they ignored me. I would be blasted out of my sleep as usual, for whatever new reason they had invented, thus ruining an expected day of travel or fun. It was not as though I was asking for much: I just wanted an occasional holiday every four or five weeks. But I did not get it. The wakeups had turned into endless torture, even though by this time in my life I was eating a very limited organic diet and felt fine--except for my constant exhaustion.

The problem was that even with the wakeup key, I always had to

figure out the problem. This was a process which could take days. But I also knew that this problem could be easily solved if I went to see another clairaudient psychic. The psychics I had consulted in previous years were no longer in my area, but I knew that others were around. It seemed logical that if I could find a new psychic, this person would be able to tell me in plain English what the spirits wanted to communicate to me, and then these endless wakeups would cease. Surely this would be a sensible way to end the problem.

But oddly enough, my tarot cards did not like the idea. Every time I asked them if I should go to see a new psychic, I received a distinct NO in response. During 2010 I must have asked this question five or six times, but each and every time I got an unequivocal NO. By this point in my life I trusted the cards with my whole heart. They had never once let me down about any important issue in my life. So when they indicated that they did not approve of a new psychic, I accepted their wisdom. I could only conclude that any new psychic I might go to would not have the ability to hear what the spirits wanted to tell me. I had to continue to work with the wakeup key since nothing else would solve the problem.

So my sleepless torment continued throughout 2010 and into 2011. But since stupidity springs eternal within the human breast, I did not think that the situation would last forever. I was certain that once I finally figured out exactly what the spirits wanted me to eat, uninterrupted sleep would again be mine. After all, these creatures were my guardian spirits. They were in my life to take care of me. That was what guardian spirits do. Right?

Still, it irritated me that they continued to ignore my requests for an occasional night off. Every once in a while I would again ask for a break in the routine, while promising to diligently figure out what the current problem was on the following night. Time after time, these requests were ignored, and I was flabbergasted. I was not asking for anything unreasonable. I was doing my best to figure out what they wanted to tell me, and I was following all their recommendations. There was no doubt in my mind that they heard and understood my requests. Why couldn't I have an occasional holiday from the torment?

But they just wouldn't let me be, oh no. Talk about ungrateful dead.

Looking back, I do not know why I stood it for so long. The fact that I was perhaps the first person in the history of the human race who was having problems with her companion spirits probably had something to do with it. People who had perceived their spirits over the centuries had always been grateful for the help they received from them. I had also read that at the moment of our death our spirits are there to help us make the transition. This is perhaps why the light which dying people see feels like something they have known their whole lives. They are able to move easily into their new reality since their companion spirits are helping them to pass. If I kept getting woken up every night, the problem had to be me instead of them. I was continuing to make dumb choices in my life, and I needed help.

Well, the situation finally fell to pieces in August, 2011 when I wanted to go to the State Fair. I had been looking forward to the event for several weeks, and I wanted to have a good night's sleep prior to the big day. The night before the event I again asked the spirits to let me sleep the whole night through since I would be out in the hot sun the next day. I had not asked them for a special night off for several months by then, and I stressed how much I wanted to have a happy day on the morrow. For once I knew that they would listen to me. I went to sleep that night feeling happy and confident that my sleep would not be interrupted, and I would have a lot of fun the next day.

By the following evening, when I was seething with fury and wracked by a splitting headache, I told the spirits that I had had it. I explained that I no longer had any incentive to listen to what they were telling me since even when I figured out what a current problem was they were after me about something else again right away. Besides, I was long past the point where the wakeups were helping me--by now they were doing nothing except making my life a hell. I told the spirits I was willing to work with them, but I was not going to be bullied any longer, and especially not about a perfectly reasonable request for a night off. From now on I would designate certain days when they could wake me, but if they defied me I would no longer pay them any attention, and I would also tear up the wakeup key.

Needless to say, the next morning key got itself torn up, and that was that. In the weeks that followed the wakeups continued, but I was past caring. They would have continued anyway. I told myself that I was perfectly justified in my defiance, since trying to appease these bullies had worked as well as appeasing Hitler. Sooner or later they would realize that they had to compromise with me if they wanted me to pay attention to them again. In the meantime, I quickly discovered that ignoring them felt almost as pleasant as getting a whole night's sleep. I started to feel like a free human being again for the first time in years, even though the nightly jolts continued as relentlessly as ever.

I suppose this situation would have gone on forever had not something strange happened. During the initial weeks of my rebellion, I continued to sit down with my tarot cards every evening and ask my usual questions. Eventually, however, I noticed something strange about the cards. No matter what question I asked, all I got were NO responses. This started to happen literally 100% of the time. Even when I asked a simple predictive question about whether I should go to the supermarket tomorrow, I would get a NO response--and this despite the fact that when tomorrow came I would go to the store as I had anticipated and return without incident.

Only after this oddity had gone on for several months did I realize why this was happening. The spirits were retaliating to my defiance of them. They had put some kind of hex on my precious cards. Somehow, in some way, they were able to get me to pull the cards that they wanted me to pull, or at least create the kind of energy field in which an oracular tool would be worthless.

I could not believe it at first. How was it possible that they had the power to do this? Wasn't I creating chaos when I shuffled the cards? How could they control that? And even worse: why would they want to? What kind of sentient being would want to block me from oracular information? By this time I had been reading the cards for twenty years and was certain that what I got from them was nothing less than Divine energy. But for the first time in two decades I was being blocked from that which I most treasured. What should I do?

Well, since I was not about to go back to appeasing the bullies, the answer was obvious--I had to stop working with the cards. This

seemed a perfectly reasonable solution. I reminded myself that lots of people didn't bother with divination yet managed to live successful lives. So why couldn't I turn myself back into a . . . normal American? I had once been a normal American, and I could surely become one again without much difficulty.

Alas, this was easier said than done. I quickly discovered that life without oracular guidance was a nightmare. Without the cards my days were bewildering, and my evenings were empty. For the first time in years I started to feel the temptation of that ultimate American curse: couch potatoitis. For me? Even when I didn't own a couch, let alone a television? And if I succumbed to TV and couch, then what? Doritos? Diet Pepsi? *Cosmopolitan* magazine? These Kafkaesque visions of horror started to fry in my mind like a blowtorch. How I had once lived as a normal American I could no longer imagine. The thought of going back to that kind of existence was too obscene to contemplate.

One night in early 2012 I couldn't stop myself from shuffling the cards and asking: "Will the cards become clear if I start listening to the spirits again?" The response I received was a distinct YES. This was the first YES I had seen in months, and it made for a nice little moment of stupefaction. But with a sagging feeling I knew that it had to be true. Since my guardian spirits were representatives of the Divine in my life, it had been wrong of me to defy them. I needed to accept that they knew what was best for me and pay attention to them again, or I would never again be able to access Divine energy.

So I caved. I could not help myself. It was not possible for me to go on with my life unless I had a workable oracular tool. I recreated the wakeup key, I started to note the time when the spirits woke me up, and I did my best to figure out what they wanted to communicate with their nightly jolts. The cards immediately cleared up, and I again started to get an occasional YES about my schemes or desires. But the strange thing was that I continued to get a distinct NO whenever I asked, as I still occasionally did, whether I should see a new clairaudient psychic.

Weeks went by, then months. I had voluntarily walked back into my prison cell, armed with an oracle to be sure, but I was not happy about it. I continued to be irritated by the fact that I still occasionally asked

for a night off, only to be jolted out of my sleep during the night as usual. Nothing I could say or do would stop them from their nightly Blitzkriegs. If nothing else, this continued to infuriate me. But what escape did I have? You cannot strangle the non-corporeal.

This situation continued into the fall of 2012, when for the first time in months I had a special day planned. I was driving to St. Louis the following morning and needed to be alert. So before I went to bed I asked the spirits not to disturb me, just this once, and only because of safety concerns. I reminded them that this was going to be the first time I had driven to St. Louis in ten years, and I needed my sleep. And I added, even though I didn't think it was necessary, "If you wake me up tonight, we're heading into nuclear winter."

Nuclear winter arrived right on schedule the following morning. This time I had absolutely had it. The spirits do anything they liked to me for the rest of my life, but I no longer cared. The wakeup key was destroyed for the last time, and I put the cards away. I think I still possessed one last frail hope that somehow the situation would eventually work itself out. But as for paying attention to the spirits again, that was never going to happen. And when the time came for me to kick the bucket, they had better not be around when it happened, or were they ever going to regret it.

* * *

Well, in a way I was right. The situation did work itself out, but not as I had anticipated. I should have realized that some of the ideas I was focusing on in this part of my life would provide me with the solution. These were the ideas that nothing lasts forever, manipulation stinks, and Divine energy spontaneously forms out of chaos. By this point there was nothing in my life except chaos, but the thought that a solution might unexpectedly appear never once entered my head.

In December, 2012 I heard about a new psychic who was giving readings in my community. and people told me that she was an excellent clairaudient. Despite the fact that the cards had always told me NO about seeing a psychic, I decided to consult her. This was the

first time in two decades that I was defying the cards, but I had nothing left to lose.

So I scheduled an appointment with this lady. She proved to be an intelligent and articulate woman who had once had a career as an engineer in the military, which she had jettisoned in order to start working as a professional psychic. She explained that she was able to both see and hear spiritual beings, although when they appeared to her they communicated more by gesture and symbol than with words. This meant that sometimes all she could do was interpret what the spirits were trying to communicate, but for most of her clients this was enough.

This sounded perfectly acceptable to me. I described my wakeup problem to her, including my willingness to work with the spirits as long as I would not be bullied. She then clarified several things to me which she had learned from her own experiences as a psychic. She explained that all the years I had worked with tarot had turned me into what she called "an open channel", which meant that I had become extremely sensitive to the energies of non-corporeal beings. Whenever you work with an oracular tool, you open yourself up to all sorts of energies, both positive and negative, and if you do this for years you become so sensitive to these energies that malicious spirits can easily disturb you. This was the first time it had occurred to me that my daily use of tarot had created a shift in my energies, but it made sense.

She also told me that she had been born with this kind of openness. When she was a child, she had been so susceptible to the energies of non-corporeal beings that sometimes they could lift her up and throw her against a wall. However, the problem had been solved when she learned how to ask the Archangel Michael for assistance. She recommended that I start doing some shielding techniques and also ask the Archangel Michael to protect the space of my bedroom. She said that she always called in Archangel Michael before a reading with a client to protect the space and make sure that she could link up with the client's energy.

Archangel Michael? I felt disappointed at her suggestion. It didn't surprise me that she was talking about angels, since most of the other psychics I had consulted over the years had also mentioned angels. But

I did not like having either the word or the concept thrown at me. During the days of my youth I had been a good believer in the Presbyterian version of the Christian religion, but that allegiance had fallen into pieces when I turned hippie and began to study other spiritual traditions in the 1970's.

But the psychic obviously believed in angelic reality, and it sounded like she was giving me a practical solution to my problem. But then she hesitated. She said that one of my spirits "doesn't like me telling you this, but I'm telling you anyway. If you set up boundaries with them, they have to listen to them and abide by them." This was welcome news indeed--apparently I had some kind of right according to Divine law to block the wakeups. I made my notes and left the session feeling certain that now my torments would end. I still intended to set aside particular nights when I would permit the spirits to communicate with me, but I felt confident that their waking me up without my permission was now history.

So on that night and for the next few nights I did what she had suggested. I informed the spirits that I did not give them permission to wake me up during the night, I created an energy shield around my bed, and I asked Archangel Michael to protect me while I slept. And--it worked. For the next ten nights I slept the whole night through without waking. It was heaven. I was getting a full eight hours of sleep for the first time in years. This was especially helpful since at that time in my life, I had returned to my former place of employment for a few weeks of temporary work. With eight perfect hours of sleep a night, I was able to glide through my days feeling bright and rested. There was no doubt in my mind that my spiritual nightmare was over.

So I had to admit that an archangel had come through for me. I also realized that since I knew less than nothing about angels, I needed to find out what I could about them. At the library I checked out some of the more recently-published angelology books and took a look at them. However, I was not impressed. The angels on display in contemporary New Age texts come across as creatures of weak intellect who possess all the personality of big warm puppy dogs. This did not strike me as accurate descriptions of these beings, to say the least. Besides, I still had enough residual Protestantism left in me not to want any kind of

mediator between me and the Divine, which was obviously what angels were.

But then I started to discover that it was a mistake to think that angels were a strictly Abrahamic phenomenon. The idea that the Divine sends some kind of benevolent winged messenger to the aid of us humans is as universal in human history as the belief in ghosts. It predates Judaism and possibly goes back to the origins of humanity itself. Sumerian carvings of winged beings still survive from five thousand years ago, and in ancient Greece it was a winged god, Hermes, who delivered the messages of the Divine to humanity. In Egypt the goddesses Isis and Ma'at were depicted with wings, as were the sphinxes. Ancient Hindus did not have angels, but they did have similar figures called *devas*, who were thought to be celestial beings of light. The Buddhists spoke of *bodhisattvas*, Taoists of *heavenly beings*, Japanese of *tenshi*, and Native American of *eagles* or *the corn mother*. Here in our postmodern culture, it seemed as though angels were being sensed more and more in all parts of the world.

This I found to be especially interesting, given the fact that the archangels in particular seemed to be quantum figures in the sense of Schrödinger's cat, who could be in more than one state of being at the same time. In other words, the archangels could be everywhere all at once, speak all languages, and personify all races and genders. If every single one of us 8 billion physical humans asked the Archangel Michael for assistance at the exact same moment, he would be there personally for each one of us. When St. Francis de Sales, whom nobody thought was a lunatic, tells us to "seek to be familiar with the Angels; learn to realise that they are continually present, although invisible," [23] . . . he was right. Wasn't I living proof of that? All I had needed for help with my problem was the assistance of the Archangel Michael, and bam! My problem was history.

It's just that it wasn't. My eight hours of heavenly sleep did not last for two miserable weeks. Without warning the wakeups resumed towards the end of the second week. I was back where I started, getting jolted out of my sleep night after night. Everything that the new psychic had recommended turned to dust and ashes, and my belief in the reality of angelic beings evaporated. I was again at the mercy of my

companion spirits with no remedy in sight.

But this time something was different. During my session with the psychic, I had perceived for the first time what kind of personalities my companion spirits possessed, and I did not like what I had discovered. When the psychic repeated their words to me, all I had heard was petulance, arrogance, and deceit. The deceit was the biggie. There had been one spirit who knew perfectly well that it was within my power to forbid him from tormenting me, but he had tried to stop the psychic from conveying this information to me. For the first time it began to dawn upon me what was going on with my companion spirits. The wakeups which they had been inflicting upon me for years had never come out of genuine concern for my well-being. The spirits had discovered a way to get an addictive fix, specifically the feeling of delight they could experience whenever they prodded a physical being out of sleep.

This was why they could never stop themselves from waking me on the night before a special day--that would have meant going an extra twenty-four hours without shooting up, which never happens with a hardcore junkie. My guardian spirits were as addicted to their substance of choice as all the tedious alcoholics I had known in my physical existence. If you think that a flesh-and-blood addict is a problem, you should try interacting with a non-corporeal one some time. But how could a Divinely-appointed guardian spirit be a junkie? I had no answer. Boy, Socrates never had a problem like this.

Then something else hit me: it had been *them* coming through my tarot cards, at least since 2009. I had not been getting Divine information from my oracular tool--I had been getting messages from a bunch of power-intoxicated junkies determined to maintain their control freakery. This was why the cards had told me repeatedly not to go see a new psychic--the spirits were scared I might find a way to prevent them from waking me up. Like all addicts they were determined to go on with their fixes forever.

It was about this time that I started calling the spirits the Mussolinis, since what were they anyway except a bunch of petty bullies? But how had I ever ended up with these creatures in my life? Had I ever agreed

that they could be my companions? If so, I was obviously as skilled at picking a companion spirit as I was at choosing a boyfriend. But even if the Mussolinis were in my life by my own choice, didn't I have any rights in this situation? Why weren't they obeying my commands not to be woken in the night, as one of them had acknowledged was within my power? Even worse: apparently all the stuff I had dreamed up about ectropy was just a silly fantasy. Form spontaneously emerging out of chaos was not how Divine energy worked. Oh, no--Divine energy meant that you were saddled with a bunch of sadistic bullies whether you liked it or not, and if you turned yourself into an open channel with an oracular tool, you found yourself in a living hell. If this was how the Almighty was running the universe, it was being operated as efficiently as the United States federal government.

It was also at this time that I finally realized that I could no longer continue writing the book which you are now reading. There was no way I could tell other people how to work with an oracular tool if there was any chance they would end up like me, in thrall to the machinations of malicious spiritual beings. Besides, if the Mussolinis could hex my cards, they were probably hexing the book as well. I made a vow to the earth and the stars that I would not go back to work on the book again until the Mussolinis were out of my life. If this meant that I would eventually succumb to Doritos and Pepsi, so be it. There were worse fates. Maybe.

There was one other thing I could do--I could go back to see the psychic and get some new answers. So I made another appointment and sat back down with her a few weeks later. I was all set with a slew of brand new questions, when to my astonishment she announced that I had now acquired a fourth spirit. O was this ever a wonderful thing to hear! Three Mussolinis were not enough--somebody had decided to saddle me with a fourth. I could only conclude that when I had stopped writing the book, I had turned into a really really bad girl who needed some stronger bullying, and only, of course, for my own good.

But then the psychic explained something I had not anticipated: this new spirit was not a guardian which had been assigned to me, but some kind of mischievous human ghost who had just latched onto me. Apparently an open channel like myself was a very attractive kind of

entity to the poltergeists among us. This was why the new spook was here--it wanted to have some fun, and what better way for a spirit to have fun than by getting a reaction out of a physical being?

Well, given the fact that I had been working in an office again during the preceding few weeks, this made sense. For the first time in years I was spending hours each day in a public environment, so it was not surprising that a new Mussolini had discovered me.

Here I must digress for a moment and say something about my professional career, such as it was. I spent most of my working life pushing useless paper at a public university, an experience which has left me with limitless contempt for (1) American higher education, (2) government bureaucracy, and (3) public-sector unions. Working as a civil service peon was not how I wanted to live out my life, but it was another of my ghastly pre-tarot mistakes. So it did not surprise me to discover that my place of employment doubled as a hangout joint for malicious spirits. The only surprise was that I had acquired only one new one, instead of several dozen.

The psychic then explained that of my three original Mussolinis, only one of them was some kind of designated Divine companion. The other two had also been wandering human ghosts who had latched onto me over the years, as the fourth had recently done. She explained that unlike a companion spirit, these beings are the spirits of humans who once possessed physical incarnation but who remained on earth after death instead of crossing over into a new plane of reality. Apparently if you are afraid that you are going to hell once you die, or if you are too hopelessly attached to your earthly existence, you balk at the thought of leaving earth's physical reality when you pass, and you elect to stay on earth right where you are.

I tried to imagine what it must be like for these spirits to remain on earth as non-corporeal beings. Of course they could wander the world at will, watch the Super Bowl without having to pay for it, and hang around the people they are still obsessed with. It's just that there would be no more eating, drinking, video games, creature comforts, productive work, or sex. All this means, I suppose, that life as a wandering spirit can be as big a drag as our humdrum physical lives,

especially if you leave the flesh still in thrall to your various addictions.

But if you can latch onto a vulnerable physical being from whom you can get a reaction, which is otherwise known as being a poltergeist, you get to wallow in lots of fun-filled excitement. I had never paid much attention to poltergeist stories over the years, nor to those accounts of people who conjured up malicious spirits when they messed with an Ouija board. Still, this was obviously what had happened to me. It also explained why my Mussolinis were still in thrall to their assorted addictions. They were spirits who had dragged their bad habits along with them when they died. The greatest spiritual sages have told us that we need to release our attachments to earthly things when we pass into spirit, or else we will continue to be saddled with our negative energies in our new reality. This is the reason why Catholic and Orthodox priests administer the last rites to the dying--the idea is to wipe the soul clean. This had always struck me as a helpful thing to do, although I did not think you necessarily needed a priest to facilitate it.

Well, okay--that explained what was going on, but not how to end it. Fortunately the psychic now suggested a new solution to my problem. She explained that there was a ritual I could perform which would propel my tormentors into that place where they did not want to be, out of our earthly reality and into a different plane of being. There were several steps to this ritual. I first needed to ask Archangel Michael for help to solve this problem and give him permission to help me. Then I needed to envision a stairway leading upwards into the sky with a door at the top of the stairs. Next I would imagine myself climbing these imaginary stairs until I reached the door and opened it. Finally I would ask Archangel Michael to push my tormentors through the opening. Once he did it, I would mentally close the door and imagine it disappearing into nothingness. Then I needed to imagine myself walking back down the stairs to the earth. She told me that if I did as she suggested, the problem would be over.

Well, I again tried to hide my disappointment. During the preceding weeks, I had asked the Archangel Michael, in whom I still did not quite believe, to protect me from my nightly torments, but the Blitzkriegs

had continued without surcease. Whoever or whatever Michael was, he must have had better things to do, such as rewriting Catholic dogma or something. There did not seem to be much likelihood of him handing me a miracle, especially since miracles are few and far between in contemporary America. Still, the psychic seemed convinced that this would work. She even reported that my Mussolinis had started yelling at her as she told me about it. That was encouraging. Well, I had nothing to lose, so I decided to give it a try.

So on the night of February 11, 2013, I did it. I asked for and gave permission for the angels to help me, closed my eyes, and then envisioned the stairway. I imagined myself climbing upwards into the stars, opening the door, and then standing there high above the earth with the imaginary door wide open. For some moments I remained motionless, holding out my hand as it clutched a non-existent door handle and feeling like the world's biggest idiot.

But then something happened. Not that it was something I could see, since my eyes were closed, but all of a sudden I felt several whooshes rushing past me as if blasts of air were zapping through the room. But the windows were closed, and the room was perfectly still. Nevertheless, the sensation that something had happened was very vivid, and I froze with astonishment. I waited for a few seconds more, and when it seemed like the whooshes were over, I closed the imaginary door and made it go poof. I imagined myself descending the stairs back to my house, and then opened my eyes. There was nothing to see except my ordinary and very empty living room. I neither saw nor heard anything unusual.

But then my whole body began to shiver as if I had just jumped into an icy pool of water. Every square inch of my skin was tingling, not with an unpleasant sensation, but in a way that I had never felt before. It also felt as though something which had been clawing at me had been pried off my chest. I sat down in a state of utter astonishment, hardly able to breathe, and waited for the shivering to wear off, which it did after about ninety seconds. I had returned to normal, but I could tell that some kind of energy shift had indeed taken place.

Merciful heavens, the miracle had happened! Archangel Michael had come through for me as the psychic said he would! The Mussolinis

were gone! I had actually felt them being zapped through the imaginary door! I now believed! Yes, I truly believed! The angels were real, and they would help you if you asked them! My spiritual torment was finally at an end. So the only thing left to do was live happily ever after.

Which I did thankfully, gratefully, joyfully for the next two sleep-blessed nights--until the wakeups resumed as usual on the third night after the "miracle".

* * *

Ah, the delights of life after you experience a genuine angelic intervention in your life! Complete with whooshes, shivers, prying loose of invisible critters, and other marvelous side effects! How do you feel when you get an experiential validation that a miracle has happened, only to have everything collapse into the same old torture a few nights later? Why, you go through your days beside yourself with fury at the Heavenly Host and the con artists who comprise it. Some angels they were. Pow! Pow! Pow! Night after night I started getting the wakeup jolts again as usual, exactly as I had gotten them for the previous several years.

Still, I was convinced that *something* had happened on the night of the stairway miracle. And I remembered that during my first interview with the psychic one of the Mussolinis had said that it was within my power to forbid them to wake me up, so every night before I went to bed I announced into the emptiness:

As of this moment in time, I do not give permission to any spiritual being to wake me out of my sleep between now and the rising of the sun tomorrow morning. Repeat: I do not allow it. Repeat: I forbid it. Archangel Michael, I give you permission to enforce this prohibition.

It was a useless exercise in futility. The Mussolinis continued to indulge in their nightly joyrides as if these words had not been spoken. As for the Archangel Michael, he continued to sit on his hands. The

only change I noticed was that maybe, just maybe, the nightly jolts were a little weaker. But that was not saying much.

There was nothing to do except schedule another appointment with the psychic, which I did two weeks later. And when I sat down with her again, the first thing she told me, to my surprise, was that I now had only one spirit left in my life. The other three were gone. So the whooshes and the shivers I had felt on 2/11/13 had indeed been real. The Archangel Michael had removed three of my tormentors from my life--but not the fourth, who was continuing to wake me up. Why why why?

The psychic then explained that my fourth remaining spirit had been with me all of my life, and he was my designated companion spirit. She added that many lifetimes ago he had been my twin brother when we were both priests dedicated to a tribal sun god. She said that he did not understand what he had been doing to me, nor did he realize that I was now a woman instead of a man. She suggested that if he and I had a talk, he would voluntarily leave my life.

So as politely as I could I explained to him that I could no longer tolerate the nightly wakeups he was inflicting upon me. I also told him that I did not have the slightest intention of completing my book as long as he was in my life, so I asked him to voluntarily leave. The psychic conveyed that he understood what I was saying. And then she told me the words that I desperately wanted to hear: he was agreeing to go. Sweet relief flowed through me, and for the third time I left the session feeling certain that my problem would be solved.

Now here comes an interesting question: guess what happened that very night? And the nights that followed? I should have remembered that the only energy coming out of this particular fraternal being was deceit, plus a furious determination to maintain his power position. A few nights later I did the stairway exorcism again, but no whooshes and no shivers were perceptible. The angels were not willing to shove him through the door any more than he was willing to voluntarily take his leave. I was back where I started.

So what next? Go back to see the psychic again? She had apparently exhausted her suggestions and could not help me any further. Nor could the angels. Everything else I had tried was no help--I

had attempted shielding, blocking, forbidding, exorcizing, prayer, charms, crystals, and protective talismans. Nothing had helped. This last spirit was my designated companion, so I was stuck with him. This meant, of course, that *The Compleat Psychic* was kaput. I told myself that the only thing left to do was forget it all and go buy a television.

But there was still a part of me which refused to accept defeat. I had long been convinced that there always was a way out of everything. And I suddenly realized that what I had been doing in this mess was trying to *manipulate* myself out of it, so no wonder I had failed. Well, how do you escape what seems to be a hopeless entrapment without manipulation? Couldn't any of the energy laws I had devised help me? It occurred to me that if I started throwing blessings and forgiveness at Brother Mussolini, it might help. In an interconnected universe, he might realize that when he tormented me he was only tormenting himself. But even as the thought entered my head, I knew it would not work. This creature lived for one thing only--to get a reaction out of a physical being. Every time he jolted me out of my sleep, he had his fix. It was true that someday he would get his inevitable Cosmic Boomerang, but I was not too eager to wait several more decades for that to happen.

