

Ace of Pentacles

A divine hand holds a pentacle above a garden. A path clearly leads out of the garden.

Potential for new beginnings and growth for 'all that which can be seen' (job, house, garden, health, money, abundance, etc.).

Symbolism:

- Let's start by considering what a pentacle represents. It is a five-pointed star that can be drawn without taking your pen off the paper, contained in a circle. Four points of the pentacle can represent the traditional **elements** (Fire, Water, Air and Earth), and thus also the four minor **suits**. The fifth point represents the quintessential essence that animates the elements: our **spirit**, or perhaps our soul depending on what language best suits you (represented by the Major Arcana). In the suit of Pentacles, the four points are underneath the fifth: our soul is the driving force of our body. In the 'inverted' pentacle the four points are in control of the soul; an alignment considered to be 'evil' as our base desires are now overriding our higher self. I'm not sharing this as something I agree with; there are times when pure physical pleasure is just fine and certainly not 'evil'. I'm sharing this to help differentiate between the pentacles in the suit and that in The Devil, as a point of interest.
- Rachel Pollack describes the Ace of Pentacles as 'the gift of earth; nature, wealth, security, a joyful life'. Waite thought it the luckiest card in the deck. This card, as the Ace, contains the potential of all the other Pentacles cards. It is recognising our **talents**, our **skills**, our '**calling**', as well as the more traditional money coming in. The suit of Pentacles represents the **material world**, so this could be an opportunity to make money, or an opportunity connected to our physical world. If you asked about **money**, a **job**, **home** or **health**, this is an overwhelmingly positive card.
- It is a card where we are spiritually and physically **balanced**: note the **red roses** (physical manifestation) and **white lilies** (spirituality). The pentacle itself represents the physical manifestation of a spirit in a human body. We are incarnated to live full, happy and satisfying lives, and that is offered through the suit of Pentacles.
- This is the only pentacle in the deck with a 'rim', suggesting there is another side to this coin; **a price to be paid**. It is also the only Ace card without yods: this is not merely a blessing falling in our laps; we need to leave our comfort zone (that

beautiful garden) and work to bring the benefits of this Ace. I have often seen this card represent money coming in, but only enough to 'seed' a plan; the rest needs to be earned by you. The rim suggests that there will be setbacks and problems along the way, but that we can overcome them.

- To me the Ace of Pentacles is a card of **peace**, often found in connection with **nature**, whether gardening, stargazing, hill walking, or strolling in a town park. When we realise we are a part of nature, we become more whole. Most (maybe all) people become more relaxed around nature, whether it be birdsong or house plants; it has a calming effect upon us. Many traditions link the garden with the Gods, whether this is Adam and Eve in Eden or Valgarth (a garth being a walled enclosure). To me this is the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve lived in total comfort but without free will. The Pentacles journey ends with the last single-digit number: the 9 of Pentacles, the garden of our own creation.
- Note the **path**, to the archway and beyond to the mountain. It is not guarded or bolted in any way. The **peace** and **inner security** found in the Ace of Pentacles is not a trick or an illusion. It is there whenever we need it, if we can only remember how to find it. I believe it is 'peak experience', when we are so focused on the moment (often through music, sport, gardening, meditation, etc.) that we feel at one and complete.

In a reading:

- A positive card for money, home, health or work, though it may suggest you have work to do to manifest this. You need to leave your comfort zone (e.g., more money can be earned through a promotion).
- A new opportunity concerning money or work.
- A gift or an investment to allow you to start a project.
- The seed of a new idea.
- Can refer to a baby if combined with other suitable cards (The Empress, a Page, or the Ace of Wands).

2 of Pentacles

A man wearing a strange hat (I mean, it *is* an odd hat!) juggles two pentacles with his back turned to a stormy sea.

You are juggling too many things at the moment; try to relax, trust in life, and ‘go with the flow’ a little until things settle down.

