

# **Tarot of the Bellydancers**

## **Suggested method of use and interpretations**

### **Part I**

#### **Preface**

There has been so much written on the tarot and its usage, that I was reluctant at first to add to the hodgepodge of information out there. However, in the case that any of you are new to this material or simply want to know what we've to say on the subject, here goes.

We won't bore you with a long preface. My wife and myself have been studying the tarot most of our lives, and I'm rapidly approaching the half a century mark. I've read everything on the subject from the old writers like Papus to modern folks like Gray. We've used the tarot in various fashions, most of our adult lives as well. Read this booklet and judge for yourself. However, at least if you really want to get a grasp on this subject, this pamphlet isn't going to do it, nor will any single book.

#### **Overview**

What is the tarot? There's a loaded question. It's not unlike the blind men feeling the elephant, their various descriptions of the elephant will depend on what part they touch. Your own understanding of the tarot will be much the same. Jung spoke of archetypes, a member of the Golden Dawn, will go on about the path of the fool and the Cabala (my own easy spelling, deal with it), and a fortune teller might speak of the sea of possibilities. They are all right, and there's so much more. Possibilities that no one's considered. Remember, when you don't know what something's for, but you have it, you might use it for any purpose.

The tarot as it occurs in all of its varieties today, is a very big set of symbols. These can either take the form of pictures, actual symbols themselves, or any combination thereof. We'll talk about their history later, as it relates to how they got this way, but as a simplification to this text, we're only going to consider their use as applied to the divination of the future. This is a nice anchor point for any of you who wish to study this further.

Here's our two cents on divination. Both of us are scientists in our other lives, and as such, we tend to look towards logic and reason rather than any supernatural cause to things.

In the case of the tarot, even extreme familiarity and a lifetime of study will not replace planning and study of the matter at hand. In other words the tarot shouldn't be used instead of common sense in making decisions about the future. The tarot would be a poor tool to use for determining load bearing capacities of a bridge. No one in their right mind would consider doing this, but how many times have you reached the juncture of some

critical path in your life only to say, we could have done just as well with a Ouija board. That's where the tarot can be very useful, in situations, where in spite of all planning and thought given to a matter, no clear decision can be made.

Now I know what you're thinking. How as a scientist can I possibly consider this? Look at it this way. Life seems to be a set of recurring themes in many of its aspects. Suppose we take a set of archetypal symbols, and with repeated use, correlate these symbols to situations within our lives. We can begin to build a (at least mental) database of these correlations. The randomness of the shuffling of the cards would then seem to connect us somehow to the randomness of the universe. Using them in this fashion, the correlations can be quite revealing. The key here is using them personally and repeatedly. Using the tarot only occasionally and without much thought, is about as effective a tool as the magic eight ball. (Only in the case of the latter, it's much easier, and you have the chance of the ask me again later triangle, and isn't that nice when you didn't really want to know the answer anyway.)

## **History**

I'm going to keep this section short as well, simply because it's way too large of a subject to cover in a booklet. The overview I'm going to present here will cover just what can actually be proved by historical records. Anything else is just pure conjecture.

The earliest surviving examples of the tarot date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and come from Italy. They were probably introduced there from playing cards brought by Islamic expeditionary forces of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. (This occurred in the late 1300's) While some authors will tell you that some of the symbols on tarot decks speak to earlier eras, this cannot be proven.

The earliest written extant written records mention that the cards were used to play a game called Tarocchi (or Tronfi depending on language derivation,) which is similar to bridge. If you'd like to see what one of the earliest surviving tarot decks looked like, click the following link to Aeclectic tarot.

<http://www.aeclectic.net/tarot/cards/visconti/>

This is a restoration of the Visconti-Sforza deck. Note that there is no numbering or titles, but much of the symbolism present today is there. Did the cards have a purpose other than gaming, we simply can't say as there are no surviving records to that effect.

