

## Ace of Wands

A divine hand, reaching from a cloud, holds an upright branch or wand from which leaves grow.

An Ace often suggests a new beginning, opportunities opening up, a new sense of understanding, a 'light-bulb moment'. The Ace of Wands is like drinking a double espresso while eating a large chocolate brownie – it is a feeling of 'get-up-and-go'.

### Symbolism:

- The beautiful **landscape** has a river, trees and a castle atop a high hill, suggesting that when this Ace is grounded it has the **potential** to grow into something amazing.
- This is **Fire** energy in its purest, most primal form. Each of the Aces is the seed for its suit; the Ace of Wands contains the **hope** of all the other Wands cards.
- The Ace of Wands can suggest the **birth** or gestation of a baby or a new venture, especially when paired with The Empress, the 10 or Queen of Cups, or the Queen of Pentacles.
- The Ace of Wands is **inspiration, creation**, a burst of explosive **energy** that will push you out of any inertia or fear. It is **illumination**, as light is shed on the half-truths you tell yourself about life (*I am happy in my job, I like doing all the cooking, I only watch an hour of TV a night...*), matched with the energy to do something about it. It is a sudden knowing that may change your whole life, as if you now understand something that was previously hidden.

*A deep spiritual desire and opportunity for self-discovery and self-realisation.*

(Arrien)

- If you are looking for **timing** in a spread (which is a difficult thing and can only ever be an indication as I do not believe the future is fixed), then looking carefully at where the Aces have cropped up is very helpful.
- If you asked about **new starts**, or an **upturn** in your life, the Ace of Wands is a very good sign. Think new, exciting, shiny, vibrant, expansive and energetic. Look for the opportunities, realise your dreams, jump into life with both feet and have no fears. Most of all, have fun as you learn more about yourself, others, and life in general.

### **In a reading:**

- Take a chance, jump at something new.
- Find a little peace and allow yourself to 'know' what you must do.
- Optimism, bursting with energy, new ideas.
- A flash of inspiration.
- Go for it!
- Can represent sexual attraction, or anger issues. Watch out for it combined with red-flag cards in a relationship reading: perhaps the 6 of Pentacles, The Devil, or the King of Wands.
- I often associate the Ace of Wands with the crown chakra.

### **2 of Wands**

A man, finely dressed (look at his fancy boots!), looking out at a beautiful view from a low parapet.

A time of creative potential and new ideas. Can be unsettling, with a sense of impatience. Watch for inspiration, anxious anticipation, restlessness. Hope and fear in equal measure.

**Symbolism:** The potential for success is shown by:

- The amazing **landscape** the man is looking at (with water, mountains, woodland and houses).
- The combination of **red roses** (physical manifestation) and **white lilies** (spiritual connection); a key symbol from The Magician and the Ace of Pentacles. But the flowers are painted on the wall, as if they are a blueprint or a symbol, not yet manifest.
- The fact that he literally holds '**the whole world in his hands**'.

And yet... the amount of work yet to be done to ground and manifest this potential is shown by:

- The man's **stance**. Pick up something quite heavy (a plant pot would work) and head to the window. Now hold the object as he holds the earth. At the same time, try to look out of the window whilst looking over your shoulder to keep an eye on what is happening in the room behind you. Feel how the **stress** grows in your shoulders. Notice how hard it is to focus on two views at once. See how long you can stay in this position, and notice how it affects your body and mind. It's almost as if he is looking hopefully to the future, whilst keeping half an eye anxiously on the past.
- The **wands**. Wands need to be grounded, to allow them to grow and the energy to flow, think of them as shoots- they need the earth, water, and sun to grow. Neither wand is grounded. One is on the wall, held firmly. The other (to the right) is bolted to the wall. If wands can be inspiration, this man is determined to keep a firm grip on his. His **anxiety** means he will hold on tight; the problem is, the harder you try to connect with your intuition, the further away it slips. There is a sense of not wanting to move forward until there is total certainty, and that rarely (if ever) happens in life. Sometimes trust can be more important than determination. This can be a card of success, but not one of contentment. This is someone who has planned, worked, strived and committed to reach his goal, only to find that there is no contentment in his success: all the fun was in the journey! He's drawn to look for new possibilities, a new way forward.
- **Duality** is represented by the two wands (reflecting the two pillars throughout the Tarot), and the red roses paired with the white lilies. This is a card of genuine potential, but (don't you just hate it when there is a 'but'?) you haven't committed yet. As long as you are caught in the hope and fear *before* you commit, the fear keeps growing. Before you **commit** to anything – a relationship, a job, a holiday, even a day out – you can see every potential problem building up. As soon as you take that step forward, you are working through issues as you need to, instead of letting the thought of them overwhelm you.
- Most often in a reading the 2 of Wands signifies the **potential for success** – but you need to just get on with it! There is a lot of potential in this card; Waite describes it as 'surprise, wonder, enchantment, trouble and fear'. A bit like life, really, as long as we have the courage to experience it.

