

Website: www.stoneriley.com/tarot

Invitation To A Student Of Tarot

This is a fortune telling system, a magic book, a diagram of human life and soul wherein your intuition speaks the truth your self can never know or soon forgets.

Here is the classic deck of picture cards, the old city of 78 squares, the ancient map drawn up as though life were an ever-shifting game of 78 tiles whereon each human token at each moment falls.

In this book of pictures, poetry and prose you will come upon a certain numbering of roads, a careful survey of the gods and men in their abodes, a full accounting of the ancestor odes.

Naked, clothe your self in daring and simply touch the flow of an infinite and ever-present moment which you know is now; feel at once the night and morning; thus come to be like a dolphin touching echoes in the ever-present sea.

Ask a question, touch a page; there study what good fortune and your own eye have to say. To learn of life just ask for guidance; your own hand can point the way.

If you wish now, come with me; stand upon my shoulders as I walk the sea. Repeat the journey trod when you were young; hearken to the tale from your own tongue. At every marker stone embrace the view;

Comprehend the truth and speak it new.

5: The High Priest

This endless eddied world of surge and flow
may here and there forget to know
that it is All
but dreams instead
that it is You
or I.

Yet in each heart will ever lie
the soul's deep pool,
the porphyry bowl of lotus wine,
the self-dissolving sigh,
so to my lips
the endless draught you pour.

When I have drunk
and bathed
and drowned
and sunk beneath the waves I've found
my self somehow composed once more
and lifted to a sunlit shore where
wind-soaked flesh
and bony core
become an echoing ocean sound.
So now the eyes within my head look round
surprised to see both You and I
with callused feet on stony ground
still at unbounded ocean's edge
immersed in flowing sky.

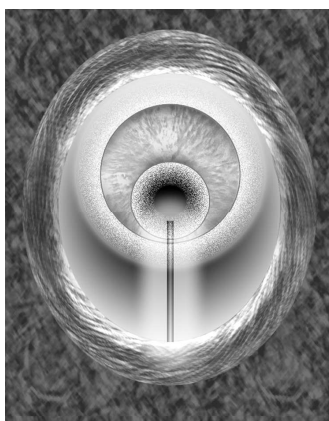
0: The Fool

A clown leaps from the height,
this prince, this god of fools.
Unfurling colored wings of immortality
he soars out high. But, drunken
with the dizzy speed and power,
he folds one wing and falls :

:
:
:
to this world.



"Tarot Card" Digital image by SR



"Image Of One"
Digital image by SR

6: The Lovers

Love, thou art perfect in all thy ways,
Perfection whispering on the waters.
(Consider our joys, have they not been
a strengthening bond these times?
Do I not know thee fair and well?)
So shed all lies which others tell,
lies of blind hunger, of fearful
jealousy and pitiful defeat.
Gaze into my clear heart
wide, calm and deep;
see here your own beauty rippling.

1: The Magician

A clot am I
of earth, wind, fire and water.
A breath am I
of earth, wind, fire and water.
A spark am I
of earth, wind, fire and water.
A drop am I
of earth, wind, fire and water.
And yet I speak !
A human thing
who names the gods.

2: The High Priestess

Cast your eye to the farthest shore
then cast you heart beyond.
There open your heart
to the velvet touch,
the holy touch of dawn.

3: The Empress

Oh QUEEN OF HEAVEN
mistress of our prayers;
Oh grandmother EVE
you who first bore child
and gave it suck,
you who first laid hand
upon the newborn human brow;
Oh PERFECT MOTHER OF US ALL
I, fruit of your womb,
call your name BLESSED
and kneel here at your feet.

4: The Emperor

Oh honorable father Adam,
you who measure space
and count the hours;
Your voice of power
invigorates both demi-god
and demon.
You who cast a legal deed
upon this shadowy realm
and stamp a seal
upon all that is yours;
At will you call the lightening bolt
or lift a roof beam high.

7: The Chariot

Like a mighty engine throbbing,
pistons counter-thrusting within steel,
our worlds are driven by
their opposites within.

Cock jays perch in opposite trees
and shout their individual song:
"I say, keep away !"
One living world is made.

The engine, armored centaur, heaves.
Upon its flank an emblem of its
government proclaims:
"I say, keep away !"