Symbolism:

- The simplest reading of this card is **juggling** two (or more) projects, responsibilities, roles, etc. at the same time. There is a suggestion of playfulness; that to succeed at this you need to relax a little, not control too tightly, not focus on specifics, but on the bigger picture.
- He is perhaps **dancing** too. The only way to maintain this **balance** is to be absorbed in it and let your unconscious take over. Like riding a bike, or driving a car, we manage so much because we rely on our unconscious to take care of the details.
- This man is dressed very fine and quite a dandy, if I’m honest, with his **fancy clothes and hat**. Is he **playing a part** to make others (and himself) believe in his capabilities?
- When this card crops up with difficult cards, or in a difficult reading, I have found it to represent **distraction**, meaning that if someone is facing immense difficulties in life, a little distraction can be of amazing value. As with all the cards, this can be overdone. Look out for someone who is avoiding long-term problems by taking on too many other (often needless) responsibilities. There is clearly a **storm** behind the man’s back, yet he is focused on the issues of this moment. He has time to distract himself for now, to still his nerves and rest his mind, but that won’t stop the tide or the storm; sooner or later, he will need to turn around.
- The deeper level to this card is **change**, and how to deal with it. Take a look at the **ships** out on the rough, rough sea. On one level this is a warning (‘don’t sail too close to the wind’) reminding you to keep things balanced, centred and focused. On another level it is accepting that the only way to deal with life’s ever-changing ups and downs is just to navigate with confidence and adaptability as the best captains do. For a deeper understanding, explore how boats deal with storms, how they use their sails to sail a zigzag path, or how they may drop all sails and simply face the storm, riding out the large waves until the storm passes. Perhaps think about the ego involved in the *Titanic*. Look what happened to an ‘unsinkable’ ship.

- A key motive throughout the suit of Pentacles is **mundane magic**; the magic we create through our everyday life. The 2 of Pentacles contains the **infinity symbol**, as a reminder that life is constant balance: just when you've got it right, it changes!

In a reading:

- You need to be flexible right now and keep your options open.
- Sometimes a sense of 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. You'll need to keep an open mind about finances.
- News, movement, opportunities regarding money or work.
- Do you need to take a break, or is it time to get focused and take control?

3 of Pentacles

In a crypt, a stonemason works. With him are a monk and a well-dressed person (the architect, perhaps?).

You are creating something worthwhile (craft, job, community, garden, home, etc.).

A very hopeful card.

Symbolism:

- At a simple level this card represents **work**. Not the drudge of nine-to-five, paying-the-bills work, but work that pays the bills, satisfies the soul, allows you to enjoy your mastery (even something simple can be done with excellence), and serves the better good of those around you. This card reminds us that it is possible to aim for a **life that satisfies on all levels**. We all have a talent (however seemingly small) that we can develop, share and enjoy. It is a personal tragedy to settle for an unsatisfying life. Take a look at the figures: the **stonemason (a skilled job)** is raised by standing on the bench, and is a part of creating something amazing. He is supported by the **monk (spirituality)** and the **noble person (financial success)**, and of course all three are reflections of ourselves.
- This leads us to look at the role of **self-worth**. On a spiritual level this brings our spiritual life straight back into everyday focus. It reminds us that our personal and spiritual development cannot be separate from our everyday life. If we are serious

about our spiritual development, we need to integrate it into all areas of our life. (If the use of the word ‘spiritual’ grates a little, try swapping it for ‘personal’.) Firstly, it is interesting to note that they appear to be in the **crypt (foundations)** of the cathedral. This makes me think about how we act in our daily work (both at home and in paid work) will form the foundation of our character. No good being mean to colleagues all day, then spending an hour on charity work. Secondly, the worker is **elevated** on a bench. It is through our life’s work that we create our character. (To be clear, this may not be your day job. It may be your commitment to a charity, a youth group, your family, or your creative project.) Thirdly, there are **three people**, each a reflection of a different area of life, all equally valued: **spiritual, social and financial**.

- This card is also a warning against **laziness, procrastination and wasting our talents** in the belief that ‘I’m not good enough.’ The pentacles here are not gold coins; they have been hewn out of rock and are against a black background. Perhaps you need to be brave and look deep within to see if you have a latent talent. Perhaps you have always felt drawn to something but not yet actually had a go? Maybe you have talents and skills that could be brought to light with a little work – look to the Page, Knight or 8 of Pentacles to see if study and self-discipline are needed.

