The Case for a Traveling Significator

Significator (S4)

Card # 5 "Above"

Card #10 "Outcome"

Significator (S9)

Significator (S5)

Card #9 "Hopes"

Significator (S8)

Significator S1

Card #4 "Behind"

Card #1 "Covers"

Card #2 "Crosses"

Card #6 "Before"

Card #8 "External Concerns"

Significator (S3)

Significator (S7)

Card #3 "Beneath"

Significator (S2)

Card #7 "Self-Doubts"
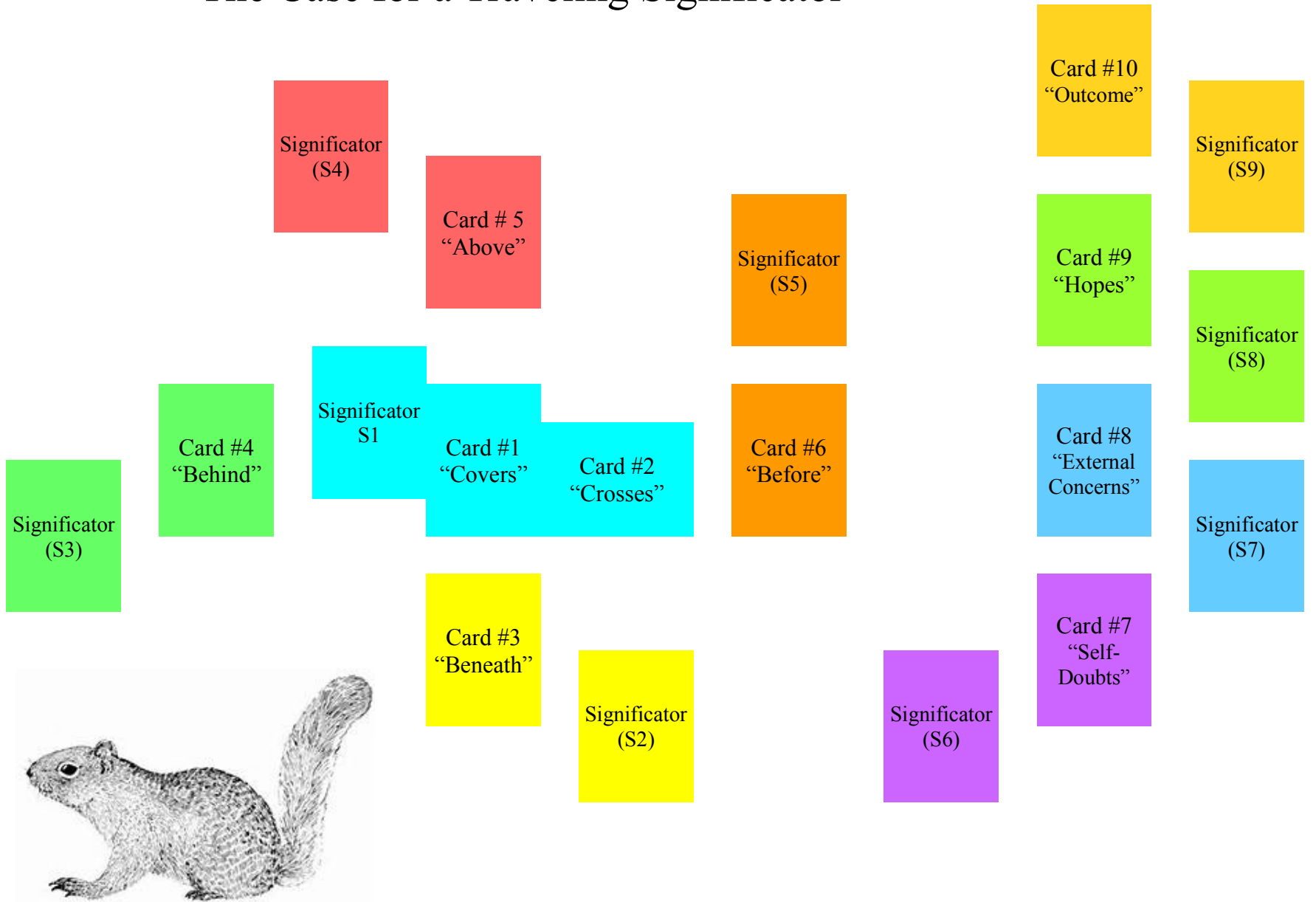
Significator (S6)

Ranking high on the list of topics for perennial debate among tarot enthusiasts is the conundrum of whether or not to use a "significator" card to represent the querent or the subject. Recently, a couple of random thoughts have been knocking around in my head that have slowly begun merging into a coherent theory. The first idea concerns the handling of the significator in a Celtic Cross layout. The second involves a realization that the positions in a tarot spread resemble the squares of a board game, lacking only moving "pieces" to complete the analogy.

The problem I've always had with the Celtic Cross significator card is that it resembles a "disinterested bystander;" it doesn't have much of a role in the narrative, and in a face-to-face reading its presence is redundant to the person sitting across the table from the reader. In recent years I have entirely dispensed with it in my Celtic Cross readings, but I've always felt that more "mileage" might be gained from it.

This leads directly into my second notion. If the sequential positions in a spread mirror the squares of a board game like Monopoly (although Sorry! might be a better reference, since life can often be a case of taking "one step forward and two steps back"), it should be possible to create a sense of movement that better integrates the querent's involvement at all stages of the "story." This is a perfect opportunity to free the significator from its usual station and set it loose in the spread! The idea is to slide the original significator along the timeline, one position at a time, and read it in combination with each card as a way to "personalize" that aspect of the reading with the querent's active presence. One way is to read the combination as a two-part narrative vignette that makes the influence of the spread card more directly accountable to the querent's action (or inaction); another way is to use the significator's input as an expression of Elemental Dignity, either increasing or decreasing the potency of the spread card for good or ill.

I depicted this graphically by color-coding each location for the "traveling significator" to match that of the spread position with which it interacts. Note that the first three cards work as a set with the original significator according to standard practice, so the subsequent pairings of significator and spread card get out-of-sync numerically. The spread position titles are drawn from my modifications to Eden Gray's model as presented in *The Tarot Revealed*.

But what about that squirrel? In the grand old tradition of "cloud divination," I noticed that the Celtic Cross layout enhanced with the additional Significator locations looks like a squirrel. Since squirrels are great "travelers" and this experiment is a bit "squirrely," the fit seemed perfect.