Split, we feel a master in our selves,
a governor in a bastion tower who
hoards up goods and keeps
a watch fire warm.

With rumbling gear inside of gear,
the turret and the cannon scan
beyond the border,
beyond our land.



"Egg"
canvas
painting
by SR

11: Justice

The firefly, tragically struggling,
sheds her phosphorescent glow upon
prismatic drops of spider glue which
a patient hunter hopes may hold her fast.

Here in a meadow in a wood on a plain,
now on this first night when all the suns
and moons together call her kind up
from a long waiting winter sleep
in the earth;

Now on this first night of love,
of life within the soaring phantom body
of a swarm of light, she has cast herself
into a net of jewels and hangs suspended,
half terrorized, half reconciled to fate.

8: Strength

Raindrop hanging still
from a leaf tip
knows the mighty tug
of Earth and yet
moves not.

The filaments
of liquid crystal
knitting it,
pure star stuff,
have their own way.

10: The Wheel Of Fortune

Tumbling headlong with its next
step, the great animal plunges
through a matted screen which hid
the tunnel mouth and down to the
cave floor below.

Plunged from dusk into night, but
bred to a forager's quick wit, it casts
a glance about to see what light is
shed by the hole it fell through.

Suddenly landed in a new place, it
pulls itself up now to a comfortable
squat and, being one of the laughing
apes, grins back at its own
breathless fall.

12: The Hanged Man

~~~~~  
! Look ye with true eyes heavenward !  
Behold:

!!  
!!  
\*\* The Chariot Of A God \*\*  
!!  
!!

this infinite-faceted jewel,  
crystalline dream spindle,  
heaven-spanning diadem of the god:

!!  
!!  
\*\* Infinitude \*\*  
!!  
!!

bridge between all stars,  
from which I,

!!  
!!  
\*\* A Priest \*\*  
!!  
!!  
descend.  
~~~~~

9: The Hermit

Oh master of the high pass,
priest of the scouring wind
which keens among my bones,
reach down your knotty staff unto my grasp
that I may climb;
hold high that glorious lamp to show
my feet the stony way
and raise a song to greet
your long-forbidden love.

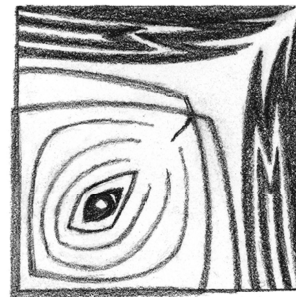
It was your song which drew me out,
which echoed through my heart and soul,
a faint high thrill to which my body chimed;
so up from the master's pillow jerked my head
and out from the castle cloister flew my feet
till here at last before you now I stand,
trembling and childlike, in your silence,
and pray you to caress me once again.

Why don't you sing? Why don't you sound the pipes?
Why don't you toss aside that doak, that spectral mien,
and clasp me to your bosom with a hearty laugh?
Why now at long last chill and numbing silence?

Within the shadowy hood which blacks your radiant face
I do perceive half-lidded eyes which hint forbearance
and a tight-lipped little smile which answers: "Go !"

Bereft and yet obedient still, I turn away and blink aside
the tears to spy my barren home so far below.

And yet behold !
The wind has laid down to a murmuring sigh
and somehow, through your magic charm,
the waste I go to tread has turned to sparkling jewels
and to gold.



"Breaking
Through At Last"
Pencil drawing
by SR

13: Death

Youth is tenuous memory and
old age looms a fantasy somewhere;
room by room in a spiral hall
I walk the land.

What dread surrounds that door ahead !
What dreams lie there? What friend
or beast turns ear to the distant
measure of my tread?

14: Temperance

Water, blood of the earth,
come wash the poison from my flesh
and bring back life !
I dwelt with the others and thus
became thus;
now I give my self to you.

16: The Tower

Upon this precipice built he a tower
to rule from high rich Eden's bower;
he fled the eye of God to cower,
to hoard up wife and goods and gear.

Spoke Fate:

"In brittle silence sit you here,
in age-long soul-deep hate and fear,
all for the sake of goods and gear,
and jealousy of love."

"Stand off !" cried Adam to the dove,
"Repeat my mortal boast above:
I am a man ! Earth's pulse shall move
beneath the tapping of my thumb !"