In a reading:

- An excellent card for any question about money, work or investments.
- A reminder to focus on work or projects.
- May indicate the need to ‘step out of the shadows’ and ask for a raise, or expect to be paid a fair rate.
- On firm foundations.
- Can reflect the need to do ‘shadow work’, looking at areas of your life you are less comfortable with, and focusing on weaker skill sets within work to allow growth.

Over the years with clients, and myself, I have seen this card reflect positive mental health. When we have something – a job, a project, paid work, a hobby – that we work on diligently, it brings great rewards. Having something (not a person) that creates a solid foundation to our life can be an absolute lifesaver.

I am currently sat in my car writing this, waiting for my fifteen-year-old son, Elwood Fox, who is lead guitarist in a band at a local youth centre. He takes his guitar playing very seriously, practises regularly, and it has been a key part in his emerging sense of self as a young man. An important focus of educating my children is to ensure they all have at least one skill they enjoy learning, from which they can gain a sense of confidence and self-esteem. Between them we have (in age order) a dancer, a guitarist, a bass guitarist, and a drummer. I truly believe that learning these skills, and the self-discipline needed to master something difficult, have been of great value to them as they grow into young adults.

So, if this card pops up and you can't make sense of it, look again – it might be pointing to mental health. Try reading the cards around it to see if it is reflecting, or offering practical guidance on the topic. What do you lose yourself in during difficult times to allow you find yourself again? Work, craft, yoga, sport, volunteering...

4 of Pentacles

A man sits with his back to a busy city. He has a pentacle on his crown (odd that he wears a crown), on his chest, and one on each foot.

Is your wealth (or pursuit of wealth or physical possessions) hindering your enjoyment in life? Enough is abundance. If money is genuinely tight, this is an optimistic card. How to manifest in one easy card!

Symbolism:

- Take a look at the **man**. Is he trustworthy and stable, a greedy miser, or a determined, focused individual? On one level this is someone who seeks **comfort in material things**, and finds a feeling of **security** in them. We all seek security and comfort at times. If you have lived with upheaval, uncertainty and chaos, then this is a much-welcomed card of **stability**.
- Look at where the pentacles are placed: upon his **crown**, his **heart**, and the soles of his **feet**. This represents where we connect to **inspiration**, **others**, and the **earth**. Ask yourself what the pentacles represent (work, security, a home, a project...). Is he simply creating moments of peace, an inner sanctuary from the busyness of life? (And that sure is a busy city behind him!) Of course, perhaps he is using his material possessions as a permanent **defence mechanism** to keep him from ever needing to

interact with the world around him. Do not think only the wealthy protect themselves from engaging in life by surrounding themselves with possessions. This is the hoarder, the overly house-proud individual, the workaholic, as well as the millionaire who would feel safer with just one more zero.

- Aleister Crowley refers to the 4 of Pentacles as ‘The lord of power’; Mary K. Greer as ‘awareness of personal value and worth’. The man is sitting on a **stone block** (meaning **physical manifestation**) and has gone to a high **vantage point**, perhaps to **meditate** with his pentacles (refer to the 4 of Cups and the 4 of Swords). This card can represent someone who has a plan, has formed an emotional attachment to it, and has written down their goals and schedules. Now they are manifesting their desire to move home, get a better job, plant a garden or take a holiday. Sometimes I just see this man as a single-minded, determined individual focused (with body, mind and heart) on one goal. Who am I to judge? Take a look at him. Is he trustworthy and stable, a greedy miser, or a determined individual? Only your intuition and the cards can answer this question.

In a reading:

- Follow the manifesting advice. Crown: be inspired. Heart: engage emotionally with your dream. Feet: put the work in.
- Are you using money, wealth, work or goals to isolate you from life?
- If you asked about money, work or a project, this is a great card.
- A curious card in a relationship reading – placement is all. Is it suggesting a shared goal, or that one partner is focused on material wealth and security?
- Creating a plan and following it through.

