

## Ace of Cups

It's a beautiful image. A seemingly divine hand holds an overflowing cup, while a dove holds a disc with an equilateral cross above the cup. There are waterlilies growing in the pool at the bottom.

I see this card as love. Romantic love, unconditional love, divine love, and loving ourselves.

## Symbolism:

- At its best, love is a universal language; all powerful. At its worst, it descends into despair and addiction.
- New **love**, new **relationships**, flowing **emotions** – the Ace of Cups contains the full potential of the suit. Free-flowing **water** – unconditional love that nurtures and inspires the giver as much as the receiver. I like to think the Ace of Cups illustrates the universal language of love by bringing together imagery from several different religions' traditions:
  - The **dove** is a Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit.
  - The **design of the cup** and the 'W' reflect the role of Mary in Christianity (seen from above, the 'W' is an 'M'). Whether this is Mary the mother of God, or Mary Magdalene, seen by many as Jesus's wife and the bearer of his children, both can represent the divine feminine.
  - The **water droplets** represent the Hebrew letter 'yod', the first of the four letters that represent God's name in Judaism (Yod He Vav He, translated as Jehovah). These are also found in The Moon, The Tower, and the Aces of Wands and Swords, and offer a genuine blessing in each.
  - The **water lily** or **lotus** represents the opening to spirit in Buddhism and Hinduism.
  - The **Grail (cup)** is a Pagan symbol of fertility and inspiration often thought to represent the womb or divine feminine.
- The Ace of Cups suggests it is time to open your heart and be prepared to **give and receive love**. Water, like love, needs to flow freely; to be given without expectations. On earth, water is constantly moving in cycles: from cloud to earth, from stream to sea, from sea to cloud. This is as love, in its many guises, should be: small acts of

compassion allowing love to circulate. For example, letting someone in from a side road when driving can alter both drivers' moods, and inspire them each to make another small compassionate gesture and so lift the day for many people. Neither water nor love ever runs out; it is merely cycled around. The image of water flowing from the cup is a reminder that to love anyone else you must first love yourself. I have seen this card for many healers, parents and carers, and often the message is that they are 'running dry' and need time for **self-care**.

- I have seen this card represent **new love, new starts, and pregnancy**.
- I believe the Ace of Cups is one of the most **powerful and positive** cards in the deck. To fully appreciate it is to be blessed indeed. If you would like to invite some of these blessings into your life, start to verbalise your feelings of love and compassion to those around you, from deep love for your closest, to a "Thank you" and a smile if someone holds a door open for you. The more you express and show your love, the more powerful those feelings become. After all, the next suit is Swords (communication), followed by Pentacles (manifestation).

#### **In a reading:**

- You can't give what you don't have – look after your own emotional needs today. A little self-nurture!
- Letting go of past hurts, allowing you to move forward.
- Love overflowing; inspiration, happiness.
- New, happy emotions: love, friendship, creative ventures.
- The love flows out of the cup. If cups represent the heart chakra, then this is a reminder to love ourselves first. You can't pour from an empty jug.

*Before I started my business, I did many readings (as you might imagine), and the most regular card that came up was the Ace of Cups. I didn't quite understand this, but took it as a sign that I would be happy and find joy in my work. I realise now that although this is a business and I earn my income from this work, it is the people, the relationships, the friendships, the love and the support that have really changed my life. If I didn't need to work to earn money, I still would. The love I feel through doing this work is beyond anything I could have expected, it is genuinely life changing.*

## 2 of Cups

Two people stand face to face, each holding a cup in front of them. Between the cups is a caduceus symbol, with a winged lion's head above it. The background seems to recede from them.

An equal, respectful relationship that creates magic. Not always a sexual relationship, but a definite connection.