**In a reading:**

- You need to make a choice, commit to a decision. Step out of your comfort zone today and just get on with it.
- Relax and trust; sometimes things take a while to happen.
- Anxious anticipation. A positive, if anxious, card.

*I have been in the place of the 2 of Wands so many times. Let me describe exactly how it feels; I bet you recognise it too. In fact, it's exactly how I feel right now as I add the narrative to and edit this book.*

*When I consider how the book might be received (like the man as he looks out at the vista), I am hopeful. I know I have taught a lot of students who have found my workshops helpful, and that my blogs and videos have been generally well received. So I can look to the book being published with some level of hope and excitement. But (like the red roses and white lilies, representing creation, that are only painted on the wall) the book is not completed yet; at the moment it is a hope, a plan; untested, as it were. I have sent sections to various beta readers, but no one has read the whole book, experienced the complete journey, as I am still writing it.*

*What I really feel, more than anything, is nervous anticipation. I would love a guarantee that this book will be well received, and that sales will mean it has been worth my investment in time and money to write it (the wand bolted to the wall). I could easily get distracted by sending the book to more and more beta readers, editing and adjusting to the point where I lose the focus to actually publish it! (The man staying in his comfort zone behind his wall.) Yet writing the book, much as I am enjoying it, is also a great strain on me. I must still do readings for a certain number of hours a day, and I do want to spend time with my children too. So the process needs to be completed to relieve the strain on me (indicated by the man's position and how he holds the world – try it and see!).*

*The 2 of Wands: hopeful but anxious in equal measure...*

### **3 of Wands**

A well-dressed man stands on top of a hill, looking out over the landscape. He has a wand at either side of him, one of them slightly behind him. The sky and the water are a deep gold colour.

You are exactly where you are meant to be. Have faith in yourself, and all your hard work in getting here. Things are going well.

### Symbolism:

- Just pause for a moment to look at the **colours**. Whichever Rider–Waite deck you are working with, this card has a real glow to it. Yellow, orange, red, a splash of green – the 3 of Wands is colourful, **optimistic**, cheerful. And our man stands firmly on top of the **viewpoint**. I often think of this card as ‘shining bright’. When we feel secure in ourselves, whether at work, in relationships, or simply in life, there is confidence and a glow of contentment.
- Take a look at his **stance**. Feet placed firmly on the ground, there is a relaxed **calm** about him. This is a position that can be held for a long time. He has total **focus** on the view in front of him, absorbed in his thoughts, with no lingering fears of what is behind him (unlike the 2 of Wands).
- The **wands** (intuition) are firmly grounded and upright. Notice how the man is so **comfortable** with his intuition that he has turned his back on his wands, and us. If something was wrong, he would know; he doesn’t need to keep a check. Yet he remains connected to his intuition, his hand resting on a wand.
- The **ships** are clearly part of his plan: ‘his ship is coming in’. Let’s pause and think about this. We have no idea if his ships are coming in or going out. Whichever it is, our man seems completely confident. Perhaps if his ships are going out, he is confident because he knows they are well built, well crewed, and have accurate maps on board.
- This is luck in its truest form; he trusts his intuition but works hard to make the luck happen as well. They say, ‘God moves mountains’ and our man believes this, but he also brings a shovel to make very sure the mountain is moved. This can be called **hopeful expectation**. Here is someone who is confident that his plans will work. If you’ve ever read books about the power of positive thought, this card is practising ‘active waiting’; waiting with a hopeful heart because you know you have put your heart, mind and soul into the plan, then worked damn hard to manifest it too.
- If wands represent our energies and enthusiasm, this card has **three** (the number of birth and creativity), all firmly grounded. Wands can represent our intuition; this card