But thunder rolls from God's great drum,
the gale and wave and earthquake come,
with ripening time all strivings sum,
and every fortress finds its hour.



"Sheila
Na Gig"
digital
image
by SR

18: The Moon

Whispering shadow on my pillow lay.
(Arise ! Barefoot ! No robe ! Away !)
"How far the chase tonight?" I say.
The moonlight never answered.

19: The Sun

Soaked with the cold blind night, I stumble,
blunted sword in hand, panting,
not even breath enough for prayer,
my charges huddled in the broken circling wall
not knowing where the next attack may come.

But children of two eternal ones are we;
He whose word is fire
and She whose breast is clay.

Oh glorious mighty SOL !
The first ray of Your rising
pierced me and my heart flew up
to suck Your breath of flame !

You kiss me as You kiss the mother Earth
and bring back mighty life !
I thrust down roots into Her breast
and turn my face to you.

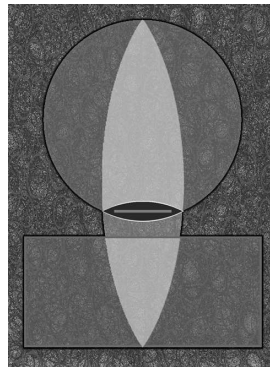
A circling temple from the broken stones
with altars male and female I heap up;
thereon this precious incense now I burn
to welcome You.

15: The Devil

A living creature crushed
beneath a hero's thumb.
Seething hunger moist
on lips and tongue.

A writhing knotty snake within,
if not on constant victory fed,
will climb up on the hero's spine
and pluck his heart instead.

By stealth or dare he feeds the beast,
each morsel meaning he lives still.
He is too strong to sacrifice
that scabrous fruit of will.



"Island"
digital
image
by SR

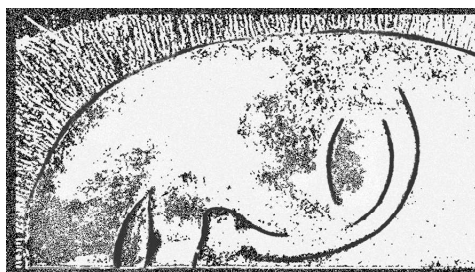
20: Judgment

Maze walker,
creature of a million colored chambers,
creature with a million colored patterns in your eye,
long ago lost here, almost guideless,
almost friendless, guessing every turn,
your steps have crossed a million beckoning portals,
tramped a million halls.

Now a new eye opens,
the eye above your self, holding no patterns, and sees:
the foot and floor, the patterned walls, light dancing to
the counter-patterned eye; now all is one !

A dance of all reality, of great and small infinity,
whose tiny steps and boundless whirls make up yourself,
all that there is.

Now see the truth of All:
All is one thing, a world of self-same strangers,
cable of many threads,
garden of night and noon and morning,
magic loom of all there is.



"You"
digital
image
by SR

17: The Star

Breaker waves 'neath lowering cloud
of autumn, driven by an icy wind;
here I stand transfixed with longing
on the shore of Skysealand.

Human eye drawn always outward
stretches forth the human hand
toward ever distant grey horizons
where the elements all blend.

Cold the heart and cold the soul,
cold the marrow in the bones does grow;
the yearning eye knows what to seek
but is the dogged flesh too weak?

Where is the rescue promised me?
How can my swooning heart yet come to be
a vessel of white light and sanctity
when all is dark and far from God's humanity?

A light !

Thank God, upon that distant curve
of blackening sea, at last a light !

So here I stand and through the eye
that piercing light darts to my soul
and there explodes into prismatic glow,
suffusing all.

"An Eagle's Flight"
digital image
by SR



21: The World

Unbounded parkland;
where the master gardener passes
exotic seeds flame
into great maturity.

Of course
the weathered lips reveal a smile;
all a wish could name
is here today.

Opening To Compassion

How often has a human caught the glittering eyes of fox or mouse or deer or bear or lion in the teeming forest or the grassy plain and - with a shudder or in sudden awesome ecstasy - they have felt everything outside themselves look into their being?

How often have the voices of the wind told someone that the spirits of the land are watching?

How often has the twinkling light of stars stabbed deep into a human soul?

How often has that penetration opened darkened places to the light of understanding so wisdom could begin, or broken through the hardened layers of a wounded heart so it might love again?