These dismal thoughts left me very depressed until I remembered that I had another angel in my life, and a human one at that. This was a being who had been one of my guiding lights ever since the days of my misbegotten youth, when I had taken his teachings to heart. I am of course referring to that great American bodhisattva, that giant of American letters, that superb interpreter of human reality who was right about everything (almost). Yes, I mean none other than the great Ralph Waldo Emerson. If there was anyone who could get me out of my mess, it had to be him.

I know, I know. Most of my readers have never been too impressed with the great Waldo, if only because their eyes tend to glaze over when they try to decipher his prose. Still, along with Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, the Sage of Concord has always been one of my luminaries. One nice thing about Emerson is that he liked angels. He had even written a poem about one of them, the archangel Uriel, whom he portrays as a nicely quantum figure.[24] And I had not

forgotten the one thing that Emerson hits you over the head with time and again: when you find yourself trapped in a dead anything, you need to break free of it and move into new space and freedom. This is something which gothic writers like H. P. Lovecraft never quite figured out. "No man can come near me but through my act," Emerson tells us in *Self-Reliance* (1841)[25], which means that Cthulhu can only shove you around if you let him. In one way or another, I realized that this was what I had been doing with my remaining Mussolini.

I also remembered that the psychic had told me that malicious spirits had been able to torment her as a child only because she believed that they actually did have power over her. When she had realized that she was not helpless in the face of her tormentors, the problem had stopped. Well, perhaps this was my weakness. I had to find a way out of my fears. Granted I had always felt helpless against my tormentors, but perhaps that was just another illusion.

So I got my confidence back. I started to wonder what Waldo would do to get rid of a Mussolini and soon decided upon the first step: I needed to emotionally detach from this situation, cut my losses, and focus on new space and freedom. Since I had already done this to some extent, it was easy enough to accomplish. It then occurred to me that somewhere along the line I might have entered into a legal agreement which allowed Brother Mussolini into my life, which would explain why the angels had not shoved him through the door with his fellow addicts. If this were true, why couldn't I simply declare the agreement to be null and void? The psychic had stressed that there was one great Divine law, that of free will, which was why you always have to give the angels *permission* to help you when you ask them for assistance. Well, if one Divine law existed, there were probably others. Surely I had the right to terminate a relationship if I wanted to, regardless whether it was with a physical or spiritual being.

I also realized that I could take back all the energy I had been throwing at him over the years, which was obviously something he had been thriving on. This is how the heroine of that superb triumph of American cinema called *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) defeats the monster who is terrorizing her neighborhood. Do you suffer under the delusion that there is nothing of value to be found in legacy slasher

movies? You should take a look at the famous *Nightmare*. In this film our heroine Nancy has to contend with a monster named Freddy, who may or may not be a spirit. She does everything she can to destroy him, including setting several intricate booby traps, none of which eventually works. But then she remembers something that her boyfriend, who is none other than a seventeen-year-old Johnny Depp, calls "the Balinese way of dreaming." He tells her that if you meet a monster in your dreams, "instead of screaming and getting all nuts" at him, you simply have to turn your back on him, and he's toast. So the next time Nancy encounters Freddy, she tells him: "I take back every bit of energy I ever gave you; you're nothing, you're shit." And it works. He disappears into the void.

What a perfect Emersonian solution! If anything would work, this would be it! So I devised a new proclamation to recite as follows:

This is a message for my companion spirit. As of this moment in time I no longer give you permission to be in my life, my consciousness, my house, or my environment. If ever I gave you permission to be in my life I now declare that agreement to be null and void. And I take back all the energy I've given to you--it's my energy and I can do what I please with it. I do not give you or any spiritual being permission to wake me out of my sleep between this moment in time and the rising of the sun tomorrow morning, nor for any day or night for the rest of my life. I sever the connection between you and me from this moment back to the beginning of time and into the endless future. I sever it, I sever it, I sever it. Archangel Michael, I give you permission to enforce this prohibition.

When I recited these sentences, I did what is called an energy *uncording*. This is a shamanic technique which helps you to cut the invisible links of energy which might exist between you and another being whom you want out of your life. You break the energy links by imagining some kind of cord or chain coming out of each of your chakras and which are also attached to the chakras of the other person. You then unhook the cords from your energy field and make them

vanish. If you do this frequently enough, you will be able to break the residual connections which might still exist between you and the person you want to forget.

So at the end of my recital I did the uncording, but not by unhooking the energy connection from my chakras. I wanted something more violent, so I used a butcher knife from the kitchen. Every time I uttered the word sever, I sliced through the invisible cords one by one. And . . . the first night I did the severance nothing happened. The second night I felt a shiver as I recited the words, as if someone were trying to stop me, but the wakeup happened again that night as usual. The third night was yet another wakeup. Still I persisted. And on the fourth night--no shiver and no wakeup. Ditto for the fifth night, the sixth, the seventh and the eighth. Another week went by without wakeups, and then another. I realized that I had done it. The last of the Mussolinis was history.

And in the weeks and months which followed, I got my sleep, my blessed sleep, my deep REM sleep, night after beautiful night. When I went to see the psychic again, she confirmed that I had a new companion spirit, a nice young gentleman named Peter who bowed courteously when he introduced himself to me (if only I had been able to see it!), and who told me that he was in my life because I needed to get out more and have some fun. Well, I promised to do what I could, even though my number one priority was getting back to writing the book which you are now reading.

* * *

So much for the Mussolinis. It is now time to examine the lessons learned from this experience and how they impact the practice of oracular consultation. Here we go:

Each of us goes through our life with a designated companion spirit. We are never alone in this world. Before we are born, we agree that a certain sentient being will be our companion spirit during our upcoming incarnation, and this spirit is with us every second of our physical life. He or she is probably a former family member or

someone to whom we were attached in a previous existence. I suspect that over the centuries, not only have most of us humans repeatedly passed in and out of physical incarnation, we have at one time or another been a companion spirit to a sentient being about whom we care deeply.

Each of us goes through our lives not only with a companion spirit, but with guardian angels as well. The psychic had explained to me that our guardian angels are what the Christian tradition calls the archangels, beings such as Gabriel, Raphael, or Michael. They are friends who will come to your assistance if you ask and give them permission to do so. If nothing else, just knowing that you are going through your days with Michael or Raphael beside you can shift you into a new kind of reality.

As a citizen of the universe, you have rights. There are Divine laws in place which can help us physicals if we need it. The laws I have figured out go like this:

- You have the right to opt out of any agreement you made about your companion spirit before you were born.
- If you or a psychic senses that more than one spirit is attached to you, the others are probably human spirits who have latched onto you.
- If the spirits in your life start making trouble for you, the angels will help you get rid of them.
- Even though everything is interconnected, you are entitled to put some distance between your own energy field and that of another being who is tormenting you.
- The angels will not help you unless you ask and *give them permission* to do so.

Permission is necessary. The last law in the above list was (and is) something which I find troubling. You can beg the Divine or the angels for assistance every second of your life, but they are not going to lift a finger to help you unless you also specifically give them *permission* to do so. During all the long years when my tormentors had turned my life into hell, not once did my guardian angels lift a finger to assist me. Well, I can see now that this was only because I never realized that I had to give them permission to do so. Okay, all right.

The problem here is that the crucial bit of information about *giving permission* has never been recorded in any sacred scripture I have ever encountered, and I have encountered quite a few. Mystics don't mention it, nor do theologians, nor any religious organization with which I am familiar. All those thinkers who have agonized about the presence of evil in human civilization over the centuries were right about one thing--evil is the price humanity has to pay for free will. But it has never occurred to a single philosopher, educator, theologian, or sage in human history that giving permission for Divine intervention could help ameliorate or even stop the problem of evil. Why haven't people known about the permission part of the equation over the centuries? Especially when they have obviously been picking up on winged messengers from the Divine for millennia? Over the centuries billions of prayers for assistance have gone to the Divine, but how many of those supplicants have realized that they also had to give permission if they wanted Divine assistance? Not very many, to be sure.

But even if people had known about the permission side of it, would that have stopped all the atrocities which human beings have inflicted on each other over the centuries? More specifically, if a certain president had asked for and given permission to the Archangel Michael to protect him when he attended a performance at Ford's Theater in 1865, would that have stopped the bullet? If the children getting shoved into the gas chambers had given their guardian angels permission to help, would they have been saved?

Well, I have no answers to these questions, and I doubt that anyone does. What matters is that at least some of the time angelic assistance can happen. I was living proof of that. And in a world where more and

more people are beginning to understand that the angels can help them if they do give the necessary permission, this might mean that in the future the human depravity rate might start to diminish. This is not everything, but it is something. If you ask an angel for and give him/her permission to help you, chances are that s/he will come through for you.

Self-reliance matters. The psychic gave me as much help as she could, but my problem was finally solved when I figured things out by myself. I have always believed that self-reliance should be everyone's first recourse when confronted with a difficulty. You do not want to spend every day of your life bugging anyone else, including your angels, about problems which you are able to solve yourself. So take another look at Emerson's *Self-Reliance*. Then reread it until you have practically got it memorized. You will be glad you did.

Sometimes it pays to watch Johnny Depp movies. Gotcha.

The misadventures I experienced will not necessarily happen to novices. A novice diviner should not be afraid of the adventures which I have described in this chapter. If nothing else, your own guardian spirit, and I guarantee that you have got one, is unlikely to be a power-addicted bully. But if as the years go on you start to sense that things are going wrong with your divination, or that you are able to sense some kind of negative energy around you, the problem might be caused either by your companion spirit or by other malevolent spirits. You will know for sure what kinds of energies the spirit(s) around you are putting out by consulting your oracular tool.

* * *

The worst part of the events I have described in this chapter was the discovery that it had been a deceitful bunch of power junkies who had been coming through my tarot cards. My torment would not have gone on as long as it did if my cards had not insisted, repeatedly, that I needed to stay clear of clairaudient psychics. I trusted those cards, and

I spent several extra years in hell.

When it was finally over, I could not help wondering what had happened in the fifteen years or so before the wakeup problems started, when I thought I was getting valuable advice from my cards. The psychic was of the opinion that the cards only started to go wrong for me when I began to write about a certain little something called ectropy. She felt that my interest in chaos had somehow created a shift in my energy field, which the Mussolinis were able to take advantage of. Well, this explanation made sense, and it was eventually confirmed by the cards when I resumed reading them. Which I now do again all the time.

The psychic has also taught me that there is a guaranteed way to ensure that only the energies of the Divine come through your oracular tool, regardless of what tool you use. If you adhere to the following steps before you sit down with your oracle, it will do precisely what it is supposed to do, convey to you information from the Divine:

Pick a quiet space and time for your reading. You always need to make sure that the area in which you will do your reading is quiet and free of distractions. In other words, do not try to consult an oracle with the television blaring, or when you are messing with the computer, or talking on the phone. I have also learned never to read the cards at the office or when my head is spinning. Experience tells me that the evenings are the best time to consult an oracle, especially during the twilights when energies are settling. In the Homeric poems, the gods would usually appear in the twilight, perhaps because Divine energies are most easily perceptible to us humans at this time. Of course, there will be occasions when you cannot wait for an evening reading. I always carry around a miniature tarot deck for those times when I need an answer. I usually get an accurate answer at these times, but I have learned never to ask a question of major importance unless I am at home and the energies are settled.

Recite your favorite prayer or mantra. Before you touch the cards, you need to bring sacred energy into your space by reciting a favorite

prayer or mantra. This helps to knock you out of spacetime reality, if only for a moment. Since I have long believed that the more Sanskrit words you speak in your life, the better, I recite *Gayatri Mantra* before each reading:

Om bhur bhuvah svah
Tat-savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yo nah pracodayat.

This is one of the most popular Sanskrit mantras and can be translated as: "May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the god: So may he stimulate our prayers." [26]

Ask and give permission for the purpose of your reading. After you clear the space, you need to say what you wish to accomplish when you consult your oracular tool. This is easy enough to do, since in my opinion your intent must at all times and under all circumstances be one thing only: the greatest good of the universe. In other words, you should never think about yourself alone when you start asking questions of your oracle--you have also got to consider how your desires or plans of action will affect the other jewels in Indra's Net. Like it or not, there is a chance that the kind of information you wish to access might send out some kind of negative energy to another sentient being. Now that you realize the kind of karmic nastiness you will incur if and when this happens, this is not something you want to do. In antiquity the greatest good of the universe was known as the *summum bonum*. This expression was used by the Roman writer Cicero, [27] and it will be used for the remainder of this book.

Ask Archangel Michael to protect the space of your reading. The last thing you need to do before your reading is ask the Archangel Michael to protect your space. It is only with his protection that you will be able to prevent malicious spirits from coming through your oracular tool. You can do this by reciting the following words:

O Divine Light, if it is for the *summum bonum*, I ask and give permission that on this day and night and every day and night for the rest of my life, that Archangel Michael will protect the space of these readings, that only angels or the Divine will give me information through these cards, and that I thank them for the information which I will receive.

The above steps are all it takes to guarantee that Divine energy will come through your oracular tool. My own cards have been crystal clear ever since I started following them. But one more thing needs to be mentioned, namely that something unexpected started happening to me when I resumed working with the cards. I started seeing angels. Literally. That is to say, I repeatedly began to pull one of the three angel cards in the Smith deck: the Lovers, Temperance, and Judgment.

Whenever I do a reading these days, sooner or later one or more of these cards will start appearing, not just once but several times, no matter what questions I ask. They are a sign to me that during the reading, I am truly receiving Divine energy. I expect that most other people who preface their oracular consultations with the above steps will also start pulling one or more of the Smith angel cards repeatedly as well. If you do not see them when you work with the cards, or if everything seems muddled, something about the energies of your reading is off, and you need to try again at a different time.

Whew! Thank goodness all this is over! It is now time to proceed to our next topic: how we can devise the best possible questions to put to an oracle.

Chapter 6. Question Preliminaries.

Believe it or not, the kind of question you ask your oracle can matter much more than the answer you receive. This means that the more carefully you frame your oracular questions, the better. Don't believe me? Well, over the years I have known tarot practitioners who were as screwed up as any human beings I have ever met in my life. These were people who consulted the cards about everything in their lives, so much so that they lived and breathed nothing but tarot. But year after year they remained stuck in emotional turmoil about people and relationships, their lack of self-awareness was stupendous, and they went through their lives without making the slightest effort to change. Not that they ever noticed any of their negative energies. They were convinced that they were always doing everything right, thanks to tarot. But the cards were not doing anything for them except perpetuating their weaknesses.

Wait a minute. People who work with oracular tools are not supposed to be like that, right? Well, not quite. An oracular tool can be as badly misused as any other human tool. Divinatory skill can make for a more successful life, but you need something more than oracular smarts if you want that success. Are you aware of what happened in Greece in the year 383 BCE? One beautiful day the Oracle of Delphi was destroyed in an earthquake. That's right, the most famous oracular temple in antiquity got itself flattened. What is interesting about this historical fact is that the resident pythoness of the time *did not see it coming*. How's that? If you are the most celebrated seer in your culture, aren't you supposed to know something about the future? Especially when everything on your home ground is about to be destroyed? I guess so . . . but still, the upheaval apparently took everyone by surprise.

There have been other examples in history of oracles not doing anyone the slightest bit of good. I have always considered the Chinese Yi Jing to be the most powerful oracle ever devised. On the other hand, when you look at Chinese history, you have got to wonder how helpful the Yi Jing has been in Chinese civilization over the centuries. The history of that country is one of unrelieved brutality, bloodshed, and

political tyranny, which continues to the present day thanks to Beijing's current crew of unelected Marxist despots. One of my theories about divination is that it can help you live a more successful life. Well, if any people have been skilled at divination over the centuries, it has to be the Chinese. Nevertheless, their oracular expertise has never helped the culture as a whole develop any sense of human rights or democracy. How can you have a workable oracular tool on the one hand but relentless tyranny on the other?

The answer is simple: if you do not know how to ask the right kind of question of your oracle, you will get nowhere fast. So how can you determine what kind of questions you need to ask? Here are some suggestions:

Whenever you notice some kind of odd coincidence or pattern . . . which is also known as synchronicity, you are encountering a message to which you need to pay attention. Then you should ask your cards what this message might mean.

Sleep on it. In other words, pay attention to your dreams since they can also convey messages to you. Also the first thought in your head when you wake up in the morning is frequently a message. J.R.R. Tolkien tells us in *The Two Towers* that "Rede oft is found at the rising of the Sun," rede being a decision or a solution. Your cards will verify whether or not you need to pay attention to your dawn insights.

Practice Occam's Razor. This is the idea that the simplest explanation is usually the correct one. The term comes from 14th century English philosopher William of Occam, who understood that simplicity always possesses more truth than complexity. So when devising your questions, keep your focus to the simple instead of the complex.

If you are hopelessly stuck about something, moving from Point A to Point B can help your thoughts move into new space. In other words, get out and take a walk or go for a drive. The mind starts moving when the body moves, and when your mind moves, it can help you realize what really matters in your life. With this you will be able

to ask the best possible questions of your cards.

Pay attention to paradoxes . . . such as the idea that we have to die in order to live. Comprehending paradoxes is not the easiest thing in the world to do, but when you manage it, it can be a revelation. So when you notice a paradox, try to understand what message you need to receive from it and then ask your cards if you are correct.

There is no finding Truth without knowledge. The more you learn over the years about the world around you, the more you will be able to utilize an oracle effectively. And if you want knowledge, you need only one recommendation: *read!*

Truth comes from the energies of the stars. The greatest sages have always been star-gazers. It is never enough to achieve wisdom from learning or experience--you have also got to know something about the eternal energies of the cosmos. Dante tells us in the *Paradiso* that Divine wisdom is communicated to us through the stars,[28] which is an idea that I like. So if you are hopelessly stuck about something, start watching the stars. The information you will receive about beauty, transformation, patterns, vastness, silence, light, interconnection, and harmony will start to resonate within you. And the eventual answers you will receive from your oracle will make perfect sense.

* * *

Here are more suggestions about how to create an effective oracular question:

Make your questions *confirmational*. In other words, before you sit down with your oracle, you should first examine your issues as dispassionately as you can and then decide upon what you logically conclude to be the best interpretation. The necessity of preliminary thinking cannot be stressed enough: you should first think things through, do research if you have to, or talk to people whom you trust.

Once you have determined what you believe to be the truth about your situation or a potential plan of action, only then do you go to your oracle to see if it confirms your conclusion. This means that you should try to frame most of your oracular queries as follows:

- I have concluded that _____ is the truth, or the best plan of action, or an event which will occur in the future. Am I correct?

With a confirmational format like this, you will then be able to get what is the most easily decipherable oracular response: a YES or a NO. So instead of asking your oracle, "Which option should I choose, A or B?", you would ask: "I've concluded that Option A is the best course of action for me. Am I correct?" The answer you receive will usually be very clear. "You conquer fate by thought," says Thoreau.[29] Bulls-eye.

Focus on what you want. When you create your confirmational question, you should always frame it so that a YES response will be the answer that you want. For example, if you ask about something which you do not want to happen and then pull several negative energy cards, you probably will not understand what you are seeing. Are the cards commenting upon the energies of the situation (it is a bad one), or are they advising you not to do something? Neither interpretation will seem convincing.

So if you want to ask your oracle if your boyfriend is lying to you, which is something you desperately hope is *not* happening, you do not frame your question as: "I have concluded that Ben is lying to me. Am I correct?" Instead you ask: "I've concluded that Ben is telling me the truth. Am I correct?" With the second question, if you pull negative cards, the answer will be crystal clear: no, he's not. Pulling positive cards would also be clear: Ben is telling you the truth.

The questions you ask an oracle should concern your own energies. If you like, you can ask your oracle about everything under the sun, including koala bears in Australia. But whether you will get accurate

answers to questions like these is a different matter. This means that you will get the best responses from your oracle when you specifically focus on your own issues. This is usually what you're curious about anyway. It is also reasonable to ask questions about the energies of other people around you. But one thing you will probably discover as you become more experienced with an oracle is that it is most accurate when you ask questions only about yourself.

You should never ask a question of an oracle unless you are certain you can deal with a disappointing response. Whenever people consult an oracle, they only want to hear positive news. This yearning is as true for novices as it is for experienced diviners--I personally never sit down with the cards without hoping that they will approve my latest ideas. The nice thing here is that most people's futures are positive. They might not get everything they want out of life, but chances are that no unexpected disaster will occur during their existence. And reasonable personal goals can usually be met.

But what on earth are you supposed to do if your oracle tells you that something you have got your heart set upon is not going to happen? Suppose that someday you very much want to have children. You are hoping for two successful pregnancies and two healthy babies. What is wrong with asking an oracle (or a professional psychic for that matter) if this will happen? Surely things will be easier for you at this point in your life if you know that your desire to be a mother will eventually be fulfilled.

The problem is that your oracle/psychic might tell you that it is not going to happen, that's what. And then what are you supposed to do? The negative answer you get for a question like this can easily ruin years of your life, even if it eventually proves false.

I have already mentioned one universal fact about oracles, namely that they are not always correct. And there are also times when a reader does not interpret the answer correctly. I cannot count how many occasions there have been in my life when I was certain that I was understanding the response I was getting from my cards, only to have the expected result not materialize. When I went back and reexamined the cards I had pulled, I realized that the problem was my

interpretation, not the cards. I wanted something so much that I misread them. This is something which can happen to anyone, even to the most gifted psychic.

So if you very much want to be a mother someday, or if you are curious about any other kind of desire which means a great deal to you, do not ever ask an oracle/psychic if it will happen. The last thing you need to have in your head as you are being wheeled into the delivery room is that damn psychic who told you five years ago that you would never have children.

You also do not want to read the cards before a court appearance, a heavy date, or a job interview. You should never even ask an innocuous question like "how should I best handle the interview?" prior to the actual interview. If you pull only negative cards as a response, you will not be able to stop yourself from thinking that somehow this negativity is going to manifest in your interview. You will walk into the interview feeling tense and worried. A negative oracular pronouncement can sometimes turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

On the other hand, there is no harm in asking about your prospects for getting the job *after* the interview or other event is over. This would be preferred to waiting days or weeks to hear if you are going to be hired.

Concentrate on one issue at a time. Do not ever sit down with an oracle and ask about conflicting desires, such as how you can relocate to the Sun Belt as well as find a new man in your life. After all, it might be difficult to maintain a new relationship if you move a thousand miles away. If you have a lot of conflicting desires at a particular point in your life, what you need to do is make a list, prioritize them as best you can, and then ask your oracle if you have correctly ranked them according to their importance. Your oracle will help you determine what matters most to you at this time in your life, and you can take it from there.

Keep things reasonable. It should be a self-evident truth that you cannot ask an oracle to help you achieve something which is wildly out of reach in your current existence. So don't bother to ask how you can

escape your job and move to Maui. Don't ask for the perfect Alpha male. Most important of all, don't think that if you bug your oracle long enough and hard enough, it will tell you how to fulfill every last damn desire you possess. Having it all has never happened to any sentient being in the history of the universe, and it is not going to happen to you.

Don't play games with your oracle. You need to treat your oracle with respect, as you would with any venerable sage. This means that you do not want to waste its time or play silly games with it, such as asking it whether you should break into Ft. Knox next Saturday. You also do not want to bug your oracle with trivialities. There have been too many times in my life when I ask the cards yet another nuisance question, only to discover that they responded with *honey, I don't give a shit what you do*. Alas, this was something I needed to see.

Be cautious about three divinatory issues. My own experience as a professional psychic has shown me that there are three main issues about which people want answers, and each one of them is stuffed to the gills with toxic energy. These are questions about (1) love, (2) manipulation, and (3) money. That's right--these three demon-driven obsessions will usually do nothing but make you miserable when you desire them and blow up in your face if you actually get them.

What the hell are you saying now? I know I would be happy if someone loved me! My life will finally start working when I can get my kids to listen to me! When I finally get a raise, I will be out of debt at last--and I can buy the new Jacuzzi! What else is there to ask an oracle about anyway?

Yes, I know--chances are that you're reading this book so you can get your hands on MORE of one of the above, right? Oh, stop it with the cognitive illusions already. We now need to examine why these three topics are so noxious. It is now time for you to grit your teeth and force your eyeballs to focus on the following.

Love. Countless single people have gone to fortune tellers over the

centuries for help with one desire only: finding the right mate. Maybe one of those tall, dark, and handsome men with money who have been promised to the Miss Lonelyhearts of this world by any fortune teller worth her crystals. There are surely enough of these guys to go around, right? Well, if you ask me, you should never waste your time asking an oracle whether the right partner will come into your life. Or even worse: you should never ask how you can make the right partner come into your life. If you are currently unhappy about your solitary existence, what you need to do is start thinking about the kinds of changes you could make in your energies which would attract a good mate.

Here you need to remember that you can never falsify your energies. If you have been going out on dates telegraphing energies of greed or narcissism, it is no wonder that you are still single. On the other hand, if you start radiating out more positive energies like serenity or gratitude, your chances of finding a good mate will increase exponentially. The catch is that you have actually got to have those positive energies within you since they cannot be faked. The thing to do is ditch the negative and bring in the positive.

Manipulation. I have already mentioned that when I first began to read cards professionally, a majority of clients came to me with control questions. They would tell me about a person in their environment who was not behaving the way they were supposed to: husband was drinking too much, mother would not stop nagging, boss was a bitch, or kid was disobedient. Ah, those people in our lives who just will not listen to our superior wisdom! Whatever can we do to change them for the better? Why, we go to a professional psychic, of course, she who can tell us how to bring them under our beneficent thumb, that is how! And so to an oracle the control freaks of this world have gone, presumably for the past several millennia.

Well, I have got some news for the Nurse Ratched of this world: oracles hate manipulation questions as much as they hate any other demon-inspired illusion. Manipulation questions are always filled with vanity, lust for power, and bullying. They are also an exercise in futility. As should be obvious now, there is simply no way to bring any

kind of self-organized energy field under any kind of artificial control, up to and including those self-organized fields called human beings. Not that this hasn't been tried from time immemorial, and not that the manipulators of this earth will ever stop attempting it. But the more practical among us should realize by now that the only thing they will end up with if they try it is that nasty little payback called unintended consequences.

