

The Playing Card ORACLES

A SOURCE BOOK FOR DIVINATION



Ana Lortez

Illustrations and Essays by C. J. Freeman

*The
Playing Card
Oracles*



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This book is dedicated to my father, C. J. Freeman.

Dad, I imagine us in a storybook
somewhere, our little ship set sail
against a sky of dreams.
And where will our little ship go?
Only the Two Sisters know!
It's true, "Treasure maps are always torn
in two," because it is in the bringing
together that lies the treasure.

*This book is also dedicated to Freeman and Nanette,
the lights of my life. I love you guys.*

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*A*LL MY THANKS TO . . .

Lainy, wherever you are. I'll never forget you.

Laddy, your enthusiasm and support came just when I needed it. You kept the flame alive.

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I would also like to thank Joan Raye, Maryanne and Julie, Freddie and Rob, Karen O., M. E. Ford, Scott Lyon, Steve Lyons, Roxanne Koehler, and all the many unnamed who have contributed along the way.

*By their numbers, suits, and pictures,
The Cards communicate
And begin to tell their story
Each time we shuffle Fate.*

— CJF

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Author's Note



DIVINATION IS A WORD that refers to any number of methods designed to make known the will of the Divine. But this is not a divinity to be sought somewhere outside ourselves. It is divinity within. This is what makes it so wonderfully accessible. In divination we open ourselves to the voice of truth, present inside each of us, but muffled by the clang and clatter of our own reactions to life, our fears, and our conditioning.

Just as a person would not play a game of cards blindfolded, one would hardly choose to play the game of life without knowing their hand, so to speak, and yet people do this, metaphorically holding onto cards that should be discarded, passing when they should play, etc. My grandmother, an avid Bridge player and venerable old soul, once said that the real challenge in cards is to have a poor hand and play it well. As with life, the cards do not represent a sealed fate, but help us to make decisions with open eyes.

Introduction



CARD READING WITH PLAYING CARDS may seem like a strange proposition. After all, aren't playing cards for games? Think about the striking fact that there are 52 cards in a deck as well as 52 weeks in a year. Could this be merely a coincidence? Consider that the 52 cards are divided into 4 suits, just as the year is divided into 4 seasons, and that each season consists of 13 weeks, exactly as each suit consists of 13 cards.

Here's a simple exercise. Count up all the numbers in a suit, with Aces as one, 2s as two, etc., Jacks as eleven, Queens as twelve, and Kings as thirteen. What do you get? The answer is 91, the total days in a season. Add all the numbers in the deck and you get 364, a curious number that is just one and one-quarter days shy of a solar year. But what if the deck was never intended to represent a *solar* year?

A look through history reveals that the playing deck is actually a perfect replica of a Fixed Lunar Calendar. This very simple model of timekeeping predates solar calendar systems like the Gregorian one we now use. Based on the observation of natural rhythms, the Fixed Lunar Calendar consists of thirteen cycles of twenty-eight days each, or exactly 364 days.

When you think about it, a calendar provides a layout in which to chart events that have not yet occurred. It is a map of the future. Of all the features of the playing deck, these perfect calendar correlations are perhaps the hardest to pass off as mere circumstance. Far from a haphazard creation, the construction of the deck alludes to a clearly thought-out intention, to a purpose far greater than ordinary gaming.

THE PICTURE BOOK OF ANA CORTEZ

THE CARD ILLUSTRATIONS that accompany this text are from *The Picture Book of Ana Cortez*. Be very clear that this is not a Tarot deck nor is it derived from Tarot in any way. It is a separate oracle entity all its own and speaks in its own distinct voice.

The deck is illustrated by my father, C.J. Freeman. His love for the playing cards and his wonderful intuition as an artist have produced innumerable revelations and endowed the so-called ordinary playing deck with extraordinary beauty. In my father's own words, "The drawings take their own courses. They have their own intelligence."

Over the past twenty-five years I have watched my father draw and re-draw playing cards, hundreds of them. His dedication is an inspiration. From chalks to oils to inks, the stream of images continues, ever-morphing, ever-evolving. *The Picture Book of Ana Cortez* is his third complete volume of work.