shows someone who trusts his own intuition. It is important in life to find moments of calm and peace to be able to hear our intuition/higher guidance. Working with the Tarot is an excellent way to do this!

- This is a card of **manifestation**, often called ‘the birth of a new enterprise’. There is a sense of cooperation and harmony here; one of satisfaction that the challenge has been enjoyable and the results were what you hoped for.
- All **four elements** are clearly represented: the calm, bountiful water; the fire of Wands; the ground under his feet; and, as he is standing at a high point, he’s breathing the freshest air.
- This card illustrates the power of **positive thought**:

*Your subconscious mind works twenty-four hours a day and makes provision for your benefit, pouring all the fruit of your habitual thinking into your lap.*

(Joseph Murphy)

- You may have noticed I love this card – there is a beauty in the colour, the composition, and the feel of the whole image. I often find it tucked away in a difficult reading, reminding a client that after the storm, life will feel a whole lot better. It is one of the very few cards to which **I cannot see a negative side**.

### **In a reading:**

- Pause and appreciate just how much you have achieved through hard work and careful planning.
- Things will come together; have hope.
- Things are going well – hopeful anticipation.
- Have confidence in yourself. Be positive. Be bold!
- I often think of this card as a ‘lighthouse’; just shine bright, be you, and trust that everything is working out well.

### **4 of Wands**

Four wands stand in the centre of the card, with wreaths of flowers joining them at their tops to create a bower.

Enjoy! A sense of contentment, trust, hope and happiness. A happy home. Respite after a difficult or busy time.

### **Symbolism:**

- In the background a **castle** can be seen, people seem to **dance**, and there is a **bridge**. It is the same bridge as we see in the 5 of Cups, the card of grief and loss. Life is a pattern of **joy** and sadness. We need to live each moment and appreciate the joy when it comes.
- This is a card of **rest** and **celebration** after the hard work is done. There is a deep sense of contentment, thanksgiving and completion. The 4 of Wands can indicate parties, social gatherings, and holidays. Think hospitality, generosity, and enjoying and sharing the good times. There is a feeling of a ‘harvest home’ celebration; of a party and abundance. I can imagine that the people are preparing for a party, a gathering to celebrate the harvest. Do you take the time to celebrate your wins in life? A small gathering to celebrate good news; a fancy bottle of wine shared with an old friend? It is important to weave celebrations into our life, no matter how small.
- This card reflects **group cooperation** through the number of people present, the castle in the background, and the cooperation that would be needed to build and decorate the canopy.
- The 4 of Wands is a card of **trust** and **hope**. Trust in your God, trust in those you love, and most of all, trust in yourself. Many of our restrictions come from fear-based decisions, or thinking that we are not good enough; that we can’t take the risk because something is bound to go wrong. When we live in trust, suddenly we are free to follow our heart and inspiration without fear reining us in.
- The four-poster **canopy** (sukkah) is a reflection of Jewish tradition. Jewish priests would sleep under a sukkah at holy times, demonstrating their complete trust in God.

*The true sukkot are not the ones we build ‘out there’ of branches and fruits, but the sukkot we make of ourselves.*

(Rabbi Ted Falcon)

- The only negative side to this card is if you **indulge** yourself in rest and celebration for too long. It could easily develop into a drunken party, or a long, lazy, sunny afternoon when your senses are too dulled to do anything else. Roll on the good times, but it is in the challenges of life that we grow as people. The bridge reminds us that the 4 of Wands is a great place to be, but we must recognise when it is time to face the challenges of life again.