This is one of those practical cards I love in a Tarot reading. To talk through the symbolism with a client, I talk about inspiration flowing through the crown, holding the dream in your heart, and then acting on it to build the dream in the physical world. Personally, I have found great comfort in my work through these times, and in using this image to help me to grow my business:

- *Making sure I have time to walk to allow myself to connect with my higher guidance (crown chakra).*
- *Time to create – I love the playfulness and pleasure that come when I write, teach, or record podcasts (heart chakra).*
- *And of course, my client time. However dark my mood, I am always grounded, humbled and uplifted when I work with clients. It has kept me real through all the ‘batshit crazy’ times (soles of the feet).*

5 of Pentacles

Two beggars walk past a lit church window in a snowstorm. Five pentacles, and the very base of the sixth, can be seen in the window.

Yes, it is difficult, and this card can often mean possible financial difficulties. But take responsibility for nurturing yourself and accept help when it is offered, because you are worth it.

Symbolism:

- As this is a Pentacles card, the simplest reading is some sort of **financial or physical issues** affecting you; a **lack**. In a larger reading (or if it keeps popping up), it is wise to go over your finances and be prudent for a while, preparing for any possible issues. It can refer to worry and stress over a **key survival issue**: home, job, money or health. It suggests a period of struggle, worry, loss and fear.
- And yet there is **hope**. They are still **moving**; this card is willing you to just keep going, don't give up. They are together; look around to see who can **support** you, and be grateful for this blessing. There is a **church** (often seen as a sanctuary), but where is the door? Perhaps just around the corner, wide open and with a bowl of hot soup waiting? This card reminds us to look for, and accept, help in difficult times. Sometimes it suggests that we consider where that help is likely to come from. Maybe friends, family, or an organisation that you have come to rely upon are no longer supportive, or are now restricting you, and it is better to struggle without this support than to compromise yourself to remain secure. The image of a window instead of a door suggests **ambiguity** as to whether sanctuary will be offered. Or perhaps it was

offered and they chose not to accept it, believing there is a better situation just around the corner.

- This card can also reflect your inner state. Do you feel **unable** to ask for help? **Unworthy** of anything better? Are you an **emotional cripple**, left out of family and social support, just battling on without expecting anything to get better? If you don't believe yourself worthy of help, you will not accept it even when it is offered. Maybe they haven't even seen the church window, because they are blinkered in assuming there will be no help for them. The **leper's bell** and **crutches** make me think of feeling emotionally crippled or '**out in the cold**'. This can be an uncomfortable card in any kind of relationship reading: you are feeling left out, unnurtured.
- The **blessing** in this card comes from the **sixth pentacle** we can see growing out of the very top, and the sense that they are still **moving**. This may be tough but there is a suggestion of moving out of the tough times, and of the birth of something better.

In a reading:

- A warning of lack of money, vitality or help.
- Be cautious about finances; there may be delays or hidden costs.
- Don't overexert yourself; you may be lower on energy than you realise.
- Do you need to just keep going, or ask for help?
- Self-nurture, and check in with relationships: do you feel lonely or isolated?
- The only good side to this card is being aware of it and navigating it well!

I know this card only too well. The emotional trauma of feeling exhausted, at the end of my capabilities, and yet isolated and unable to ask for help. I have spent much time sitting with this card, trying to find the deeper message for me, and over time, my eye focused on the sixth pentacle that we can see peeking at the top of the window. The 5 of Pentacles can be a dark and lonely place to linger, feeling locked out of support and love. I came to see it as the need to keep going, to trust that each day can get better. I came to see a strange parallel between the rainbow in the 10 of Cups (God's promise that life will be better) and that sixth pentacle in a lit stained-glass window, which seems to hold a promise too.

Often the 5 of Pentacles can indicate a relationship splitting up; after all, nothing is likely to make us feel emotionally and financially poorer than a long-term relationship

ending. And sure enough, this card haunted me at the end of my marriage, pointing out that there would be cold days ahead when what I had lost would dominate my whole life. On those days I would take the card and really stare at it; feel the exhaustion of the two people. Then I would turn to the 6 of Pentacles and consider how I was moving, one slow step at a time, towards taking control of my life. It's interesting to consider that when we feel out of control, as if life is falling catastrophically around us, taking control of our health and finances is a brilliant way to feel more in control. As my marriage disintegrated, I turned to work. It helped me to feel that at least there was one stable part of my chaotic life. I've seen other people focus on fitness goals or eating healthily. We are never really in control, but sometimes we need that illusion to allow us to have the courage to keep going.