The first recorded instance (at least that I'm aware of) of the cards being associated in any way with the occult, is from a Venetian trial in 1589. After this, there is no connection with the cards and their use for magic or divination until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1781 *Le Monde Primitif* (The Primitive World) is published by Court de Gebelin and the Comte de Mellet. This is the first recorded connection between the tarot and occult practices such as divination. The first connection between the Cabala and the tarot is also

made. Gebelin makes claims the cards are of secret Egyptian origins. (To my knowledge no one has ever proved that.)

In the 1850's the French occultist Eliphas Levi (who's real name was Alphonse Louis Constant) did more than anyone else to fix the connections between the Cabala and the tarot. He had a huge impact on the members of the Golden dawn. His magnum opus *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, is a must read for any student of the tarot. It's been translated into English and since it's in the public domain, it's available for free on the internet. (The late Benjamin Rowes' version is available here.)

<http://www.hermetic.com/browe-archive/classics.htm>

along with many other "classics" of the occult.

In 1887 the Order of the Golden Dawn was founded by William Wynn Wescott and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers. (My favorite description of Mathers lists him as unemployed and unemployable) Their membership included William Butler Yeats and of course Aleister Crowley. These folks did more than anyone to bring the tarot to the state it is in now. One of their members, Arthur Edward Waite, went on to supposedly commission the so-called the Rider Waite deck, which is probably the most recognized tarot in the world. It should be noted here, that in an interview with Stuart Kaplan (Author of the Encyclopedia of Tarot) he describes a letter from a New York Librarian that seems to imply Waite was less influential than presumed in creating this deck. Like lots of authors, musicians, and artists throughout history, Pamela Cole Smith (the actual artist who drew the Rider Waite deck) died without making any money on what would be the world's most popular deck.

That pretty much brings us up to today. Like I said it would be a brief history. All of this information can be studied readily from the internet. I recommend that if you're going to study the tarot, read all you can, and form your own opinion. While that seems to be stating the obvious, I cannot stress this enough. It's easy to get complacent with the things we do in life, especially as modern life has become so busy. However, as I stated before, this little booklet will not make you master of this subject nor will any single work. This is more like a signpost to point you in the right direction.

## **Divinatory Use**

The method I'm going to suggest for laying out the tarot cards is the so-called Celtic Cross Method. It uses ten cards for the layout with an eleventh card (called the significator) representing the querant or the question of the matter. (To you students of the Cabala this ten/eleven relationship suggests the ten sephirot on the tree of life with the significator representing the so-called hidden sphere Daath.) To those of you who have no knowledge of the Cabala, don't worry it's not necessary for you to understand this.

Ok so let's get to the nuts and bolts of the Celtic Cross.

1. The significator: Choose a card from your deck (or have the querent choose if you're doing a reading for someone else) that either represents you or the question. It doesn't matter either way will work.

2. The Question: Formulate a question in your mind, if you're doing a reading for someone else, then have them do so. Try hard as you can (albeit somewhat difficult at times) to have no expectations as to the outcome of your question. I've seen where some authors suggest that for this method that the question be general. I say it doesn't matter, it can be as general or specific as you like, the important thing is that you're familiar with your cards. Don't do readings, unless you have to, if you're upset or not able focus due to issues or circumstances in your life.

3. The mix: Ok here comes that randomness I was alluding to earlier. While letting your question roll around in your mind, shuffle the cards. (Do not include the card you have chosen for the significator) Try to do this as long as you can hold the question in your mind, say for at least a minute or two. Then cut the cards three times to the left, restack them and take the cards off one at a time from the top of the deck.

Note: We don't use reversed meanings with our cards. (Upside down) Lots of people do, but this booklet, won't have meanings for reverses cards. It's always been our opinion, that there's plenty of good and bad within the cards, and reversed meanings aren't needed. It's easy to shuffle the deck where the cards don't become reversed, but if they do, don't concern yourself with that, read them as they are. If you're used to using reversed meanings, then use whatever you're comfortable with.