That is compassion.

August Evening

We are not imprisoned in ourselves and we are not alone. Your soul is not a single seed isolate in frozen ground nor is your heart a stone. No one can put up castle walls to hold themselves with any lock and key, for we are creatures of a teeming world.

Though we at times may fear the overawing beauty of a sunset or a dawn, the foreign eyes which penetrate our eyes, the grip of birdsong on our throat, the touch of whispering wind on naked cheek; though we at times may fear the loosening of the knotted strings of individual identity these intimate invasions bring, still soul beyond your soul is everywhere and crowding close.

Sit in company with a weeping woman, sharing grief for her beloved gone beyond the veil, and then up on the picture screen inside your eyes behold a presence standing right there beside the woman's shoulder in an aureole of other-light, presenting emblems of some sort about some message they would have you speak. Will you belie your claims of courage? You will not.

So turn an ear to seek a whisper from the very depths of mystery, and study carefully and breathe and speak.

Songs Of Heroes

An old blind man up by the table's head
rises carefully to stand on wobbling legs.
Some good girls and boys assist
this blind old gentleman
to find the chair that some have run
to set in a shady spot beneath a tree.
Our local champion poet brings the painted harp
and gives it, bowing by his knee.
And so he strikes
the first note on the strings.
He begins to sing amid the ringing chime.
This reedy thinning voice cries out the tale
of great Odysseus.

Journey To The West

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Hope is not the mouse's scurrying feet and owl's sharp beak, no more than these are fear. What is the purpose of the poppy's fate then, or the logic of my heart blood's heat, or yet the celestial motive of the sky's Great Bear? How do we live? Why has the Cosmos brought us here?

When I was full of hope, I thought that was the beginning and end of all things. Then, full of yearning to be loved, I dreamed love was the wellspring of delight. But then, immersed in deep despair, I chose to live this life for purposes that were far too obscured in smoke and flame for me to know and name. Why did I, in that dark hour, choose to live this life? Why did I not yet fly away?

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Faith is not the prisoner's chain, nor doubt the prophet's holy flame, nor greed the mother's teat touched to the sleeping baby's lips, nor is blessed charity the tyrant's grip. All this is life, but what is life? What is the melting of all opposites?

There is a man I truly hate; there is a woman whom I love. That man is dead as he once wished for me, the woman never met although my eyes search through the worlds for only she. Where is this woman who'll return my glance? Where is that ancient foeman now when in my hands I hold his broken blunted lance? And where am I? Where is this land wherein I stand alone? What is this place? Is this my home? I simply call this place my Skysealand.

One year when I was young and starting out across this continent, I strained my eyes to look ahead to map the way. That year, each Monday I would take a poem from an ancient wisdom book and I would fold up the coded rhyming wisdom neatly into my purse. Then for seven days I'd search the curving trunk of every tree and every mottled turtle's shell that I might pass beside the way for explications written there by unseen hands for me. Well, the Gods were generous and kindly gave some of their secrets up, but the boy I was then did not know their language well.

An eagle's mighty flight; a turtle shell; amid the lovely ripples of a brook, the various colored pebbles very artfully arranged; I made the best of it I could. Indeed, several turnings of the way and crossroads were very helpfully pointed out to me in advance by these magic signs. But now I've come a good way further on and, even though the sunlight and the stars and meadow flowers and hills and snow now all sing and whisper to me audibly; and even though the web of jewels of which all things are made stands manifest and visible and palpable to my fingers; yet even so, more hidden secrets still remain.

Buddha says that all is bliss. Solomon recommends a carefully considered trust. Christ says you should take his word on faith. Ganesh and Krishna both respectfully suggest that you can dance your life with happy grace. But for me, Merlin stands with a lantern held high in his hand, leaning on a wooden staff up on a windy mountain top. That wind blows down to gently touch my face and it speaks to me in a woman's voice and all she says is just: "Come."

No, love is not the thing, nor hate; not victory nor defeat. Whatever guides my fate, whatever it may be that lures me on, whatever it may be, it is not anything that I can know so as to name.

Don't Stop Walking

Don't stop walking when there is no way ahead. Your walking makes the path. The place you started from was cleared by others and others will soon follow you and pass and step ahead.



"Telling The Tale"
Digital image by SR