Now I will acknowledge that sometimes, through tremendous effort and energy, you can get somebody to change his or her wicked ways-- at least for a while. But there is no guarantee that the change will be permanent. Control freaks should also remember that manipulation energies always contain an insult. When you try to force another human being to behave differently, you are silently informing him that he is too stupid or incompetent to make his own decisions about his life. I have often noticed that the manipulators of this world are always astounded when the lesser people resist their benevolent wisdom. Well, what else happens when you spew forth negative energy of the most odious kind? There are better ways than control freakery to improve the world.

Money. Now we get to forget the love and forget the manipulation. What most people want an oracle to hand them is very simple: more money. Have you ever wondered why the diviners of this world are not called lovetellers or manipulationtellers? No, they are known to all and sundry as fortunetellers, and what is fortune but money?

But what's wrong if I want just a little bit more money? It surely wouldn't hurt if I do some trivial spending, right? What is the good of consulting an oracle if it can't help me in something as inoffensive as this? Also there's nothing wrong with being a billionaire by the age of thirty! I just gotta have money! I just gotta!

Alas, one of the biggest cognitive illusions ever indulged in by the human race goes like this: *I know I would be happier if I had more money.* I am sure that this piece of hooey has probably been around since money was invented. I myself suffered from it myself when I was younger and stupider. Unfortunately the vast majority of earth's seven billion human beings continue to subscribe to it as if it were some kind

of Divine revelation, which it isn't. It does not even come close.

I expect that these words are falling upon stone ears. Greed, alas, is the driving force in the lives of millions of people in our world today. People are only rarely interested in discovering spiritual reality or even becoming a better human being. They just want more money! They just know that they cannot start living until their equity goes into overdrive!

Here comes another personal anecdote. I had a co-worker who became very interested in me once he learned that I read tarot cards. He would stop by my office every few weeks to chat about one thing and one thing only, namely how my cards could help him win the lottery. I kept explaining to him that the cards did not work like that, and that he had never seen a headline proclaiming PSYCHIC WINS LOTTERY, or PSYCHIC PURCHASES FORTY-ROOM MANSION IN PALM SPRINGS. Nothing I said ever quite penetrated. He was certain that something spooky like tarot could give him the extra edge he needed to get his hands on a winning ticket. At which time, so his premise went, he would find the ultimate in American happiness, a seven or eight figure bank account. Alas, he needed to remember that when you do see a headline about a psychic, what you usually see is PSYCHIC UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR FRAUD.

But he didn't want to hear this, and neither do you. Now that you understand how an oracle can benefit your life, you are bound and determined to start asking how-can-I-get-more-money questions right this very second.

My friends, it is now time for you to start understanding something which you've never bothered about in your life: the energies of money. Like all other "physical" manifestations in our spacetime universe, money is a form of energy and nothing else but. We now need to examine the kind of illusions people have about their dollar bills. As usual, these are nothing but my own theories, which you can take or leave as you please.

Money is always neutral energy. In other words, any kind of money you get your hands on, whether from wages, inheritance, lotteries,

gifts, investment, interest, or even robbery, is always the same. Also there is never a connection between the energies of your money and the stuff you spend it on. You will luxuriate in a Balenciaga original regardless of whether you paid for it out of your salary or your most recent heist.

Unfortunately that is not quite how it works. The only way any kind of positivity happens in money is when you earn it through the expenditure of your own personal energies. The natural movement of energy always depends upon some kind of reciprocal balance, and this especially holds true for the energies of money. If you get your hands on money without expending any effort for it, all you will be doing, in Abraham Lincoln's damning words about antebellum slave owners, is "wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces." [30] Of all the bad energy strategies ever devised by deluded humanity, the worst is getting something for nothing, and especially when that something is money.

This means that there is no such thing as a bank robber who gets away with it, even if he is never apprehended. Emerson rightly tells us that "the thief steals from himself." [31] If you ever get your hands on any kind of unearned money, you will soon discover that all aspects of your existence are off-kilter. The negative energies of this money will go into every "physical" object you acquire: the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the house you live in--and nothing about your life will ever feel right. This explains why things usually go disastrously wrong for lottery winners. They have acquired money which other people's efforts have created, and their eagerly anticipated happily ever after does not happen.

Good management of your money will make it magically increase.

In other words, if you make the right investments and keep your finances organized, more money will somehow just start appearing in your life, and this money will be as good for you as the money you lawfully earn. So it is a good idea for you to spend hours each week tracking your expenditures, monitoring the stock market, searching out bargains, clipping coupons, or otherwise conjuring ever more cash out of ever more cold thin air, which is something that anyone can do.

Well, it is true that spontaneous self-organization happens all the time in our chaotic self-universe, but it hardly ever happens with that energy called money. Any kind of manipulation paradigm designed to produce equity out of airy nothing is an exercise in futility.

Trying to earn as much money as you can is a good thing. How can there be something wrong with wanting a little financial security? It is only common sense, and it is the American way. Well, there is a profound difference between wanting financial security and lusting after zillions of dollars. The first desire, that of equity, is perfectly reasonable. On the other hand, wanting piles of greenbacks in order to spend and spend and spend inevitably adds up to a demon-driven disaster. And if you are curious about how much money is enough, let me give you a celebrated Biblical quote: "give me neither poverty nor riches" (Proverbs 30:8). That is the kind of financial reality you should strive for: middleness. Yes, you are entitled to reasonable financial security, but if you want luxury, what you need is inner luxury, as in mental tranquility, instead of expensive stuff.

It is possible to purchase positive energy with money. In other words, no matter what it is, we can buy it. Everything has a price, up to and including health, enlightenment, good karma, a youthful appearance, and salvation. And now that we understand that there is such a thing as positive as opposed to negative energy, we are certain that we can purchase it, too.

Yeah, right. It always amuses me whenever I notice someone attempting to purchase positive energy with their money. One way people do it, of course, is by giving to charity. There is nothing wrong with giving money to your favorite charities; indeed, this can be an act of great positive value. But problems come when your acts of charity convince you that you are only thinking about other people instead of wallowing in yet another ego-bolstering maneuver. The latter is the modern version of medieval papal indulgences: you are purchasing nothing but a fraudulent illusion which will not help you in the slightest. There is plenty of positive energy to be had by everyone, but Reality tells us that you cannot buy it, not even at an outlet mall.

Intelligent people never spend money on anything unless it is worth it. In other words, the stupid idiots among us are the only people who throw their money away on useless crap or assorted scams. But the educated and the successful are much too smart to make dumb purchases. They always spend their money as wisely as they can, and their portfolios prove it.

Fat chance of any of that. Some of the ultimate stupidities in this county can be observed whenever you observe a self-indulgent American try to spend his or her money intelligently. The problem is that most of us stand defenseless against a stupendous juggernaut which is constantly coming at us 24/7, Madison Avenue marketing, the countless ways in which we lesser people are encouraged to spend and spend: money we have, money we do not have, money we might have someday, it all has to go for the new gadget, the cappuccino, the next vacation, the platinum fountain pen. Madison Avenue has convinced millions that life is not worth living unless your money flies out of your hands the second you touch it. And the more expensive something is, the more likely your self-esteem will prod you into believing that you will be smart if you purchase it. Well, not quite.

Fortunately this nonsense is easily solved. From now on you should never purchase anything without oracular approval. End of problem.

Once you get enough money, you will be satisfied. You just need a reasonable amount of equity, or a sufficient high end salary, and you will be satisfied. And you will never ask for more again. Sorry, not quite. If your equity matters that much to you, no matter how much of it you have, you will never be satisfied. The Romans had a saying: *qui multum habet, plus cupito*, which roughly translates as "the more you have, the more you want." When you go through life constantly throttled by your greed, there is never enough. A desire for that all-important MORE is hardwired into the species, and it is there within you, too.

It is okay to spend money you have not yet earned. After all, credit is the backbone of our prosperous fiscal reality and has made our society the triumphant commercial utopia it so obviously is. This

means that it is always okay to buy stuff on credit since you always know that you will be able to pay your bills in the future.

It is difficult for me to understand how anyone could be stupid enough to believe the preceding nonsense. Once upon a time, way back in prehistory, there existed a charming little notion that you should earn your money before you spent it. Needless to say, this bit of old-fashioned common sense has evaporated into nothingness these days. Here in the 21st century we Americans are slaves to credit, mortgages, and all other aspects of the corrosive financing which is currently rendering our economy bankrupt. American society is based on the premise that you can obtain whatever you want the exact microsecond you want it, thanks to a pleasant little swindle called finance charges. The fact that these little charges multiply the actual purchase price exponentially does not count. The only reality people ever notice is their monthly bills.

Well, living out your life in constant debt is as toxic as energy can get. If you go into debt early in life, chances are that you will probably end up paying more of your lifelong salary in finance charges than for basics like food, clothing, and shelter. And you might eventually kick the bucket while still in the red, which is as bad as a Cosmic Boomerang can get. Debt never creates happiness. It will fill all aspects of your energy field with limitless toxic energy.

Money makes life interesting. It means you get to buy cool stuff! You get to go wherever you please and have adventures! You get to have great sex--or at least you will as soon as you make it to Club Med! Why, without any money, there would be nothing at all in your life! And the more money you have, the happier you are going to be! Everyone knows that the wisest sages over the centuries have unanimously agreed that there is only one thing that can make you happy: money!

Or maybe not. In my highly prejudiced opinion, money will forever be boring. It gets in the way of living intensely, of the natural movement of universal energies, of expanded vision, and of creativity. Says Henry Miller: "Strange as it may seem today to say, the aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly,

serenely, divinely aware." [32] Try buying some of that the next time you have got some extra cash. Lots of luck.

And what about the author of this book and her money? Here comes an interesting question: do I practice what I preach? Is my equity free from negative energies? Well, is my face red. Have I ever had a mortgage? Guilty. Do my savings collect interest? Guilty. Have I ever invested in stock? Guilty. Do I use credit cards? Guilty (well, sort of, since I try to pay the debt off at the end of every month). Have I ever purchased something I very much wanted and then had to make payments since I did not have the cash? Guilty. Do I pick up pennies? Guilty. So, as far as my own money is concerned, I am no saint. I doubt that anyone is. Still, I have never suffered the kind of endless financial problems which I have continually observed in friends and relations. Indeed, the only time in my life I never seemed to have enough money was when I was a homeowner with a mortgage. At all other times in my life there always seemed to be plenty of money despite my minuscule salary. All I had to do was avoid the scam known as finance charges.

But the heck with all this. Forget the damn money. Forget asking an oracle how you can get your hands on more of it. There is more to life than the almighty dollar. Fortunately, once you start working with an oracle, you will quickly discover that it hates everything about money lust. There are more liberating ways to live.

* * *

So much for the preliminary steps in formulating a good oracular question. But there is obviously much more to discuss. We next need to examine how to formulate more specific questions to put to our oracle. These questions come in two varieties: internal and external. We will first examine how to ask an oracle about the kinds of energies we have within us, which is also known as self-examination.

Chapter 7. Self-Examination Questions.

It is an unhappy fact of history that willful self-blindness has always been one of the defining characteristics of the human race. This holds true even for classical antiquity, when the idea of *gnothi seauton* or *know thyself* was widespread. These words greeted all comers to the Oracle of Delphi, and thoughtful people in those days, particularly Stoics and Epicureans, took time every day to examine themselves. People in other cultures have done it as well: the Vedic *Upanishads* speak of *atmanam vidhi*, which also translates as know thyself, while Muslims practice *muhasaba*, the exercise of self-reflection. Some kind of self-examination has also been recommended by both Catholics and Protestants during the Christian centuries.

Nevertheless, one can only wonder how frequently people have been able to see themselves with accuracy. One of Ben Franklin's more memorable aphorisms occurs in *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732-1758): "There are three Things extremely hard, Steel, a Diamond, and to know one's self." [33] Chances are that the readers of this book actually think that they do know themselves. They are aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and feel confident in trusting their own judgment. This is something I once felt about myself. When I studied Emerson for the first time as a teenager, I was completely convinced by his exhortation to "trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string". [34] Yes, yes, the Sage of Concord was absolutely right about how to live your life. I was going to do nothing but follow my own inner light as I went through my days, which meant that I would live a successful life.

Well, after several decades of calamitous personal and financial decisions, I had to admit that a 17th century pessimist like the Duc de la Rochefoucauld was more correct when he tells us that "self-love is more cunning than the most cunning man in the world." [35] There is nothing which leads to more harmful cognitive illusion like the promptings of our vanity. When good Americans examine themselves these days, chances are the only thing they will notice will be their latest feelgood desire, along with an endless number of self-justifying excuses to make sure that the desire happens.

But of course that isn't you, you just + know that you're doing everything right. After all, you purchased a fine education, so it must be worth something, and you are making a lot of money, which means that you are a successful professional. You do not want to hear that maybe, just maybe, your beliefs, your interests, or your customary way of doing things are poisonous mistakes.

Just + know. This word combination describes perhaps the single most pernicious human energy which exists in the world today, that of self-righteous complacency. How do you know your assumption is true? Why, I just + know it! How do you know you are a good parent? I just + know it! How do you know that a particular degree will give you a successful career? I just + know it! How do you know your political or religious beliefs are making the world a better place? I just + know it **BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT!!!!**

Just + know creates a state of mind so toxic that the people who possess it do not even begin to realize that what they have got inside their heads are assumptions instead of truths. No cognitive illusion is more destructive than the one which you do not have the slightest inkling that you have got. When you go through your life acting upon evidence-free assumptions which you do not even begin to realize are only that, you are guaranteed to meet with nothing but disaster.

So what we are now going to discuss is how to use an oracle to confirm the rightness of our assumptions about everything which matters to us. One of the premises of this book is that there is a way out of everything. However, the kind of escape hatches we all occasionally need will only start to manifest if we are brave enough to use an oracle to examine whatever we hold most sacred about politics, religion, money, relationships, child rearing, or career. The only way we will ever reach our full potential is by identifying and discarding our inner toxic energies, up to and including our most cherished beliefs.

Since we are now discussing one of the primary points of this book, I will now repeat myself, and with a larger font to boot. What is probably preventing you from achieving your full potential are

your most cherished beliefs

So forget about using an oracle to ask about plans of action, what is coming in the future, or whether somebody is lying to you. If you want to live the most successful life you can, you need to ask your oracle questions about:

- whatever makes you feel good about yourself, especially your vision of yourself as an intelligent and ethical human being.
- assumptions you automatically make about a situation or an event.
- those ideas or concepts which have been a bedrock part of your energy field for years and which you have never questioned since they are more yourself than you are.
- whatever feels pleasant to you, or whatever you have got in your life that seems normal.
- the habits you have followed for most of your life.
- any idea or belief which makes you emotional.
- any issue you immediately decide you *don't* need to ask an oracle about.

The last item in the above list is the most important. If as you are reading this book you have been making a mental list of all the things that you are going to start asking your brand new deck of tarot cards,

but you immediately dismiss certain topics as not worth the bother, I guarantee that these topics are the ones which need to be examined.

Here I will acknowledge that there are probably some people on this earth whose most cherished beliefs actually are full of benevolent energy. However, I suspect they are the tiniest of minorities. As for me, after several decades of being chastised by my cards, I know that I am not one of them. The good news is that I am now able to see Reality a lot more clearly these days thanks to my oracle. If you are one of the remaining 8 billion who has never bothered to question what matters most to you in your life, chances are that you are also not one of them. Your most cherished beliefs are toxic.

But you still do not want to hear this, right? You just want to ask your oracle to approve your tedious soap opera desires so you can relax with your new purchases or your taste treats of choice. But asking about your most cherished beliefs? Panic time, fury time, everybody just + knows that they are way too smart to be mistaken about anything. *My most cherished beliefs are perfectly all right! I know they are! No, don't ask me how I know--I just + know it! So let's forget this nonsense, okay?*

Not a chance. What now follows are my suggestions for the type of self-examination questions you need to put to an oracle. As you will see, they all follow the following general format:

- I have concluded that my cherished belief about _____ is filling me with positive energy. Am I correct?

What now follows are examples of very common toxic illusions which infect a huge percentage of the human race. If you want to have a successful life, these are the kinds of questions you need to put to an oracle. Have fun.

I can accurately perceive reality.

- I am certain that the fights between Mark and me will stop as

soon as we are married since everything will be different then.
Am I correct?

- The medication I'm swallowing is truly helping me. Right?
- The problem isn't me--the problem is that I am being discriminated against because of my gender/age/sexual orientation/race/religion/weight/politics/fashion statement. Am I correct?

I am wise.

- I just + know I should accept the position at Weswindle, Inc. I mean, I cannot believe there is any truth to those rumors about the CEO murdering puppies and kittens since I will start making piles of money within the first few weeks. Am I correct?
- I am certain that I will have a successful professional career if I pursue a bachelor's degree in Transgressive Eskimo Poetry. We all know that American education just doesn't get any better than that, right?

I am spiritual.

- I have not missed a Sunday service for thirty-five years, so I just + know that the messages I am getting from Jesus about how to straighten things out at the office are the real thing. Right?
- Three weeks ago I experienced full Kundalini enlightenment when I listened to Peaceflower Schultz's ethereal new CD *Crystal Solar Green Cosmos Vision*, and I am now empowered to get those rotten brats who made fun of my son's science project kicked out of his school.

I am secure.

- I have decided that it will be a good idea for me to get that tiny bit of plastic surgery, the one where they replace all your facial muscles with metalloids for the perfect ultramodern look. Let's face it, a woman of my age has got to have some work done, or else she will never be able to create any buzz. And what is life without some buzz?
- If you are not cool in this day and age, you are nothing. In other words, nothing feels so good like conforming to nonconformity, since it is the best way to conform. So why should I mind paying \$12.85 for a jar of artisanal mayonnaise? What would people think of me if I started to serve them Hellman's?

I know a phony when I see one.

- I just + know it's a good idea for me to read *Che and Satori*, Esme Mildew's brilliant new memoir about her efforts to bring hope, video games, and cinnamon rolls to an isolated village in the Himalayas. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that this Ruth Brown woman is a slimy little scam artist with a lot of space between her ears, so I don't need to even think about the rightness of my most cherished beliefs, let alone ask an oracle about them. Am I correct?

I am honest with myself.

- The only reason I am sabotaging Roger's new initiative at work is for the good of the company. Right?
- Yes, I know I have gotten multiple DUI's time and again in

my life, but now that I have become a father things are going to be different. I am stone cold sober these days, and I am going to stay that way, so it will not hurt to relax with a little brewski on the weekends, right?

- I know I have been helping myself to Mom's savings since I persuaded her I needed to look after her finances, but it is not as though I am stealing from her--I will replace the cash in her account when I get my raise. Okay?
- I just happen to be a with-it dude who has created the coolest possible life: I purchase the right stuff, I listen to the right music, and I vote for humanitarian candidates. Am I just totally awesome, especially in the sack, or what?

I am free from hypocrisy.

- I have been a committed vegetarian for a whole decade now since I just love all furry little animals to death, so I don't know how anyone can criticize my Louis Vuitton leather boots with the ultra-sleek stiletto heels, I mean, come on--it is not as though I am eating the leather or something, okay?
- I glory in the title of tenured radical, and I have vowed to overthrow contextual economic tyranny in all its forms, since that is the only way my investment portfolio and my pension fund will be secure. And I will not rest until righteousness triumphs, especially since the market is so unstable these days everything might tank without warning. Am I correct?
- So help me, I will defend the First Amendment as long as there is breath in my body, but of course you cannot expect me to approve hate speech, or racist speech, or homophobic speech, or any other kind of reactionary speech since that is not really speech. This kind of speech must always be prohibited, or else the human race will cease to exist. Am I correct?

I have excellent health habits.

- I know I will finally be able to lose the weight if I can just get a prescription for Pharmapoison Industries new acrylic chocolate. So what if it goes right through you? I am so healthy that the side effects won't bother me, and I have got to do something about those cravings for Mars Bars which keep wrecking my diets. Am I right?
- I am pleased to say that I religiously follow every FDA recommendation ever created, and since there's no way that the FDA is the bootlicker of its lobbyists, this means that I am at the peak of human health. Right?
- Sanitary water stored in plastic bottles cannot be making me fat--it doesn't have any calories! It is as good for me as good can get, right?
- It is okay for me to keep swallowing the anti-depressants which my doctor has recommended, since their side effects only happen to other people, and I am not crazy enough to kill myself. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that my health will not be harmed if I continue to consume _____ (fill in the blank as you choose: caffeine, sugar, synthetic dyes, chemical preservatives, alcohol, pizza, dairy, soy, trans fat, nightshades, salt, meat, non-organic anything, donut cheeseburgers, high fructose corn syrup). No! I won't ask it! No way am I going to let these idiot cards tell me that my ultra-delicious delights are bad for me! They cannot be bad! They just can't!

I am a humanitarian.

- I have concluded that my political views are making the

universe a better place. Am I correct? (Boy, what I wouldn't give if millions of my fellow Americans would start asking themselves this one.) But don't stop with your politics . . .

- I have concluded that my social or religious or dietary or ecological or financial views are making the universe a better place. Am I correct?

I am creative.

- My edgy new Foucauldian poem on stray cats and caramel fudge sauce will radicalize millions of readers with its dangerous neodiscursive empowerment. You betcha!
- I have concluded that the obnoxious and opinionated book I am writing about being a compleat psychic will put out positive energies into the universe. Am I correct? (Oh, thank you, thank you!)

My profession fills me with positive energy.

- I am so fortunate to be employed by Greenie Geekies, where I really am accomplishing something wonderful for the whole world. After all, we are the only ecological company capable of producing cellulose-based wind generators, which we will start manufacturing as soon as we get another couple of billion out of the feds. That means more jobs for more Americans, yes! What's not to like here?
- Power to the people! I am Dr. Nadine Silverstein-Carruthers, Ph.D., author of one of the most trenchant exposés ever penned: *Donald Duck, Minnie Mouse, and the Hypostatized Orgasm: A Gramscian Equation* (2019). This multiple award-winning exegesis of patriarchal sublimation at the heart of semiotic structuralism adds a missing existential nuance to pre-postmodern discourse on political realignment. In short, I am

doing more good in the world than those worthless bitches who rejected me for Delta Phi and both of my ex-husbands combined, right?

I manage my money wisely.

- I do not need to retrench this winter, since there is too much going on at the moment and my life would be endless misery if I had to live more cheaply. It can wait, right?
- I am not buying that 22 carat solid gold cell phone because I want it, but because I truly need it. I mean, it is vitally important that I make a good impression at the country club or else Frank will never get his promotion. Am I correct?
- When I finally get my inheritance, I will not have any financial problems left, I just know it. Right?

I do not play junkie denial games.

- It is not going to hurt me to snort cocaine every once in a while since there is no way I will get addicted, I have got more sense than that. Right?
- Of course you cannot expect me to do anything about my drinking now, but I have made up my mind to quit in the future, and that is what counts. Besides, it never hurts to self-medicate, and I have known for years that I do my best work when I'm sauced. Also it is not my fault that I'm an alcoholic--everybody knows that alcoholism is a disease, it is just a virus or something I caught one morning when I was waiting for the bus.
- I just + know that once I get the nicotine out of my system, I will never be tempted to touch a cigarette again. Right?

I never seek thrills.

- I am not out demonstrating against my political opponents because I'm bored--I am doing it for the good of the country!
- I never pick fights or push people's buttons just to stimulate some fun-filled excitement. I am serenely content with my normal uneventful life since the humdrum is what everyone always wants, including me. Am I correct?
- The only reason I keep sticking it out with Jeff is because he is the great love of my life. So what if he broke my arm last spring? I know he is going to change for the better any day now. Am I correct?

I am a successful parent.

- The only reason I'm spending \$80,000 remodeling the kitchen is to give my kids a suitably upscale life. Yes, I know that means that they will have to borrow money for their college, but what matters is that they are getting a kitchen with Jurassic granite countertops, so why should they mind going slightly into debt for their education?
- I have concluded that I have no cravings for excitement in my life and keep fighting with my kids only to help them move towards the light. Am I correct?

I am free of both displacement and projection.

- I am always coolly rational whenever I discuss President Bogeyman but I can see with my own eyes that he is the vilest Nazi this country has ever produced he's turned the government into the most repressive regime in the history of the world

every time he lifts his little finger it's the crime of the century he is going to write the Constitution out of existence next week on Thursday we have got to man the barricades they are going to send us to concentration camps in Nevada where they will make us eat corn dogs I can't stand it I'm going insane I've got to get back on Lexapro or else I am going to die what do you mean ask an oracle if this is accurate I can see exactly what he is doing are you kidding?

- I didn't vote for President Lightbulb because I wanted to feel good about my own enlightened humanitarianism. I voted for him because I can rationally perceive he is the best candidate for the job since he is so spiritual, so brilliant, and so totally unbelievably incandescent. The man is nothing less than a radiant human rainbow filled with sparkles and golden butterflies, and I just worship the asphalt he walks on since never in the history of the universe has there ever been such an omnipotent human god. Let me sing his praises for evermore! Am I correct?

My religion fills me with positive energies.

- I should always listen to my religious leaders as reverently as I can, since they are right about everything. Yes, of course they are, right?
- I just + know that my religion is the true one since it's got billions of followers and always will, which means that it has to be Divinely inspired. Am I correct?

I would be happier if I had more _____

- I just + know I would be happier if only I had more mon--.
(No no no no no! I'm not about to ask the cards that question! I AM ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT I WOULD BE HAPPIER IF I HAD MORE MONEY! What am I supposed to

do if the cards say no? This book needs to be burned at the stake!)

- I just + know that I would be happier if only I had more . . . stuff, obedience, opportunities, peace and quiet, Facebook friends, sex, excitement, respect, responsibility, space, video games, time, authority, attention, health, facials, travel, whatever. (Sheesh, I am not about to waste my time asking about any of this crap. I'll just stick with the more intelligent questions, thank you very much.)

I exist in harmony with the natural flow of the universe (this is the Big Enchilada Query which you need to ask the cards at least once a month for the rest of your life).

- I have concluded that at this period in my life I am existing in harmony with the quantum field. I go with the flow of universal interconnection and equality, I adjust and readjust my energies according to natural forces, I send forth only benevolent vibes into the universe, I see patterns as well as abstractions, I feel empathy for all sentient beings, I know that no one is saved until everyone is saved, I reject allegiances to any particular group, I am not a slave to my desires, I do not consider myself superior to any other entity in the universe, I pray only for the *summum bonum*, and so help me, I do this day in and day out even though it keeps killing me. Please please please . . . am I correct?