### Symbolism:

- This is a card concerning the relationship between **two people**. Lovers, friends, family members, work colleagues – two people who come together with equal respect and love. Each holds out a cup towards the other; both are open-hearted, ready to share. There is a sense (with that winged lion figure) that together they can create far more than if they worked separately. This can be a card of **sexual** love, but also a **creative** project, **healing**, or simply the magic that happens when two people work together in an open-hearted way. If you are looking for love this is a hopeful card, but look for clarification as it does not necessarily suggest long-term love; rather, a new passion.
- This card often suggests that **past hurts** will be reflected in a new relationship. At its best, the 2 of Cups shows that old hurts will be healed by the new relationship. At its worst, they will tarnish and sour the new relationship. Either way, be aware of projecting old emotional wounds onto your new partner or friend.
- The **caduceus** is an ancient magical symbol. It is said that Hermes saw two snakes fighting and threw his staff between them to stop them from harming each other, thereby creating the caduceus symbol. Look to the other cards to see if this is a **warning** or a **blessing**. The 2 of Cups can be a warning against infatuation, idealising another person, devoting oneself to a relationship at the cost of all else, closing off other parts of life for the adoration of 'the one'. This kind of primal gazing is to be expected in teenage love, between parents and newborn babies, and in the first flush of honeymoon love; but it is not sustainable or healthy in the longer term.
- This is a **separation** card. (Notice that line that looks like a stage – not a lot is known about whether this is intentional or not; I have only commented on the separation cards

if it seems to add something to the meaning.) The two figures have stepped out of the normal world. Their gaze is so intent, everything else in the card seems to have receded into the distance. Would you want to share a meal with them?

- A big skill of a Tarot reader is being able to apply any card to any situation accurately. To write this card off as ‘lovers’ is to see affairs and infatuation where they simply may not exist. I have had this card represent people coming into my life to inspire me, but who will argue that it is I who inspired them. This can be a deep soul friendship, mutual inspiration, romantic love, or infatuation. The question, the cards around, and the spread will help you understand the meaning of the 2 of Cups.

### **In a reading:**

- Partnership – spend time with someone today; someone you find inspiring, whether friend, colleague or lover!
- Arguments are 80% past issues being triggered; don’t argue about past hurts.
- Equal, respectful relationships creating magic.
- You will achieve much with another.

*I always think of my friendship with Rachel Burge when I see the 2 of Cups. She was curious about my deep connection with the Norse pantheon and wanted to talk to me about my shamanic experiences as research for her book, The Twisted Tree. We talked for hours about my shamanic journeys, my relationship with the Norse deities, my understanding of the myths. We would become lost in these stories, totally in the moment. I loved how she made it sound like me when she rewrote anything I had said, but better. Her skill as a writer obsessed me. And so, we also spent many hours talking about the craft of writing, and how to engage the reader. Whenever I wrote something I could hear her commenting, “Remember, semicolons are not confetti; they are not meant to be scattered throughout your writing. Mix long and short paragraphs; keep the audience interested. Don’t say it three times; once is enough.” I felt as if I had an editor working with me; I internalised our conversations. What was wonderful was that we each added so much value to the other’s projects. It was a totally equal exchange of ideas, skills and inspiration. We were perfectly matched to inspire each other. She was the first person I sent the initial section of this book to. I knew that if she liked the concept, the style and the format, then it was worth continuing with. She was the one*

*who told me to find the rhythm, the balance, between personal reflection and Tarot book. I hope I have done her guidance justice.*

### **3 of Cups**

Three women dance, each holding a cup aloft. They are cooperative, working together to build and enjoy the good times – there is no leader. They seem to merge into one; strong, yet individual. The gourds, fruits and berries suggest this is harvest home; a celebration of abundance!

Enjoy friendships; celebrate even the smallest of successes (ideally with others).

Good times!

### **Symbolism:**

- The 3 of Cups is a card of **celebration** and **good times**. It reflects people coming together; a sense of **community**, **harmony**, being **part of something bigger**. It is a reminder that together we can achieve more, and to enjoy the good times as they come, because they rarely last! The 3 of Cups represents a **harvest** festival, and harvest is a small window of abundance in a busy and difficult agricultural year. So, if you get the 3 of Cups, it is a reminder that life has its ups and downs – make sure you celebrate the good times!
- ‘*Anam Cara*’ is Celtic for ‘soul friend’; someone who will never judge you, who will always offer support and honesty, who knows how you feel without asking. This is the card of **true friendship**; a genuine gift of emotional abundance. Take a moment to consider your true friends, perhaps plan to make contact, connect, and meet up. A true friend is a joy to the soul. I imagine if one of these women stumbled and fell, the others would support her until she was steady again. Their strength lies in their trust and togetherness.
- Alas, sometimes people get stuck in what should be a window of celebration, and are still partying a week or a month later. Check your intuition and the other cards to ensure you haven’t been partying (or whatever else your personal **indulgence** is) for a little too long. It doesn’t take too much imagination to see these as slightly drunken women heading out for a long party evening...