### **In a reading:**

- This is a card of celebration, whether it is small and more to cheer you up, or a big step forward. Celebration is good for the mindset.
- Don't overindulge or descend into laziness, and don't allow a period of celebration and rest to roll on too long!
- A happy home, joy, celebration and trust.
- Take the time to enjoy life and celebrate the good things.
- A positive card in anything to do with home, family or relationships.

*I have been humbled to counsel people through the most difficult of times using Tarot. The bridge that links the 4 of Wands (joy) and the 5 of Cups (grief) reflects what I have learnt from my clients. A heart can hold both joy and grief in the same moment.*

### **5 of Wands**

Five brightly dressed individuals, each with a wand, appear at first glance to be fighting. Look more closely at their faces and hand positions. Are they really fighting? Or dancing, playing, or building?

You may experience debate, competition or arguments. Your mind is feeling overcrowded and it is difficult to hear your own inspiration.

### **Symbolism:**

- This card is about staying grounded and centred, but also flexible and allowing yourself to adapt as needed. This is a **high-energy** card; some people love it! Do you enjoy sparring, power plays, or lively debate? Do you see challenges as opportunities,



and debates as a chance to further clarify your own understanding? There are times when a little **creative competition** drives us to achieve more together (think of the Olympics), but this card is verging on the **chaotic**. Don't overload yourself. If debates turn to arguments, try to be diplomatic, or just take a step back – don't get sucked into the confusion.

- Are they dancing, having a mock battle, really fighting, or working together? Different days may give different answers, but their faces and body language are **ambiguous** – one wrong move, and someone could get whacked.
- Those **wands** could just as easily reflect your internal workings as people around you. When life gets busy our psyche becomes chaotic and it is hard to distinguish our 'true voice' from our internalised hopes and fears. With so many voices shouting in our head, how can we make a sound decision? At this time, it is essential to ground yourself, find some quiet time and clear the internal clutter until you can hear yourself think again.
- This is a simple card: **five** people, five wands, almost working together, yet on the verge of chaos. If this sounds like your mind, it's time to do something about it. Sometimes with the 5 of Wands there is a feeling of oppression; of being unable to see a way out, **overwhelmed** by life's choices and complexities. There could even be an element of **sabotage** in this card: that someone is maliciously trying to disrupt your life, or perhaps that someone is you, and this card is highlighting self-sabotage. Meditation and mediation are the best ways forward: with your intuition this cluttered it will be difficult to see things in perspective. I advise you to seek the counsel of a good friend, co-worker or professional (Tarot readers are good at this!).
- Sometimes when I look at this card, the people just seem to be **crowding** together to confuse me, physically blocking my path forward.

### **In a reading:**

- If things seem a little muddled, sort out your desk, write a list and get everything in order.
- Don't get drawn into petty arguments; this card may be warning you to step away from the dramas and arguments in your life.
- Debate, discussion, competition and wrangling.

- See the opportunities in the challenges.
- Can point to anger issues, or an emotional overreaction.
- Stay grounded, keep flexible, and don't make important decisions with this card around.

*I would say this is the one card that most represents my life right now: just about holding the chaos together!*

*I want to pause and say to every single parent out there, "By God, it's a tough job, and no one can ever say that loud enough." As I juggle four home-educated children, running my business, and running a home, this picture is exactly what my mind looks like most of the time. Nothing quite fits in my day: look carefully at the card – to the right, the scene appears to continue outside of our view.*

*It is hard to adjust from married family life and being a housewife to being a single mum and main wage earner. Each Tarot card represents a stage, an experience, something we are moving through. I try to feel the frustration, the overwhelm, sometimes sadness, and sometimes anger. It is a part of my journey; we all go through difficult times, and I know this too shall pass.*

## **6 of Wands**

A leader rides a white horse. He wears a laurel wreath for victory and holds another aloft on the end of a wand. Behind him others can be seen on foot, also holding wands aloft.

The surest way to success in love, life or work is to have faith in yourself. Victory and a 'yes' to any question asked of the cards.