THE MAKING OF THIS BOOK

THE BOOK YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS is the result of a remarkable journey that began more than twenty years ago, a journey not of miles but personal discovery. There is magic in the seemingly ordinary playing deck we all grew up with, a whole enchanted world, just waiting to be discovered.

My first exposure to playing cards as something beyond an ordinary gaming deck happened at a fairly young age. I was perhaps thirteen or fourteen years old, on a visit to my father (my parents were divorced) when I ventured into his basement to find larger-than-life oil paintings of the cards. The paintings were my dad's first effort at illustrating the playing deck, his own self-assigned "art project." But this was like no art I had ever seen and certainly unlike any cards. The startling and vivid images on the canvases would have been a shock even for Alice as she wandered through Wonderland.

The strangeness of the pictures combined with the atmosphere in

this particular basement produced a very surreal and memorable experience for me. The basement itself was little more than a hole, probably better described as a cave. The dirt floor and crumbling rock walls were cast in shadows, lit only by the single light bulb my father had hung to paint by. He showed me how he had written the names of my sister and myself into the lines of wrinkled fabric on two of the figures.

My fascination had been captured, but years passed and thoughts of playing cards drifted far from my mind. It wasn't until after graduation from high school when I went to live with my dad for the summer that the deck was reintroduced as something extraordinary. Excerpts from this period appear in later chapters of this book, describing experiences with a card reader named Lainy. Lainy was my father's girlfriend at the time, a woman with a dark, exotic look and the spirit of a gypsy to match. Dad had taught her some basic card reading techniques based on his own studies with the playing deck. Lainy took his ideas and put them into practice. For her readings she used a one-of-a-kind playing deck made from photographs of the images created in the basement years before.

Lainy and I spent most of our days together that summer, talking endlessly about life and cards. Through her eyes, I saw the playing deck as if for the first time. She introduced me to the incredible symbolism it contained and how the meanings could be applied to our daily lives. I began to understand that the cards held secret knowledge and took detailed notes. That summer was a turning point for me. My perceptions had changed, but I was young, and the bigger world was calling my name. Once again, cards drifted from my life.

Finally, more than ten years later, my fascination for the playing deck surfaced again, but with a greater seriousness than before. I had just been through a devastating life change that left me questioning almost everything I had experienced up to that time. I needed to find myself again. The cards would become my vehicle.

Fortunately, much of the material on my father's original system had been preserved by a woman who called herself Laddy LaDoux. Laddy, like Lainy, had learned card reading from my father and had been using his method for years. She was generous enough to share with me all she knew about the cards, and I was an eager student. As time went

on, however, I became increasingly aware that the information I had collected was only one piece of a greater puzzle. All my notes somehow stopped short. The deck itself hinted at more.

This is when the fun began. I felt as though I were a detective on a classified mission. Books on calendar systems, the four elements, and alchemy began collecting around my house. I dusted off my old astrology and numerology texts and started to look into geomancy, a magical practice from the time of the Renaissance that has historical connections to playing cards.

An ongoing collaboration with my father during this period allowed an even greater depth of study. Two people focused on the same thing generate an energy difficult to create alone. Our conversations about cards spilled into the hours on many occasions. Discoveries were often surprising and appeared in unexpected ways: in dreams, for example, or through words spoken in a seemingly unrelated conversation. Gradually, a wondrous system of card reading emerged, beautiful and multi-faceted, like a shimmering jewel. This is what you will find in the pages that follow.

My hope for this book is that someday it will be acknowledged by people outside the card-reading and so-called “new-age” populations. Truly we are *all* in a new age. The world vibration is changing. At this fascinating and critical point in our human history, now is the time for information such as is contained in this book to become part of the general consciousness. The playing deck has slipped through our lives for many hundreds of years under a veil of ordinariness, its magic disguised by its simplicity and the fact that it can be used for games. May this book facilitate the lifting of the veil. It is time for Sleeping Beauty to awake.