- The image of **three women** together has a long and powerful history: the three Norns, the three Fates, the threefold Pagan Goddess (Maiden, Mother and Crone). This is a reminder of the **cycle of life** connecting who we are now with our past and our future.
- In a reading, this is a card of **celebration, success, working together, joy and sharing**. Perhaps you need to ask for – and accept – **help**. Perhaps you need to realise how much you have achieved and pause to celebrate. Maybe you are distracting yourself from the reality of the situation by celebrating, or helping others to avoid facing up to life?

### **In a reading:**

- A little help today will go a long way. Spread the load, reach out, connect.
- Make time for friends; they can be uplifting and inspiring.
- Friendship, fun and celebration.
- Enjoy life with an open heart.
- So often a positive card – remember to look for the joy in life.

*I remember the day this card made sense to me. Life was difficult with three young children, and I needed some headspace, a break, to pause from life. I rang a friend I hadn't seen for some years and said how much I needed some time out from my life (that was, time out for me and three children under five), and her answer was simple: "I'm at work now, but come and stay – you'll find the key under the bin."*

### **4 of Cups**

A person – I tend to think a man – sits cross-legged and cross-armed, leaning against a tree. A divine hand (similar to those on the Aces) hands him a cup, but he appears not to notice. In front of him are three cups, all standing upright.

Boredom, stuck in a rut. Or perhaps the need to take a break, or do some meditation or active visualisation.

### **Symbolism:**

- His **face** and **body language** say it all. Often the 4 of Cups is a sign that you are bored, weary, stuck in a rut – and simply can't be bothered to do anything about it.

This is **stagnation** of the body, mind and spirit. The problem is, even if wonderful new opportunities do occur, you won't have the energy to grasp them. This man is so busy feeling disappointed by the cups he does have, he doesn't see the wonderful cup being offered to him (new love, creative inspiration...). Notice how the sense of **opportunity** and new **hope** is created by the connection to the Ace of Cups.

- And yet, look again. Is he bored, or is he waiting, **meditating**, **resting**, simply being still? Some decks clearly show him as bored, but I see the Rider–Waite deck as not making this distinction clear. Sometimes the 4 of Cups is not so much stagnation as taking a break. It is much easier to appreciate the good things in life (partner, child, friends, wine, good food) when we have a rest from them. This card could reflect someone who knows they have a lot in their life, and is taking some space, ready to come back renewed, refreshed and appreciated. We need hunger to be satisfied. An important time to take a break is after a relationship breakdown – perhaps this person is just waiting until he is *ready* to grasp the new opportunity, rather than grabbing the first cup offered in his desperation.
- In our busy lives, sitting, perhaps even feeling glum, is often seen as wasted productive time. But if it helps us to **appreciate** what is good in life, it is time well spent. Try booking some time (even just an hour) by yourself.
- Seen from another point of view, this person may be meditating under the tree. Perhaps he is visualising the cups, **manifesting** reality from his desires?
- When you get the 4 of Cups, look at it calmly for a few minutes. How does it make you feel? Bored, relaxed, focused? With a Cups card **your feelings** are a big clue. It is easy (especially with some decks) to read this as a card of withdrawal due to lack of action. But sometimes the important action is going on inside. Why do you think he is not taking the cup? Should he take the cup? Will he take the cup? I often find this card needs **context** to understand it fully. Look at the other cards; trust your intuition. Is this card reminding you to snap out of it, to slow down, or suggesting you need to pause?
- This card can indicate **breaking emotional patterns** – perhaps a client needs to clear old emotions before embarking on that new job or relationship. Most times I see it as **hopeful** (I can't move away from the link with the Ace of Cups, with that one cup in the divine hand), though there is a need for **patience**; timing may not be as you hoped.

### **In a reading:**

- Pause and take the time to dream, doodle, visualise, connect with your dreams a little.
- It's OK to feel bored and stuck in a rut; that's when inspiration strikes!
- When we wait for a while, in peace, we know what we most need to do.
- Time to focus on inner work: meditation, dreaming, a duvet day!