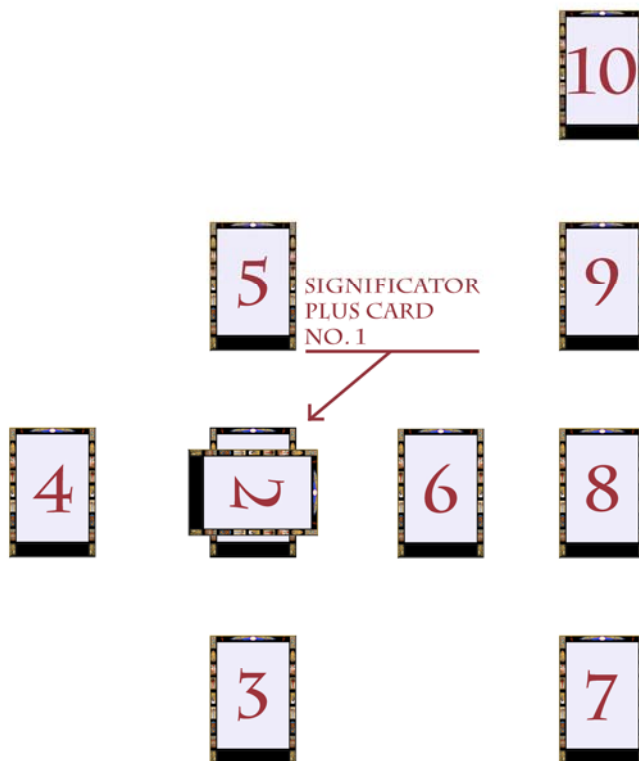
4. The layout: (See Figure 1.)

First lay the significator in the center of the table and start laying out the cards as shown below using figure 1. as a guide.

1. This covers you: Lay the first card, face up, on the significator. This card represents the general atmosphere of the question, and the influences at work around it.
2. This crosses you: This card is laid across the card covering the significator and represents what the opposing forces may be, for good or evil.
3. This is beneath you: Lay this card below the central cross formed by the other cards per fig.1 This card represents the basis of the question, something already a part of the querents' experience in the past.
4. This is behind you: Lay this card to the left of the central cross. This card shows past influence that is just fading away.
5. This crowns you: Lay this card above the central cross. This card represents something that may happen in the future.

6. This is before you: Lay this card to the right of the central cross. This card shows things that are likely to come to pass. (I've always taken the card before this to represent a more mutable future and this one to be less mutable, but more on that later.)

**Fig 1.**



7. This is what you fear: Lay this card out by starting a column to the right of the cross and on the level of card 3. (as per figure 1.) This is, well your fear about the question. If there was one place I agree with all the Jungians, it's this card. Quite

often what we fear subconsciously, is very different from apparent anxieties we have. (Again, more on this later)

8. This is what your family thinks: Lay this card above number seven, in the newly formed column to the right of the cross. This card represents the family or environment of the querent.
9. This is what you hope: This represents the best hope or ideal situation in the matter. Lay it above card 8 in the same row. (It's actually the Jungian twin of the number seven or fears card, you'll see)
10. This is the final outcome: This card tells the final outcome of the question and should include the meanings of all the other cards as they relate to it.

5. The interpretation: Here's where we were going to get to the divination part. We'll start with card one, and using their interpretations, form a little story with our layout. In other words, using the interpretations from the next section (or from any source you prefer) go from card one to ten and see how their structural layout relates to the question. Probably the best way for you to understand this is with a little imaginary reading, so we'll do that.

Bob Dobertson has worked at the Highland widget factory as senior staff analyst for thirty seven years. Highland Widget, while a stodgy bunch, does provide security for Bob and his family. Recently there has been a financial shakeup at Highland Widget, and some senior staff members are being forced into early retirement. Bob cannot through any source he knows of, find out if his name's going to be on the retirement list. Bob has also been offered a position, of greater stature, with Upncoming Widget. Now Bob has to take this new position right away, or someone else will get it, as Upncoming Widget has to fill this slot. If Bob chooses the new position, he'll lose the partial retirement he'd have with HW. If Bob stays with HW, early retirement at a much reduced rate, is likely and then the market will be so flooded with people who have his skill set, that job placement will be a nightmare at best. Now our pal Bob is no fool, he's done all his homework on learning about UW and their potential for growth. He's got thirty seven years in after all, so he knows his way around the industry. Much to his chagrin though, and as in the case of his retirement, no clear decision can be made. Bobs exhausted every resource available to him.

