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### 3. MAJOR ARCANA CARD MEANINGS

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dumb of me, I shall not be doing that again in a hurry.” Without that shift in thinking there is no magical adept, only a magical aspirant.

I had to learn. All my life. The hard way. And the hard way’s pretty hard, but not so hard as the easy way.

— Granny Weatherwax<sup>1</sup>

## *17 Star*

### KEY WORDS

The dawn after the disaster, hope, self-reliance, seed, Divine guidance, navigation, first step, conception.

The Star is the small but powerful light that shines in the darkness to lead you on your way ahead. When you stand in the rubble of disaster, or have faced a trial so devastating that you feel you are in total darkness, and you have kept as much integrity as is humanly possible in such a situation, this is when the Star begins to shine. When you have seen and acknowledged your failings, weaknesses, and the role you played in your own downfall, when you stand alone with no emotion on the edge of the precipice and stare out in to the darkness beyond, then if you do not flinch from it, the Star will appear and show you the safe passage ahead. You must walk that path alone, but the Star will light each step in front of you to stop you falling into the Abyss.

The Star is also the herald of the end of the storm. It tells you that until you are ready—until you have recovered, strengthened, and rebuilt your foundations—you will not be tested again. The Star is a time of rebuilding, reenergizing, reforming, and renewal. The Star

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<sup>1</sup>Pratchett 1993, p. 356.

will not carry you, nor will it coddle you; rather it will give you safe passage, sanctuary for body and soul, and the space and time to regroup your energy, resources, and necessities. The Star will give you however long you truly need, if you are determined to learn from past experience and forge forward alone to truly become the master of your fate.

It is a card of hope, respite, renewal, and rebirth. It is the gift that comes after the lessons of the Tower are learned. It can appear in a reading to tell you the worst is over, or to indicate the seeds being planted of something to blossom in the future, such as an idea or project. It can indicate conception, or the coming of a different fate path to take you in a different direction. But most of all, the message of the Star is that your suffering has been recognized, your willingness to forge a path ahead has been acknowledged, and the powers of the universe are responding by lighting your path ahead so that you do not get lost.

### MUNDANE MEANING

When this card appears in a mundane reading, regardless of its subject matter, it tells you to take a deep breath. No matter how bad a situation is, there is a bright light at the end of the tunnel. It can also say that whatever potential action or decision you are considering will bear strong fruit in the long term. It may be a difficult beginning and a long road to walk, but further down that road you will start to see the life-changing gifts that fate has put in your path. Depending on the question of the reading, and the position in the layout that it lands in, this card can herald the conception of a child, the start of a new cycle of fortune or fate, or the slow climb back to health and balance. It is the card of 1 a.m.: the start of the new day that occurs in the darkness of the night.

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#### ESOTERIC MEANING

The Star is deeply connected with Temperance. It uses similar imagery of the water bearer, but instead of pouring water from one pot to another the Star pours water both into the spring and onto the land, while keeping one foot *on* the water and one foot on the land. This is most likely connected to the *cool water* that appears in Ancient Egyptian funerary texts. Cool water and nourishing bread is given to those who have overcome some of the trials of the Duat.<sup>1</sup>

In the distance of the Star card there is a hill with a tree on it, and sitting on the tree is a long-beaked bird. I have looked at the Star card for decades and never noticed this quiet but powerful message in its background. The bird in the tree is the Benu bird,<sup>2</sup> similar in concept to the Greek Phoenix. The tree it sits in is the Ished tree or the sycamore tree. The cool water is poured for the refreshment of both land and lake by a goddess. These images are all from ancient Egyptian mythology and feature heavily in the Egyptian Book of the Dead<sup>3</sup> and the Book of Gates.<sup>4</sup>

The Benu bird is a bird of new life and renewal, and is the herald of great things to come. It features heavily in funerary texts once the soul has undergone some of its most terrible trials and has survived to begin its walk towards the dawn. The Benu bird appears in the depths of the darkness just before the long journey to light begins. It is also the bird that heralds the birth of the creation of the world from the Benben stone that rises out of the waters. The Benu bird is strongly connected to Osiris and was taken to be the soul of Osiris, who was torn apart, who descended into the Underworld, who was

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<sup>1</sup>The Duat is the Egyptian Underworld and the realm of the dead.

<sup>2</sup>Benu. Taken from the Egyptian verb *wbn* which means to rise or to shine.

<sup>3</sup>The most recent academic English translation of the Book of the Dead is Quirke 2013.

<sup>4</sup>For a magical translation and commentary of which, see Sheppard and McCarthy 2017.

reconstituted, and who rose again with the dawn as the renewed solar deity called Re.

The sycamore tree also features in the same funerary texts as the tree which is also the goddess Hathor in her connections with the stars.<sup>1</sup> The goddess in the form of a tree offers cool water to the clean soul who has passed some of the trials of the Duat, allowing the soul rest and regeneration before they forge on to the greater trials ahead of them in their quest to rise at the dawn with the sun, and thus into renewal.

The ultimate goal of the soul that rises with the solar barque of Re is to become as *one of the stars*, the Justified Ones. It is perfect imagery for the Star, together with the goddess who pours water onto the spring and the land, and the new bright star that shines among the others on the trump card. It is clever way of quietly using Egyptian imagery to convey hidden meaning to *those who have eyes to see*.

The collective imagery for the Star tells of the deeper, layered, esoteric meaning of this card. The Hermit and his lamp, lit by a star, forges forward alone in the darkness to face the trials ahead of him. On the other side of those trials, the star is no longer the wisdom and harvest of the adept; the adept themselves is *becoming the star*.

When this card appears in a magical reading it tells of new seeds that are starting to grow. Those seeds will blossom into fate paths or events that will take the magician to the next step in their magical development. It is a sign in the darkness that the best days are still to come. By not giving in, the magician will develop into a better, more evolved version of themselves.

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<sup>1</sup>Book of the Dead ch. 59 (see Quirke 2013, p. 145).

### 3. MAJOR ARCANA CARD MEANINGS

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To me belongs yesterday, I know tomorrow.

*What does it mean?*

As for yesterday, that is Osiris. As for tomorrow, that is Re on that day in which the foes of the Lord of All were destroyed and his son Horus was made to rule. *Otherwise said:* That is the day of the ‘We-remain’ festival, when the burial of Osiris was ordered by his father Re.

— Book of the Dead ch. 17.<sup>1</sup>

And so they become clothed in Gold;  
Their faces in the stars,  
Their feet in the waters,  
And their minds cast to the road ahead.

— Josephine McCarthy.<sup>2</sup>

## *18 Moon*

### KEY WORDS

fantasy, hidden, creative, tides, delusions, madness, hormones, stealth.

The Moon is a card of many faces. Just as the moon can present as a full, new, or crescent moon, so its meanings can ebb and flow in their strength and meaning. The Moon card appears when someone is not truly seeing what is there. They see in ‘moonlight’: in shadows and without clarity. This can mean anything from self-delusion and self-ignorance, to something literally being ‘hard to see.’ For example if you are hiding from danger for some reason, and you ask the cards if you are hidden enough and the Moon card appears, then it is saying “yes, you are unseen, you are in the shadows, in the mists.”

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<sup>1</sup>Faulkner 1985 [1972], p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Sheppard and McCarthy 2017, p. 296.