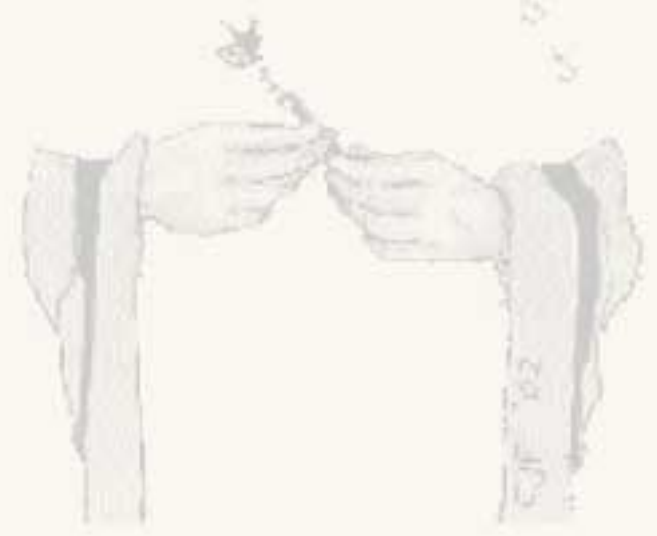
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

THE METHOD OF CARD READING disclosed in *The Playing Card Oracles* is the result of many years of study and discovery. It is not meant to be mastered in a short period of time. Take it in pieces, and practice, practice, practice. The text has been designed to take you step-by-step. Part One will introduce you to the basic language of the cards. Color, number, and suit meanings along with detailed descriptions for each of the 52 cards will provide the tools for your card reading toolbelt. Parts Two, Three, and Four will show you what to do with your tools. Card layouts and how to interpret them, reading techniques, and tips on tapping into your own intuitive power are covered at length and interwoven with sample readings throughout. BOOK TWO provides an interesting perspective of playing card history.

One more note: if you acquired this book without its companion deck, *The Picture Book of Ana Cortez*, there is no need to worry. Find a deck of playing cards that you like and follow along. The regular deck is the root and source of this system of card reading and is no less an instrument for divination than the illustrated deck featured in *The Playing Card Oracles*.



BOOK ONE
BOOK ONE



PART ONE

Card Symbolism



PART ONE will open your eyes to the playing deck as never before. Secrets will be revealed. Cards will come to life before you as you enter their world of colors, suits, and numbers. This part is your ABCs and 1-2-3s. Study it well. Parts Two, Three, and Four will show you how to apply what you have learned.



Calendar Correspondences

ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF AUTHORS have mentioned the calendar correspondences in the playing cards, this book is, to my knowledge, the first published material on how to make practical use of it. The card spreads covered later in the text will show you how.

CALENDAR CORRESPONDENCES WITHIN THE PLAYING DECK

52 cards	→	52 weeks in a year
4 suits	→	4 seasons in a year
13 cards in each suit	→	13 weeks in each season, 13 lunar cycles in a year
Total of numbers in each suit (counting Aces as 1, Jacks as 11, Queens as 12, and Kings as 13) = 91	→	91 days in each season
Total of numbers in the Deck = 364	→	364 days in the Fixed Lunar Year

As you take the deck into your hands, you are taking hold of a time machine. With each turn of the cards, weeks and months pass, seasons change, and a unique opportunity to glance into future or past unfolds before you.



The Magic of Three

THREE IS A PROMINENT NUMBER in many traditions of magic and prophecy and the 52-card deck is no exception. Three are the sisters who personify the three aspects of Fate, weaving their web of past, present, and future throughout the lore of many European traditions. Three are the phases of the moon: waxing, full, and waning, emblematic of the three stages of life as recognized in the Goddess practices. Three are the legs of the sacred chair upon which the Pythia of Delphi would sit as she uttered her prophecies of the future, and three are the components that make up the 52-card playing deck—*colors*, *suits*, and *numbers*. For this reason, we will refer to these three aspects of the deck again and again as we make our way through the text. In time, these pillars of understanding will take shape in your mind, erecting a temple of wisdom from which to draw insight for yourself and others.