### **Symbolism:**

- This is the card of **victory**, triumph and **leadership**. If you asked a question, the answer is likely to be yes. This card suggests that not only will you be successful, your success will be recognised and will inspire others. There is a feeling of the triumphant pageant in this card. Worldly success, public recognition – this is a successful person recognised by his peers. It makes me wonder if he is actually riding off to battle, and all that pomp is not to celebrate success, but to build confidence in

him and his soldiers. This is ‘dress to impress’, or as I like to say, ‘fake it till you make it’.

- As usual, the card can be read to reflect the internal state as well. In this case it means personal **self-mastery**; overcoming your fears and self-limiting thoughts and behaviours, having the discipline to get the job done, or keeping your thoughts positive, ordered and focused so you create your own success. Take a look back at the 3 of Wands. There are many commonalities between the two cards: both show confidence and bold colours, and illustrate self-belief and personal mastery. If the mind is a chariot drawn by a black and a white horse, as Plato suggested (take a look at The Chariot card), then this man has harnessed his hopes, overcome his fears, and driven to victory.
- Of course, there’s usually a downside. If something looks too good to be true, it probably is. With this card you have to **balance** your immensely focused will, your drive to succeed, with the needs of others. Sometimes the 6 of Wands indicates that you have ‘trodden on the needs of others’ to win your victory. (Conversely, this could apply to someone in your life.) Take a look at the man’s **horse**. What is hidden underneath – is it really a horse, or the backs of his peers that he rides upon? Or a mummies’ (pantomime) horse, suggesting that his success is all an illusion? Cloth covers the tail and front legs; in fact we can see no part of the body of the horse, and its face does not have the same detail as the other horses in this deck. The Knights’ horses really portray emotion. Is this horse lacking in emotion because it is a fake horse? When we compare the 6 of Wands with the other horses in this deck, it is clear that the artist knew how to paint horses! Also look at the faces of the man’s **followers** – are they part of his success, or just the hard work behind it?
- Most often in a reading this card suggests that success is coming – you just have to build your **confidence**; ‘fake it till you make it’. This is a card of acting as if you are successful, dressing to improve confidence, and walking with a bit of a swagger. But watch out – as with other cards that suggest overconfidence (perhaps the Knights of Wands or Swords), or those that can suggest deception (e.g. the Knight of Cups, The Magician, the 7 of Swords, or The Moon), this card can indicate someone who is all swagger and no substance.

**In a reading:**

- Confidence is key. Walk tall and fake confidence, just for today.
- Your goal may be important, but that does not justify ‘any means’.
- Victory and success.
- When you act with confidence you are a magnet for success.
- If someone, or an offer, seems too good to be true, then this card is a warning that it probably is too good to be true!

*I clearly remember my biggest 6 of Wands moment. It was the day I launched my ‘proper’ Tarot course. I’d advertised heavily, rented a lovely venue in Lewes, and carefully written my notes on the court cards. I only had two confirmed bookings, but had hopes of more people on the day.*

*An hour before we were due to start, I was in my car, on the verge of a panic attack, with a good friend texting every few minutes to ask if I had managed to get out of the car yet. Then, just in the nick of time, I rushed into the venue. I focused only on practicalities: setting up the tables, arranging the Tarot decks and my notes, redoing my make-up, and combing my hair.*

*Rachel Burge (author of The Twisted Tree and The Crooked Mask) was the first of my two students to arrive. (I remember her wearing a bright red coat and looking very glamorous.) I took a deep breath, stood as tall and straight as I could, and introduced myself. I acted as if it was just another workshop, and tried to role-play that this was how I spent much of my time. Even with the disappointment of only two students, I tried to act as if it was rather lovely to have a small group ‘for a change’. As Rachel and I became friends she was surprised to discover that it had been one of my first Tarot workshops; apparently, I came across as calm and assured!*

*Every time I step into something new – my Zoom shaman workshops being the latest venture – I go through the same experience. My nerves and anxiety overwhelm me, then it’s full 6 of Wands mode. Stand tall, act confident, believe that this is what I’ve always done. “Hello, my name is Maddy and I’m so excited to be sharing this with you today.” Confidence with me is usually faked, though my experience and my desire to do a good job are genuine.*

## **7 of Wands**

A man stands confidently on higher ground, a staff (wand) held firmly in a defensive position.