* * *

So there you have it. A nice selection of examples of how not to be a psychic ignoramus. The good news is that continual self-examination with an oracle can be fun as well as psychically liberating. Instead of progressing from moron to supermoron as the years go by, you will discover that your life is starting to work. "Man's character is his fate", said the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, an aphorism which has

rightly been regarded as one of the most brilliant statements ever uttered about human existence.[36] You want a good fate? Start using your oracle to improve your character, and everything else will follow.

We will conclude this chapter with an interesting question. It is now time for the author of this book to inform her readership what her oracle of choice is currently telling her about her most cherished beliefs. This is a necessary question to ask, especially since your author's precious little cards have insisted that she's been a befuddled idiot about practically everything in her life for way too many years.

Well, as it happens, my current most cherished beliefs are on display as clearly as I can make them right here in this book and in my second book *A Spiritual Guide to Planetary Transformation*. And they are on display only because the cards have approved them. You surely did not think I would write a book without repeatedly asking the cards what they thought of it, did you? Not a chance.

Hmmmm. Then maybe it's best if we soldier on. Into what? What is next? That's easy. We still need to examine more oracular queries. And the next kind of questions to examine are . . .

Chapter 8. Predictive Questions.

This is the next kind of question which we can legitimately put to an oracle: you can ask whether a certain event will take place in the future. Usually the future event about which you are curious is something which you very much want, such as marriage or a new job. There is nothing wrong with asking such questions, and on occasion you can receive valuable information.

However, before we even begin to examine a predictive question, we need to take a look at a certain little irritant first, that fantastical something called the future. What exactly is the future, anyway? We talk about it, we plan for it, and we think we have a pretty definite idea what it is, but do we? If you had to come up with a precise definition of the future, how would you describe it? Would you think that some aspects of it are inevitable? Or that it is open to all possibilities? How should you account for unexpected events or accidents? Is there any way for us to truly create the kind of future we want?

Well, after many years now of working with an oracle, I have realized that there is only one way to answer all these questions. It is the same answer for all of them, and it goes like this: *the future does not matter*. That is right. Here I am, writing a book about how to use an oracular tool to make your life better, but now I am saying that we should not waste our energy thinking about or planning for the future, since it is of little or no importance in our lives. Well, the greatest sages are in agreement about this, including none other than Ralph Waldo Emerson, who tells us that: "These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin." [37]

But . . . getting a glimpse into the future ought to be a good thing for most people, right? Wouldn't this be a sensible way to help you avoid bad decisions and wrong turns in your life? Unfortunately the desire to know what is coming in the future can cause even more problems in your life than you have already got. Indeed, most people's idea of the future has no basis in Reality.

What we now need to examine are the kinds of illusions about the future which will wreak havoc in your life if you let them:

We understand time. We understand the future because we understand time, right? In other words, we can easily perceive what time always does: it moves directly into the future without any kind of deviation and always at the exact same speed. It is a steady state linear force which does not possess any kind of circular energy, since that cannot be possible.

Well, if you ask me, that four-letter word known as time just happens to be a big fat nuisance which never does anybody any good. Who will ever be able to solve the riddle that is time? We can theorize about it, but that is about all we can do. Not that people will ever stop trying to define or control it. Some of us are even dumb enough to attempt to manipulate it through follies like time management and multitasking, but we only waste our energy. Time will forever be an uncontrollable beast beyond our human control.

The problem is that time is never something which we humans experience objectively. Our perceptions of time are always subjective: sometimes time can drag, sometimes it accelerates, and sometimes we feel as though we have escaped it, as when we are lost in our dreams or listening to music. We can work to acquire a higher awareness of time, but that is about all we can do.

The future is preordained. This nice little illusion tells us that everything that is going to happen will happen exactly as it is supposed to, since everything is preordained. Or as a popular phrase will have it: *que sera, sera . . . whatever will be, will be.* Words to this effect have been knocking around since Christopher Marlowe used them in *Doctor Faustus* (1589).[38] Whatever will be will be, peasants, so shut up and suffer since there is nothing you can do to change your life for the better. The future is set in stone. No kind of freedom truly exists, there is nothing we can do to alter Fate, and we cannot deviate from a path which is already marked out.

Not a chance of any of this. The idea that the future is preordained is both one of the silliest and one of the most widespread delusions about the future. Huge numbers of people seem to believe that the future cannot be altered under any circumstances. You would think that this kind of Calvinistic drivel would be history by now, but it continues

to thrive here in our postmodern world, most especially among the heavily educated. What kind of a lily-livered coward would want such a world? Well, Reality tells us that nothing about the future is set in stone. No matter how psychically gifted you are, no matter what kind of oracular tool you use, the future energies of your life cannot be predicted with 100% accuracy, since they are constantly in flux.

An interesting anecdote about predestination is provided by Anagarika Govinda in his *Creative Meditation and Multi-dimensional Consciousness* (1976):

It is the well-authenticated story of a man who, after having bought a ticket for a sea voyage, dreamt that the boat on which he was traveling caught fire and sank. He saw vividly all the details and his own part in the events, such as his efforts to save himself and others from the impending doom. The dream was so overwhelmingly real that he returned the ticket. A short time later he read in the papers that the steamer, on which he had booked his passage, had met with a disaster and that the things had happened exactly as he had dreamt--except with regard to his own person! If the future even had been unalterably fixed or existed in some "timeless dimension," he could not have changed his decision and escaped the impending fate.[39]

This man avoided catastrophe by the simple exercise of his free will, which is something we can all do every second of our lives. Over the years I have frequently compared what the cards have told me about the future and what eventually manifests, and I learned one clear lesson: the future is up for grabs. Nothing, but nothing, about our lives is predetermined. No matter how humdrum or unchanging your existence might appear, the daily choices you make about your life determine the kind of future you get. This means that you are free to change your destiny any time you like. This is not cheating fate, since fate does not exist in the first place.

So if you want a good future, what you have to do is create it. Forget about using an oracular tool to get information about the future, and forget about sitting around waiting for your future to happen. It is

far better for you to focus on what is happening in the here and now and take steps to correct the negativity in your life, instead of daydreaming about how you might be living five years down the road.

If you plan carefully enough, nothing will go wrong with your future. In other words, Murphy's Law does not apply to everyone, just to those pathetic idiots who do not attend personal development seminars. But that is not you, you are smart and you have paid a lot of money to learn how to control every square inch of your current and upcoming existence, so you just + know that you are going to get the best possible future.

Well, the idea that you can *guarantee* the kind of future you want is another widespread fantasy. There are a lot of determined careerists around these days who are carefully tracking every millimeter of the progress which they make towards their assorted goals, and which they are certain that they will eventually reach. When you devote huge amounts of time and energy to achieving success, that naturally means that you are going to get it, right?

When I first started reading cards for other people, I was surprised to discover that some clients wanted a blow-by-blow account of literally everything they expected to happen during the rest of their lives. Mind you, they expected to be told only good news. They wanted to hear that they were going to marry their current girl/boyfriend, raise two ecologically-sensitive and drug-free children, have a successful career, a nice house, and a comfortable Sun Belt retirement. Naturally they would not have to face that tiresome problem known as death until they were ninety-something and too old to care. Why they wanted to hear this kind of recital was difficult for me to understand, although I can now see its attractions. One of the most comforting illusions we can ever have is the idea that since we are so smart and so careful, nothing will go wrong with our life.

If only. People who are certain that the right amount of control freakery will guarantee them a safe future are in denial about the Reality of our human existence. Unexpected surprises have been happening both to the human race as a whole and to each individual human being since the dawn of history. No matter how hard we try to

manipulate all aspects of our lives, we can never achieve 100% control. No one can. If you think that careful planning, up to and including regular consultation of an oracle, will guarantee you the life you want, you had better think again.

Once you get into the future that you want, it will be unchanging.

Many people who dream about the future also enjoy telling themselves that it is going to be some kind of frozen state of existence where nothing will ever again change in either space or time. This especially holds true for those people who are currently working towards a major goal in the near or medium future, such as getting married, earning the right degree, or finding the right job. Once that hurdle is crossed, your subsequent life will be smooth-sailing from then on and free of challenges, difficulties, and speeding tickets.

Well, maybe it actually will pan out like that. But then what? You are only going to discover more hurdles as you go on with your life. In our spacetime universe, nothing ever stops its endless becoming. The fact that your post-hurdle existence will keep evolving ought to tell you that you need to be extra careful when you make your choices. It never ceases to amaze me how many people immediately start spending money the moment they begin a new job since they just + know that the money is now going to start happening without a glitch. Well, the Reality of our world is that all things are in flux. When you tell yourself that your post-hurdle existence is going to be changeless, you are making a very bad mistake.

The future will be similar to the past. We all just + absolutely + know that what is coming in the future will be similar to what has occurred in the past. What we have got now is pretty much what we will always have, since this is the way human history has always worked. Or has it?

Here I will admit that most of the time relying upon past experiences is a good thing. Nevertheless, you are in deep trouble if you think that the events of the past will help you to predict what is coming in the future. Unless you can open yourself to the possibility that something new might spontaneously appear out of nowhere, you

are badly misjudging your circumstances. This especially holds true for our current 21st century mess, which is probably the first period in human history when the future is not going to have the slightest resemblance to human experience in the past. For more information about the unprecedented changes which are coming for the human race, take a look at my second book *A Spiritual Guide to Planetary Transformation*.

It is wonderful to think about the future since the future is your friend. When you just + know that you are doing everything right in your life, you enjoy thinking about that prosperous and enjoyable future you are going to have, since you also just + know that it is definitely going to happen.

Once again, fat chance. If you think that dreaming about the future is good for you, you had better think again. Focusing solely on an upcoming period of your life when you are theoretically going to have everything you ever wanted is the pits. You are not really alive: you are existing in a fantasy twilight where nothing is real. And even worse: you will make no effort to exert yourself or change your energies for the better. Of course, when the promised future does not arrive on schedule, no problem--you are content to do some more waiting. And then more, and even more. I have known elderly people who can only think about the good days to come, several months or years down the road. That makes for sixty or seventy years of not knowing how to live.

It is terrifying to think about the future since the future is your enemy. The opposite of the above is going through your life scared witless about what might be coming at you in the future. After all, the world is a terrifyingly uncontrollable place! Anything might happen! And there is nothing you can do to stop it!

Of course, thoughts like these always provide a thrillingly enjoyable masochistic wallow, but they are also a useless waste of energy. It is true that bad things might happen to you someday. Your job might end, your house could burn down, or your partner could walk out on you. But you are crazy if you spend your time worried sick about what may or may not be coming in the future. Such thoughts tend to paralyze

people into inactivity as much as fantasies about future wonderfulness.

The present moment is never as important as the future. Yeah, what is happening now is nothing but a thin slice of meaninglessness trapped between the past and the future. This means that the present is usually something that needs to be got through until something interesting can happen, as in the next video or the next vacation. So why bother about it?

Alas, what with their daydreams about the future, the one thing that most people never seem to notice is the present moment. But the present moment is the only Reality that we will ever know. In recent years many be-here-now thinkers have emphasized the importance of being fully aware in the present moment, which is all for the best. But they never seem to mention what I consider to be the most crucial aspect to awareness of the present: it is never just enough to live in the present--you have also got to do your best to enjoy it as well. Says the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa (4th century CE):

For Yesterday is but a Dream,
And To-morrow is only a Vision;
But To-day well lived
Makes every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness,
And every To-morrow a Vision of Hope.
Look well therefore to this Day![40]

* * *

So much for illusion and reality about the future. But where does that leave us with the predictive questions we wish to ask our oracular tool? My experience has told me that there are two kinds of predictive questions we can ask the cards: either we ask about an event which may or may not take place in the future, or we can ask about a future state of being. Both types now need to be discussed.

The first, asking a question about a future event is easy, if not very reliable. The problem here is that over the years my tarot cards have

always been *least* accurate when I asked a predictive question about an upcoming event, and the more far-off the event, the greater the inaccuracy. You can, if you wish, sit down with your oracle and ask if you will be able to retire to Arizona in thirty years. Then you can make a note of the response and check it periodically over the next three decades. But this kind of silliness would be a complete waste of your time. Chances are that by the time you reach retirement age so many other things might have happened to you that your youthful desire to move to Arizona might no longer have any meaning.

But asking a more short-term predictive question of an oracle also does not work very well. Here is an example of what I mean. Several years ago the supervisor of my unit at work had retired, and one of the unit's other administrators was put in temporary charge. This woman was a typical feminist professional whose preferred method of motivating colleagues and subordinates was by turning scarlet and exploding with fury. It was obvious that if she became the permanent administrator of my unit, I would have to find another job.

The decision to hire for the permanent position was not going to happen for another ten months. I decided to ask the cards once a month to see if someone other than Madam Tantrum would get the job. To my dismay, during the first four months when I asked this question, the cards told me that no external candidate would be hired. But then there was a shift. After the fifth month the cards started to indicate that someone new would come in, and this is what eventually happened.

So you could say that for a four-month period the cards were giving me inaccurate information about a situation which mattered very deeply to me. But that is not quite right. It is more correct to say that the cards were not giving me accurate information about the future since it was not settled. When she first assumed her temporary position, Madam Tantrum had a lot of supporters, but after four months of yelling her head off, she had alienated even her most loyal followers. This experience was a valuable lesson to me about predicting a future event. What the cards were picking up on in this situation were the energies of the present moment and their *most likely* movement into the future. They were showing me potentials, not facts. I have since come to realize that

as far as future event questions go, potential is the only thing you can ever expect an oracle to give you. Every situation can move not just in one but in several different directions.

But if you stick to the short-term, you can at least some of the time get accurate answers. And some of the best predictive questions are monthly safety and health questions. One thing I have learned to do over the years is sit down with the cards on the first day of the month and ask a series of health and safety questions about the next four to six weeks. I would definitely recommend that you start doing this as well. Here are the kinds of questions I ask:

- I have concluded that during the upcoming four to six weeks my life, my family, and my property will be safe from harm caused by natural or man-made forces. Am I correct?
- The weather will be sunny and mild on the 12th for our picnic. Am I correct?
- Jack has told me that the check is in the mail, so I just + know it is. Right?
- Our camping trip to the Ozarks will go off as planned. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that during the upcoming four to six weeks my vehicle will be safe from accident or damage caused by natural or man-made forces. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that during the upcoming four to six weeks I will have a regular supply of food, water, gasoline, electricity, and internet. Am I correct?

I also think it is an excellent idea for everyone to ask a set of health-related questions at the beginning of each month:

- I have concluded that during the upcoming four to six weeks I will continue to enjoy good health. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that I am free of any kind of unnoticed health problem at this point in my life. Am I correct?

What you should do if you get a NO response about these kinds of safety or health issues will be discussed further on.

* * *

There is a second kind of predictive question we can ask our cards, namely about a proposed plan of action. For example, we can ask about our career or business choices, our marriage plans, or whether we should relocate. My experience tells me that we can get very accurate answers to these kinds of questions.

And let's face it: one of the most frequent ways in which we fallible human beings constantly fall flat on our faces is through our best laid plans. Well, asking an oracle to confirm a plan of action before we initiate it can at least diminish the disasters from happening, although it will not eliminate them altogether. But this time things get more complicated. Chances are that by this point my readers are dying to sit down with an oracle and ask it about everything they need to do to live a more successful life. It is not time for that, not just yet. Before you ask a plan-of-action question of an oracle, you need to take several preliminary steps:

You first need to ask about the contingent aspects of your proposed plan of action. Let us suppose that Anthony has concluded that he and his girlfriend Sarah should get married. He has thought about their relationship as logically as he can, and he has concluded that the two of them will have a successful marriage. This is the common conclusion which most people reach on the brink of matrimony, but which is also not always the correct one, as the 50% American divorce rate tells us. But before Anthony asks his oracle to confirm that a marriage with Sarah will work, he needs to identify every minor issue about his relationship that he can think of and ask his oracle about each one of

them first. Examples of preliminary questions Anthony should ask would include:

- I have concluded that Sarah is telling me the truth about her willingness to have children. Am I correct?
- My feelings for Sarah are genuine love and not addictive co-dependence, right?
- I just + know that Sarah and I will not fight about finances once we marry. Am I correct?
- Sarah and I have agreed to live out our lives here in Alabama, so we will both be contented here in the South. Am I correct?

Another example would be Robert, who is debating whether to accept a job offer in Vermont. Before he asks his oracle whether he should accept the new position, he first needs to ask questions like these:

- I am certain that the main reason I want this job is because of the positive energies the company puts out into the universe, and not the salary. Am I correct?
- My wife and the boys will thrive if we relocate to New England. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that we will be living in a healthier environment if we relocate. Am I correct?

A third example is Susan, who has an idea for a new startup and wants her girlfriend Natalie to go into business with her. But before she asks her oracle if the new business will be successful, she needs to know:

- I have concluded that Natalie and I will be able to work together harmoniously to make our business a success. Am I correct?
- I am certain that we will be able to obtain the necessary initial financing. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that it is a good idea for us to establish a new business here in Illinois, even though people keep saying that the state is going broke. I am surely right about this, aren't I?

You probably get the idea by now. You need to make a list of every issue which might come up about the new kind of life you want and ask the cards about each one of them.

But here we go with the *summum bonum* thing again. The other thing to consider about a plan-of-action question is making sure that your proposed plan does not disrupt the natural flow of the universe in any way. I have already explained that you need to set the *summum bonum* as the aim of every single oracular consultation you attempt. Now I must tell you that as far as your plans of action go, you also have to make sure that they include the idea of the *summum bonum* as well. Don't forget that any plan of action which you wish to implement is going to impact all the energy fields of the universe, up to and including the stars on the other side of the Milky Way. Your plan of action absolutely must be filled with positive energy for the entire universe, or else.

There have been numerous times in my life when a proposed plan of action seemed perfect for me, but when I asked the cards about it, they refused to agree. It finally dawned on me that I always needed to consider how my proposed plan might affect not me, but Indra's Net as well. If you are certain that a proposed plan of action will be a successful one, but your oracle keeps telling you that there is something wrong, you can bet your sweet ego-gratification that the problem is not the oracle--it is your plan. Something about your proposed intention is selfish, demon-based, bad for the universe, or

otherwise really really negative.

Let's go back to Anthony, Robert, and Susan. After Anthony has received positive responses about his preliminary oracular questions, it is now time for him to ask his big question. But instead of asking:

- I have concluded that it will be best for Sarah and me if we get married, right?

he needs to say:

- I have concluded that it will be best for me, Sarah, and the universe if we marry. Am I correct?

Yes, Anthony--as much as you dislike the idea, this is how you have to phrase your question. There is a possibility that while your marriage might be good for the two of you, it might also wreak havoc with other people in your environment, or maybe in the next galaxy. The astounding number of toxic power couples to be found in our collapsing culture proves that one easily enough. Unless you also consider the impact which your new relationship will have upon other energy fields, your oracle won't help you in the slightest.

Robert would ask:

- I have concluded that it is best for me, my family, the company in Vermont, and the *summum bonum* if I accept the job offer. Am I correct?

Susan would ask:

- I have concluded that if Natalie and I go into business together, it will benefit not only our customers but the universe as a whole. Right?

Ouch. I know. *Oh, brother . . . if this idiot thinks that somebody in*

Outer Mongolia cares if Sarah and I get hitched, she had better think again. Nope. She is not going to think again. Life is never a case of just Me, but Me + Universe. You are it, and it is you. Fortunately, if you do manage to keep this in mind, I can guarantee that your success and happiness will just start happening, regardless of any kind of plan of action that you wish to implement.

So much for predictive questions. Now we get to analyze . . .

Chapter 9. Questions about Externals.

The next kind of question we can ask are about the energies which surround us. For example, we can ask about our career or business choices, the people in our life, or our environment. My experience tells me that we can get reasonably accurate answers to these kinds of questions. If a potential job or relationship is currently giving out nothing but negative energies, our oracle will tell us so in a flash. So the next kind of query we need to examine are . . .

Informational questions.

My experience is that there are two kinds of information questions we can put to an oracle. The first is easy enough. As you go through your days, you will find it helpful to get accurate information about these kinds of situations:

- I have concluded that if I get the radio repaired, it will work for me from now on. Am I correct?
- I will be able to pick up some interesting new books if I go to the book sale--right?
- Harry will be thrilled if I give him a surprise birthday party, right?
- Planting several new trees in the yard is a good idea, I just + know it. Am I correct?
- I'm certain that a vacation in Florida next winter will do me a lot of good. Am I correct?

These kinds of questions might seem to be trivial, but you will learn that if you take the time to run them past an oracle before you take action, your life will start going much more smoothly.

The second way an oracle can help us with informational queries

concerns our efforts to determine that celebrated something called *the plain honest truth*. Alas, we live in a world where a huge percentage of humans constantly inflict dishonesty upon other people as they go through their lives, and the more sociopathic they are, the bigger the whoppers. Not that they are ever troubled by their actions, of course, since they always have a good excuse why the deceit has to happen. And thanks to the ever-present cognitive biases of the rest of us, it is frequently difficult for us to recognize a falsehood when we hear it, especially if it comes from someone to whom we are emotionally attached.

Well, the sociopaths among us would not be able to get away with this in a world where everyone is psychic. Do you ever want to know what someone truly thinks of you? Or whether your employer is truly pleased with your work? Or if your kid actually intends to obey you? All you have to do is sit down with your oracle and ask:

- I am certain that Bill is telling me the truth. Am I correct?
- I have concluded that Jerry thinks well of me. Am I correct?
- I just + know that Sheila really does love me. Right?
- I believe that my supervisor is pleased with my work. Am I right?
- I'm sure that my wife wholeheartedly supports my plan to start a new business. Am I correct?

Believe it or not, the responses you will get from questions like these will end a problem which has existed for millennia.

Financial questions.

We now get to consider oracular questions about our dearest friend the Almighty Dollar. However, this time we are going to do something my esteemed reader probably thinks is impossible: examine the kinds of

positive energy questions you can ask an oracle about money. That's right. There really are ways you can ask an oracle intelligent and practical questions about your money. As long as you do not bother about your eternal desire for *more*, your oracle can give you valuable financial information.

I have already mentioned that there is only one kind of money which contains positive energy, namely the money which you have earned yourself. If you keep your focus on this kind of money, you can receive some very sound oracular advice, both about equity preservation and that pleasant little pastime known as shopping.

We will start with money management. Here I must acknowledge that I am a dedicated believer in equity. Going through life with a reasonable amount of savings just happens to be common sense and very positive energy. Equity means freedom, room to maneuver, and peace of mind. I have known too many mid-life people who continue to owe thousands of dollars on their mortgages or their credit cards, and the energies they put out into the world are not positive ones. We all need financial security and intelligent ways of managing it. So here are some initial suggestions about the kinds of equity questions you might want to put to an oracle:

- I have concluded that it is a good idea to invest in this Enron company. It is one of the largest companies in the world so it must be doing something right, and its quarterly reports are consistently spectacular. Investing in Enron will be a win-win situation for me and for every square inch of the universe. Am I correct?
- I just + know that it is okay for me to trust Sam Bankman-Fried with my money since he is a sweet little billionaire and he smiles a lot. No, I am not being greedy, I am just after a little financial security, which will be good for me, my family, and the *summum bonum*. Right?

Oh, uh, no . . . you don't want to ask questions like these. So let's try again:

- I have decided that it is a good idea to invest in cryptocurrency at the present time. I am aware that there will not be any dividends on this kind of investment, and that the price of crypto could eventually drop, but this will be a good long-term investment and a hedge against inflation. It is best for me and the universe if I proceed, right?
- I know it will cost me to consult a financial planner, but I am impressed with the guy at my bank. He makes good sense, and he is not promising me the moon. It will be best for me and the universe if I trust him. Am I correct?
- My husband and I have decided that there are dozens of ways we can start to live a more frugal existence, although our kids will be unhappy that we are scaling back. But if we can make a go of it, I think they will appreciate our efforts, as will the quantum field. Are we correct?

Once again, you probably get the idea. And the more you do it, the better your chances that you will successfully preserve your equity throughout your life.

Spending questions.

So much for acquiring equity, what about spending? There are two issues to examine here: (1) whether your proposed purchase is filled with positive energy, and (2) whether it will fill you personally with positive energy. In other words, you first need to make sure that your potential purchase has been manufactured in an ethical way, and then that it will bring beneficial energies into your life. The first issue is dealt with easily enough. You need to ask a question like the following:

- I have concluded that Business X's item which I wish to purchase has been crafted in a benevolent manner and is putting out positive energies into the universe. Am I correct?

Well, the above query is simple enough, but business is business, so do not be surprised when the answer you receive rules out the majority of items you wish to purchase. As for asking whether or not a product will fill you with positive energies, here are some examples:

- I have concluded that it is the best possible time to purchase that new cell phone I have got my eye on. I know it will be upgraded again next year, but I will not need the next generation since the one available now will meet my needs, as well as enable me to live in harmony with the natural flow of the universe. Am I correct?
- I am just dying to buy that new Provencal dining set, and this isn't just ridiculous self-indulgence, I really need a focal point in the great room, and I can just imagine the kind of positive impact it will make on all my friends. The universe can't complain about something like this. Am I right?
- I have concluded that I will win the vintage Schiaparelli scarf on eBay if I place a bid of \$24.95 at the last possible moment. Also, if I win this item, the energies of my purchase will be best both for me and the universe. Oh, please--I have just got to be right this time, please?

The blessing here is that, once again, with these kinds of questions most of the time your oracle is going to tell you NO. That's right, the NO's you are going to see will be a blessing. Over the years my tarot cards have repeatedly saved me from making a completely useless purchase time and again. Whenever I look back at the crap I once wanted to purchase, back in the day when I subscribed to the great American delusion of *more*, I can see that the cards were right. Of course it was always a bitter disappointment when those rotten little pieces of cardboard told me to forget about buying whatever I had my heart set upon, but when I finally realized that those NO's were handing me the *summum bonum*, I started to like it. The *summum bonum* just happens to be a very enjoyable sensation.

Still, as incredible as it seems, there will be times when your oracle will hand you a YES to a shopping question. If and when this happens, before you rush right out to make your purchase, one other condition needs to be in place first or else you are asking for trouble: you must actually possess the money to pay for what you desire. In other words, if you cannot pay cash for your new thingy, or at least pay off your credit debt by the end of the month, forget it. The problem with spending your future money has already been discussed, but if you are still dumb enough to do it, your anticipated delight in your new object is not going to happen. The only exception to this rule seems to be a home mortgage, but even that is something you should avoid if you can help it. If you are dumb enough to fill your environment with debt-encrusted purchases, I guarantee that there is no way that you will ever enjoy them. They will spew forth malevolent energy at you every time you come into contact with them.

Business questions.