*I have a secret to share: I hate, hate, hate doing my email 'year ahead' readings for clients. I know they are well received and clients find them very helpful, but they give me psychic indigestion, walking through the energies of someone's year in that way. And I know many of my clients print them out and use them to structure their year by, because I get a lot of feedback about how uncannily accurate they are. So, I get a satisfaction in doing them, and put a serious amount of effort into doing them well, but I do have to be very disciplined in not doing too many in one day.*

*At the start of 2019, the 4 of Cups was the stalker card for my year ahead readings; it would pop up without any seeming reason. I would see energies moving, decisions being taken, job offers made, houses sold – then slap bang, for no reason, the 4 of Cups. I think just about every reading had the same sentence several times: 'Everything looks good, but there is a slowing down and I don't know why.' Of course, as is so often the case, it was only with hindsight that I fully understood the context. As life slowed down as we navigated Covid restrictions and lockdowns, the 4 of Cups became very clear. For me now, the 4 of Cups will always make me think of the great Covid lockdown and how the whole world seemed to slow down.*

### **5 of Cups**

A cloaked figure stands, head down, with three tipped cups in front of them. Two cups stand behind them. A river flows past, and in the distance there is a bridge over the river (the same bridge as in the 4 of Wands), and a building over the riverbank.

Sadness and timing. Do you need to spend time being and feeling sad? Or are you wallowing a little too much? Time to pick yourself up and carry on?

## Symbolism:

- There is no hiding it: this is a card about feeling sad because we have lost something that felt important to us. If you get the 5 of Cups it may reflect the **sadness** you feel now, or are likely to feel in the future. This is not necessarily a card about **loss** – the sadness may be about something that happened a long time ago, and perhaps you were unable to deal with your emotions at the time; or perhaps it is an ongoing **emotional trauma** that reappears from time to time. It is right to feel sad when we lose something or someone we love. It helps us to move on as a whole and mentally healthy person. If you get the 5 of Cups, pay attention to when you are ready to live life fully again. There can be a sense of someone wallowing, submerging, drowning in their sorrow.
- The remaining two **cups**, and the **bridge** across the **water**, are the real clues to this card. Life is still worth living. When the time is right you need to pick yourself up and walk across the bridge to the rest of your life. Conversely, this card may represent someone who is soldiering on regardless, burying their sadness deep and hoping it will go away. It won't. Sadness and loss need to be acknowledged. If you feel this reflects you, look at ways you can express your feelings, e.g. journaling, or talking to a friend or counsellor. Repressed feelings always come back.
- The 5 of Cups is all about sadness and **timing**. There is a time for sadness, to be in the moment of your emotions (as the person in the card clearly is), and there is a time to pick up the cups and cross the bridge. Look to your intuition and other cards to see if this is about **wallowing** or **repression**. When we don't acknowledge our emotions, we can easily become caught in patterns of anger, fear or paranoia. This card can be a warning that pent-up emotions are becoming a problem. Sometimes I wonder if the red and green liquids spilled from the tipped cups represent the jealousy, rage and spite we can feel when all we see is our mistakes, and never the potential we could have. A tendency to destroy instead of enjoy. True sadness on a deep level that poisons all around us – and ourselves most of all.
- How did the cups fall over? Were they kicked in a rage? Knocked over before they could fall anyway? Knocked over to stop the person from having to cross the bridge? Many of us have self-limiting patterns, where we **self-sabotage** rather than leave

our comfort zone. Look carefully to see if you are holding yourself in a difficult situation because it is less scary than making a change.

- At its simplest, this is a ‘pick yourself up and get on with it’ card; a ‘don’t cry over spilt milk’ message. I have also seen this card reflect deep **trauma** or unprocessed **anger**, and trigger tears and rage. I have seen clients shrug and say, “Yes, I really should just get on with life.” There is great **hope** in this card, but take the time to understand the message – it is usually important. If this card is in your reading and you just can’t place it, it is worth meditating on the card, journaling, or taking the time to just sit with the card. It can often be highlighting a loss or grief that you haven’t fully let go of, and our conscious mind can struggle to acknowledge that loss.

### **In a reading:**

- This card usually highlights feelings of sadness, loss and grief.
- Stop focusing on all the little things that may be going wrong. Focus on what is working today.
- If you have feelings of sadness, take the time to feel them. Allow yourself to connect with your emotions.
- Release your emotions, put on a smile, and start a new day.

### **6 of Cups**

Take a look at this card – I mean really *look* at it. The buildings seem too big, and to crowd around the two main characters. Have you spotted the man walking away? The people look odd, the wrong size somehow, and the red hoods are dominant. Not hats – oddly, they are wearing hoods. This card gives me the creeps!