COLORS

IF THE PLAYING CARDS ARE SO SPECIAL AND EXTRAORDINARY, then why aren't they full of color? Why the same old black, red, and white, century after century? In answering this question, we stumble on some of the more subtle mysteries contained within the cards. The limited palette of color used in the playing deck is one of simplicity, yet deep symbolic implication. In it we find yet another example of the number three and the power it has within the pack.

To the alchemists, the trinity of black, red, and white was the magical color combination that corresponded to the three essential phases of spiritual evolution. Black pertained to fermentation and repentance, white to transcendence and pardon, and red to suffering and love. Examples of this color trio appear repeatedly in the literature and art of religion and myth.

One more critical observation exists in terms of color. Because each card is either black or red (on a white background), we can view the deck as a binary creature. Binary means it is made up of two equal and contrasting or distinct parts, like yin and yang, yes and no, male and female. This additional correspondence opens up huge possibilities for interpretation and has far-reaching implications. Again, we see that less is more when it comes to color. To fully make use of the colors built into the deck, this book includes ideas on color interpretation (see *Looking for Black and Red*, p. 134) as well as geomancy, a sister system of divination that is based on just this kind of two-part observation.

NUMBERS

*All things have a number,
and it is this fact
which enables them
to be known.*

—PHILOLAUS, ca. 450 B.C.E.

NUMBERS ARE A FASCINATING AND COMPLEX FACET of the playing deck. By familiarizing yourself with the unique role that the numbers play within a reading, you will be getting to know them in a new way. They begin to take on life and meaning beyond their ordinary, one-dimensional counting or quantitative function. They begin to reveal their spirit.

Within the playing deck, there are two general categories of cards by number. Single-digit cards (Ace through Nine) are called pips, and double-digit cards are called courts.¹ “Pip” is the old card term for a suit sign (a Diamond, Club, Heart, or Spade) and a catchall word for cards that feature suit signs rather than court figures.

In numerology (the art and science of numbers), the single digits are sometimes referred to as the “original nine,” as they truly are the only numbers that are original, all others being simply new combinations of them. Accordingly, it is the pip cards whose meanings embrace the spectrum of human experience. The courts, on the other hand, are a new breed of cards quite different from their predecessors. They are personalities, representing complex characteristics just as the numbers assigned to them are complex. They symbolize actual people within a reading.

The court figures can be conceptualized as the actors and actresses who play out the events and circumstances that are the pips. The pips are the lessons we must learn, the trials that shape our individual karma. Together, these two groupings work to represent all the diverse phenomena of human life.

The following gives an overview of the numbers 1 through 9 as they operate within readings. Seen collectively, they symbolize a grand unfolding. Notice how the characteristics of each number are born from the one before it and in turn give rise to the next. Each is separate only as stones of the same pathway are separate. Through the numbers, life can be understood as a thing in movement, a work in progress.

Insight into the nature of the court cards can be gained by studying the two numbers that appear on each, although I believe numerological interpretation to be of limited value here. As stated before, courts belong to a different group or order of cards separate from the pips. Their personalities are broad, archetypal, and potentially mystical.

¹ Among the court personalities featured in this card reading system you will find the “Lady Cards,” long ago discarded from the court and labeled as simply a “ten.” This upset the balance of male and female within the court and put a two-digit number in the faceless grouping of single digit cards. *The Picture Book of Ana Cortez* is, among other things, an attempt to rectify that situation. Further discussion on this topic can be found on p. 78 and in *Book Two*, pgs. 218-219.

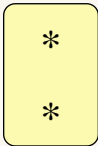
Characteristics are entwined by gender, age, suit, and relationship to other members of the court. Each is a potential vehicle for *every* pip experience.