By this point my business-oriented readers are probably dying to ask an oracle how to make their companies more successful. There are, after all, limitless numbers of questions you can put to an oracle about your business. Some of the more interesting ones might be the following:

- So what if Zelda Nasty comes across as a slightly foul-mouthed bitch? We need a tough new manager in Human Resources, or else we'll never hire the kind of people we need. She is the best person not only for the job, but for the universe, right?
- I have carefully evaluated Digital Zombies new DRM scheme, and I can see with my own eyes that it is completely hack proof. I know that people keep telling me that there is no way you can build a fortress around a byte, but I just + know that this will be worth every penny of its \$187 million price tag.

I am also certain that the universe is behind me 100% on this.
Am I correct?

- Our consultants tell us the best way we can increase productivity is by eliminating private offices. It makes sense since our employees do not need to surround themselves with their personal crap as they go through the days--they will simply sit down at whatever terminal happens to be available and do their job. Of course this initiative will not apply to the managers since we need our space, but it is just necessary for those idiot women who cannot make it through five seconds without chattering on their cells. This is a fabulous idea to save money for the whole *summum bonum*, right?
- Yes, it will be a good idea to hire Mike Mooch as our new chief lobbyist. His bipartisan genius to funnel money to just anyone in the Beltway is truly remarkable, and I am sure the universe is as impressed with him as I am. Right?
- There is no better way to encourage innovation than by having everybody write up monthly productivity reports describing how great their team is. This will help us get our mojo back and throw out endless harmony into the quantum field every second of the day. Yes?
- I have concluded that it is a good idea, both for us and the universe, if we outsource our human resources department to that company in Bolivia. Am I correct?
- It is okay with the universe if I give Martin a good reference, I mean, so what if he's a Peter Principle disaster, if he moves to a new company he might do better. Right?

What's that? You mean you don't like any of the above questions since they are all so obviously full of negative energy that you already know how an oracle will respond? You want some advice on how to ask real

questions about your business, since you just + know it is full of good energy and throwing out positive energies into the universe. That's why it is so successful.

You had better think again. The vast majority of businesses today, not just in the United States but in every country in the world, are currently wallowing in a limitless swamp of malevolent energies. Needless to say, the bigger the company, the more negative the energies. The people who work for these companies walk around so submerged in these energies that they cannot see their way into Reality for anything. As for the honchos running the show, their energy fields are so stuffed with toxicity it's a wonder they do not topple over.

There is, of course, only one reason for all this negativity, namely that toxic energy called greed. Plus the insane notion that you have to pay hardball to get the cash. This nonsense has been the rule and not the exception in this country since 19th century mustache-twirlers were robbing widows and orphans. It continues to be the dominant energy of the vast majority of 21st century businesses, no matter what kind of business it is, and no matter where it is located. Money and yet ever more money is its siren call. In order to make this wonderful money appear, good businesspeople are constantly compromising, cutting corners, operating a few little con jobs, producing shoddy products, ignoring safety concerns, bribing the authorities, indulging in bait and switch, practicing deceptive advertising, and playing various other underhanded games--all for the sake of a phantom known as the bottom line.

Perhaps the most contemptible hardball game is called kowtowing before the despot. When American businesspeople are confronted with the demands of an overseas dictator, they jettison their beliefs in free speech, human rights, and democracy and proceed to acquiesce in whatever the tyrant demands. They did it with Nazi Germany in the 1930's, with the Soviet Union in the 1970's and 1980's, and they are doing it with China today. Not that good American businesspeople can admit to themselves that they have got as much blood on their hands as the thugs they are enabling. Should you try to object to their practices, I am sure they would rattle off excuse after excuse about their sweetheart deals, the biggie being that if they did not do business with

the tyrant, their competitors would. Yes, of course, so go in peace, and now as you walk the links you can keep the occupation of Tibet out of sight and out of mind.

What the honchos of these companies cannot understand is that no matter how record-breaking your quarterly reports, no matter how enormous your profits, no matter how brilliant your innovations . . . if your company is not going with the natural flow of the universe, sooner or later it is going to crash right into the Studebaker mountain. On the other hand, if your head honchos would start to consult their oracles about every procedure, every initiative, every hire, and every major policy decision they make, things would be different. The most successful companies are always going to be the ones which are filled with Divine energies. So there is only one kind of question you need to ask an oracle about your company's success:

- I have concluded that our company's belief about the positive energies of our _____ will put out benevolent energies into the universe. Am I correct? (Fill in the blank as you choose with terms such as products, hiring policies, strategic initiatives, advertising, mission statement, consultants, market research, organizational structure, team dynamics, or anything else drilled into your head at your college of business and manipulation.)

Government questions.

So much for business--what about government? How can an oracle help here? Alas, chances are that the person currently reading this book is one of the lesser people in our American scheme of things and has no say in governmental decisions at any level. Probably the only way you can impact your government is by voting. So can an oracle help you here? Well, over the years I have occasionally asked my cards the following question:

I have concluded that if I vote for Candidate X, s/he will put positive energies into the universe if elected. Am I correct?

This ought to be a perfectly reasonable question to put to an oracle. The problem is that whenever I have asked this question of the cards, all I get is a NO. Not once in thirty years have the cards approved of my voting for a particular candidate. Hmmmm. Well, obviously one of two things is going on here: (1) I am not reading the cards correctly, or (2) there have not been any worthwhile candidates to vote for in the United States of America during the past quarter of a century. Meet the new boss, etc.

Well, of course (1) must be the problem, since (2) simply could not be possible. No, it just could not be possible. So I cannot recommend that you trust an oracle when you are trying to decide for whom to vote.

But here is an interesting fantasy: what would happen if the inhabitants of Versailles-upon-the-Potomac started to consult an oracle prior to initiating (or voting upon) new legislation? Now wouldn't that really be something, especially since it is so easy to imagine what kinds of questions our dedicated public servants would ask:

- Boy, this time it took me forever to get all of Boondoggle, Inc.'s earmarks into the budget bill, but it will be worth it if they finally get off my back. I mean, what more do they need besides \$12.7 billion? Am I right again, as usual?
- It is outrageous that members of Congress cannot issue end-of-term pardons to their cronies as does the president. This fundamental right needs to be extended to the legislative branch in order to maintain a healthy separation of power in the federal government. I am certain that my proposed constitutional amendment establishing this right will be approved without a single glitch, and that the universe wholeheartedly approves, right?

Yes, I know--the above questions are a little too overly cerebral for the current inhabitants of Versailles-upon-the-Potomac. But that is okay. As a matter of fact, our politicians really need to ask only one simple little question of their oracles:

- I have concluded that the proposed legislation will put positive energies into the universe, so I should vote to approve it. Am I correct?

Wow. If this one marvelous question were put to an oracle before every legislative vote, think what a spectacular improvement it would make in the efficiency of our government. Our elected representatives would not have to read a bill before they voted on it, which doesn't happen any more anyway. They would simply consult their tarot cards to check on the energies of the pending legislation. Then they would be able to see at a glance whether the proposed legislation was in harmony with the *summum bonum*.

Yeah, right. Fat chance of that happening any time in the near future. In the meantime, as far as voting is concerned, I guess that we lesser people must continue to rely upon something which always lets us down: our best judgment. But maybe someday, somehow, our oracles might reveal that one of the candidates in our area is actually worthy of public trust. In a quantumly-cursed world, anything can happen.

* * *

So much for formulating oracular questions. Have fun devising your own personal favorites. Just do not forget that your own personal energies are what you need to focus on, not the follies in the world around you.

Chapter 10. In Search of the Flash.

It is now time for you to reach for your tarot deck and start getting some answers about your assorted issues. But before you take your brand-new deck into your eager little hands, you need to understand several things first. There is an art to working with your tarot cards, and if you want to practice this art with skill, you need to follow the following recommendations:

Shuffling the cards. The first thing to examine is how to shuffle the cards. What is important here is that it has to be you who does the shuffling and the pulling of the cards. In other words, your own personal energies need to interact with each and every card as they are shuffled. Nobody else can do it, and certainly not your pay-for-hire psychic. I have heard that some psychics think it is fine if they do the shuffling instead of the querent, but I cannot see how this would work. There have been times in my life when someone phoned me and asked me to shuffle and pull the cards to answer his question. I tried it a few times, until I realized that the answers were worthless.

But how long should you shuffle the cards? That is easy: as long as you like. A good time to stop shuffling is when the cards no longer meld. But don't suffer under the delusion that a lengthy shuffling of the cards will give you the answer that you desire to see. There was once a time in my life when I thought that shuffling the cards for many long minutes would give me the much-desired YES response that I just had to have. This was a useless exercise in futility. It does not matter whether you shuffle your cards three or thirty times--you will never be able to force them to give you an answer which is not correct.

What is known as the riffle or the faro shuffle has always worked best for me. You divide the deck in half, with one half placed in the left hand and one in the right. Then you riffle the edges of the cards with your thumbs so that the two halves are mixed together. Combine the two halves together and do it as many more times as you please. You will eventually get a good chaotic mix.

The riffle shuffle is not the only way to randomize the cards. You can also spread the cards before you as messily as possible and start to

stir them as if you were stirring a pot of soup. Some people find the Smith deck too large to handle comfortably and stir the cards like this instead. I do this myself with my miniaturized Smith deck, and experience tells me that it works as well as a shuffle.

To reverse or not to reverse. We now come to a complicated topic: whether or not to read reversals when you work with the cards. Many tarot practitioners do their best to create a mixture of reversed and upright cards as they shuffle their deck. This is easy enough to do: as you shuffle the cards, you should occasionally give the half-deck in one of your hands a clockwise or a counterclockwise turn, and then shuffle as usual. You can also turn the entire deck several times in either direction after completing your shuffle. You will end up with a nicely chaotic mix of upright and reversed.

However, some tarot writers do not like the idea of reversals and recommend that you read cards upright only. As for me, I can only urge you in the strongest possible terms to read the cards with reversals. There was a period early in my tarot practice when I did try to read all the cards upright, but it eventually dawned upon me that I was not getting helpful responses. Only when I started adding more chaos to the deck by reversing some of the cards as I shuffled them did the accuracy of my readings improve.

But why should reversals be necessary in a card reading? Well, let me tell you what you are going to start doing when you work with tarot. You are going to do your tidy best to twist the messages you get from the cards into what you want to see, instead of what they are actually showing you. Your tarot cards might tell you, as clearly and as distinctly as possible, that NO, you should not marry Luke, but if you are lost in a whirlpool of turbulent emotions, the minute your eyes make contact with the cards you turn over, you will do your best to twist their meaning into some kind of YES. Getting the Truth and recognizing it as Truth are two different things.

Not that you are alone in this. Over the years I have seen astrologers, psychics, tarot readers, healers, and other people who think they have a special intuitive talent for getting things right, get them wrong time and again. Fortunately, as far as tarot is concerned, the cure

for this problem is easy. You read reversals. In my experience, the only way you can prevent yourself from twisting an obvious NO response into a YES is with reversals. When the first card you turn over is reversed, and subsequent cards are reversed as well, and when your tarot expert (me) tells you that this means your answer is a NO, you will not be able to persuade yourself that you are actually seeing a YES.

Pulling the cards. Now we get to pull the cards. The trick here is that you should always pull the cards with your left hand. This is very old cartomancy guidance which happens to be excellent advice. Research has shown that when you use the muscles on the left side of your body, they stimulate the right side of your brain, and vice versa. So even if you are normally right-handed, you should pull the cards with your left hand. It is also best to turn a card over as soon as you pull it, instead of waiting until you complete your pull. But it does not seem to matter whether you turn a card over vertically or horizontally. What does matter is that you must let reversals remain upside down. I have had querents who pull a reversed card and then quite automatically turn it right side up, since they think they are seeing some kind of mistake. I always explain that the card wanted to appear reversed, and that this is how we will interpret it.

Pay attention when a card wants to be pulled. When you become familiar with shuffling your cards, you will discover that sometimes one or more of them want to be pulled. These are the ones which stick out or even jump out of the deck as you are shuffling. It also happens that sometimes when you pull a card, you discover that you have pulled more than one. All these cards want you to look at them, so you should never stick them back into the deck. You should turn them over and pay particular attention to them.

Forget the spreads. After you have pulled your cards, how should you arrange them before you? If you are familiar with traditional tarot practices, you will be aware that most experts recommend that you arrange your pulled cards into a pattern called a spread. This is almost

universally considered to be a sacrosanct rule about cartomancy. You are not supposed to lay out the cards before you as you please--you have got to fit them into some kind of diagram. Card spreads seem to have been in existence as long as people have used cards as an oracle.

Well, I say the heck with tarot spreads. Defining spreads, analyzing spreads, tweaking spreads . . . all these time-wasters are about as helpful as a poke in the eye. The problem with tarot spreads is that the only thing they provoke is . . . *thinking*. You do not flash on the cards before you--you start thinking about what they mean in a certain position. Then you have also got to remember that the card you have turned over means one thing when it is next to one kind of card, but something else when it is beside another. Then you have got to recall which is which, and why didn't you pay more attention to that tarot spread book you were reading last summer, and surely it is not going to hurt to open up the book again right now since you are stymied about why you are seeing that card in that position, and all these permutations are surely necessary so you can figure out what the heck you are seeing, and . . . you end up as befuddled as a rapper trying to say something intelligent. Whoops, looks like you just lost your flash.

You need to pull only three cards to get an answer. Here comes my next tarot heresy, namely that you only need to pull three cards to get a clear answer to your question. Just three cards? What kind of nonsense is this? Very practical nonsense, if you ask me. My experience tells me that three cards are enough to give you a comprehensible answer to any kind of oracular query. They will tell you a story, show you patterns and interconnections, and clearly indicate YES or NO. Also it is easier to flash upon the cards when you pull only a limited number. If you pull more than three cards for your answer, things will start getting complex, as in having to think.

How did I come up with a three-card pull? That's easy. When I first started learning tarot, I was thoroughly intimidated by everything I thought I had to learn, up to and including the spreads. Somehow I found one authority who told me that a good spread for beginners was a simple seven card pull: you extracted seven cards from the deck, lined them up one after the other, and you had your answer. There were

no additional complications about what each position in the seven-card lineup was supposed to mean.

So I started to pull seven cards every time I asked a question. But after a while I noticed that by the time I had pulled the third card, I had my answer. The remaining four cards usually confirmed what the first three cards had told me. Eventually I simply stopped pulling the four final cards. I have stuck to pulling three cards at a time ever since, and it continues to work.

Then why don't I turn over only one card to get a response, instead of three? Because I have also learned that pulling only one card seldom gives me an accurate answer. There have been times when I have pulled a strongly positive first card, only to pull two very negative subsequent cards, which blow that positivity out of the water. This is why, at least for me, pulling only one card is never enough for a successful divination. Those pesky little NO cards enjoy nothing more than turning up as the second or third cards in a pull, thus dashing your hopes yet one more time.

So pulling three cards works for me, and it will probably work for you. But mind you, I am not recommending that you turn these three cards into some kind of spread. Some tarot authors will tell you that you can still play the what-the-spread-means game with three cards, as in thesis/antithesis/synthesis, or past/present/future. Forget it. The only thing you need to do when you turn over your three cards is flash on them.

The best possible card pull: three x three = nine. Still, there have been times in my life when I have learned that a simple three card pull is not enough, especially if I am asking about an important issue in my life, such as money or career. At such times I have learned that the best possible tarot pull consists of pulling nine cards, three at a time, over a three day period. In other words, when you ask your question for the first time, you pull three cards for the answer, then you wait twenty-four hours, shuffle the deck again and pull three new cards. Then you again wait a second twenty-four hours and shuffle and pull your final three cards. You pull a total of nine cards for your response, but you do it over a seventy-two hour period.

Am I kidding? Not a bit, since this kind of pull always gives me the most accurate answers, but only when I wait twenty-four hours between each pull. The cards need that amount of time for their energies to clear. Not twelve hours, not six hours, not five minutes: nothing less than twenty-four hours between questions, a night and a day. Doing a three-day reading works best because it gives you a chance not just to divine, but to do some thinking about what your oracle is telling you. It is true that you want to flash on a card the instant you turn it over, but after the flash happens, you need to think about what you have seen, especially if it is not what you expected.

Now I am aware that most of my readers will not like the idea of waiting twenty-four hours before they can ask the question a second or third time. But I have learned that there is an extra benefit to the waiting, namely that what you so intensely desire tends to grow less important with the passage of time, even just the passage of a single day. And if you are asking a plan of action question, something the very best thing to do in a particular situation is . . . nothing. Let the problem solve itself. Energies always want to return to harmony and will do so if you let them. If you give yourself seventy-two hours before you initiate a proposed plan of action, and if you make sure you get a confirmation about it three times in a row, your plan will succeed more often than not.

Still, even with a $3 \times 3 = 9$ reading, the pull you see on your first night will always be the most accurate. If you do not like the first response and feel you need to ask the question again, go ahead and do it, but chances are that your original pull will prove to be the accurate one.

A three x infinity card pull. You can continue to ask a question as many times as you like, as long as you obey the rule about waiting twenty-four hours between readings. There was one period in my life when I pestered the cards for several months about a relationship which I desperately wanted to resume. This was the sort of situation where Little Miss Moron sits around the house every Saturday night for half a year just in case *he* might call. In all the months that I asked the question, perhaps only once or twice did I see something positive.

What I usually got instead were the kinds of reversed or negative energy cards which equaled a big fat NO. Of course the cards eventually proved correct--the relationship was dead. Now I can see that repeating the question for several months was a necessary thing for me to do. When you get an answer you do not want to see about something of vital importance in your life, you will fight it as hard as you can. Getting a NO reinforced night after night for weeks at a time is frequently the only way it will penetrate a very thick skull.

And it is no exaggeration to state that the skulls of most human beings happen to be very thick. If you get an oracular NO about something which matters very deeply to you, chances are that you will blow it off if you see it only once, particularly if you are still not convinced that oracles can be trusted. On the other hand, if you ask the same question night after night, for dozens or even hundreds of nights, and get a NO response more than 95% of the time, I guarantee that those NO's will eventually start to penetrate.

So if the cards start telling you something you do not want to see, don't feel bad if you have to ask the same question of your oracle for weeks or even months. If you are desperately clinging to some kind of bad energy in your life, the first or second NO you see will not penetrate. After fifty NO readings, things will be different. And the thinking you will be doing between seeing the NO's will help you understand why you are seeing them.

What if you cannot wait twenty-four hours to ask the question a second time? You grit your teeth and accept the answer you got from your first pull. It was probably the right answer, anyway.

* * *

All right, so now we know how to shuffle and pull the cards. So what is next? Obviously it is now time to figure out what the cards are saying to us, right? *Oh, goody, goody! Now she is finally going to tell us what-the-cards-mean!* Oh, stop it. Haven't you got it through your head yet that card meanings only rarely matter in divination? Whenever you turn a card over, you do not want to *think* about its

meaning, let alone ponder, deliberate, or clutch your head in hope of enlightenment. That ego thingy called a thought would annihilate your Divine revelation in a split-second. On the other hand, if you can mindlessly flash on a card the second your eyes see it, you will usually get the Truth.

What we now need to discuss is the art of the flash. This is the single thing you want to experience when you turn over a card, namely an ectropic burst of meaning. Don't forget that this has always been a very efficient way for us humans to get a communication from the Divine. Why do you think Zeus kept tossing out his thunderbolts and lightning? To generate rain? He must have realized that a bolt from the wild blue yonder was the only way he could get through to the blockheads down below. If you are truly after Divine energy when you divine, sometimes you need to get completely knocked out of your head. The bigger the knock, the better.

Still, I can understand if my esteemed reader does not like the idea of a flash. A flash is something which can never be manipulated into being. If you want to truly experience it, you have to do what is the ultimate horror for control freaks the world over: you have to just let it happen. Good American that you are, this is the last thing you want to do, right? You were raised by control freaks, you were taught by control freaks, you interact daily with control freaks, and you cannot help being a control freak yourself. Now that you are eager to consult an oracle, your inner Manipulation Demon is lusting after a carefully calculated divinatory experience.

Ain't gonna happen.

But cheer up. This is going to be one time when it will be easy to ditch your control freakery, but not because of anything you might consciously do. The mere practice of divination is one of the best ways to start freeing yourself from your ingrained determination to manage every single aspect of your life. Divination is based upon synchronistic energies, remember. When you start interacting with non-causal reality, you will discover that it can shift your entire energy field into new patterns of balance and harmony. In such an environment, your ingrained control freakery starts to sink beneath the vibes.

But if you cannot manipulate a flash into being, how are you going

to get one? Here are my suggestions regarding the art of the flash:

Empty your mind. The first step is to clear out your mind of everything except the question you wish to ask your oracle. Forget the past, forget the future, and forget the fact that you are probably desperate to get a YES from your oracle. Relax into timelessness and do some breathing exercises if you have to. Flashes happen best in an empty sky--or an empty mind. Only when your mind is blank of everything except your question do you start to shuffle the cards.

When you turn a card over, notice how your body responds. This is the key to the flash. The moment you make eye contact with an overturned card, you will physically respond, and you need to pay attention to what happens. It has been my experience that your body can respond in one of several different ways, as follows:

- Recoil or sag. If you recoil or feel your energy drop when you turn over a card, you are seeing a NO.
- Relief. If you get a sense that some kind of discomfort has ended, you are seeing a YES.
- Bewilderment. If all you feel is confusion when you turn over a card, I guarantee that you're seeing a NO. YES's never generate puzzlement.
- Freeze. When you go rigid when you turn over a card, it means that you are surprised at what you see: the card before you is the exact opposite of what you expected. So depending upon your circumstances, a freeze can indicate either a YES or NO. Speaking as someone who has gotten mostly NO's from her oracle for more than thirty years, I always freeze when I see a YES. A novice reader, on the other hand, will usually freeze at a NO.

Your body is going to react most strongly to upright or reversed.

The one single thing that will scald your eyeballs when you turn over your first card is whether it is upright or reversed. Never mind the illustration, the colors, the suit, the shapes, or the figures. Upright or reversed will determine how your body will respond. Here are my general rules about upright or reversed cards:

- Any card which you feel contains positive energy and which appears upright is usually going to hand you a relieving YES.
- A positive-energy card which is reversed, or any negative-energy card which is upright will hand you a recoiling NO.
- A negative-energy card which is reversed is also usually a NO. However, it can be a weak YES if it indicates that what you need to do is release some kind of energy.

The first card you turn over will usually give you your answer.

Many tarot writers suffer under the delusion that the last card you pull in a spread is the one that counts. This is the exact opposite from my own experience, which is that the first card you turn over is the card with the strongest zing and will probably give you the answer to your question.

* * *

The above directions, believe it or not, are all that you need to know about the art of the flash. But the catch here is that a flash is usually going to happen only when you turn over your first card. And you are not pulling just one card for your answer, are you? There are two more to go. You will still get a burst of either negative or positive energy when you turn over your second and third cards, but this energy is now entangled with the energy of the first card. And it is going to be all three cards together which will give you your answer, not just the first one. If you recoil at the first card you see but then pull two positive-looking cards, your body is going to remain tense regardless of the

positivity of the second and third cards. And sometimes those two subsequent positive cards will overrule the first card's negativity.

But how do you interpret the second and third cards if you cannot flash on them? And what happens if you are too tense or worried to notice how your body is responding? At times like these you will do nothing but stare helplessly at the card which you have turned over. Alas, as much as thinking is to be avoided when you turn over a tarot card, sometimes it needs to happen. No psychic without logic. This means that if you want to supplement your flash with some necessary thinking, then you are going to need some guidance about--

Oh, no! Not that! Not--*what-the-cards-mean!* No! I can't do it! I won't do it! Don't ask me to! You cannot make me! Anything but that! Please! Oh, I give up . . .

Chapter 11. But You've Got To Tell Me What the Cards Mean!

So here we are. You cannot work with tarot unless your all-seeing and all-wise author tells you what-the-goddamn-cards-mean. After all, you are still just a beginner! You have got to have somebody with more experience and wisdom to tell you the MEANINGS of the cards! That would be me, I guess. As if I can do it. As if anyone can. Please get it through your head one more time that the desire to have every square millimeter of Smith's illustrations explained to you reveals you to be a brain-dead Newtonian who is chronically out of balance with the natural flow of the universe. But that is not about to stop you, is it? I have just got to tell you what-the-cards-mean, even if it kills both me and you. Boy, do I ever not want to write this chapter, and do I ever not want you to read it.

Well, let's get it over with. But before we start to wade into this particular swamp, let me remind you that the only card meanings which I can give you are my own personal interpretations, which exist at one particular point in my life. This means that my current definitions are as fluid as everything else in my life, or in yours. If you make the mistake of memorizing my current version of what-the-cards-mean and using it for the next several decades, you do not have a prayer of successfully divining with tarot. This means that eventually you have got to (1) decide for yourself what-the-cards-mean, and (2) accept the fact that your definitions will evolve as the years go on.

So here we go. We will start by examining some of the patterns which can be found in the deck as a whole, as follows:

Numbers. In her deck Smith follows the time-honored tradition of putting numbers on both her major and minor cards. As far as the major cards are concerned, the numbers from 0 to 22 must have been helpful when tarot was played as a game, but they are irrelevant to successful divination. On the other hand, I believe that the numbers on the minor cards can help us to find meaning. Each minor card is numbered from one to ten, and these primal numbers each possess an archetypal energy which can be illuminating in divination. So when you pull a minor card, it helps to have some knowledge of its

numerical meaning in your mind:

- One: singularity or new beginnings.
- Two: duality, an energy manifestation paired with its complement.
- Three: triangular energy, or the synthesis of thesis and antithesis.
- Four: the energy of the square, which is solid and stable.
- Five: some kind of instability or disruption.
- Six: balanced energy that moves smoothly forward.
- Seven: stressful energy, usually that of restriction or blockage.
- Eight: an energy of increase or unfoldment.
- Nine: a triple triad indicating some kind of integration or attainment.
- Ten: completion or culmination.

Classical elements. Along with the numerical meaning, Smith also shows us the energies of the four classical elements of earth, air, fire, and water in the minor cards of her deck. I have long believed that the one thing which makes tarot a viable oracle is its alignment to these elements. My own experience tells me that the basis of our "physical" reality is not only mathematical, but in some way a manifestation of the number four. In this I am relying upon the philosophers of classical antiquity, particularly pre-Socratic philosophers such as Thales, Democritus, and Heraclitus, and their conclusion that all forms in the

universe were manifestations of four types of energy.