Sweet memories of happy days. Experiencing and sharing happiness. Innocent bliss in simple pleasures. Or, as I like to call it, the darkest card in the deck...

### **Symbolism:**

- At its simplest level, this card is about **happy memories**, either of your past, or creating them now for your future. It is unconditional love; a haze of security and happiness. It is remembering or experiencing life with **rose-tinted glasses** – which

now and then is just fine. Life seems rosy, simple and uncomplicated. (Or even if that isn't true, that is how it will be fondly remembered.)

- Often this card is reminding us to nurture our own **inner child**. The responsibilities of adult life complicate matters too much. Go for a walk in the rain, read a good book in bed (preferably in the middle of the day), watch a family film, paint, juggle, play the piano – do something just for the fun of doing it, rather than because you feel the need.
- **Fairy tales** are fun stories (often a little scary) that help children to learn society's **mythology** and important **life messages**, whilst relaxing. Try it yourself. Just when we think we are having the most fun is often when we learn our most important lessons.
- The **red hoods** – have a look into the *Little Red Riding Hood* myth; it is a dark tale of sexual awareness, consumption and death. If you want to see how it can be woven into modern mythology, watch the movies *Don't Look Now* or *The Company of Wolves*.
- The **St Andrew's cross** suggests **martyrdom**. The **adult walking away** either illustrates that the children are so safe they do not need an adult's protection, or that there is no **safety** offered to the children at all. This is a very difficult side to the card: the martyred child. All children are martyrs, for one of two (and often both) reasons. We promise young children 100% safety, love and security. At some point they realise that adults cannot keep this promise. Whether through accident, illness, or needing older children to face the consequences of their mistakes, for children to become adults, adults must let them down. Parents are not omnipotent. Or, adults abuse their power, and the trust children place in them. This card can reflect an abusive or neglectful childhood, or it can point to unresolved wounding from childhood, even if the parents were caring and sensitive – growing up can be difficult. Obviously, if this is mentioned it should be done with great care and sensitivity. Just be aware that this card can bring childhood memories to the surface. Sometimes it just means that the simplest of pleasures will lift the heart; other times it is that the problem the cards are looking at is deeply rooted from childhood. I would always tread softly with this card.

**In a reading:**

- Watch out for childhood wounds affecting whatever question you are reading for.
- A day for simple pleasures and a little fun. Lighten up your mood with ice cream, comedy, or a walk in the park.
- Don't judge life to be a failure because it isn't matching your memories.
- Look at your past to see if your experiences are triggering you.
- Nurture your inner child; think of simple things that bring you gentle comfort.

*This is probably the one card that I have received the most feedback from online, and my experience with clients still reflects my original notes. It very often points to emotional wounding, or self-limiting blocks rooted in childhood.*

*These notes were originally written a section at a time, split into nine sections, to be taught in the first round of my Tarot workshops. I really enjoyed researching each set of notes, books spread on the bed, the cards laid out in order. Focused time engaging with each card was something I looked forward to; a little 'me time' in my busy home life with four young children.*

*Until I reached the 6 of Cups. Each time I sat with this card it gave me a headache, made me feel uneasy, queasy, a little bit ill. I'd always seen it very much as a card of nostalgia and rose-tinted glasses, but I needed to know why sitting with it was triggering me so deeply. So, I started to delve a little more. Most readers link the 6 of Cups to happy memories, but looking at the picture didn't make me feel happy; it made me feel on edge. The symbolism triggering my childhood wounds caused my strange emotional reaction. For various reasons, my childhood was not an easy one, which is why the card was triggering such a complex reaction. I believe we all have wounds, self-limiting beliefs, and conditioning from our childhood. Certain beliefs or expectations that are so much a part of us we aren't even aware they are there: codified expectations, phrases, unspoken rules from our parents' or grandparents' childhoods. So, if the 6 of Cups comes up in a reading, have a look: is it pointing the way to a self-limiting belief (watch out for Swords cards) or a deep wounding and fear (perhaps The Devil, The Tower, or The Moon) that is impacting you now?*

*Whether reading for yourself or someone else, do tread gently. Even if someone has had a happy childhood and been well loved and understood, there may have been an incident of getting lost, the loss of a grandparent, or bullying by a neighbour. I never seek to blame; just to understand and help the client accept and ease this wound. Practical tools like*

*journaling, art therapy, breath work, counselling, or shamanic healing can make a real difference.*

## **7 of Cups**

You can see the black silhouette of someone, with seven cups in a cloud in front of them. Each cloud has something inside it: a head, a shrouded figure, a snake, a castle, jewels, a laurel wreath, and a dragon. What these symbols mean may vary according to your culture and personal belief system.