ONE (Ace): Self

Positive expression: powers and potentials contained within the individual

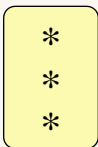
Negative expression: avoidance of manifestation, fear of losing self



TWO: Self and Other

Positive expression: partnership, cooperation

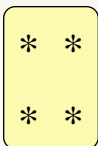
Negative expression: division, self against other



THREE: Manifestation

Positive expression: decision and movement

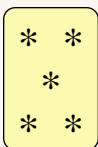
Negative expression: vacillation and worry



FOUR: Foundation

Positive expression: organization and completion

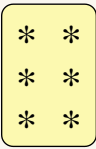
Negative expression: disorganization or rigidity



FIVE: Crossroads

Positive expression: opportunity and diversification

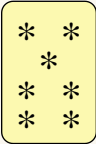
Negative expression: restlessness and confusion



SIX: Harmony

Positive expression: creation of harmony, experience of peace

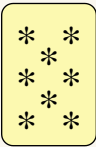
Negative expression: complacency, fear of challenge or disruption



SEVEN: Challenge

Positive expression: growth, development of inner strength

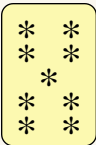
Negative expression: obstacles, destructiveness



EIGHT: Fortification

Positive expression: achievement, support

Negative expression: materiality, failure



NINE: Final Challenge

Positive expression: selflessness, humanitarianism

Negative expression: extremes and selfishness

SUITS

*The Four symbolizes the parts,
qualities, and aspects of the One.*

—CARL JUNG,
Psychology and Religion

THE SEASONS CYCLE ROUND AND ROUND, ever flowing, one to the next, ever renewing the life they contain. As part of nature, we too must dance to the shifting tune of the seasons' song. We wear the faces of youth, adolescence, mid-life, and old age. We embody the forces of mind, body, emotion, and spirit. It is this cycling, this exchange of form, that the suits of Diamonds, Clubs, Hearts, and Spades symbolize.

Each has its own personality, so to speak, its own inherent characteristics that aid in interpreting a spread of cards. The contrasts between the suits are vital, allowing each to supplement the others. They energize one another while tempering each other's extremes. Together they bring balance and wholeness to a spread.

The suit signs were fashioned as key symbols for core energies that manifest through the individual numbers, Ace through King. Inscribed upon unbound card "pages," their stories unfold. Suits mix and mingle, harmonize and clash, and finally reflect our experiences—inner and outer, past, present, and future. I can picture some kind of Creator seated on a grand throne, joyously shuffling and throwing spreads from a royal deck, creating the seemingly endless array of phenomena we call life. And now, allow me to introduce . . . the suits.

DIAMONDS



MAGICAL NAME: Ignita
ELEMENT: Fire
DIRECTION: South
SEASON: Autumn
PHASE OF LIFE: Mid-life
PRINCIPAL BODY PART: Head
COMPATIBLE SUIT: Clubs
KEY CONCEPTS: Prosperity, Creativity, Self-confidence, Transformation, Spiritual growth

The sparkling Diamond, formed within dark Earth by intense pressure and heat, is a radiant symbol of transformation, representing well the spirit of the cards within this suit. Money is a major correspondence for Diamond cards and an essential tool of transformation on this Earth. Through its use, goods and labors are exchanged. One thing becomes another. For example, the work you put in at the office becomes your mortgage payment and your groceries. Diamonds represent prosperity or potential for prosperity.

Through our own spirituality, transformation can also be expressed, though an *inner* transformation as compared to the *outer* transformation symbolized by money. Spiritual potential, illumination, and consciousness are all concepts that fall within the realm of Diamonds, although not very commonly. Mankind has become so outwardly directed, using the power of Diamonds to generate money and earthly power rather than spiritual depth.

The personality of this suit is creative and inspirational. There is a need to reflect the inner experience in the outer world. Think again of the Diamond, and how light shining through it is refracted and

beautified to reveal the colors of the rainbow. This is like life filtering through people who manifest this suit.

Fire is the Element of the Diamonds. Sitting next to a cozy hearth or even a burning candle, I notice my gaze is drawn again and again to the flame. Now imagine this same energy as it lives inside a person. People with strong Diamond characteristics are magnetic, compelling, and dynamic. Just as firelight banishes darkness, when we incorporate this suit into our lives, we take hold of an inner torch, lending courage and an ability to meet with confidence the circumstances that come our way. A lack of Diamonds can indicate a certain fearfulness or inability to trust. Life can be like walking into a dark room and not being able to find the light switch.