The Greeks were not the only people to sense Reality as a kind of fourness. You can find this thinking in many other cultures, including Egypt, Babylon, Vedic India, Mahayana Buddhism, and pre-Columbian America. In the West the notion of the four elements influenced the thinking of early church fathers, alchemists, astrologers, and Renaissance philosophers, and it continues right into our own era. Quantum physics tells us that there are four measurable forces in the universe: strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, gravity, and electromagnetism. There are also four primary chemical elements: carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen. And matter manifests in four states: solid, gas, plasma, and liquid. Carl Jung felt that we humans experienced the world through four kinds of energies: thinking (air), feeling (water), intuition (fire), and sensation (earth). North, south, east, west . . . spring, summer, winter, fall . . . body, mind, soul, spirit . . . fourness everywhere you look. Our spacetime reality is quadripartite.

Still, it is a mistake to think that the energy of each of the four elements is limited to their "physical" manifestation. The primal element of earth, for example, was never considered to be just plain old dirt. It also represented the physical reality of our world: nature, sustenance, or even the human body. This makes sense to me, especially when you realize that ancient philosophers felt that these elements were spiritual forces working through matter. As for us postmoderns, when we start thinking about Reality in terms of the four elements, much about life and consciousness starts to make sense.

So what kinds of patterns or energies do the four classical elements represent in Smith's deck? My own interpretation of the four classical elements goes like this:

- Air/Swords: mental energies, thought, communication, language, learning, the intellect.
- Fire/Wands: spiritual energies, creativity, inspiration, mystical vision.

- Water/Cups: emotional energies, feeling or desire.
- Earth/Pentacles: physical energies, objects in space, forms which appear to be solid, order, discipline, the human body.

I also think that like all other energy complements, these four elements can balance each other out. Earth and water are yin energies, while air and fire are yang; fire harmonizes water, while earth balances air.

But how can these energies help you in divination? Well, if you pull several wands cards in a reading, you are probably seeing that there is some kind of spiritual issue in your life that you need to address, or that a spiritual solution will solve your problem. Sword cards might show a problem with intellect or communication. Cups would indicate that you need to release some excessive emotions, while pentacles might point to a problem with your physical health.

The meanings of both the numbers and the four elements are now so firmly ensconced in my psyche that I always sense them the moment I turn over a minor card. Novice tarot readers probably need to reach this point as well. Yes, I am now telling you that you do need to rely upon something that you have memorized when you flash on a card. But I learned to work with the cards at the same time I began to study the numbers and the elements, and I cannot do it any other way. The thing to remember is that if you do absorb the basic meanings of the numbers and the elements as deeply as you can, you will still be able to flash on the card's primal energy the instant you encounter it.

At any rate, now that we have examined the patterns to be found in the deck, we can now move on to what you've been waiting for: explaining the cards. Out of the darkness into the light sort of!

Court cards. Once upon a time when you went trotting off to your friendly neighborhood fortune teller, she would be pleased to inform you that the court card you had just pulled represented a real human being, more specifically a person who was going to come into your life. Pulling the King of Diamonds/Coins/Pentacles in a reading, for example, usually meant that an older man with money was about to appear in your life, a thought which must have been balm to thousands

of spinster ears, especially the ones who yearned to get their hands on somebody else's cash. As for me, I don't know how many times I have pulled the King of Pentacles over the years, but mercifully I have never had to deal with any kind of Mr. Moneybags appearing in my existence. So while a court card can on occasion represent a particular human being in your life, I have learned that there is a better way to interpret these cards, specifically as manifestations of energy.

Like most other tarot decks, Smith gives us four court cards in each suit: King, Queen, Knight, and Page, and I feel that each figure represents a distinct kind of energy. If you think of the King and Queen of each suit as representing the Daoist idea of yang and yin, the active and the receptive energy of the element, the figures start to make sense. The King of Wands, for example, would indicate some kind of active or creative spiritual energy, while the Queen of Swords would manifest as receptive intellectual energy. The Knights are all riding horses, which indicates some kind of forward movement, while the four Pages are standing completely still next to some kind of precipice, although they do not seem to be aware danger lurks. In one way or another, these inexperienced kids are miscalculating the energies of their environments. So while the Pages might indicate some kind of new beginning, they are also a warning to watch your step.

And as for the meaning of the minor arcana cards, here we go . . .

Swords.

Ace of Swords. *Upright*--positive energy, new intellectual beginnings. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking a gift of Divine energy.

Two of Swords. The heroine of this particular card is one of Smith's world class Stupid Idiots. She sits blindfolded and precariously balanced while trying to protect herself with a couple of weapons, even though there is no enemy in sight. And why is she wearing a blindfold? She doesn't have to if she doesn't want to, but she obviously wants to. Not much intelligence here, but it is an excellent illustration of what happens when you focus only upon what your inner demons want you to see. *Upright*--negative energy, you are being willfully blind to huge

chunks of reality, including an astoundingly beautiful seascape behind you. *Reversed*--positive energy only if you manage to release what is holding you back. *Escape Hatch*--put down those idiot swords, take the blindfold off, and enjoy the beauty of the universe.

Three of Swords. We see three swords piercing a large red heart, with rain falling against a cloudy gray sky. There is no human figure to be seen in this card--only a disembodied heart in distress. *Upright*--negative energy, the only thing happening at the moment is emotional pain. *Reversed*--positive energy, those agonizing thoughts are going to fall away. *Escape Hatch*--since a heart like this cannot exist in Reality, this illustration is an illusion, and so must be the thought forms which are creating it.

Four of Swords. Here we see a stone carving of a deceased human being whose hands are clasped in prayer. It is not an unpleasant image, but something seems to be askew. Perhaps the message is that we should never let our thoughts freeze into stasis. Complete mental tranquility is possible only when you're dead. *Upright*--can be either positive or negative energy depending on the question. Either way, do not let your mind get stuck. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can get your thoughts moving and return to the world of the living.

Five of Swords. This is one of the most unpleasant illustrations in the deck. Everything is wrong about this scene--the isolation of the figures, the disruption in the sky and the water, and the barrenness of the landscape. Smith has found a perfect way to illustrate that illusion called Otherness. *Upright or reversed*--a great big blast of negative energy. Release! Release! You do not have to do it or if you don't want to. *Escape Hatch*--just drop those idiot swords and scam.

Six of Swords. This card shows us three faceless figures moving slowly across water. They are making progress as they go forward, but their body language screams glumness. *Upright*--positive energy (just barely), when you can move your thoughts through your emotional turmoil, you will get somewhere, even if it takes longer than you

would like. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are stuck and unable to escape your unhappy thoughts. *Escape Hatch*--a new shore is visible ahead of you.

Seven of Swords. Here we have a fun fellow who is going nowhere fast. *Upright*--negative energy, you are so lost in illusion that you cannot see how you are harming yourself. *Reversed*--negative energy unless you can release your painful thoughts. *Escape Hatch*--it is within your power to stop your thoughts from cutting you to pieces any time you like.

Eight of Swords. The heroine of this card gives a visual illustration of one of the most important problems we all face: locking ourselves into our very own Comfort Zone. What's that? You do not think that your precious Comfort Zone looks like this? Then what do you think it looks like? Some kind of rec room complete with recliner, beer, pizza, and twenty-foot flat screen? Don't be so unimaginative. A Comfort Zone comes into existence whenever someone covers up her eyes so she will not see anything she does not want to see. Then she does her best to remain forever bound to her static thoughts. What else is happening in this card? You will observe that our heroine is bound with only a few flimsy fabric rags, so she could escape her imprisonment any time she likes. But she is not about to do that, right? Living is easy with eyes closed, so why open them? *Upright*--negative energy, you are bound and determined to shut out Reality and Truth. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can release your bonds. *Escape Hatch*--honey, just start walking away from your negative energy. Nobody will stop you.

Nine of Swords. This is an unhappy image of sleeplessness and worry. It shows us one of the few enclosed spaces in the deck, which is not a fun place to be. *Upright*--negative energy, you have let yourself become engulfed with painful thoughts. *Reversed*--still a lot of negativity but you can release it if you want to. *Escape Hatch*--the astrological imagery on the quilt reminds us that a greater world exists outside our own personal soap opera, and if you enlarge your

perspective, you can find a way out.

Ten of Swords. Here we have one of the more horrific images in the deck: some poor chump has no less than ten swords stuck in his back. But as I have already discussed, no blood is to be seen, and he is making a spiritual gesture with his right hand. This tells me that somehow he has done these injuries to himself. *Upright or reversed--* both indicate the kind of positive energy you will find if you can release your burdensome thoughts. *Escape Hatch--*spiritual energy will come to your rescue no matter what your burden, which the dawning sky indicates.

The Page of Swords. He is armed and ready to do battle--against the wind, apparently. Sweetie, I guess you are just too young to realize that the wind can be your friend. *Upright--*there is positive energy for a new beginning as long as you put down your weapon. *Reversed--*negative energy, somehow you are not picking up on new ideas or thoughts. *Escape Hatch--*let yourself enjoy the natural movement of the air.

Knight of Swords. Here we have another world-class Stupid Idiot. This loser is charging recklessly forward with sword upraised and visor lifted, which is a perfect recipe for disaster. His horse is so appalled at his rider's behavior that he is looking backwards instead of forwards, which makes for a double disaster. *Upright--*negative energy, thinking is disastrous when it moves too quickly. *Reversed--*positive energy if you can manage to slow your thoughts down. *Escape Hatch--*whoa!

Queen of Swords. At all times and under all circumstances this queen means NO. She is telling us that being overly receptive in your thinking turns you into one of the most negative energy fields in the universe. *Upright or Reversed--*as negative as negative energy can get. *Escape Hatch--*is she a queen dreaming that she is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that she is a queen? Either way, dreams are better than thoughts.

King of Swords. This king is staring at you straight in the face because he wants to communicate with you. *Upright*--positive energy, the blessings of interaction with another human being. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking you from learning or thinking.

Cups

Ace of Cups. *Upright*--positive energy, new emotional beginnings. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking a gift of Divine energy.

Two of Cups. Here we see a man and a woman standing as equals with each other. They are positioned underneath the ancient symbol of the caduceus, which is a sign of healing and balance. Both are wearing laurel wreaths, possibly symbolizing some kind of emotional victory. *Upright*--positive energy, give and you shall receive. *Reversed*--negative energy, your emotional energies are somehow out of balance.

Three of Cups. This is the jump for joy card and one of the happiest images in the deck. The fact that the three figures are harmoniously interacting with each other tells us that this is a card about the joys of friendship. *Upright*--positive energy, you are frequently at your happiest when you are interacting with the other sentient beings in the Net. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are letting something block your sense of interconnection.

Four of Cups. This card shows us a smaller version of the Divine hands we see in the Aces. This time we see a human on the receiving end of the offer, but he has crossed his arms and legs in the best sulking-teenager manner possible. *Upright*--negative energy, you are too full of yourself to accept the Divine energy which is being offered to you. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can relax and accept the gift. *Escape Hatch*--take what you are being handed.

Five of Cups. This illustration gives us self-pity personified. We see a faceless figure bent over with grief. But it is hard to feel sympathy for someone who is not behaving very intelligently. It is true that three of

his/her cups have spilled on the ground, but two still remain upright, so the situation is not as bad as he thinks. *Upright*--negative energy, self-pity is self-pits. *Reversed*--still negative energy unless you can release your unhealthy emotions. *Escape Hatch*--there is a bridge in the distance, so quit your bawling and start walking.

Six of Cups. Here we see a couple of kids standing before a grand Olde Englishe house and garden. The older boy is handing a bouquet to the girl. It is a vision of gentle communion. *Upright*--positive energy, you experience pleasure when you exchange beauty with another human being. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is stopping you from connecting with another soul or from appreciating the beauty which surrounds you.

Seven of Cups. The principal figure in this card is a featureless silhouette, which makes him the only dematerialized human in the deck. And what is this phantom doing? He is gazing at a bunch of fantasy cups floating in the sky, most of which seem to promise some kind of pleasure. *Upright*--negative energy, when all you see is illusion, you are helplessly stuck. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can ditch your delusions. *Escape Hatch*--you can turn away from those fantasies and come back to Reality any time you like.

Eight of Cups. Here we see a solitary figure trudging away from a row of cups, with a glum-looking moon in the sky. There is a lot of water to be seen, which probably means that this view is weighted down with emotional overload. Our hero is doing the right thing by walking away from his problems, but at the moment his emotions are a horrific burden, and the moon is not giving him any help. *Upright*--positive energy if you are able to move into new space. *Reversed*--negative energy if you keep letting your emotions drag you down. *Escape Hatch*--you have got spiritual energy in the form of a staff to help you move into new space.

Nine of Cups. The meaning of this card has shifted for me over the years. Once I thought that it was an image of positive energy showing

a guy happily content with his collection of cups. Nowadays I see nothing but self-indulgence. This Stupid Idiot is a confirmed attention-whore who has lined up his trophy emotions for everyone to see, since for some reason he thinks they are interesting. *Upright*--negative energy, too much ego and smugness. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can walk away from your silly little self. *Escape Hatch*--you can easily ditch your ego any time you like, and the sooner the better.

Ten of Cups. Two adults and two children are dancing with happiness at the sight of a cup-enhanced rainbow in the sky, which is as positive as any image as any in the Smith deck. Rainbows were once seen as a bridge between heaven and earth, and in this card the colors in the sky display greatly benevolent energy. *Upright*--positive energy, the ultimate in earthly happiness can be yours when you connect to the Divine. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking you from easily attainable spiritual happiness.

Page of Cups. This kid has got a fish popping up out of his cup, but for some reason that does not seem to surprise him. The fish seems perfectly friendly and looks like it wants to talk. *Upright*--positive energy for a new beginning, but don't try drinking out of your cup. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are not paying attention to the emotional turbulence behind you. *Escape Hatch*--listen to the fish.

Knight of Cups. This is a rational image of a horse and rider moving forward as a harmonious unity. *Upright*--positive energy, emotional energy needs to move carefully to be successful. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking you from a natural progression.

Queen of Cups. This Queen is so bewitched by the beauteousness of her desires that she is sinking into nothingness. *Upright*--negative energy, it is pretty dumb going through life fascinated by an illusory object in space. *Reversed*--negative energy unless you can free yourself from your mirage. *Escape Hatch*--throw the thingamajig into the sea where it belongs and get on with your life.

King of Cups. This king has a careful handle on his emotions and can sit in rock solid contentment despite the watery chaos which surrounds him. *Upright*--positive energy if you can master your feelings. *Reversed*--negative energy, if you don't let go of your inner turmoil, you are going to sink beneath the waves.

Wands

Ace of Wands. *Upright*--positive energy, new spiritual beginnings. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking a gift of Divine energy.

Two of Wands. This illustration gives us one of the most sublimely beautiful landscapes in the deck. We see a prosperous man gazing out at a vast distance of sea and mountains, and the world is his oyster. *Upright*--positive energy, you are blessed with such a good grip on Reality that you will meet with success. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are letting everything you hold precious fall away.

Three of Wands. This card is very similar to the Two of Wands--we see a lone figure gazing out at a huge expanse of land and sky, where only the sky is the limit. *Upright*--positive energy, the sight of all this vastness can expand your soul. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking a vision of beauty and truth.

Four of Wands. This is a pleasant image of rejoicing. The interesting thing about this card is that it is the only card in the Minor Arcana where the elemental symbols are larger than the human figures. The people are positioned much further back in the landscape, so they are completely dwarfed by the energy about which they are rejoicing. *Upright*--positive energy, if you make spiritual energy the most prominent manifestation in your life, you will have a lot to celebrate. *Reversed*--negative energy, do not be dumb enough to let the spiritual energy around you collapse.

Five of Wands. Here we see a bunch of Stupid Idiots clobbering each other with their wands. No rhyme or reason to be seen, just mindless

pandemonium. *Upright*--negative energy, you need to bring some reason into your spiritual energy. *Reversed*--positive energy only if you can release your turbulence and achieve serenity. *Escape Hatch*--maybe the people around you might be mired in meaningless confusion, but you do not have to participate if you don't want to.

Six of Wands. This is an image of a triumphant human being sitting astride a magnificent horse. The people around him seem to be using their wands to cheer him on. *Upright*--positive energy, spiritual strength will spontaneously burst up around you if you move forward with confidence. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is keeping you from your spiritual progress.

Seven of Wands. The figure in this card is trying to fend off some kind of wands attack from below, but he does not look too successful. *Upright*--negative energy, you are wasting your time trying to ward off what you think is a spiritual attack. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can let those energies fall away. *Escape Hatch*--stop using your spiritual tools as weapons and find your way into harmony.

Eight of Wands. Here we have another of the peopleless images in the deck--we see eight wands flying or perhaps falling through the air. *Upright*--either negative or positive energy, positive only when you realize that you need to come back down to earth. *Reversed*--negative energy, the air is not a natural place for a wand to be. *Escape Hatch*--just let spiritual energy do what it wants to do, and things will return to equilibrium.

Nine of Wands. The bandaged figure in this card is standing alone and wary, and he looks as though he is anticipating some kind of new fight. So while nothing is happening at the moment, it is time for vigilance. *Upright*--negative energy, something about your environment is not quite right. *Reversed*--positive energy, the situation might take a turn for the better if you can let down your guard. *Escape Hatch*--start walking.

Ten of Wands. There is no earthly reason for this Stupid Idiot to lug around ten whole wands if he does not want to, but obviously he wants to. *Upright*--negative energy, it makes no sense to keep staggering down the Road to Nowhere. *Reversed*--positive energy if you can let the useless stuff fall away. *Escape Hatch*--stop weighing down yourself with a lot of nothing.

Page of Wands. Our Wands hero is clutching a perfectly lovely wand but needs to pay attention to the rest of the world around him. *Upright*--there is positive energy for a new spiritual beginning if you can release your obsession. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are not going to survive in a desert like this unless you take some action. *Escape Hatch*--start using the wand to help you instead of just staring at it.

Knight of Wands. This duo is moving forward as carefully as the Knight of Cups. *Upright*--positive energy, spirituality needs as much slowness as emotions. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking you from developing your spiritual energies.

Queen of Wands. Spiritual receptivity has made this queen a model of serenity and grace. *Upright*--positive energy, one of the best ways to be receptive to spiritual energy is through a flower or an animal. *Reversed*--also positive energy as long as you are willing to turn the spirituality you have absorbed into creative energy.

King of Wands. This king is a spiritual visionary. He is not interested in looking at us but at the source of his inspiration, his wand. *Upright*--positive energy, your creative ability will easily manifest if you can keep your focus. *Reversed*--negative energy if you let your concentration fall away.

Pentacles

Ace of Pentacles. *Upright*--positive energy, new material beginnings. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking a gift of Divine energy.

Two of Pentacles. Here we see a lively young person holding two pentacles which have come together to make the infinity symbol. There is a lot of emotional turmoil indicated in the choppy water behind him/her, but this figure does not care--s/he is balanced between eternity and physical reality. *Upright*--positive energy, dancing while you are juggling will give you success. *Reversed*--negative energy, you have let things get knocked askew and need to straighten them out.

Three of Pentacles. We see three figures involved with some kind of construction, with one workman pausing for a moment in his toil. When you do a skillful job, you are filled with Divine energy. *Upright*--positive energy, something needs to be crafted or built. *Reversed*--negative energy, there is some kind of block to the creation of new physical manifestation.

Four of Pentacles. As has been mentioned, this is one of the funniest Stupid Idiots in the whole deck. Our hero is so obsessed with his pentacles that he seems to have plastered them to his body. *Upright*--negative energy, behold the human being whose greed has rendered him immobile, precarious, and ridiculous. *Reversed*--positive energy, only if you can release your stuff/money obsessions. *Escape Hatch*--since they obviously are not doing him any good, is there any reason why he actually needs these pentacles?

Five of Pentacles. If you have been wondering what the human race looks like in the second decade of the 21st century, here you have it: two suffering people staggering blindly through illusion and oblivious to the spiritual assistance which is theirs for the asking. *Upright*--negative energy, you are heading nowhere fast because you're focusing on all the wrong things. *Reversed*--still negative energy, you are falling down instead of rising up. *Escape Hatch*--the help you need is right there above you, and all you have to do is lift your eyes to see it.

Six of Pentacles. This card shows a merchant holding a balance with one hand and distributing alms with the other. *Upright*--positive energy, when your energies are in balance, you can assist your fellow

human beings. *Reversed*--negative energy, you have lost your equilibrium, and your noblest instincts are being blocked.

Seven of Pentacles. I always think of this as the take a breather card. Our hero has managed to create a huge pile of pentacles and is now pausing to look at them. *Upright*--positive energy, there is nothing wrong with occasionally taking a break. *Reversed*--positive energy in a different way, it is time to get back to work.

Eight of Pentacles. Here we see a craftsman who is hard at work making pentacles. Since the pentacle is a symbol of life, we are perhaps being told that the most ordinary of our daily work can be spiritual enriching. *Upright*--positive energy, a thing worth doing is worth doing well. *Reversed*--negative energy, when you are not focusing on your work or your profession, things will fall apart.

Nine of Pentacles. This is an image of a serenely contented woman with a beloved bird companion, both of whom are standing in the full glory of the natural world. *Upright*--strongly positive energy, what more do you need in life than the blessings of Mother Nature and the wonders of the present moment? *Reversed*--negative energy, somehow you cannot enjoy the riches of the world around you.

Ten of Pentacles. Here we see prosperity, human interaction, and the glory of the physical world, which includes our beloved canine companions. *Upright*--positive energy, the more we can commune harmoniously with other sentient beings, the more successful our existence. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is stopping us from reaching out to others.

Page of Pentacles. This page is holding up his pentacle with the greatest reverence, but it seems to be so insubstantial that it rests lightly on the tips of his fingers. *Upright*--positive energy, you can make a new beginning as long as you can sense the insubstantiality of "physical" reality. *Reversed*--negative energy, if you think that an object in space is solid, it will fall out of your hands. *Escape Hatch*--

take things lightly as often as you can.

Knight of Pentacles. As has been mentioned, this particular knight is one of the Stupid Idiots of the universe. He's been stuck in one spot for so long that his horse has leaves growing out of his ears. *Upright*--negative energy, stop trying to turn a horse into a tree. *Reversed*--positive energy, it's time to hit the road, Jack. *Escape Hatch*--giddyup!

Queen of Pentacles. This queen sits in a bower of bliss under a clear blue sky, with the largest pentacle in the deck comfortably positioned in her lap. *Upright*--positive energy, the natural world is a vision of earthly bountifulness and riches. *Reversed*--negative energy, unless you can pay attention to the wonders of nature, that gorgeous pentacle of yours is going to fall out of your lap.

King of Pentacles. This king sits amid the glorious richness of the earth, accompanied by one unforgettable armadillo. *Upright*--positive energy, anything is possible when you have got a little bit of Texas under your foot. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking the beneficent energies you can get from the earth.

MajorArcana

The Fool. The major arcana starts off with two cards of new beginnings: the Fool and the Magician. The Fool is a card of starting fresh if ever there was one. It is also a freedom card, a lesson in how to break the rules but still survive, which is something that can happen to anyone who practices divination. Our hero is so carefree that he could not care less that he is about to step off a cliff. Perhaps he understands that the leap he is about to make is full of limitless potential. *Upright*--positive energy, it is time to take a plunge. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking some kind of opportunity.

The Magician. The figure in this card is channeling Divine energy so triumphantly that we can almost see the power flowing through him

from heaven to earth. He is using the symbols of the four elements to manifest some new kind of spiritual reality, while at the same time he is surrounded by fertile natural energies. *Upright*--positive energy, let Divine energy flow into your tools, and you will accomplish what you want. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are not going with the flow.

The High Priestess. The High Priestess is the card of female spiritual energy and shows us the positive aspects of intuition. She does not need to read the scroll in her hands since she already possesses the wisdom she needs within her, which is why the crescent moon has taken up residence beneath her foot. *Upright*--positive energy, trust your intuition. *Reversed*--negative energy, there is something blocking your intuitive perceptions.

The Empress. The Empress shows us female secular energy. She is shown as a figure of fertility in a lush natural landscape and is displaying a crown made out of starlight. *Upright*--positive energy, if you take your strength from nature, you will thrive. *Reversed*--negative energy, you have cut yourself off from the natural harmony which surrounds you.

The Emperor. The Emperor is the card of male secular energy. He sits solidly in a barren environment from which he seems to draw his strength. He does not notice the blazing sun or the intense heat since he has the kind of disciplined energy necessary to get things done. *Upright*--positive energy, you need to apply some courage to your problems. *Reversed*--negative energy, it is time for you to find a source of new strength.

The Hierophant. This card complements the High Priestess, but here we see male instead of female spiritual energy. It is organized spiritual energy, the kind that comes from long study and rational thinking. *Upright*--positive energy, you need to add some structure to your spiritual experiences. *Reversed*--a different kind of positive energy, you need to release your adherence to traditional religious forms and try something new.

The Lovers. Next we come to the first of the three angel cards in the deck, which are the Lovers, Temperance, and Judgment. My recent experiences with angelic beings had led me to reevaluate these three cards, which I now consider to be the most powerful cards in the deck after the Hanged Man. In the Lovers we see a male and female figure standing beneath an enormous and quite colorful angel in the sky. This angel is conveying some kind of message to the man and woman below, who are receiving it with open hands. *Upright*--positive energy, you need to be receptive to the energies of the Divine. *Reversed*--negative energy, somehow you're blocking spiritual truth.

The Chariot. You get to tell me what this one means.

Strength. Here we see a female figure who is gently prying open the mouth of a very cooperative lion. Both woman and feline exist in a gorgeous natural landscape, and our heroine seems to be so much a part of the natural world that she has got flowers growing in her hair. As for the lion, he has his tail between his legs, so he is not about to fight her off. *Upright*--positive energy, you will be able to find your strength through the cooperation of another sentient being. *Reversed*--negative energy, your courage has fallen away and you need to recover it.

The Hermit. This figure seems to be standing at the summit of a mountain. There are other mountains in the distance, but he is not gazing at them, nor at the spiritual light of the lantern which he holds. His shut eyes and bowed head indicate that he has found what he was looking for within. *Upright*--positive energy, you have reached the culmination of your search. *Reversed*--negative energy, you need to keep looking.

The Wheel of Fortune. This card is also a kind of angel illustration since we see four small winged beings located in the corners of the picture. This time the angels are depicted as representatives of the four elements. They are also the only figures in the deck who are engaged in the act of reading. But the focus of this card is the floating wheel in the

center of the illustration. Historically the Wheel of Fortune could indicate a shift either for the better or the worse in your life. However, my experience of this card has always indicated that when it is upright, some kind of positive forward movement is happening thanks to the winged beings who surround it. The fact that these beings are reading might be a sign that if you want to move forward in your life . . . learn something! As for the meaning of the critters perching on the wheel, I don't have a clue. *Upright*--positive energy, some kind of energy is moving you forward into a better reality. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are stuck and need to release.