It's important to spend time daydreaming, fantasising and visualising, but you will need to make a clear choice and act upon it.

### **Symbolism:**

- Spending time **dreaming**, contemplating, and imagining how life could be is an essential part of creating our life path. But we must use **focus** and **clarity** to decide which dream to follow, and then follow it! **Timing** is essential with this card: some time spent dreaming is empowering; a life lost in dreams is not.
- What do the **images in the cups** mean to you? There are no other clear images in the card apart from the dreams which have obscured all of life. This card reflects Water's biggest downfall: **lack of action**. Connecting with all possibilities, but realising none. Sometimes choice becomes a poisoned chalice, and not making a choice leads to becoming paralysed by inaction.
- There is a danger with the 7 of Cups that the person starts to **project** their hopes, fears, dreams and dislikes onto other people and life in general. They almost stop seeing people as they actually are, simply seeing their own reflection in everything around them.
- Imagine the dream gaining more and more importance; it grows and grows until it fills the whole of the person's experience. Henri Corbin described this as 'imaginal', when the **imagined world** is as real as the physical world. Remember that with Tarot balance is the key. It is not that the dream world lacks importance, but it needs to be integrated into life, not dominate it.
- There is the potential of completely **losing touch with reality** through **addiction** or **seduction** into the hedonistic and glitzy lifestyle money can offer, of being

consumed by physical desires. If you get this card, it is always a good idea to be honest about any addictions (alcohol, internet, shopping, cleaning, hoarding, etc.) that you may be developing. The image is of a person greedily grabbing every cup, selfishly following every desire with no consideration for the consequences of their actions. This is addiction; when all you care about is your addiction.

- With patience, the 7 of Cups is a beautiful image of the **Grail quest**, slowly letting the cups dissipate one by one, until your single true soul dream is before you. So much potential in this card, but only if you can allow stillness to help you to connect with what you are looking for, so you can ground and act upon it.

### **In a reading:**

- Open your mind to new possibilities and solutions by imagining what you would most like to achieve.
- Honour your need to daydream, vision-board and doodle! (But don't get lost in the daydreaming.)
- Creative manifestation.
- There can be links to addiction, especially if combined with the King of Cups, The Devil, or Temperance.

### **8 of Cups**

A person in a red cloak and boots walks up an incline with a staff to aid him. Behind him are eight cups, all upright, and an eclipse is in the sky.

Letting go. A fresh perspective. Perseverance. A complex card which can have several slightly different meanings.

### **Symbolism:**

- If the 7 of Cups can suggest addictive behaviours, then the pattern is broken with the 8, for this is the card of **letting go** and **moving on**. This could refer to anything which is not for your highest good: people, jobs, houses, addictions, self-limiting beliefs... A change is called for. You not only understand that, but you are willing to act upon it.

- It's easy to make assumptions with the 8 of Cups. Is he **leaving**, or off to fetch the last cups? (Ten is the full 'set'.) Does he have one or more cups with him? Is he leaving because he's given up, or because he feels it is the right thing to do? All the cups are **upright**, suggesting he has chosen to walk away from something that is still serving him but no longer right for him. Look carefully at this card and see how it makes you feel; that is often a good indication as to how to read it. (If indicated by other cards and intuition, the 8 of Cups could suggest that perseverance is needed!)
- This card can be a strong indication that the best way forward is to look within and trust your **intuition**. It might be suggesting that it is a good time to do some **inner work**, gaining a sense of yourself and your true purpose. Look to the other cards to see if this is indicated, in particular The Hermit (compare the two cards: the single figure supported by the staff).
- If the 7 of Cups can be someone seduced by material pleasures, in the 8 of Cups is someone who has (for the time being) turned his back on such fripperies and is seeking a **higher purpose**. The moon image is likely to be an **eclipse**; a time of deep change and strange magic. The figure walks with a staff – or could that be the **wand** of his **inspiration** that he is using to guide his way in the strange half-light?
- Sometimes this card just means (resonating with the 4 of Cups) that you need a **change** from your normal life: a night, a weekend, or a week away from it all to allow you to gain a better perspective.
- The **cups** are all still standing. Maybe he is just taking a **break** before he comes back to finish the job, refreshed and with a better appreciation of his blessings. Perhaps from the top of the hill he will have a clearer picture of how his life is unfolding?