Stand tall. Be comfortable in your own uniqueness. Always be true to yourself.

### Symbolism:

- There appear to be six people attacking the man with staffs from below, though we cannot see them, and it seems a **pointless attack** as the tips of their staffs hardly reach him. Let's be clear: I love this card. This is Mr Bevis from Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, Phoebe from *Friends*, or the Greenpeace movement – someone comfortable with their own views, opinions and beliefs. Whatever quirks or idiosyncrasies they may have, they feel no need to 'fit in'. If it comes to it, they will stand up, or even fight, for what they truly believe in, regardless of the odds. This man appears to be under attack by many people, yet by virtue of his 'moral high ground' (i.e., being **true to himself**) and his readiness to defend himself with commitment and skill (that's a great defensive pose), I have no doubt he will fight off the attack.
- As for life's little **eccentricities**, note that he is wearing one boot and one shoe. This is a direct reference to Petruchio from *The Taming of the Shrew*. He tried to tame poor Kate, but in the end, they were both determined individuals who fell in love because they were well matched. Just be yourself, and life will sort itself out around you.
- This is a card of **overcoming obstacles**. You have the strength, persistence and foresight to deal with any problems that arise. Follow your instinct and do the 'right thing', whatever the odds may seem like.
- Rather than sticks, think of the six lower wands as a cacophony of **minor problems** and 'you really should's'. This man has the clear advantage: he is standing confidently, has a good vantage point, and is firmly holding one wand – his self-belief.

I'd like to say that there is no bad side to this card (I'm so fond of it personally), but it can be a warning against indecision. If you start to believe in everyone else's opinions then anxiety and perhaps embarrassment will override your strength and vigour. If this card offers a warning, it is against indecision and uncertainty. If the man had sat and contemplated his decisions, he would not be in the strong position he is now. Sometimes decisive action is

what saves the day. I have often seen this card as gentle encouragement: just be yourself and things will work out. In a relationship reading it can represent stubbornness and a difficulty in compromising; look for well-matched cards suggesting that both people are happy in the relationship, and be wary of the 7 of Wands implying an independent spirit that is not appreciated by a partner!

### **In a reading:**

- Believe in yourself.
- Stick to your intentions.
- Keep on top of things now, and life will be far easier.
- Don't engage in petty quarrels.
- Life may seem complicated: keep grounded and try and keep one step ahead.

### **8 of Wands**

Eight wands fall through the sky, all parallel. No people can be seen. The landscape behind has green fields, a river, hills, trees, and a dwelling.

A burst of energy, enthusiasm, inspiration. Things moving. Ideas, however good, still need action and attention to detail to manifest into reality, though. Synchronicity: things are happening at the right time and for the right reason. Travel, holidays and messages.

### **Symbolism:**

- This is a card of high energy, focused organisation, and getting things done. If you have hopes and plans, expect things to happen swiftly in the way you hope. Think of the **wands** as hopes and intentions; maybe they are still in your mind, maybe you've started to work towards manifesting them, but they are all heading to the ground to be realised. Take a look at the ground; there's **water** to nourish your hopes, a **hill** to give you perspective, and a **building** of some sort to give a concrete reality to your hopes manifesting.
- The 8 of Wands often reflects when things are moving quickly, and **timing** becomes really important. Usually this card indicates **synchronicity**; things happening at the right time, almost as if someone else is orchestrating them. Take a look at the other

cards in your spread. Pentacles (especially a court card) may suggest a need to rein yourself in and pay attention to the details.

- There are **no people** in the Rider–Waite 8 of Wands, suggesting that the events concerned are not directly under your control, but more likely your past thoughts, words and deeds have created the position you are in, and right now it's '**out of your hands**'.

Sometimes this card means that you are going to have a reality check; a sudden realisation of the truth. Perhaps you've been allowing someone to take advantage of you, control or dominate you, while you wait for them to change. Maybe you've been working extra hard at work, hoping to be noticed. Expect to see your life with total honesty, and with the rose-tinted glasses removed. Imagine each wand is a new understanding of yourself and your life. They will illuminate you with a bang. It will be unsettling, but it's usually better to live with authenticity rather than delusion.

