



## Reading the 5X5 “Inner Magician” Spread

The 25-card “Constellation of Magic” reading from the Voyager Tarot study material arranges very neatly into a 5X5 layout with a single “focus” card centered vertically and horizontally within the spread. The cards are laid out in vertical 5-card columns, starting at the upper left and ending at the lower right (although they could just as well be arrayed in rows from left-to-right and top-to-bottom). The center card (#13) relates to the “Rainbow” or “How I Can Find Joy” line in the text. As the “focus” card it captures the Zen-like assumption that joy should be sought within, and that external phenomena are merely distractions. This card also has a secondary correspondence to the Death card in the traditional tarot, suggesting ways in which the “old” can be transformed into the “new” through an act of will. To reinforce the connection of this spread to the Magician of the original reading, the focus card is titled “Inner Magician,” and the consultation is intended to shed light on how well or poorly the “Magical Will” (aka “True Will”) functions in the seeker's life at the time of the reading, and ways in which it might be successfully redirected.

The principal feature of this spread is the 9-card equal-armed cross that quarters the square. In the “Graphics” section of his book *A Dictionary of Symbols*, in which he ascribes metaphysical qualities to basic geometric figures, J.E. Cirlot names this cross the “spiritual and neutral” quaternary, and the square signifies the “material and passive” quaternary. Joining these symbolic elements in a single image creates an emblem that brings to mind the quiescent state of a human being at birth: a *tabula rasa* on which the details of the individual's life are gradually written. In this metaphor, the “Inner Magician” might be seen as the “seed” idea of a past life carried forward into the present incarnation.

The vertical axis of the cross mirrors the stance of the Magician in traditional tarot decks, in which the Magician's wand-bearing right hand is raised “above” to channel spiritual light, and his left hand points “below” to disseminate that light into the material world (although in the Tarot de Marseille decks this stance is reversed). This axis of the cross is titled the “Axis of Inspiration.” The horizontal axis is titled the “Axis of Integration,” defining the interface via which the four classical elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth are harnessed to the service of the Magician in pursuing his mission.

Quartering the layout produces four peripheral “quads” representing the realms of Fire and Air above (conceptually denoting the Higher Mind) and Water and Earth below (depicting the Lower Mind). The most important card in each quad is the one that touches diagonally on the “Inner Magician” card; these cards provide the “linkage” between the Magician and the four fields of elemental potential, the portals through which the Magician “processes” the energy of the elements, both incoming and outgoing. In keeping with the Voyager correlation of the Magician to the four Aces, each linking card is figuratively assigned the Ace of its respective element as a kind of “significator.”

As with almost all odd-numbered spreads, this layout is perfect for the use of Elemental Dignities since there are numerous three-card sets, each with a middle “principal” or “focus” card and two adjacent “modifiers.” This practice supposes that some elements are mutually friendly, or at the very least supportive, while others are unfriendly and uncooperative. Friendly or supportive modifiers strengthen the function of the focus card, making it “well-dignified;” unfriendly modifiers weaken it, producing an “ill-dignified” status; and modifiers of mixed dignity neutralize one another, resulting in no effect on the principal. The normal expression of any card in the middle position is biased accordingly, on one hand making for a strong showing in the reading proper; on the other, one that is easily overridden by competing influences. Friendly elemental pairs are Fire and Air, Earth and Water; unfriendly pairs are Fire and Water, Air and Earth; supportive elements are Fire and Earth, Air and Water.

In this spread, the primary triplets (with focus cards in **boldface**) are: 3-**8**-13, 11-**12**-13, 15-**14**-13, 23-**18**-13, 8-**13**-18 and 12-**13**-14, showing whether the Magician's “working environment” supports effective integration of the “above” and the “below.” Interestingly, the last two “core” sets each add up to 39 and reduce to 12 – the Hanged Man, one of the Magician's “alter-egos” who seeks illumination in the spiritual depths and not the rarefied heights. Two final sets (7-**13**-19 and 9-**13**-17, also summing to 39) complete the picture, cross-tying the Aces of the four supportive elements through the Magician.

Secondary triplets are 1-7-13, 5-9-13, 21-17-13 and 25-19-13, offering insight into how closely the “Inner Magician” is attuned to all four elemental resources, and how fluently those resources can be translated into action. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cards in each horizontal line are also linked by their final digit.

Tertiary triplets within the elemental quads are also possible, “shading” the potency of the linking cards (for example, 2-7-12 and 6-7-8) before they are factored into the secondary triplets. Tertiary triplets “across the divide” between elemental quads, with the “satellite” cards in the cross as the focus, can also be determined (2-3-4, 6-11-16, etc), but it can quickly become a case of “diminishing returns.” In all but the rarest cases, the primary and secondary triplets will be sufficient.

It is also possible to engage the cards that aren't directly aligned to the central card (Cards 2, 4, 6, 10, 16, 22, 20 and 24) by using the practice popular in Lenormand reading of “knighting” between Card #13 and those “skewed” cards. This involves simulating the L-shaped “knight's move” of chess by moving three cards away from the focus card (one or two cards out - vertically or horizontally, not diagonally - and then two or one card at right angles) to land on a destination card that is given special significance. This card can be read as both a narrative qualifier for the “Inner Magician” and as an expression of elemental dignity; there are eight such possibilities involving the cards mentioned above.

Begin reading this spread by considering the nature of the axes of “Inspiration” and “Integration,” both as narrative “stories” and as inputs to the “Inner Magician's” functional toolbox. This will show how comfortably the Magician is situated within his present sphere of operation: how effectively he turns inspiration into practical results (vertical axis) and how efficiently he coordinates and brings elemental forces to bear on his objectives (horizontal axis).

The influence of the elemental quads via the linking cards will reveal whether the Magician is strongly aligned with each of the energy reservoirs or whether there is a weak connection in one or more of the areas. For example, in approaching a project, the Magician may be able to successfully tap the requisite desire (Fire) and vision (Air), but lack access to the emotional stamina (Water) and material stability (Earth) to see it through. Similarly, he may have a high-minded conviction that he's doing the right thing (Fire and Air), but he may also have secret doubts about the risks to his emotional health and security (Water and Earth). The goal is to see whether the elemental “channels” are disposed in a friendly or unfriendly way to the “Inner Magician.” The four-card quads culminating in the diagonal output can also be read as a narrative describing how the different psychological factors influence the Magician's decision-making and risk-taking propensities. Conversely, the links can work in an “outbound” manner showing how effective the Magician will be in imposing his will on circumstances in each of the elemental arenas.

In summary, the spread should be analyzed for indications of whether the “Inner Magician” is favored to succeed in whatever he is attempting to do, or whether he will face practical and/or psychological challenges that will have to be recognized and confronted. The elemental dignities will aid in revealing where those “hard spots” lie and the narrative discourse will ideally build a picture of what he might do to compensate, how he might do it, and who might assist or impede him.