6 of Pentacles

A man dressed as a merchant appears to be handing money to one of the beggars.

You have enough, and some left over to share. Have fun! Beware of power plays.

Symbolism:

- I am always slightly unsettled by this card. There is a man 'in the guise of a merchant' (Waite), who appears to be freely **giving** his money. Yet the beggars are down on their knees, and the merchant's money is not as free-flowing as it seems: some is clearly **held back**. And the **scales** are a powerful symbol (also found in Justice and the 10 of Pentacles). To me they represent **consequences**. There may be consequences to accepting this person's 'generosity'. The scales move: if one side is weighted, the other will lift by an equal amount. Everything in life has a consequence.
- Usually, the 6 of Pentacles is about **having enough**. If you asked about money, work, health or energy, this card suggests you will have enough. It is also about **generosity**, **sharing** and sometimes a **benefactor**; if you don't have enough (and just check to make sure), be prepared to ask for help, accept help, and keep your eyes open for opportunities. It is about someone giving you a helping hand to achieve your dreams. Most often this is a lucky card, being read as opportunities and material gain. For this interpretation we trust the merchant to be fair and generous with his wealth. He is giving each as much as they need, with an open heart and a kind **blessing** (indicated by his fingers giving the coins forming a blessing symbol).

- In a negative context, this card is about giving charity as a means of **control** (and this could apply to you or someone else). Be wary of giving to others to create **dependency**, or giving just enough to keep the tie strong, but always holding something back. Are you the person holding the purse strings (or heartstrings), always keeping everyone a little short? (Think of a casino: the customer wins a little, to keep them hopeful.) Or are you the beggar, imploring someone to notice and respect you? The merchant has four coins (at least) – will he give to the other beggar, or is this a **power play**? Note the way the coins fall: two remain close to the merchant, two close to the beggar. It is as if the merchant is still retaining control. Some might say that the scales suggest he will give each man what he needs; personally, I think these mean that there is a consequence to receiving this money, an expectation of return at some point. Fine if you know what that exchange is and what is expected of you. But beware – check that there is no **hidden agenda** here.
- Sometimes the card shows its deeper level, where we are not asked to identify with one person, but all three are **reflections** of us. Then the merchant (whom Waite describes as ‘a person in the guise of a merchant’) is our **higher self/divine inspiration/life energy**, and the beggars are just two of our many **roles**. If I am a mother, wife, daughter, friend, individual and Tarot teacher, on any one day I devote a certain proportion of my life force to each role. If I was a prima ballerina, I would need to devote almost all my life force to one role. Where will you work your mundane magic today? In which areas of your life will you choose to stand tall and manifest?

In a reading: (I find this a complicated card...)

- A suggestion that if you take control of your finances you will have enough and some left over.
- You may be called upon to offer or receive help.
- In a relationship spread this card worries me: it often indicates power plays and control games. In a workplace reading too it is a concern: again, it can suggest power plays (especially combined with the King of Wands, The High Priestess, the 5 of Swords, The Devil, etc.).
- Take control of your life!

In itself this is not a bad card as such, but it is one of my key 'relationship red-flag cards'. In my mind it is 'my controlling partner'. I have seen it, often combined with the King of Wands, suggest, 'I don't want to be with you, but neither do I want to let you go...'

As always with Tarot, placement is all. The 6 of Pentacles is about control. I have seen it reflect a partner who is focusing hard on work, or a family-orientated project, to create a secure foundation for the relationship. They are taking control of a project for the benefit of the relationship/family. The problem starts when the 6 of Pentacles reflects taking control of other people, moving into manipulation, and my personal name for this card ('my controlling partner') reflects this. So if it pops up in a relationship spread, be cautious: it can be a red flag and definitely deserves special attention.

7 of Pentacles

A man leans on his staff to look at his six pentacles. By his feet nestles the seventh.

You've worked hard and it seems as if not a lot is happening. Don't worry – your harvest is on its way. (Just remember to pause and enjoy it.)