### **In a reading:**

- A different perspective is needed today. Make changes to your routine so you can see the wood for the trees.
- Fear of commitment.
- Finding a fresh perspective so you can decide whether to persevere or let go.
- Find space alone; hear your own intuition.

*When reading for myself I really hate this card. It's the one that says, 'Stand back – you're not quite on the right path.' As I am very much like the Knights of Wands and Swords, I really don't like standing back to get a better perspective. I would much rather just keep going and presume everything will sort itself out in the end.*

*The 8 of Cups has been a key card in the writing of this book. This book is the first time I have paused in a project to really gain insight from others along the way. The book has been sent in chunks to various beta readers; a selection of students and clients whose Tarot experience varies from absolute beginner to Tarot pro. Pausing to read their constructive criticism has (hopefully) helped me to create a more considered book than I would have done in my usual Knight of Wands/Swords manner.*

*When I am becoming overwhelmed, I try to imagine that I am in the 8 of Cups. I breathe, and try to step back from whatever the issue is, to consider how important this will be to me in a week, a month, a year...*

## **9 of Cups**

A rather cheery man sits, dressed in a fine red hat, arms crossed and looking proud and hopeful. Behind him, up high on a blue cloth, are nine cups, all upright.

Classically called 'the wish card', and a resounding 'yes' if you asked a question. Distraction from worry by focusing on enjoyment; fine in the short term...

### **Symbolism:**

- Often when the 9 of Cups pops up it is a reminder that enjoying ourselves leads to a more optimistic state of mind, and pays huge dividends in many ways. This card is '**a little of what you fancy**': ice cream in the bath, a glass of wine and an old movie, a trashy book and a cup of hot chocolate... something comforting and slightly indulgent to cheer the spirits.
- The **barkeeper** has lined up all his **cups**, put on a jaunty hat and socks, and is going to be of **good cheer**, whether he feels happy or not. Sometimes it is right to abandon the struggle and just do something to lift our spirits. The danger with distracting ourselves from the complexities of life with a good movie is if, when we've finished the movie, we just play another, and another. Our quick pick-me-up has become an **addiction** (7 of Cups mode again). Or we become so involved with the

sensual pleasures of life we become **superficial**, unable to appreciate the simpler pleasures of chatting to a loved one or walking in the woods.

- There is an element of **wish fulfilment** about this card, or ‘magnetising our desires’. When we focus on the obstacles in life, they can appear to grow larger and more insurmountable. Perhaps this guy knows his life is not perfect, but as an optimist he is going to look and act happy, meeting every challenge with the hope that he will overcome it... and with an attitude like that he probably will!
- He only has **nine** cups. Ten is the complete number. He knows it, but he’s going to bluster it out, live like his dream is coming true, and with that level of belief his subconscious will become a powerful ally. A strong positive outlook and good self-belief (even with a little bit of bluster) go a long way.

### **In a reading:**

- The ‘wish’ card. Act as if everything is hunky-dory, just for today. It can make quite a change.
- Allow yourself a day of treats and distraction.
- Yes, wishes do come true.
- Optimism and a cheerful disposition will make a real change.
- Programming your unconscious with your dreams.

*I love the Rider–Waite deck, but my favourite 9 of Cups is in the DruidCraft deck. Let me describe the picture: a man sits at a banqueting table, alone, lifting a cup as if in a toast. I always think this is manifesting at its finest. He is awaiting his guests, knowing they are on their way because he has used the four suits of Tarot to ensure he has manifested his hope of enjoying a banquet:*

- **The suit of Wands:** *He had a ‘knowing’ that he wanted a banquet.*
- **The suit of Cups:** *He is emotionally connected to how it would feel to be at the banquet; daydreaming a little about how it would be.*
- **The suit of Swords:** *He planned the banquet and communicated to everyone that it was happening.*

- ***The suit of Pentacles:** He did the preparation: organised the seating and food, sent the invitations...*

*I often see these stages of manifesting in a client's Tarot reading, but it is all too easy to get stuck in one stage – perhaps lots of daydreaming and vision-boarding, but never quite creating a plan. Or to miss a stage – you are creating a plan, but your heart is not in it. Try to find the flow of the suits in a reading: which stage are you at now in any given project? Is there a progression, or are you missing a stage altogether?*

## **10 of Cups**

A couple stand, arm in arm, whilst two children dance. A rainbow containing ten cups arches above them.