Justice. Here we see the cosmic harmony made visible. Smith's illustration of Justice is conventional in that she holds up the two symbols which have been associated with her since Roman times: the sword and the balance. But as far as I am concerned, this card also shows us something more important than that: we see nothing less than the natural order of the universe returning to equilibrium after a disruption. *Upright*--positive energy, things have returned to harmony. *Reversed*--negative energy which continues to be out of whack.

The Hanged Man. As far as I am concerned, the Hanged Man is nothing less than the key to tarot as a whole, as well as the one card which can convey to you the most optimal energy you can experience in your life. This card? Am I kidding? The Hanged Man doesn't exactly show us a fun situation. We see a young person with his hands behind him hanging upside down by one leg, with the second leg bent and crossed behind the first. This is positive energy?

Well, take a closer look. There is obviously no sign of distress on our hero's face--as a matter of fact, he has got a halo, which means that he is filled with Divine energy. The frame from which he is suspended is showing plenty of living greenery, and behind him is the vast eternity of an empty sky. So what does it all mean? I think that the clear message to be found here is that of egolessness.

And egolessness just happens to be the best kind of energy you can experience in your life for one simple reason: only when you can detach from your ego will you ever be able to absorb the energies of

the Divine. But as usual, this is probably not something that you want to hear, right? Especially if you are a Westerner. The annihilation of the human personality which you find in Eastern spiritual systems has always been troubling to us more logically-minded Occidentals. It is also difficult to say what good this annihilation has done during the past several millennia. Why should you bother to assert yourself or stand up against injustice if there is no you in the first place? Long live the Western ego, at least when it occasionally takes some action! But when the Western ego turns into a would-be Faust who wants to wallow in power and pile up the treasures of the earth, there is a problem.

Well, in my opinion, there is a practical way to reconcile the two. Even if you cannot manage complete ego surrender, what you can do is start cultivating the idea of a permeable ego. This is not the complete annihilation of your human personality, but a way to relax your boundaries. A better way to describe it might be the idea of an ego flux--a constant movement between the receptive ego, which can lose itself in the sound of a concerto or the light of the stars, and the creative ego which can transmute the experience into art. It is a practical compromise between East's annihilation of the ego and the West's Dr. Faust.

If and when you can manage to generate this kind of energy, you will discover that there is nothing more thrilling than occasionally stepping out of your conscious self and surrendering to whatever is before you in the present moment. Absolutely and utterly surrendering. Not just noticing something, mind you, but becoming absorbed by it, melting into it, becoming so enraptured with it that your self-consciousness evaporates into air. This is not necessarily a lessening of your own being but more of a growth or an expansion, the way a seedling moves both downwards into the soil and upwards into the air. I have learned that these moments can be especially precious when you can surrender to the little things of the natural world: the gold of the morning sunlight, or the chill of the first autumn breezes, or the fragrance of a blossoming flower.

Indeed, these moments can even be considered the ideal state of consciousness. It is, after all, a poetical state of consciousness, where

rhythm, harmony, and perception are what matters. In one of his letters John Keats says that the

. . . poetical character . . . has no self--it is everything and nothing--it has no character and enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated--it has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the camelion Poet . . . A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity, he is continually filling some other body.[41]

Filling some other body . . . in other words, forget your ego with its endless desires and start merging with another energy field, whether sentient or not. Become one with your cat, or the maple tree beside the garage, or an oddly shaped stone, and you will find yourself in a new and better reality: hanging upside down with a halo. *Upright*--strongly positive energy if you can loosen some boundaries. *Reversed*--negative energy, either you are not allowing spiritual energy into your existence, or you are not seeing things clearly. *Escape Hatch*--the Hanged Man shows us the most useful Escape Hatch in the deck. When you are stuck, when you are desperately unhappy, when your inner demons have got you in thrall, you simply need to surrender to Divine providence, and you will find your way out.

Death. There are three very negative major arcana energy cards in the Smith deck: Death, the Tower, and the Devil. My experience has been that the overload of black ink in these illustrations always makes them NO cards (unless an upright angel card subsequently appears in the reading). And the Death card is probably the most cringe-inducing illustration in the deck. Newbies at tarot are always assured that Death never means, uh, you know--death, the end of our "physical" selves. I agree with this: I have pulled the Death card many times in my life, but it was never once connected to someone's passing. Still, it is always a jolt to turn this card over and get a reminder of human mortality right there before your eyes.

But in case you have not noticed, neither coffin nor grave are on display in this card. So we are not necessarily dealing with human mortality here. The message of the card is much simpler: it is time for you to kill something off in your life in order to make room for something new. You cannot buy a whole new wardrobe unless you clean out your closet first. This card is also saying that change is occasionally necessary in our lives, or else we will never be able to move into the light. This kind of transition does not have to be abrupt but can move forward at a slow and leisurely pace.

We should also note that Death displays the red feather shown on the Fool and the Sun cards. Now what on earth does that mean? Perhaps this third appearance of the feather is Pixie's way of telling us not to take the Grim Reaper all that seriously. She could not resist having a little fun with Death, the way she has fun with everything else. *Upright*--negative energy, you are trying to block a necessary change in your life. *Reversed*--still negative energy, you need to release and move into better space. *Escape Hatch*--the figure is wearing armor, which suggests that he is not as strong as we foolish mortals think he is.

Temperance. The Temperance card gives us an angel who is not quite standing on solid ground: one foot is lightly touching the earth while the other is immersed in, but not sinking into, water. The background is a harmonious natural landscape with no trace of human civilization, except for a winding road which leads off into the distance. Red feathers speak of richness, while the rising sun is giving us a new beginning. *Upright*--positive energy, you can exist in wondrous beauty if you know how to work with Divine energy. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is blocking your access to the sacred.

The Devil. I have already discussed this funniest of Pixie's cards, so I have little more to add here. The main thing to remember when you pull the Devil is that laughter is the best way to free yourself from your obsessions. And since there has never been one single sentient being in the history of the universe who has found happiness from an obsession, you should always welcome the card when you see it. *Upright*--

negative energy, you are sunk in delusion. *Reversed*--still negative energy, but at least you know that you have got to start releasing your bad energies. *Escape Hatch*--sweetie, you can hop down from your idiotic perch any time you feel like it. Or you can throw off your chains any time you want. I guarantee that you will do more than escape--you will make a clean getaway.

The Tower. Here we see lightning striking some kind of tower, with two hapless souls crashing to the ground. I like to think that this is what happens when our Comfort Zone crashes into pieces. Sometimes we need a blast from the heavens to jolt us out of our negative energy. It might not be pleasant, but it is occasionally necessary. *Upright*--negative energy, you have been stuck in your self-imposed prison for so long that you need a jolt. *Reversed*--still negative energy, you are fighting a necessary change that needs to happen in your life. *Escape Hatch*--jolts are sometimes the best way out.

The Star. The Star gives us an astounding vision of light, grace, and beauty. The figure is balanced between the earth and the sky and is moving harmoniously with natural energies. As above, so below. *Upright*--strongly positive energy, astral energy can heal any situation or solve any problem. *Reversed*--negative energy, something is keeping you from experiencing the beauty and the harmony of the universe.

The Moon. The High Priestess is not the only moon card in the deck--she is complemented by the Moon card. This card shows a more negative kind of intuitive energy: we see a dog and a wolf, plus two forlorn towers and a road leading off into the distance. The moon above this scene is so off-kilter that it is showing several of its aspects at the same time. This is the proverbial hour between the dog and the wolf, which is not a fun place to be. *Upright or Reversed*--negative energy. You do not have the intuitive knowledge you need within you--you need to go somewhere to find it, or you need to figure out a way to escape the negative energy which is currently bedeviling you.

The Sun. In the Sun card everything is bursting with joy: the happy

kid, the cheerful horse, the radiant sunflowers, and the benevolent sun shooting out rays in every direction. I especially like the kid in this card, who is having more fun than any other figure in the deck. He is also, by the way, wearing the same feather that we see on the head of the Fool. Whatever can be the deep occult mystical metaphysical connection between the two? Probably that Pixie could not resist inserting another of her jokes into a card where the only thing that matters is fun. *Upright*--positive energy, you should enjoy the golden present as intensely as you can. *Reversed*--negative energy, somehow you are blocking the life-giving energies of the sun in your life.

Judgment. This is the card of resurrection. We see three people rising out of their watery coffins and returning to life, thanks to the burst of spiritual/musical energy coming at them from the sky. It is interesting to see that these people have not been buried in the earth but in the water, the most purifying of all the elements. *Upright*--as positive as energy gets, you have been handed an opportunity for a new life, and you need to take advantage of it. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are shutting yourself off from the energies of regeneration.

The World. This is another card of great power since it is both an end and a beginning. Here we see a figure dancing in the empyrean and radiating the energies of joy, transcendence, and cosmic consciousness. Perhaps we are being told that when we have reached a successful conclusion, it is time for music and dance. *Upright*--positive energy, you need to rejoice as you move into new space. *Reversed*--negative energy, you are blocking a necessary change which needs to happen.

* * *

Okay, all right, already. It is over. I have done it. I have explained, finally, what-the-cards-mean. Are you satisfied? What do you mean it has not helped? You still cannot tell which card is supposed to tell you to break up with your girlfriend? Or which card wants you to buy a new house, or accept a new job, or stop eating a particular food?

What an astounding surprise. What-the-cards-mean can never be

enough to divine successfully with tarot. We now need to try something else: *think!*

Chapter 12. In Search of the Thought.

Okay, now it is time to analyze what I have repeatedly told you does not work very well in divination: *thinking* about the cards you pull, specifically about the second and third cards you turn over in a reading. Well, sometimes the thinking has to happen. Granted that your initial flash is usually going to give you your answer, but the accuracy of your interpretations will increase if you learn how to think about the subsequent two cards you pull. Let us remember that the exercise of human reason has been considered a sign of the Divine by many sages over the centuries, including Aristotle, who tells us that "reason is God within us." [42] Even when we are paralyzed with emotional turmoil, we can frequently find our way into clarity through the use of our rational thinking skills. Once again: no psychic without logic.

So how can you do some effective thinking when you turn over a tarot card? Here are my suggestions:

Try to connect your issue with what is happening in the illustrations. In an interconnected universe, there is definitely going to be some kind of connection between the illustration you are seeing and your issue, even if it is not immediately apparent. Keep thinking and you will see the connection.

Try to notice what part of the illustration your eye focuses upon. Chances are that if you let your eyes wander over the illustrations before you, something will jump out at you. When this happens, start thinking about why you noticed this particular part of the card, which in a holographic universe happens to be the whole.

Pay attention to the elemental energies of your pull. If you have pulled one or more minor cards, try to connect their elemental energies with your question. For example, if you are asking a business question and you pull only wands as your response, you are probably being told that your problem can be solved with spiritual energy. If you ask a relationship question and pull swords, you are being told that you need to bring some thought energy to bear upon your situation.

Pay attention to the unexpected. If there is anything in the cards you have pulled which seems surprising, pay attention. You might be getting the kind of jolt you need to look at your issue in a new way.

Think about the patterns you can perceive in your pull. Here are some examples of patterns you might see in your pull. If you see cards that . . .

- are of the same suit.
- are of the same number.
- are majors, minors, or court.
- indicate some kind of balance.
- possess the infinity symbol.
- show communication or communion.
- show stressful energy, such as that of restriction or blockage.
- show water, sky, clouds, or landscapes.
- show a road, tower, or city.
- show birds, butterflies, cats, or any other kind of critter.
- show defensiveness, unhappiness, chaos, burdens, or self-imprisonment.
- show freedom, ways to maneuver, or happiness.

. . . you are seeing a pattern, and the pattern is much more likely to give you your answer than the meaning of any particular card.

Try to see the figures as actors in some kind of magic theater.

Sometimes in a pull you can envision the figures you see as actors in a miniature drama. They seem to be interacting with each other in a meaningful way. If you can discern the plot of your little drama, you will have your answer.

Reversed cards do not always mean NO. As has been mentioned, reversals do not always mean a NO. A reversed card can simply mean that there is something in your life that is blocking you, and you need to release it.

Upright cards do not always mean YES. There have been plenty of times in my life when I pulled three upright cards which seemed to mean a YES response, but I nevertheless realized that I was seeing a NO. Some kind of negativity was manifesting despite the uprightness of the cards.

My own personal YES and NO readings. Here is a list of what I automatically see when I turn over certain cards. Of course, what works for me will not necessarily work for someone else, but these interpretations will probably help a novice get an idea of what kinds of energies certain cards demonstrate:

- If you pull at least one of the angel cards upright (Lovers, Temperance, and Judgment), you always get a YES (well, at least 99% of the time). An angel reversed, however, almost always means a NO.
- If you pull at least one of the following cards, you always get a NO: the Five of Swords, the Queen of Swords, the Moon, the Tower, the Devil, and Death. It does not matter whether you pull one of these last five cards upright or reversed, each one means NO.
- Three upright positive looking cards are usually a YES.

- Three cards reversed, regardless of whether they are negative or positive energy cards, are usually a NO.
- If you pull a mixture of upright and reversed cards, or a mixture of positive and negative energy cards, your answer is an unhelpful MAYBE.

As for those nuisance MAYBE's . . . I estimate that perhaps 10-15% of the time when I ask the cards a question, I pull mixtures of upright/reversed or positive/negative cards, which bestow upon me a crystal clear answer of MAYBE. I have learned not to be upset when this happens, and also that I need to treat a MAYBE as a NO, especially when I am asking a plan of action question.

There is another way the MAYBE's can manifest: if you are doing a 3 x 3 pull, or even a 3 x infinity pull, there will be times when you will get a YES answer to your question, then a NO, then a YES, then a NO, or maybe another YES. In other words, it seems like your idiot oracle cannot make up its mind what to tell you. If you keep asking the same question night after night but do not get a consistent answer, your oracle can be telling you a variety of things, including:

- Honey, I don't give a damn what you do.
- The issue is not as important as you think it is.
- The energies of this issue are in flux.
- It's okay if you do, and okay if you don't.
- It is not the right time for this question.

The last statement in the above list is usually the one that counts--you can always ask about your issue again several weeks/months later.

* * *

The above rules are the best suggestions about divinatory thinking which I can offer. However, I am aware that to a beginner, they won't seem like much. Well, the learning of tarot only happens with the doing of tarot. You have got to keep at it until things start to click. Nevertheless, it will probably help you if I offer some sample interpretations of responses to common questions:

I have concluded that Wally is telling me the truth. Am I correct?

Pull: Three of Swords reversed, King of Wands upright, and Lovers Upright. *Interpretation:* We see one angel card upright, so this is a definite YES. The only negative energy card, the Three of Swords, is reversed, which indicates a release of painful thoughts. The King of Wands upright completes the positive energy.

I have concluded that it will be best for me, my family, the company, and the universe if I accept the new position. Am I correct?

Pull: Six of Pentacles upright, Fool reversed, the Emperor reversed. *Interpretation:* A resounding NO. Despite a positive first card, two majors reversed is a NO. The reversed Fool in particular is telling you not to try anything new at the present time.

I have concluded that it will be best for me, Jennifer, and the summum bonum if we get married. Am I correct?

Pull: Hanged Man upright, Knight of Pentacles upright, and Nine of Pentacles upright. *Interpretation:* We see three positive-looking cards upright, which makes for a definite YES. The Hanged Man is telling you that this situation is filled with Divine energy, while the Nine of Pentacles indicates a state of perfect contentment. The only problematic card is that of the Knight of Pentacles, a card which usually indicates something stuck. But with these other two positive cards, this time he is telling you that you need to move forward with your plan.

The offer I have received for the house is the best I am going to get, so I should accept it--correct?

Pull: Seven of Cups upright, Eight of Pentacles upright, and Ace of Swords reversed. *Interpretation:* A pretty clear NO. The Seven of Cups is the fantasy card of the deck, and the

Ace of Swords reversed means that this is not the time for a new beginning. While the upright Eight of Pentacles might indicate that this is the best offer you will receive, it does not override the other two cards.

I am sure that my wife and the universe support my plan to start up a new business. *Pull:* Knight of Pentacles reversed, High Priestess upright, and Knight of Wands reversed. *Interpretation:* A weak YES or a MAYBE. You have got one major card, the High Priestess upright, which indicates positive female strength, but she is positioned between two reversed cards. It is usually good to see the Knight of Pentacles reversed, since he finally understands that he needs to get moving. However, the Knight of Wands reversed indicates that there might be some kind of block or doubt on your wife's part about your proposed scheme, which might cause problems down the road.

I have concluded that my daughter will be better off living with me than with my ex-husband. Am I correct? *Pull:* Nine of Pentacles reversed, Seven of Wands upright, King of Wands reversed. *Interpretation:* NO. The Nine of Pentacles is a female figure who might represent either you or your daughter, but here she is not standing contentedly in her environment--she is upside down. The figure in the Seven of Wands is trying to beat back some kind of spiritual attack, while the King of Wands reversed shows some kind of blockage of outgoing spiritual energy.

I have decided that it will be a good idea for me and for the universe as a whole if I invest in the company stock at the present time. *Pull:* Magician upright, Two of Swords upright, Three of Swords Upright. *Interpretation:* NO. The Magician indicates strong positive energy, but the other two cards indicate that you are not perceiving some aspect of this situation, or that there is some kind of potential problem about it. Even though you have pulled a major card upright as your first card, you should definitely hold off on your plan of action. This reading strikes me as one of those times when you are being told to wait before taking action.

I have concluded that our company's reorganization will put out benevolent energies into the universe. Am I correct? *Pull:* Fool upright, Two of Cups upright, Four of Wands reversed. *Interpretation:* YES, with a caveat. The upright Fool is followed by the balance card of the Two of Cups, which indicates that your company is moving into better space. However, the Four of Wands reversed indicates that some kind of energy is off-kilter about the reorganization. So even though you are heading in the right direction, you are not there yet.

I am a humanitarian. *Pull:* King of Pentacles reversed, Hermit upright, and Ten of Swords upright. *Interpretation:* NO, not a chance. The reversed King of Pentacles means that something is off about your relationship to physical matter. The Ten of Swords shows that you have got some kind of overkill thought process, which you need to release. The Hermit is stuck between two negative energy cards, which means that he needs to keep looking.

I am living in harmony with the quantum field. *Pull:* Two of Swords reversed, King of Swords upright, and Ten of Pentacles upright. *Interpretation:* YES. The Two of Swords reversed indicates that you are able to see Reality clearly, the King of Swords indicates positive mental energy, and the Ten of Pentacles is telling you that you are existing in harmony with the natural flow of the universe. So at this time in your life, the answer is YES, but do not think that it will last unless you keep working at it.

* * *

So much for a few sample YES or NO readings, which I hope will be helpful. Now we must turn to turn to a new topic, one which has not yet been discussed. The reader will observe that the above readings have been based on the kinds of queries which I recommended several chapters ago: confirmational. The best way to get the clearest possible response from your oracle is by thinking about your issue, developing a tentative conclusion, and then asking the cards for confirmation.

The problem with confirmational questions is that there will always

be times when you simply cannot determine what might be the truth or the best plan of action about your situation. This is known as that very common state of being called *cluelessness*. Alas, the reality of our human existence is that cluelessness can happen. It has happened to me, to you, to every single one of the seven billion of us on the planet. We are confronted with a problem, an issue, or a situation, but we are at a total loss about how to deal with it. Yes, reason is the Divine within us, but there are always going to be times when nothing makes sense, the mind boggles, and the brain goes dead.

All of which means that distilling every problem you have got into a YES or NO query is not always going to work. Suppose you cannot figure out why your life is not working. Or you do not have an inkling why your carefully conceived plans never produce the desired results. Or that you have got a gut feeling that there is some kind of disaster coming at you, but you cannot identify what it might be. No matter how rationally you try to think things through, no matter how carefully you examine yourself, you cannot seize upon a good way to phrase your concerns into a decent YES or NO question, let alone ask an oracle to confirm it.

Fortunately, divination can help you in situations like these as well. What you need to do is ask a very general question about your issues and then interpret the answer as rationally as you can. While this is less effective than asking a confirmational question, it can give you valuable insight into your energies. It's just that this time it is more difficult to interpret the response.

Here are some examples of clueless questions, plus sample readings:

What is wrong with my life? *Pull:* Five of Wands reversed, Lovers upright, Moon upright. *Interpretation:* The Five of Wands indicates some kind of painful or chaotic spiritual energy, and since you have pulled it reversed, you are being told that you need to release it. The Lovers upright shows that Divine energy is coming through to you, although you probably will not sense it unless you release your spiritual chaos first. Finally, the Moon indicates that you need to move into some kind of unknown. So what's wrong with your life? Too much

chaos, inability to listen to the Divine, and fear of the unknown.

How can I get out of this mess? *Pull:* King of Cups reversed, Knight of Cups reversed, Page of Wands upright. *Interpretation:* The King and the Knight of Cups indicate some kind of outgoing emotional energy; pulling them reversed indicates that you need to stop sending this energy out. If you have been getting overly emotional every time you try to deal with your problems, it is now time for some discipline. Fortunately the Page of Wands indicates that some kind of new spiritual energy is going to manifest.

What should I do about the situation between me and Kate? *Pull:* Strength upright, Temperance upright, Hanged Man reversed. *Interpretation:* There is good spiritual energy for the two of you to continue with each other, as the Temperance angel indicates. However, the Strength card indicates that you need to develop some kind of self-mastery about this situation, while the Hanged Man reversed indicates that your ego-gratification energies need to be released. Start working on your self-discipline, and things will get better.

Why don't my kids listen to me? *Pull:* Six of Swords upright, Seven of Pentacles upright, and Death reversed. *Interpretation:* You are letting something external move you forward instead of relying upon your inner wisdom. The Seven of Pentacles is telling you to take a break in your efforts so you can make some kind of change in your life. Death reversed says that you are trying to block this change, but it needs to happen.

How can I find happiness at this point in my life? (This is one of my favorite clueless questions, which I ask every few weeks.) *Pull:* Justice reversed, Emperor upright, and Sun upright. *Interpretation:* There is some kind of harmonious energy which you are blocking, but if you start practicing a new kind of self-discipline, a lot of sun fun will be yours.

What can I do at this point in my life to strengthen my spiritual energies? (This is another of my favorite clueless questions.) *Pull:*

Four of Swords upright, Star upright, and the Hierophant reversed.

Interpretation: The Four of Swords is telling you to calm your mind (perhaps with a new meditative exercise), the Star wants you to pay attention to the Divine energies which are always flowing down from the heavens, and the Hierophant reversed means you need to release some kind of adherence to a formal religious structure.

How can I bring more positive energy into my life? *Pull:* Five of Pentacles reversed, Queen of Cups reversed, Ace of Wands reversed.

Interpretation: We see three reversals, but no, these cards are not telling you that you cannot bring more positive energy into your life.

They are telling you that you need to ditch your illusions about something physical and something emotional, and stop trying to block new spiritual energy from coming into your life.

What is the most important thing I should focus on at this point in my life? *Pull:* World reversed, Hanged Man upright, Devil upright.

Interpretation: The World reversed is telling you that even though you think you are at the culmination of some kind of energy, it is not over yet. And you probably need to do some ego-releasing to get there. Also a certain nuisance is telling you that you are still obsessed about something, which you need to release. So what do you need to focus on? Bring your obsession to an end and open the door to new spiritual energy.

How can I manage my money more carefully? *Pull:* Eight of Pentacles upright, Four of Swords reversed, and King of Wands reversed.

Interpretation: The Eight of Pentacles tells you that you are spending too much time doing your work instead of paying attention to your finances. The reversed Four of Swords indicates that you have been too passive about your money, and that you now need to start expending some intellectual energy about it, perhaps by learning something new about investments. The reversed King says that this is

not the best time to take action about your finances--discover what you need to learn first.

What am I not perceiving clearly in my life? *Pull:* Six of Cups upright, Two of Cups reversed, and Two of Wands upright.

Interpretation: You have the possibility of a new and very positive relationship in your life, but you are not seeing it. Expand your horizons, and you will find it.

What lesson do I need to learn from that experience? *Pull:* Queen of Pentacles upright, Strength reversed, and Queen of Cups reversed.

Interpretation: This was probably an experience that you should have avoided. The Queen of Pentacles says you should have stayed right where you were, Strength reversed means that you were not courageous enough to see things through, and the Queen of Cups reversed indicates that you had some kind of illusory goal which you should have identified before you got involved.

What is a good idea for a startup business? *Pull:* Judgment upright, Chariot upright, and Queen of Wand reversed. *Interpretation:*

Judgment is blasting the ears of the newly resurrected, as usual the Chariot is motionless, and the Queen of Wands reversed means that it is not time to be receptive but creative. Since the Judgment card is the only card in the deck which indicates sound (a trumpet blast), perhaps this is a suggestion that you need to do something creative with music or transportation.

Conversing with the Cards

So much for those times when you cannot formulate a good confirmational question. But this leads us to our next problem. What happens if you are clueless in a different kind of way: the answer you just received from a pull is not adequate. You have gotten a response from your cards, but you still do not have a clear answer about the energies of your situation or what you should do next. You need further information.

In cases like these, there is a way to ask further questions of your oracle without having to wait an extra twenty-four hours. What you can do at times like these is start to converse with your cards just as if you were conversing with a physical being. You ask a question, your oracle gives you its answer, you think the response over, and then you ask a new question. You continue to talk to your oracle like this until you get some clarity about your issue. So here are some suggested ways to converse with the cards:

Problem: the cards tell you that the man of your dreams is NOT telling you the truth about his intentions to marry you. So what else do you need to know? *Question:* What does he really think of me? *Pull:* Five of Swords upright, Emperor upright, Nine of Pentacles reversed.

Interpretation: He is confused in his mind about the kind of person you are, he thinks that you are too much of a control freak, and that you are not promoting any kind of contentment in his life. Alas, this probably means that he does not think highly of you at all.

Second question: Has he told me the truth about his finances? *Pull:* Four of Wands upright, Page of Swords upright, and Eight of Swords upright. *Interpretation:* YES, he has. The first two cards indicate positive energy, but the Eight of Swords tells us that you are not seeing some kind of more toxic energy here, which probably indicates that even though he has been honest about his money, you are being willfully blind about something important.

Third question: Does he put out mostly positive energy into the universe? *Pull:* Page of Cups upright, Page of Cups reversed, King of Wands upright. *Interpretation:* YES, he does, as the upright Page and King indicate. However, the reversed Six of Cups indicates that in a one-to-one relationship, something is off.