Symbolism:

- The first thing to do with this card (especially in the Rider–Waite deck) is just to **look** at it. Is he experiencing a quiet moment of contemplation and bliss, is he faintly bored by where he is, or is he just downright lazy and avoiding his work? Your honest answer may change on a daily basis, and gives a big insight into your reading of this card.
- Most simply, this card indicates that **a venture will be successful**, based upon the hard work you have already put into it. This is a card of harvest; a farmer who has tended his plant, watered and weeded it. Now it is big enough to look after itself, he just needs to wait for harvest time.
- It's a question of how his **face** and **posture** seem to you at the moment, combined with the other cards in the reading. At its best, the 7 of Pentacles is **mundane magic** in the making. The farmer has worked hard; lost himself in the steady pleasure of work. Now he takes a moment, a 'creative pause', and inspiration strikes, just when he is not seeking it (as it mostly does). The single pentacle by his feet represents an Ace; a new start. Harvest is one pause in the farmer's cycle, and he knows that he needs to be

planning the planting of the next crop as he harvests this one. Crowley refers to this card as the 'Lord of failure'. I imagine our farmer is looking at his crop and deciding which of his harvest he will reserve as his seed crop for the coming season. He is pausing to reflect and plan. And this makes me think of the saying 'Fail to plan; plan to fail.' This card usually indicates success, but if you don't pause to reflect on where you are and what you have achieved and then plan carefully, the promised success will quickly turn to failure.

In a reading:

- Pause, reflect and plan!
- Generally a card of success and growth, though the timing may be slower than expected.
- There may be a new start, an offer, or money coming in.
- Do you need a break?

8 of Pentacles

A man sits on a bench, totally absorbed in carving pentacles.

Happy in your work (not necessarily your paid job). Or it could mean learning and developing new skills diligently.

Symbolism:

- We see someone sat on a bench (the same bench as in the 3 of Pentacles, clearly linking the two cards), totally lost in his work. The background seems to recede, though we can see a yellow path leading into the city. This is the card of the **apprentice**; learning your trade or skill through practice and self-discipline. You are completely **focused** on the process and care about what you are doing; this is a **long-term project** and you are prepared to take the time to get it right. There is a feeling with this card of **perseverance, commitment** and **self-discipline** (which will create the person in the 9 of Pentacles).
- This is a very positive card, with the suggestion that you will be **successful** (note the single pentacle on the floor, reminding us of the Ace of Pentacles and the potential

within the complete suit). The card speaks for itself; the man is completely absorbed in his work, and seems content. The length of time is reflected by the number of pentacles made, and by the detail in the wood, reminding us of the **slow and steady** growth of a tree. The bench reminds us of the stonemason in the 3 of Pentacles (work that creates something amazing).

- The image makes me think of ‘peak experience’ or bliss; those times when **mundane magic** really works. You’ve become completely absorbed in a task, in the moment, in yourself, and experience a surreal feeling of connection, peace and happiness. The best way to connect with this card is to simply meditate with it. It has a quietness about it that seeps into your psyche.
- On the negative side, will he stop when he has perfected the pentacle? Will he recognise when it is time to try something new, and have the courage to do it? It is very easy to get **stuck in our comfort zone**, enjoying the calm of doing something we are good at. But to grow as an individual, and to develop our skills, we need to challenge ourselves. **Break the mould** and carve a square instead of a pentacle! Depending on your mood, just sometimes, there can be a hint of **madness** or **obsession** about the 8 of Pentacles. “Just one more pentacle and it will be perfect. You want a square? Oh no, I only carve pentacles.”

In a reading:

- Often associated with work, especially when combined with the 3 of Pentacles.
- You may need to learn something, or this may refer to study.
- The need to organise and systemise something.
- The perpetual student, caught in taking ever more courses, hopeful that one more will finally help them to feel confident. (It won’t!)
- Stuck in your comfort zone, doing a job you have grown out of.
- OCD, or procrastination through business.
- The need to do more of whatever gave you that ‘peak experience’ (music, swimming, craft, etc.).