Sometimes the cards are just being obvious. I read for two ladies at a fair once. They both had this card as a key card in their readings, and in both spreads it just didn't connect with the other cards. I suggested it might mean travel, and they laughed. Although the fair was in Brighton, they had met on holiday in New Zealand.

### **In a reading:**

- Things are moving quickly and, unless otherwise indicated, in a positive way.
- News, an offer, an indication of movement.
- Travel, a journey.
- The project is out of your hands now; a momentum is started, for better or worse!
- A realisation; might be good, might be painful.
- Don't micromanage; there's a lot on and it is moving fast.

*I came to my deeper understanding of this card many years ago, before these notes were written. At that time, I taught (I've always found some way to teach Tarot) in a monthly mothers' group I held; a friendship circle of mums with babies and toddlers. We would fill the kitchen table with treats for the toddlers, set out loads of toys, then sit in a circle as the children played around us. I would do a small workshop on the Tarot, then lead a*

*meditation. With three children under five, and pregnant again, this was the only way I could connect with like-minded people – and it was a lot of fun.*

*One of the ladies had offered to take me out for lunch on my birthday, and my husband had even taken the day off work to look after the children. I stood at the window, dressed up fine, and excited. A trip without babies and toddlers was very rare. My friend was running late, but she often did. Then my husband asked, “You did text her to check, right? She always forgets otherwise.” This plan had been so important to me I hadn’t thought of her not remembering. I rang her, a little panicked, and from the sounds I could hear that she was already at a café. It turned out she had forgotten, and was at the same café, but with a different friend. I scrolled through our text conversations. Almost all of them were focused around me checking that our arrangement was solid, but at least half of the times she had either forgotten, or was asking if she could drop off her daughter instead of meeting, as she had ‘complicated arrangements’. Standing at the window, it literally felt as if each of those wands was landing on my head; each one a painful realisation. Each one hurt, and left me confused as to why I hadn’t realised this earlier.*

*I let the friendship fizzle out after that, and it did so quickly. Without me to follow up and check our arrangements, nothing really happened. I always check the cards around it when the 8 of Wands turns up, especially if it appears with the Ace of Wands, or Swords cards. It really can be the one realisation that unlocks a total wake-up call.*

## **9 of Wands**

A man with a bandage around his head leans on a wand. Eight wands are planted firmly in the ground behind him. The man looks to his side – is he expecting to see something? Waiting for someone?

A card of healing; make sure you rest (even the strong get weary). A card of being well prepared, or over prepared and anxious. Can indicate worrying that past problems will be repeated.

## **Symbolism:**

- This is a complicated card, offering **hope** and **caution** in equal measure. Success and achievement are indicated, but not accepted, appreciated or acknowledged. This guy has fought long and hard to be where he is. The problem is that now the battles are over, he doesn’t know how to relax. He keeps expecting one last battle. This could



be overblown emotional defence mechanisms, slight paranoia, being trapped in negative behaviour patterns (which could be linked to post-traumatic stress disorder, or complex PTSD) – or just sheer stubbornness. Either way, he is in a strong and secure position; he just hasn't acknowledged it yet. **Bruised and battered**, he's still standing and watching out for the next attack. If each wand is a psychological defence or coping mechanism, it will be hard for anyone to get close.

- Often, I have seen this card appear when someone is in great **need of healing** (mind, body or spirit). The point is that the man is ready to accept and take an active part in that healing. This does not necessarily mean that he's ill, but that he's ready to heal and release negative patterns or thoughts from the past that are restricting him and causing pain. Think now of the wands as comforting, supporting and energising him. He has allowed his wounds to show and is accepting help and playing an active part in healing himself. A beautiful and powerful image.
- This card can indicate someone who is so focused on winning their battle and staying strong that they are neglecting their mental, physical or spiritual health. If this resonates with you, or other cards seem to suggest it (especially the 10 of Wands, or the 9 or 10 of Swords), take some time to seek **balance** in your life. Healthy diet, exercise, good sleep and relaxation. Clearly this guy needs to take a break. Wounded and with a slightly maniacal look on his face, he'd do a better job after a good, long rest. I have often found that people can have the most incredible strength and courage in difficult times; then when the struggle is over, they feel exhausted yet unable to rest, still thinking that life will be difficult. This is the exhaustion when the war is won but you just don't believe it.