Fourth question: What are my options? Confront him? Dump him? Purchase a voodoo love spell? *Pull:* Eight of Pentacles reversed, Five of Wands reversed, and Six of Wands upright. *Interpretation:* Stop trying to force this situation to work--you are not getting anywhere. And stop it with your inner turmoil. The Six of Wands is telling you to go on with your life.

Problem: the cards tell you that NO, you are not free from the preliminary signs of heart disease. Obviously the first thing you need to do if you get a NO to a question like this, and especially if you get a NO several times in a row, is go straight to your doctor. Oracular information is never a substitute for professional medical treatment. But you also need to think as carefully as you can about what might be causing the problem and then ask your oracle questions such as the following:

First question: I have concluded that if I stop consuming dairy products, it will improve my health. Am I correct? *Pull:* Eight of Cups upright, Three of Cups reversed, Ace of Swords upright.

Interpretation: A definite YES. The Eight of Cups is telling you to walk away from liquid, three upside down cups cannot hold anything including milk, and the Ace is a sign of a new beginning.

Second question: What kind of daily exercise might improve my health at this point in my life? *Pull:* Knight of Swords upright, Knight of Cups reversed, Queen of Swords reversed. *Interpretation:* You have pulled two cards which indicate negative mental energy: the Knight is going too fast, while the Queen reversed is a double negative. This suggests that you need a new kind of mental discipline in your life, perhaps something which will slow your mind down and allow you to release. This would also help with the kind of emotional blockage which the reversed Knight of Cups indicates.

Problem: the cards tell you that your property will not be free of environmental damage during the next four to six weeks. If your oracle tells you that NO, your property is not safe, and if you keep getting NO's on subsequent evenings, then you need to ask about what kind of protective measures you can take, up to and including evacuation. The thing to remember here, which has already been mentioned, is that predictive responses from an oracular tool are frequently not reliable. All you are picking up at the moment is a potential.

Still, you will not go wrong if you work with the cards on subsequent nights to try to pinpoint what might be coming and when it will happen, and you should do this if you get a NO about any kind of

monthly health or safety issue. You should try to identify what the exact problem might be, or, if it looks like an environmental emergency is coming, try to figure out the day when it might hit. And don't forget to ask whether you should evacuate. You might end up feeling like a fool if you do, but then again, you might not.

* * *

As should be obvious, the above sample readings can do only one thing: help you get started with thinking about your card pulls. The welcome news here is that even beginners can get some solid practical advice as soon as they start working with the cards. All you need to do let the cards speak to you. So does this mean that we are finally done with the question/answer thing? Well, not quite. My own experience tells me that even when you figure out (1) the right kind of question to ask and (2) what your oracular response means, a new kind of problem can appear. We now have to examine what happens when you just *cannot* deal with your answer.

Chapter 13. Fighting the Answer/Accepting the Answer.

Dealing with your oracular answer? Well, *of course* you are going to do that. You are an intelligent and responsible adult, after all. So when those NO's come time and again, you will accept them with courage and good sense--right? Well, just you wait until you get a NO about something which you have got your heart set upon. I guarantee it will provide you with some of the most shattering agony you can ever experience. What is even worse is that getting a YES can frequently create new and unexpected difficulties. We now need to examine the kinds of mental maneuvers people go through when they try to deal with their oracular responses.

What if your oracle proves to be wrong? Suppose your tarot cards tell you, with absolute clarity, several nights in a row, *not* to take your flight to Minneapolis. So you decide to trust your cards, and you stay right where you are. Then you discover that the flight took off and arrived safely without any difficulties. As for you, your longed-for job interview is now completely ruined.

Well, in a situation like this, I guess you could murder your cards, but that would not do you--or them--much good. My own experience tells me that what probably happened was not so much a wrong oracular pronouncement as a wrong interpretation. Even a $3 \times 3 = 9$ reading can be wrongly interpreted, and even when you are reading reversals. Misinterpretation especially happens when your emotional turmoil persuades you that black is white or up is down. The only helpful thing to note here is that the more you work with an oracle, the less you will misinterpret your oracular responses.

Still, in my opinion, you would have done the right thing to trust your cards. It might have been a reliable prediction in spite of everything. Your presence on the flight might have somehow disrupted its energy field and led straight to disaster. Of course there is no way for you to know this for sure, but you have to acknowledge that it was a possibility.

Dealing with a YES. We will next examine what happens when your oracle--brace yourself--actually *approves* your latest scheme or desire. In other words, even a 21st century American can sometimes get things right. People who possess at least a smidgeon of self-awareness and self-discipline are probably going to pull more YES's than NO's when they consult an oracle. As for the rest of us, we should not think that the NO's we keep getting are going to last forever. As we become more familiar with our oracle and accept its lessons, the YES's will increase in frequency. Not that we will start getting YES's every time, but they will start popping up with greater frequency. This is all for the best.

Still, there is an inevitable catch to a YES answer, which will probably surprise you: getting an oracular YES about your desires can sometimes be much worse for you than getting a NO. If your oracle starts handing you a lot of YES's every time you question it, up to and including a YES about your living in harmony with the natural flow of the universe, chances are that you will be so satisfied with your wondrous state of being that you will do nothing but sit back, relax, and enjoy your blissitude. No more striving, no more learning, no more self-examination since that kind of tedious stuff is no longer necessary in your life.

And you could not be making a bigger mistake. The universe in its endless becoming does not like complacency. Besides, in case you have not noticed by now, relationships do not work unless they are continually thought about, adjusted, and readjusted. Parents are not successful unless they are constantly deliberating about the best way to raise their kids. Businesses don't turn a profit unless the boss is willing to accommodate changing circumstances. And your life will not work unless you continue to learn, grow, and change. Congratulations on the oracular YES you just received, but do not think that the YES energy is going to last unless you keep working at it.

Dealing with a NO. So much for YES answers. What about NO's? It has been my experience that an oracular NO means:

- It won't happen.

- Don't do it.
- Get over it.
- Deal with it.

Your oracle has spoken, and if you have got a brain in your head, you will accept it. Uh, huh--in other words: fat chance. Accepting an oracular NO can sometimes require nothing less than superhuman strength. I still have problems with getting NO's even after several decades of being clobbered with them, so chances are you will, too. Tarot beginners who start pulling one damn NO after another are in for a very rough ride. They will simply not be able to believe what they are seeing. The damn cards keep announcing over and over that everything they want, everything they have been dreaming about, everything they believe in . . . it is either full of crap or it is not going to happen. No matter what the question is, no matter how carefully it is phrased, it is NO every damn time, even about their favorite burritos.

Let's face it, being told that much of what you think, say, do, or want is wrong can make for a psychic shock so catastrophic that it almost feels like a sentence of death. Very few of us can handle it. I am not one of them. Do you want to hear how many times I have experienced *I'm going to kill those cards* moments over the years? I have gotten so many NO responses that on those rare occasions when the cards actually tell me YES, it is practically time for cardiac arrest.

But . . . but . . . how can this be? How is it possible for a human being to walk around so bursting with such negative energy that he or she spews forth nothing else nearly 100% of the time? Especially when this person is giving off the right signs of success in our culture, such as money, status, or celebrity? But money, status, and celebrity are the kind of toxic energy which inevitably fills you to bursting with negativity. Message to any 21st century American reading this book: when you start messing with an oracle, you are guaranteed to discover negative aspects to your existence which you never suspected that you had.

So what are you going to do when the cards start throwing bad news in your face? That is easy. You will start indulging in all sorts of sly little psychological maneuvers to persuade yourself that the NO answers you keep receiving are not really NO's. Well, take my word for it--this nonsense does not work. Since I myself have attempted these maneuvers on countless occasions, I know everything there is to know about trying to turn a NO into a YES, and also something about their success rate, which happens to be zero.

The most common of these ploys is very simple. If you do not like the answer you have just received from your oracle, you will want to ask the question again right away, right this very second, to get a better answer. You will persuade yourself that it is okay to do this, since that NO you got just cannot be correct. Well, if ever there was a way to completely destroy the energies of an oracular message, this one is it. All of which means that oracular consultation happens to have a prime directive, which goes like this:

GREAT ORACULAR PRIME DIRECTIVE

Never, never, never ask an oracle the same question twice in a row.

This is the one rule to follow when you get an answer you do not like. No matter what kind of agony you go through when your oracle hands you a NO, no matter what howls of misery erupt from your throat, no way and no how do you ask your question again right away. If you repeat the question immediately, the only thing you will accomplish is turning your truth-telling oracle into an enabler.

Wait a minute here. The author has admitted more than once that oracles are not always correct. So there has to be a chance that the NO which our oracle has just handed us is not correct! Right?

Yes, that is true. So there ought to be a legitimate way to ask the cards your question a second time. And there is, which is something I have already discussed, the 3 x 3 = 9 card pull. It is perfectly acceptable to ask your question a second time, but only if you wait twenty-four hours until your second reading. And during that twenty-four hour period, you need to do some thinking about why you did not see what you expected to see. Then go ahead and ask the question a

second time if you like. And again and again ad infinitum, if you want to waste your time in such a fashion. But let me remind you what has also been mentioned: chances are that eventually you will discover that the NO you saw the first time around was the correct answer.

Okay, so much for the Great Oracular Prime Directive. But now we need to examine several other nasty little maneuvers which you will probably attempt when you are handed an unexpected NO, as follows:

You try to alter the mechanics of the pull so you can ask the question again right away. You might decide to ask the question a second time using a different deck, or you might try shuffling the cards in a different manner, or maybe pulling seven cards instead of three, or keeping the cat in your lap when you pull the cards a second time, or performing any other pathetic strategy you can dream up which will enable you to ask the question immediately. But of course, the only thing you are still doing is defying the Great Oracular Prime Directive.

You ask a *similar* question right away. In other words, you ask a question with a few minor changes from the one you just asked. So if your oracle tells you that NO, you should not purchase that new sewing machine which you just + know is perfect for you, you ask:

- All right, so it is not a good time to buy a new sewing machine, but if I promise not to touch it until I have finished painting the house, I can go ahead and order it now, okay?

Well, this silly little gambit won't fool your oracle one iota. You are still defying the Prime Directive big time.

You pull some extra cards in an attempt to turn your NO response into a YES. Whenever I give readings to clients, I tell them to pick three cards for their answer. But something predictable happens when the three chosen cards indicate an obvious NO. The querent will thereupon pull a fourth or even a fifth card out of the deck. He or she will do this without thinking, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. And I suppose it is, to your average self-esteem-addled

American who just + knows that s/he is always in the right.

So if you think it is perfectly okay to pull an extra card or two if you do not like what you see in the first three, you are as wrong as you can be. Those three initial cards that you pulled gave you your answer, and you need to deal with it, not pretend that their meaning can be wiped away if you pull more cards.

You try to "heal" the reading with an extra card. Some people practice a different kind of extra card maneuver when they do not like the cards they see: they pull an extra card to "heal" the reading. This bit of nonsense seems to be widely taught in the tarot world these days. It is based upon the illusion that if you pull an extra card, it will show you how to deal with the negativity of your reading, or something like that. When I was first learning tarot I had no problem with this farce, but nowadays I see that it is as wrong as it gets. As I have mentioned about a hundred times by now, everybody needs to have the brutal truth about their illusions occasionally shoved in their face. Trying to "heal" a NO reading by turning it into a YES is yet another defiance of the Prime Directive.

You decide that you have gotten a YES response if you finally pull some positive cards after getting several NO's. If you are the type who has to do the ad infinitum pull, I guarantee that sooner or later you will finally see a YES response to your question, even after fifty nights of pulling NO's. *Oh, thank goodness--the cards are finally telling me that I am going to get my heart's desire!* Well, not quite. If you get a YES answer after countless nightly NO's, chances are that nothing has changed, and that this particular reading is a fluke. On the other hand, if you start seeing a YES for the next fifty nights, it is possible that your oracle is picking up on a change in the energies of the situation, which would mean that YES is now an accurate answer. But in all the years I have worked with the cards, I can think of only one instance when this happened to me, and I expect that for most people, it will seldom or never happen as well. The original NO was the correct response. You have got your answer. Deal with it.

Deal with it! Deal with it! You keep telling me to deal with it, but I can't! I just can't! Well, of course you can't. As a victim of American education, all you ever learned was how to wallow in that illusion called self-esteem. Getting a NO about your heart's desire? What are you supposed to do now, jump off a cliff? Oh, calm down. No matter what the problem is, there are ways that anyone can cope even with the most agonizing NO. Here are some suggestions:

Rethink. The first thing you have got to do when you see a NO is rethink. You need to examine what might be wrong about your situation, and you do this as clearly and as logically as you can. Are there any hidden energies you are not seeing? Is someone lying to you? Have you accurately analyzed all the pros and cons of what you want? Chances are the more thinking you do about your disappointing response, the more you will see that your assumptions about a particular situation were full of hidden bobby-traps which until now were invisible.

Remember that nothing ever lasts. The next thing to do is remember that nothing is permanent. So if, for example, your oracle tells you repeatedly that you should not continue with your current boyfriend, that does not necessarily mean you are going to walk the earth alone for the rest of your life. The pain and the disappointment you are feeling at the moment will eventually dissipate. The way things are now are not the way things will always be.

Remember that the NO you just received might mean that something better is coming along. This has happened to me on several occasions, especially when I wanted to make a purchase. I go through the predictable NO agony, but I also remind myself that a better version of what I want might be in the offing. And lo and behold, after time passes, the better something actually does manifest. This does not always happen, but I have seen it so frequently that nowadays I try to see the NO as a lesson in patience instead of a pitiless negative.

Read the Stoics. Over the years I have come across two effective tricks which have helped me deal with disappointment, one from the West and one from the East. Both are simple yet very effective, especially what we can get from Stoicism. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus's most famous aphorism occurs in his *Enchiridion*: "Don't demand that things happen as you wish, but wish that they happen as they do happen, and you will go on well." [43] This one sentence sums up the essence of Stoic philosophy and has worked many times for me over the years. If you are unhappy about a particular setback, what you need to do is wish that it happened exactly as it did happen. You will discover that you have taken a step in detaching yourself from whatever you were obsessed with, and detachment is always the way to regain your equilibrium.

And read the Tibetans. Namely a medieval Tibetan monk named Gyalsé Tokmé Zangpo. Zangpo wrote a treatise called *The Thirty-Seven (37) Practices of Bodhisattvas*, which describes a series of steps which can help you turn into the Buddhist idea of a saint, a bodhisattva. Zangpo's Practice #24 tells us that "when you meet with disagreeable circumstances, see them as illusory." [44] When you start thinking about the circumstances of your life in terms of energy, you will start to see more transparency than solidity, and this will help you move more easily through loss or disappointment.

Don't forget the Cosmic Boomerang. Suppose you are stuck interacting with your very own Nurse Ratched day after day. In a situation like this, you need to remember that no one is exempt from the Cosmic Boomerang. Sooner or later it catches up with everybody, up to and including anyone who is currently making your life a living hell. So instead of throwing negative energy back at your tormentor, you simply need to remind yourself that she is setting herself up for some world-class payback. Karma never forgets. You do not have to fight a lethal personality, nor do you have to plot revenge. You simply have to detach and wait things out. And while you are doing the waiting, if you act with the kind of restraint and discipline that the Ratched you are dealing with is incapable of, sooner or later the

energies of your situation will shift.

Block the negative energy. Another trick when dealing with negative energy in your environment is simply to bounce the energy back. You can wear a crystal or a protective talisman to strengthen your own energy field. You can also protect yourself by visualizing an energy barrier between you and the toxic person. It is true that everything is interconnected, but my experience with the Mussolinis tells me that it is possible to put some kind of space between you and your tormentors.

Consider your NO a lesson in self-reliance. When you decide that the oracular NO you have just been handed is an opportunity for you to develop some self-reliance, you will move much more easily through your disappointment. It is only the losers among us who are constantly buffeted by externals. More successful people are able to see that internals matter more than externals and focus on them. Do this, and those NO's you keep getting will be seen for what they truly are: irrelevant.

Understand that releasing a desire can feel better than actually getting it. Believe it or not, letting go of a desire can turn into one of the most blissful emotions you will ever experience in your life. That's right. If you can just forget about acquiring an object in space, an experience, or even some more cold hard cash, you will realize that you have suddenly got space, freedom, and opportunity in your life. And you might even start to sense Divine energy for the first time in your existence. What was that illusory piece of nothing you had your heart set on anyway?

Spin straw into gold. This final recommendation is something which I like to call the Rumpelstiltskin Technique. Whenever your oracle hands you yet one more NO, what you need to do is transform your disappointment into something positive. This is otherwise known as spinning straw into gold. You turn all that negativity into something

which will help you. This can be done at any time, even with the worst kind of bummer.

The trick to the Rumpelstiltskin Technique is that you have got to start seeing an oracular NO as a spiritual challenge. The universe in its wisdom is handing you a test to see whether you can deal with it with maturity and courage. Instead of letting that NO send you into a tailspin of self-pity, you need to accept it as gratefully as you can. Yes, I know this is about as easy as pogo-sticking up Mt. Everest, but it can be done. The catch is that spiritual challenges are never going to stop happening in your life. They are the price we humans must pay for the opportunity to be alive and kicking on Planet Earth. It is within our power to calmly and rationally deal with our challenges--along with the assistance of our trusty oracle, of course. Or we can make a nose dive into a bottomless abyss of malevolent energy.

The nice thing here is that life takes on a different perspective when you remember that there is a spiritual meaning to everything you experience as you go through the years. This is another blessing that repeated use of an oracle gives you: it helps you to see all aspects of your existence in the clear light of eternity. When you are able to deal with disaster or collapse in a calm and sensible manner, you are going to live a successful life regardless of your external circumstances.

* * *

So there you have it. A few words of wisdom which may or may not help you deal with your oracular NO. You can find similar banalities in any best-selling self-help book on the market. So if and when you get a big fat unendurable NO, forget about tossing the cards into the fire. Instead accept what you see, and you will be on your way to a better kind of life.

Still, I am aware that there are plenty of addled narcissists in our toxic culture who will not and cannot accept any kind of a NO. If you are one of them, I know exactly what you will do when confronted with an endless number of NO's. You will start to practice that celebrated American pastime known as the *blow off*. On some level, you may realize that the NO you're seeing is the right answer, but then

you decide . . . well, so what? Why should you pay attention to these idiot cards anyway? It cannot be possible that they are telling you that you are wrong about something! Besides, you just + know that you have got a successful and productive life. You are making good money. You have got a solid marriage and nice kids. You do not need any of this crackpot occult stuff. Are you really supposed to care about how pieces of colored cardboard get themselves arranged? It is not as though any of this is a life-and-death matter, right? Why should you pay attention to a silly little NO?

You are intensifying your inevitable Cosmic Boomerang, that is why. Unconscious negative energies always cause a nice little boomerang, but when you get a message straight from the oracular mouth and then consciously defy it, you are going to double or even triple your karmic payback. So if and when you decide to blow off your oracular pronouncements, guess where you end up:

Welcome to The Club of Pathetic Losers

From dud to washout for everybody

Dear Sir/Madam:

Congratulations! You have just been awarded a lifetime membership in *The Club of Pathetic Losers*[™], a densely populated national organization which any normal American can join. Once you become a member of our valued community, we guarantee that your life will be filled with miscalculation, mediocrity, and failure. We are proud to state that we number millions of thick-skulled capitalists, us-against-them fanatics, shyster CEO's, medicated Hollywood anorexics, internet venom spewers, corrupt politicians, snarky academics, media propagandists, and any other kind of worthless rabble you care to name among our treasured members. Let us never forget that it is always difficult to change for the worse, but with enough hard work and dedication, it can happen to anyone--and it can happen to you, too!

The only criteria for membership is defiance of Divine energy. Yes, you were once dumb enough to consult an oracle, only to be handed a

bunch of stupid NO's time and again. But you were smart enough to blow them off! Good for you! That is all it takes for a lifetime membership in our renowned organization. Never forget that The Club of Pathetic Losers™ is not just for everyone. You have to be a super-colossal moron who thinks that he or she lives in a world of matter instead of energy to be accepted for full membership.

The benefits of our community are as limitless as the national debt. All members of The Club of Pathetic Losers™ are guaranteed the right to luxuriate in the negative energies of their choice 24/7/365. Also you will not have to ditch your narcissism for anything in the world. You will feel good about yourself every second of your life in spite of all the mistakes you keep making! You will turn into a celebrity star in your own movie! Your ghastly personality will sparkle in flashing neon lights for a guaranteed three billion years! Can human existence get any better than that? Ain't no way and ain't gonna be a way, take our word for it.

Fortunately our organization offers several tried-and-true techniques to delay bad karma. Are you worried that your eventual Cosmic Boomerang will zap you like there is no tomorrow, which for someone like you there probably isn't? Once you start following our easy guidelines, your payback will not arrive for at least several more decades. Frequently we can guarantee that karma will not track you down until you're in your nineties, and what will you care about anything by then? So stop worrying about that comeuppance nonsense. When you are a confirmed pathetic loser, karma does not count.

Membership dues are both affordable and reasonable, just your lifetime income plus any other money you can get your hands on. Don't delay! Make sure your clueless idiocy remains intact until the last day you take a breath! Membership in the millions and growing every day! Join at once, or will you ever regret it!

But wait! There's more! Join The Club of Pathetic Losers™ today, and you will receive admission to our very own Pathetic Loser University! Pathetic Loser University is one of the most celebrated scholastic rackets in the country. We are fully accredited by the American Reeducation Association, and we offer both introductory and advanced courses in the art of the flop. PLU graduates go on to meet

brain death in everything they attempt, including tropical vacations, shopping, and whining. Some of our most popular courses include:

- *Why You Deserve Everything You Want* -- and how to discover new stuff to want.
- *Preserving Your Self-Delusions* -- after all, nobody can take too much reality.
- *Business Is Business* -- and greed is okay if it is a nice guy like you doing it.
- *Love in My Tummy Drugs* -- healthy and delicious mind-altering substances which don't cause hangovers.
- *The Art of the Excuse* -- guilt-free strategies of theft, fraud, shakedown, deceit, and betrayal.
- *Drama Queening for the Hell of It* -- never a dull moment with these laboratory-tested turmoil techniques.
- *Follow Your Bliss into Money* -- how to make them attend your performances, buy your creations, or otherwise fork over their cash.
- *Taking Everything Seriously* -- fun just can't happen when you are surrounded by dark forces.
- *Humanitarian Hatred* -- use your rage and resentment to make the world a better place.
- *Heaven Is Only a Botox Away* -- how to acquire the ultimate phony face.
- *Establishing Successful Ponzi Schemes* -- let the federal government be your guide.

- *No Way Are They Human* -- practical ways to demonize the evil people.
- *Money Talks* -- and we will show you how to listen.
- *Gimme Them New Time Cognitive Illusions* -- what to do if you are bored with the ones you have currently got.
- *You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Oppresses You* -- how to get the patriarchy to start picking on you the way it picks on everyone else.
- *Beginner's Guide to Milking the System* -- in this our most popular course, we reveal dozens of super-secret techniques guaranteed to deliver six figures!
- *Making Your Fifth Marriage Work* -- now that you've finally found Mr./Ms. Right, here's what to do.
- *How to Prevent the Moochers from Getting Yours* -- once you get it, you know they are going to be after it.

Don't delay! Sign up for our special introductory discount offer today, and you can enroll in one of our life-transforming courses for only \$4,999.99! Both Visa and MasterCard accepted. Offer valid in USA only. Price subject to change without notice. Some other restrictions may apply. NOTE: Pathetic Loser University is not liable for legal fees, finance charges, penalties, etc., as these must come out of your own personal hide. Hurry, offer ends soon!

* * *

What was that? Are you serious? You mean you actually *don't* want to be a pathetic loser all your life? What on earth is wrong with you? Don't you understand what pathetic loser hood means? You get to live a life filled with thrilling adventures! People pay attention to you,

which means that you're special! You end up with so much stuff that you can't move an inch without knocking something over! The money keeps happening even though you do not have to earn it! You get to look out for Number One every second of your existence, which is the only number that counts! Best of all, you get to wallow in that fascinating sensation called feelgoodness every second of your life--until it wears off! O the ecstasy! The bliss! The endless hangovers! The ruined liver! Pathetic loser hood is what every single human soul on this earth constantly yearns for! Life is as meaningless as pea soup unless you're a confirmed pathetic loser!

But . . . you tell me that you have been impressed with some of the arguments in this book? You do not want to walk around riddled with negativity, nor do you want those darn Cosmic Boomerangs to keep knocking you out of your cranium? And even worse: you want to do something with your life besides pursuing endless addictive fixes? Holy cow. Can it actually be possible that you are one of the tiniest of all human minorities, namely somebody who can accept an oracular NO? Well, I am stunned. But more power to you! And congratulations on living a new and successful life.

Chapter 14. Conclusion

Well, so much for divination and the blessings it can give to you. The thing to remember now is that divination is one of the easiest of human activities, just as long as you use a workable oracular tool, of course. And once you get the hang of it, you will be hooked. You will not want to let a day go by without asking your oracle one question or another. And while nothing is perfect, the responses you will see from your oracular tool will start to improve your life in ways you cannot now imagine.

But what do you mean, you still want me to offer some proof for everything that I have said? My friend, the proof is in the doing of it. Doing divination, that is. One individual at a time must personally learn the value of oracular consultation and then see how his or her life changes for the better. I am certain that the people who practice these techniques will be able to transform not only their own personal lives but their societies as well.

But even though we are now at the end of this book, there is much more you need to understand about your current earthly existence. It just so happens that the human race is living in an era which will soon start to exhibit the greatest evolutionary shift in human history. We are on the verge of tremendous political, social, cultural, medical, and spiritual changes in our history. And believe it or not, these changes are going to transform our planetary reality *for the better* in ways that previous generations never could have imagined.

That's right: new alternatives to governments, organized religion, mechanized medical care, oppressive mega corporations, and artificial chemicals are going to be developed in the years to come. These alternatives are going to be aligned to the natural energetic flow of the universe, and they will transform absolutely everything about our human lives and cultures. This means that for the first time in human history, all of us living in an ever-more globalized world will be able to live in harmony with the natural energies of the universe. If ever there was something new in human history, this is it.

But the new world to come is another subject. Another book-length subject. If you want to learn how our planetary reality is going to be

transformed for the better in the years to come, you need to take a look at my second book, *A Spiritual Guide to Planetary Transformation*, which you can download for free at www.themista.com. The price is right, so go take a look. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

In the meantime, stay cool and keep shuffling those cards. You will be glad you did.

Footnotes

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