Like Temperance, this is a difficult card for me, touching on two of my weak spots:

1. *Organisation and systemising life. This is something I really, really struggle with. I would love to be one of those capsule-wardrobe, minimalist, uber-organised supermums. In truth, I have a box full of 'these will fix your life' journals – you know, the ones where you can plan every detail of your life and record your gratitude thoughts and how much water you drank. The thing is, if you are too disorganised to find the damn thing, or keep planning to fill it in later, they don't bloody work. I did take the time to automate my booking system for clients and link it to my phone, so now my phone lets me know fifteen minutes before an appointment. But it only works because it's automated. Any kind of organisation that relies on me regularly doing things has (so far) failed.*
2. *Getting lost in work. Well, that is me all over. It's currently nearly eleven at night, I've just watched an episode of The Walking Dead with my teenage children, and I need to be out by 9am tomorrow (and do some email readings before that). But here I am, happily lost in writing this. Work for me has been a genuine solace over the last couple of years. I know I am a workaholic; it is a healthier choice than some addictions, but an addiction nonetheless. At some point soon I will need to strike more of a balance in life. But for now, this book absorbs me, obsesses me, distracts me, and captivates me.*

9 of Pentacles

A well-dressed woman stands in a lush garden with a hunting hawk on her hand. There is a snail on the path in front of her.

A secure, self-sufficient, confident person. Happy with herself... though perhaps she could do with relaxing with friends a little more?

Symbolism:

- We start the suit of Pentacles in a garden, with the invitation to leave its safety and create our own success, and in the last single-digit number we find ourselves back in a garden. I love that journey, and it is very clear that this is a beautiful and successful card. Compared to the 10 of Pentacles I like the symmetry and balance of this card, the **golden sky**, and the **two trees** framing our lady. Generally, this is a very positive card, suggesting **success, security, abundance, and enjoyment** of these things. This card represents someone who has worked hard to create a secure, enjoyable life for

herself. Her material success is clear from her **clothes**, the **hunting bird**, and the rich harvest of **grapes**. The security is suggested by the **garden** (garth); a little bit of paradise she stands in, this time created by her. The pentacles are split between three (**hard work**) and six (**money** enough, and the personal **control** she took of her life to get here).

- Another positive side to this card is her connection to **nature**. This is a woman who finds happiness in her garden. She is clearly content and comfortable here. She has built a relationship with her bird, and many people see the **snail** as another sign of her connection with nature. The snail has a sense of **self-sufficiency** (it carries its home on its back), and this woman has all she needs.
- So, we are left with the negative side... what could be wrong with attaining success, abundance and happiness through your hard work? We have to ask what she has **sacrificed** to get this far, and now she's reached this stage, will she be brave enough to embrace those parts of herself that she sacrificed to get here? She **stands alone**; not a problem in itself. But most people are happier when they share their lives with others. Has she become so self-reliant, so independent, that she can't relax with other people?
- Her bird is **trained** and **hooded**. This indicates two things:
 1. Her supreme **self-discipline** (to train an animal, the trainer must first be trained) – will she be able to loosen up and relax now and then?
 2. The bird can represent her **wild side**, her creative, free-thinking side. Is she able to let her bird free at times, or is it always hooded and tethered?
- Almost always the 9 of Pentacles is a welcome card, indicating success and abundance. But like the 8, it can become a little **too comfortable**. If it keeps cropping up, take a good look at yourself. Are you sticking to what you know, staying safe, perhaps getting a little boring, a little stuck in a rut? Are you able to ask for help and delegate, or do you have to do it *all* yourself?

In a reading:

- Keep focused and working hard; it will be worth it.
- Material success; an excellent card for anything work- or finance-related.
- Do you need to loosen up a bit, be more spontaneous?

- Not the best card in a relationship reading – it is a card of isolation and self-discipline, not a card of teamwork.
- My ‘Blitz war wife’ card (along with the Queen of Pentacles)
- : a card of resilience, hard work, and getting done whatever needs to be done.

10 of Pentacles

A gateway into a courtyard where a man and a woman can be seen. There is an old man sat outside, a young boy reaches out to some dogs, and framed against the blue sky is a tower.

Overflowing riches! Take the time to appreciate, rather than accumulate. Legacies and benefactors; build something for the future.