Bob leaves the office at six-thirty on an autumn evening, walking towards his Manhattan home where his wife and family wait for him. (Bob and Nancy had their children later in life, so double's the pressure on him.) Bobs necktie seems to constrict Bob's throat tighter than normal, and he mutters to himself that at least he's glad he doesn't live in Japan where poor business decisions can still end in ritual Seppuku. It's well past dark as the demons of financial future whirl in his brain. Bob then sees a light coming from a side

street he's never noticed before. The unusual neon sign says Tarot and another word that he can't quite make out.

Bob, and he never remembers exactly why he does this, goes in to the shop. It's a small shop, dimly lit, with a few bizarre illustrations on the wall. In the center there's a pleasant looking red-haired woman in her late thirties, seated behind a green felt table. There's only one other chair in the place, opposite the woman. She motions him to sit down, and it seems so refreshing after his recent musings, that he does so. She then tells him that for a mere twenty dollars she'll tell him his past, present, and future. Now let me get this straight folks, our Bob is not the kind of guy who would normally spend twenty bucks on such a venture. No, our Bob is the ultimate dependable family guy, who doesn't drink, not only never inhaled, but never did it in the first place, and could run for a Republican seat if he had more personality.

Bob forks over the twenty, and the woman begins to shuffle a large pack of cards with images of bellydancers and strange symbols on them. She then, in a much practiced motion, fans the cards in front of Bob and tells him to choose a card that he feels some connection to, as it will represent him in her reading. Bob looks at the cards, thirty seven years of widgets have not prepared him for anything like this, but after a moment or two he settles on the King of Pentacles. The man in the cards image reminds him of his brother (the family black sheep) who's a graphic artist in Pacoima.

The woman then gathers all the cards, except for the King of Pentacles, and begins to shuffle the deck again. She asks Bob, to think of a question, firmly in his mind, but not to speak it aloud. Bob has no trouble doing this, since there is only one question on his mind anyway. She shuffles the cards and then hands the cards to Bob, and tells him to cut them three times to the left. He's not exactly sure what she means by this, but he does what he thinks is right, and she seems to smile approvingly. She then takes the cards and begins to lay them out while speaking a series of small statements.

"This covers you", she says, and lays a card face up on his king. This crosses you she says and lays the next card across the pile formed by the previous two. She continues doing this until ten cards are laid out in the pattern of a cross, surrounded by a diamond, with a vertical line of cards going up to the right of the cross and diamond.

She picks up the first card that she'd laid out. It is an image of two women in costumes beneath an arch. One is showing a polished globe to the other, who appears not to show on her face, whether or not she likes the globe. "The three of pentacles" the red-haired woman says. "A business question, I love a challenge." She further adds. Bob thinks to himself that it is no stretch to imagine a guy in a two thousand dollar suit, near Manhattan, as having a business question. She then picks up the second card, which was laid across the other two cards, in the center of the table. "This crosses you." she says. The card shows two women, one looking longingly at the other, while the other looks at what appears to be an angelic figure looking down on them.

"The lovers" the red-haired woman says. This upsets Bob as the idea of women lovers causes him to have feelings he believes he should not have. The red-haired woman smiles

at his obvious discomfort, and says. "Do not worry, in the case of your question this implies that you have a decision to make. Bob again thinks that in modern times this is not a real stretch to image that a businessman has an important decision to make. The woman adds that with the other cards in the reading that the decision is between what is unknown and that which is familiar. Bob feels while this hits a little closer to home, that such a statement could be generally inferred.