People “in Diamonds” tend to be rather “me” oriented. They do not like to be weighed down with heavy concerns for others. Watery feelings (Heart suit) threaten to douse their Fire. Too many material or practical concerns (Spade suit) smother their creative impulses. The lighter, airy qualities expressed by the Club suit, however, complement the suit of Fire well. Clubs feed Diamond ambitions with new ideas and allow the freedom they need.

An overabundance of Diamonds in a spread is rarely seen as a problem by the person who has it. This is because Fire, in itself, is not sensitive. Commonly, only in hindsight is the imbalance recognized. The person can get literally “burned out” after being hopelessly driven to the point of exhaustion. Usually others in their path have been “burned” as well. Symptoms of this imbalance often manifest as self-centeredness, greediness, and/or an excessive concern for making things happen.

As with all the suits, balance must be sought. Each suit is kept in check by the presence of the other three. Diamond energy lights our life. Too little is a day without sunshine. Too much is a Fire that knows not its own bounds.

*Every Fire possess a hunger
Like none you've ever seen
Set a feast before this creature
And he'll lick each platter clean*

*Never matters what you offer
He's always wanting more
See him eating up your ceiling
And gobbling up your floor?*

*Takes a day before he's finished
And stops to catch his breath
Done digested eighty acres
But starved himself to death*

—CJF

CLUBS



MAGICAL NAME: Ethra
ELEMENT: Air
DIRECTION: East
SEASON: Summer
PHASE OF LIFE: Adolescence
PRINCIPAL BODY PART: Throat
COMPATIBLE SUIT: Diamonds
KEY CONCEPTS: Ideas, Thinking, Dreams,
Communication, Detachment

The suit of Clubs represents many of the more subtle and elusive energies of the pack. Corresponding to mental processes and the Element of Air, it symbolizes things unseen. People attuned to this suit work well within the realm of ideas and imagination. They are the inventors, the entrepreneurs, the dreamers. They conceive those things that are yet to be in our physical world.

Picturing now the Element associated with Clubs, further insight can be gathered into the nature of this suit. Air is our human ocean, our environment. By breathing we become intimately connected to all other breathing creatures. Applying this then to a spread of cards, we can say that Clubs provide a sense of connection, of relationship. They bring understanding to the dynamics of a reading. Air is a soft, receptive Element. It harmonizes energies that might otherwise be antagonistic.

In keeping with this concept of subtle receptivity, it is important to recognize Air as a carrier. Air delivers sound to our ears and smells to our olfactory senses. Clubs are messengers and suggest an affinity for communication. They represent information, reading, writing, and verbal abilities. People with a strong show of this suit are typically fond

of talking and social situations where they can relate to others on a mental level.

While these cards indicate connection, ironically they also reveal a sense of detachment gained from an ability to look at things from a logical perspective. As if strapped onto the back of a bird in flight, those with well-developed Club energy are able to view the bigger picture, separating themselves from intense personal involvement. Those of a less airy orientation are likely to perceive this kind of person as simply cold or uncaring.

Of the other three suits, Diamonds provide the best match for Clubs, sharing their love for the lighter side of life. As the Element of Fire, Diamonds mix naturally with the suit of Air, stimulating and putting into action Club ideas and dreams. When found together in a layout, these two suits symbolize an ease and flow not demonstrated between Clubs and either the Heart or Spade suits.

Spreads imbalanced by too many Club cards have substantially weakened energy. Strength is found in their alliance with other suits. Standing alone, Clubs represent ideas not carried through to manifestation. Like a mournful, restless wind, this suit of Air can become as a sad and discarnate spirit, a breath without a body. Conversely, when Club cards are missing from a reading, there is a need for mental stimulation and reflection on one's experiences and life in general.