Symbolism:

- Make no mistake about it: this is a lucky card! It offers financial **abundance**, **stability** in home and work, a rich and sensual life. This card speaks of building something worthwhile for you, your family and your community to enjoy. A card of firm foundations.
- This is the last Pentacles card. When it comes to the **manifestation** of dreams and desires, it offers every last wish. The **opulence** in the card is clear, from the buildings to the clothes and decorations. Everything is done to excess.
- And yet the card doesn't quite make sense. Firstly, it's too **cluttered**, especially with those pentacles hanging over the top. None of the people seem to be **interacting**, the two adults stand oddly; are they just walking past each other? The **perspective** seems wrong. The child is on one side of the arch, the old man the other, yet they both touch the dogs? And regarding the arch/courtyard – who is inside and who is outside? The man who seems to be sitting outside holds a **black staff** – a strange symbol in the Rider–Waite deck which we only see in The Fool and the 6 of Swords. To me this is connected to the **soul's (fool's) journey**, and suggests this man is unnoticed by the adults because he has ‘journeyed to the other side’; he is a deceased **ancestor**.
- The symbols on the outer side of the arch are complicated. We have the **chequerboard pattern** (seen in The Hierophant: **spiritual wisdom**), and the **scales** (a link to Justice and the 6 of Pentacles: **balance**, **consequences** and **fairness**). It's almost as if the young people are **rejecting the wisdom of the past**: sometimes that

is helpful in letting go of the status quo, and sometimes it is a very foolish thing to do.

- And let's talk about the elephant in the room: there, carefully framed against the bright blue sky, we have a tall **tower**. Either side of the tower are a **man** and a **woman**, dressed in **blue** and **red** – I always think of The Tower when I see this card. That life is a **cycle of creation and chaos**, and there always comes a moment when we have to accept change.
- When you look closely, the whole card seems confusing, cluttered and a little bit out of perspective. It lacks clarity. The 10 of Pentacles warns us about the **complications of modern life**; the **urge to accumulate** ever more 'stuff' rather than appreciate experiences and the people dear to us. And don't think that applies only to the wealthy: hoarding, collecting or overspending can apply to any of us regardless of income.
- The **secret to enjoying life** is offered by the pattern of the ten pentacles. They form the Kabbalistic Tree of Life; a part of the Jewish mystery traditions. In the Kabbalah, the **number 10** is associated with the soles of the feet, and for me the meaning is clear: **focus on the moment**, on what your senses give you, not where your mind is taking you (past or future, worry or regret). It also reminds us to appreciate the magic in life all around us. Take the time to enjoy a rainbow, a good meal, a long walk. If life is too complicated for simple pleasures, then you have lost your way.

In a reading:

- If money is tight, or you asked about the success of a business, an investment, etc., then this is an exceptionally positive card.
- In relationships, double-check the spread: it can refer to marriage or living with someone, but it can also reflect the financial restraint of being with someone because you feel more secure with them; the 'gilded cage'.
- Communities, family structures, networking, and being a part of something.
- Can refer to inheritance, of either a financial or a spiritual nature.
- Perhaps you are over-focusing on belongings and finances to make you feel secure.

I have been accused (rightly so) of having a negative attitude to this card. Exploring those cards that are not generally 'negative', but you still dislike, can be very enlightening. Yes, I have money wounds, and that is reflected in my relationship with this card.

I had a very interesting experience some years ago. Reading for a client, she had the 10 of Pentacles as her central card, and the Knight and King of Pentacles were there too. As I gazed at her reading it came to me: "Money is a trap for you; it creates a gilded cage. It hampers and restricts your life." I said this with a slightly bewildered tone. Lack of money had always been my issue, not an abundance of it. We talked through the reading, and it turned out she came from a wealthy family. This led to a long discussion about money, and the complications of living within a wealthy family. I had never considered that side of life, and it has proved very helpful in other readings to understand that money and family very often bring obligations and restrictions, just as a lack of money brings restrictions and can make obligations difficult.

Of course, towards the end of my marriage I saw the other side of the gilded cage. I couldn't see a way to leave my husband without being financially independent first. He certainly used money, and my financial dependence on him, as a way to trap me. As my marriage disintegrated before my eyes, and my mental health crumbled, some instinct told me to work, work, work. It was probably one of the best decisions I ever made.