Next she picks up the card underneath the cross formed by the previous cards and says, "This is beneath you." The card has an image of a man and wife holding each other with their arms outstretched, facing a pretty country home, while their children dance in the foreground. "The ten of cups," she says. It is then when Bob notices that in the card there are ten floating cuplike drums. She tells him that the card represents stability and achieved goals. She further adds that this is now in the past, and that in the current state of things, this stability is passing away.

Now at this point Bob would like to chalk these things up to coincidence, but the reading seems to be hitting closer to home. She picks up the next card, located to the left of the central cross and says, "This is behind you." The card shows an image of a woman stretched out on a field, with nine swords floating in the air behind her, all under a night sky. The woman tells him that this card represents things that are just passing away in his life. She tells him it means that there has been a recent shakeup in his normally stable world, one that he may not be able to recover from.

She then picks up the card above the cross and says, "This crowns you." The card has an image of a hand holding a golden disk with a pentagram in its palm. She tells him that this card represents a possible future, and that implies a new beginning, one with good monetary results.

The next card she selects is the one to the right of the central cross. She tells him that this is before you and explains that it is something that will come to pass. It is an image of five dancers fighting with canes and wands. She tells him that it's the five of wands, and related to his question it shows struggle with his job condition, but it will only be a small struggle if he makes the right choices.

She now begins to draw cards from the column of cards to the right of the other cards. The first one she selects is at the bottom of the column. "This is what you fear" she says. The card selected shows a dancer stretched out on a beach, with ten swords piercing her body. She tells him that the card implies absolute ruin.

She goes on to draw cards that show what his family thinks and what he hopes. We won't go into these as they show that Bob's family thinks the best of him, and that he hopes for the best outcome. It's when she draws the final card on top that things get a little heavy for Bob. The last card she draws, she states, is the final outcome of the matter. It is a tower, perhaps from some old castle, being struck by lightning, with fire coming out of its windows.

In a gesture that Bob finds mildly disturbing she takes his hand and says, “I want you to understand that no future is ever set in stone, they are completely mutable.” “This card is very bad sir, it also shows absolute ruin, of the type where we construct lofty ideals with no thought to their consequences.” “I also see by the other cards that there can be a really good outcome to this if the proper choice is made.” “If there is a new position or situation coming in your life, take it, don’t fear to change.” Bob tells her that there is, such a situation in his life, but he isn’t convinced that he should make life decisions based on some cards.

Bob’s head begins to spin with all that he has heard and seen. He flees the shop for the safety of night and the familiar call of home.

Upon returning home Bob tells his wife that he believes he’s come to the right decision for them. (All this gypsy stuff is just too much for our stodgy hero.) He’s decided that since he’s got thirty seven years in with Highland Widgets, he’s going to stick it out, he’s been a faithful employee low these many years, and certainly he’ll be kept on. Bobs wife tells him that she’s proud of him, and sticking with what they know, seems right to her as well.

The next week Bob is called into the CEO’s office and told unceremoniously that he is to be laid off, with minimal retirement. Bob’s heart jumps up in his throat, he can’t believe what he’s hearing. He cleans out his desk of thirty seven years, and walks out the door for the last time. He heads home and puts in a call to Upncoming widgets, but his friend in human resources, tells Bob that they no longer have anything available, as they’ve scooped up everyone from HW’s shakeup.

A year later Bob and his wife are living in New Jersey, where Bob’s wife has taken a job as a real estate agent, and Bob is still unemployed. Is there a moral to this story? No there isn’t. Sure it might be different if he had listened to the red-haired woman, but Bob wasn’t capable of such a leap of faith. After all he’s made widgets for thirty seven years. Nope this little tale is just an example of how to read the cards. It’ll still take much experience on your part to interpret the cards to different situations, and the only way to get there is through a lot of practice.

### **(Authors Note)**

The section that follows will contain images of the cards along with their respective meanings. Please be aware that these are our interpretations. We feel that while they are applicable to us, you’ll want to read other peoples interpretations as well. After that you’ll want to take a good look at the cards and ask yourself what they really mean to you. You should then see how things have turned out from readings that you’ve done. Combining these things is the only way to get the most out of the cards. (Yeah, you may want to right some of this down as you go.)