Happiness, love, fulfilment, gratitude, joy. Long-lasting relationships. Family.

### **Symbolism:**

- Do not be mistaken in thinking that this card only means marriage and children. This card is **happiness in a relationship**, whatever that means to you. Perhaps with pets, or perhaps happiness in yourself (when all four people represent aspects of you).
- Be assured, this is one of the happiest, most positive cards in the Tarot. If you have problems, they will work out. If you have dreams, they will come true. If you seek love, you will find it. Any **happiness** you find is likely to be **long-lasting** and **secure**. If **cups** represent **love**, then this is free-flowing love: for yourself, your family and your friends. And love never runs out: the more you give, the more you receive. It is the authentic language of the universe. I love the **rainbow**; a clear sign of sunshine after storms.
- The adults stand together, ready to engage with the world in **partnership**. The children can represent their **inner children**, authentic, natural and happy. The **house** is small, but big enough. Unlike the 10 of Pentacles, this is a card of **experiencing life** instead of accumulating objects. Look at the card – does it make you smile?
- This is a '**separation**' card (that line that looks like a stage). If you get this card and are in a difficult position right now, with hope and happiness seeming far away, then the 10 of Cups reminds you that we can create our own reality. By working with our

**intent**, our subconscious; by being an **active** player in life rather than reacting to things that happen to us, we can make our dreams come true. The separation cards look like theatre sets, with actors on the stage. With the 10 of Cups this suggests someone focusing in on a specific hope (compare with the crowded 7 of Cups). They have a clear and simple dream, and they are creating a vibrant picture for their subconscious. Think of this card as a positive **affirmation**. Feel free to take it out of your pack and place it somewhere to help lift your spirits. Sometimes when life doesn't seem so good and you get the 10 of Cups, it's letting you know that life isn't so bad after all. Take time to count your blessings and practise a little gratitude.

- If the 10 of Cups is pulled as an important card, it suggests that the focus in life at this point concerns **home, family** or **relationships**.
- The 10 of Cups will always add **hope** to negative cards or difficult situations.

#### **In a reading:**

- Relationships are key with this card, whether work, family or friends. Make time for the people in your life.
- A long-lasting, happy and committed relationship.
- Enjoy your blessings.
- Visualise how you would love your life to be.
- A promise that things will work out well.

*This card is a godsend for me as a Tarot pro. Sometimes clients come to me as an act of desperation in the worst of times; I may be the last-ditch attempt to find some hope, some meaning, in catastrophic moments. When loved ones have died, walked out or gone missing; when the client has suffered the loss of a baby, a job or a home; when mental health issues are crowding in, help is hard to find. I have had clients driven to me after suicide attempts, clients bring letters to open with me that they can't face opening on their own, and secrets whispered to me that they have told no one else. On occasions people have come to me on the way home from sitting with a dying relative, or on the way to a funeral. I am the one to whom they whisper, "I can't go on any more."*

*I don't enjoy these moments. I love a shamanic challenge, but not to be faced with someone in utter torment hoping against hope that the Tarot will find light in their darkness. And*

*yet it does. The card most likely to come up in these moments is the 10 of Cups. There are many Christian images in the Rider–Waite deck, and the rainbow in this card is one of them. It was God’s promise that he would not destroy humanity again. I find that with clients in a state of trauma and shock, showing them the card, explaining the images, is really important. They often aren’t hearing words clearly and are wary that I may be placating them in some way. When this card comes (as it usually does), I show them the ten cups – joy and happiness – in the rainbow. Whether you believe the Bible to be the word of God, or a book containing wise parables, doesn’t really matter. The promise of happiness is enough to create that moment of hope needed.*

*Usually, I will sort through the cards at this point, find the Ace of Cups, and talk about loving ourselves, being kind to ourselves, and how the tiniest act of self-care, like reaching out to a Tarot reader for comfort and guidance, can be the start of the healing process.*

*Sometimes with clients in real trauma, I pray that this card will be there. So many times, I have looked to the spread, cursing slightly under my breath as all the spread is doing is reflecting their pain – useful, but not helpful. I turn the pack over and there it is: the 10 of Cups. I breathe and know I can help a little; hope is sometimes all I can offer.*