*You are not enclosed within your bodies,
nor confined to houses or fields.
That which is you dwells above the
mountain and roves with the wind.
It is not a thing that crawls into the sun
for warmth or digs holes into darkness
for safety.*

*But a thing free, a spirit that envelops the
Earth and moves in the ether . . .*

*This would I have you remember in
remembering me.*

*That which seems most feeble and
bewildered in you is the strongest and
most determined.*

*Is it not your breath that has erected
and hardened the structure of your bones?*

*And is it not a dream which none of you
remember having dreamt, that builded
your city and fashioned all there is in it?*

*Could you but see the tides of breath
you would cease to see all else,*

*And if you could hear the whispering of
the dream you would hear no other sound.*

—KAHLIL GIBRAN, *The Prophet*

HEARTS



MAGICAL NAME: Agana
ELEMENT: Water
DIRECTION: West
SEASON: Spring
PHASE OF LIFE: Childhood
PRINCIPAL BODY PART: Torso
COMPATIBLE SUIT: Spades
KEY CONCEPTS: Emotions (love, passion, hate, fear, etc.), Sympathy, Healing, the Subconscious

The Heart is one of those universal symbols that needs no words to explain. But more than simply “love,” the suit of Hearts encompasses the full array of feeling and emotional possibilities. It represents our blood, our passion, and our pain. It is the reason we love and the reason we war, our reason to live and the causes for which we die. Its impulses bypass the mind, confounding attempts at logic and reasoning, originating in a place deep within our being.

This is the suit that corresponds to the Element of Water. Understanding this association is key to understanding the nature of these cards and how they behave within a spread. Water is nurturing, fluid. Washing ourselves with it, we are not only cleansed but renewed and refreshed. Heart cards in general symbolize these same qualities. Their presence within a reading points to healing and an ability to nurture and care for others, as well as oneself.

It is the graveyards near bodies of Water that have the most hauntings, giving a further clue into the nature of this Element. Water picks up and holds vibration. As such, Heart cards represent sympathetic energy. People manifesting Hearts are attuned to the undercurrents of reality, the feelings behind words spoken and unspoken. This is the suit

representing those things that lie beneath the surface of conscious awareness.

Without a shape of its own, Water seeks solid forms to hold it and give it function. Be it the rocky bottom of a river bed, a cup from which to drink, or the veins and tissues of one's own body, this Element is gravitational and must conform to the confines of its vessel. As the suit that corresponds to Earth, Spades is the natural partner for Hearts in this way, giving this suit of the emotions both stability and purpose. Hearts, in turn, nurture and give life to Spade characteristics.

Diamonds, as Fire, present an exciting combination for Hearts, although a very unstable one. Fire touching Water will sizzle and steam, but eventually these two Elements eliminate each other. Club cards as they appear with Hearts in a reading symbolize a very sensitive dynamic as both these suits deal with finer, softer energies. This is also a more difficult association than the Hearts/Spades combination.

When Hearts is the dominating suit in a spread, the person you are reading is looking at life through the lens of their feelings. They possess natural healing ability, although it can be latent or unexpressed. There is a natural attunement to subtle energies. Complications arise because with so much Water it is easy to get "washed away," to be so sensitive to feelings and moods that one becomes vulnerable to fears and insecurities of all kinds. As previously mentioned, the stability offered by the Spade suit is vital to Hearts and can help offset the difficulties that come about when this suit of the emotions is heavily represented.

Conversely, a lack of Heart cards corresponds to a lack of attention to feelings. Especially in our hustle-bustle, technologically oriented society, human sensitivity and emotion are often perceived as more of a hindrance than an asset. Because Hearts are related to healing, their absence often alludes to a *need* for healing. This becomes especially apparent when Spades are present in the spread. Spades without their companion suit of Hearts is Earth without Water. Think about what this means to the physical being. A healthy emotional state is vital to the health of the body. The section called *Generating Suit Energies* (p. 130) gives ideas on how to re-establish connection with the energy that the Heart suit represents. As always, a good balance of suit energies is the best medicine.