### **In a reading:**

- Can be paranoia, or a fear of past events being repeated.
- Exhaustion.
- The need to be prepared.
- Healing, rest, gathering your resources.
- Isolation, withdrawal, not wanting to be with others.
- Can link to deep emotional wounds from a past relationship which mean the client is more reserved now as they seek to avoid further hurt.

## 10 of Wands

A man walks along, carrying ten wands in front of him. His shoulders are bent, and his head is hidden in the wands. A dwelling place and trees are ahead of him, yet they seem a long way off.

Yes, life is busy and difficult; you have the strength and the resources to cope, but don't maintain this level for too long. Honestly, do you need to put something down?

### Symbolism:

- If you get the 10 of Wands, it could well indicate that life is about to get **busy** and **tough**. You will have a lot to do, but you have chosen this path, and you do have enough resources to meet the challenges before you. Put your head down, nurture yourself, and get on with it. Perhaps the man is just gathering up the last of his courage and determination for one final burst of energy. It is a lot to carry, but I always think he has the determination to manage it.
- You need to rely on your intuition and other cards in your spread to determine the card's meaning. It could be a warning that you have maintained high energy levels for too long: **collapse** (physical, emotional or mental) is headed your way if you don't gain better perspective on your life and, quite simply, do a little less. This card often represents someone who is not prepared to share the load. They insist on doing everything themselves, not admitting to others, or themselves, that it is all too much. Look carefully as to whether 'I'll do that' is an excuse for not doing something more important. Whilst it's OK to shoulder the burden for a short while, do it for too long and it becomes a problem. Look at the way the wands are placed before him, and his head is down. This is someone using his business as an emotional buffer to keep him from interacting fully with others, or the world around him. Sadly, I fully empathise with this card, knowing that I often take on far too many small projects, responsibilities and jobs as an excuse for not facing the real issues. (Procrastination through being busy!)
- Sometimes the 10 of Wands relates purely to the creative process, e.g. '**writer's block**'. You have so many great ideas and inspiration has been flowing, but until you ground that inspiration (through writing, speaking, painting, etc.) and allow the energy

to flow, you feel blocked. Inspiration is not meant to be accumulated. It is meant to be expressed, to flow. Act on your ideas: write down your poem without expectations of perfection. Enjoy the experience rather than holding your dreams so very tightly. You will feel better once you start.

### **In a reading:**

- Tough times with lots to do.
- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Keeping overly busy to avoid facing problems (procrastination through busyness).
- Not wanting to face the facts.
- The need to declutter and organise.
- Creative block.
- Moving house (he is literally carrying all his stuff!).

*The first time I realised this card could refer to moving house was in January 2019. (That's what I love most about Tarot; there is always more to learn.) I was demonstrating my 'year ahead' spread at the Barns as part of a workshop. Many of those present had been Tarot students for some years, and everyone was aware of the difficulties within my marriage. It was just down to timing now: the marriage had become too toxic and hurtful to survive much longer. I pulled three cards for each of the months of January, February and March. There at the end of January was the 10 of Wands. The first card for February was the 4 of Swords. I wasn't sure what to make of this. The 4 of Swords can be rest or recuperation, but the 10 of Wands worried me: Wands cards can be emotionally charged and indicate anger. It is far harder to read for yourself than for others, and to remain emotionally objective at the end of a relationship. I sat back and asked the group, "Fear is clouding this for me – what do you think?" Someone nailed that reading for me. "Look, there is your husband leaving at the end of January, taking all his stuff with him. That's you at the start of February, enjoying the peace of a calm home." And that is exactly what happened. He left at the end of January, and I returned home after a week in Denmark with an overwhelming sense of relief. I simply hadn't realised the full extent of the mental pressure I had been living under. I felt genuine peace, alongside the expected anxiety of starting my life as a single mum (and the growing threat of the first Covid lockdown.)*