Of all the Elements, the sage should take Water as his preceptor. Water is yielding but all-conquering. Water extinguishes Fire, or, finding itself likely to be defeated, escapes as steam and reforms. Water washes away soft Earth or, when confronted by rocks, seeks a way around. It saturates the atmosphere so that Wind dies. Water gives way to obstacles with deceptive humility, for no power can prevent it following its destined course to the sea. Water conquers by yielding; it never attacks but always wins the last battle.

—from *The Wheel of Life*,
by JOHN BLOFELD, ©1972
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SPADES



MAGICAL NAME:	Terra
ELEMENT:	Earth
DIRECTION:	North
SEASON:	Winter
PHASE OF LIFE:	Old Age / Death
PRINCIPAL BODY PART:	Feet
COMPATIBLE SUIT:	Hearts
KEY CONCEPTS:	Labor, Career, Housing, the Physical Body, Discipline, Responsibility

A Spade is a dark thing, even more so, if possible, than its black counterpart, the Club. Clubs, being associated with the Element of Air, at least have a lightness, a levity about them. Spades, on the other hand, are associated with Earth, making their blackness heavy and dense.

The Spade is a tool, a weapon. For the gardener it is everything—the sharp blade that breaks the solid Earth to till and expose what nature has been brewing in darkness. For the warrior it is the all important spear point, an especially significant weapon back in the days when playing cards were conceived. Like the gardening spade, the spear point was made for thrusting, but for thrusting into flesh—another Earth, of sorts.

So, what do a gardener and a warrior have in common besides this all-consuming urge to thrust? They both *labor*. Spades is the suit of work, toil, and physicality. Where you find Spades in a spread is where you find that the person works hardest. It is the point where routine and even drudgery enter.

Compared to the Elements of the other three suits, Earth is relatively stable and permanent. It slows down the more volatile and

excitable Fire, Air, and Water. As such, people with strong Spade tendencies demonstrate a dependability, predictability, and conservativeness not possessed by any other suit.

Intermingling most naturally and completely with Spades is the suit of Hearts. Spade characteristics provide security and stability for Hearts, which correspond to Water. Hearts supply the feeling qualities needed to soften Spade characteristics, just as Water softens and nurtures an otherwise dry and inhospitable Earth. I have always found it interesting that the Spade is an upside-down Heart with the addition of a little stem.

Diamonds and Clubs, of course, also have their own relationships with the suit of Spades, though neither demonstrates the same natural mix or balance as the Spade/Heart combination. Diamond cards present an energizing match for Spades within a reading (Fire and Earth), indicating a real “go-getter” dynamic; however, it is a very coarse pairing as both these suits run short on sensitivity. Motives can turn to greed and hunger for power if not kept in check. Clubs and Spades create an obviously very black combination that manifests as a dry, serious outlook lacking excitement or spontaneity.

Earth as an Element is unique in that it is form-bound. Its shape is deteriorated by time and must die to be reborn. In human beings, for example, we witness the degeneration of the physical body with age, as the emotional maturity and spiritual consciousness often improve. Accordingly, the vitality in Spades is found in youth while the rewards of the other suits typically emerge with age. Because court cards depict personalities as they progress through the different phases of life, you will find this aspect of the suits reflected there.

Looking at a cluster of Spade cards laid out on the table, I feel I am looking at a black, pointed army with spearheads poised, ready for battle. A lot of this suit within a reading signals conflict, clash, hard spots. Spades, as Earth, are dense and unyielding. A spread imbalanced by many Spade cards typically indicates situations of feeling trapped, boxed in. People with this feature tend to be stubborn, skeptical, and argumentative. On the other hand, people who have a weak show of Spades can be unreliable, flighty, and lacking in discipline.

Cards within this suit certainly represent more than their fair

share of difficulty and challenge within the playing deck. Symbolizing physical realities, Spades address tough issues that must be dealt with in real terms.

The negative aspect of the stability of the Earth is its inertia, the downward attraction of gravity. A solid structure on Earth, even a living body, requires upward energy to move. It does not flow like Water or Air. When we stood on two legs rather than four, it was in defiance of Earth's gravity. The free legs became arms that could aspire upward, even to be raised in worship, attracted by a higher force.

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