

The following is an excerpt from *The Book of Maps*, the companion guidebook to the *Spirit Keeper's Tarot*, a hand-illustrated black and white tarot deck crafted with practitioners of the mystic arts in mind. The pen and ink drawings were inspired by woodcut prints from the late Renaissance. Symbology called upon is based predominantly on medieval European alchemy, astrology (the Sacred Seven), Hermeticism, Zoroastrianism, Abrahamic angelology, Kabbalah, Catholicism/Christianity, Sufism, and Egyptian mythology.



For more information about the deck, go to:

<https://benebellwen.com/spirit-keepers-tarot>

The Significator

A classical divinatory technique in tarot reading transplanted in from horary astrology is the use of a significator. In *Spirit Keeper*, the significator card will always be Key 0. However, which version of Key 0 being used will depend on where in the path of discovery the operator of the deck is at.

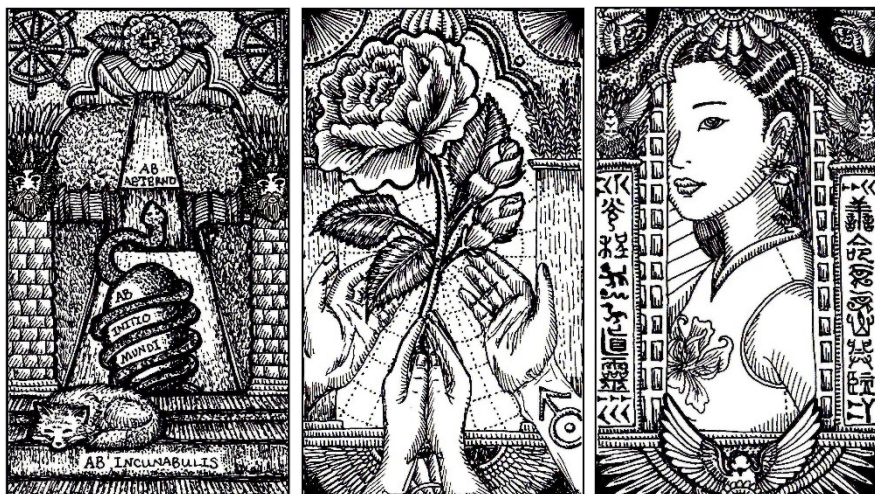
When working with the Major Arcana of the deck exclusively toward the intention of initiating the deck into personal work with your Holy Guardian Angel, use The Initiate in place of Key 0, the classic Fool card. Also, use The Initiate card in all readings with the deck during the time period that you are working through the initiation process to gain access.

Once that initiation has taken place and a realized, conscious connection between you and your Holy Guardian Angel has been established, henceforth use The Seeker for your Key 0. At that point you can retire Key 0: The Initiate from personal use. However, select Key 0: The Initiate as the significator card in readings for others when the reading inquiry is about a commencement matter, new beginnings, or in any situation that makes sense to you as one where an Initiate card would be called for. For readings that pertain to the cycle of growth and the tradition of reading The Fool card in tarot as personifying the spring of one's life path, use The Initiate.

Otherwise, when using the cards for divinatory purposes, use The Seeker. After you've self-initiated through the coloring of key omens on all cards (80 card entries in total), work primarily with The Seeker. Thus, for readings that are about seeing an answer, seeking spiritual salvation and that which is "peculiarly sacred" (noted from Crowley), work with The Seeker card to express that tradition of The Fool.



After a sense of self-adjudicated mastery over the deck, switch to using The Keeper as the significator. Also, when using the deck as calling cards to the roster of spirit entities, use The Keeper for Key 0. Note further that The Keeper expression of Key 0 emphasizes the presence of the Holy Spirit as a Sacred Triune. The active practitioner of the sacred arts and anyone who navigates between the realms should be using The Keeper when working with the deck. Which Key 0 to use in any given reading situation needs to be a matter of self-assessment by the tarot reader. Thus, trust your own intuition when deciding on which significator to go with.



In *The Book of Thoth*, Crowley notes three distinct traditions of interpreting The Fool card: the Green Man, the Great Fool of the Celts, and the Holy Ghost. The Green Man personifies the return of spring and the cycle of growth. The suggestion here is of rebirth and perhaps even the idealization and romanticizing of spring. One notable symbol here is the Easter Egg, a symbol we can find on Key 0: The Initiate.

The second distinct tradition is the Great Fairy Fool of the Celts. Waite, W.B. Yeats, and Crowley all reference Dalua, the Great Fairy Fool of the Celts, from a poem by William Sharp, who also wrote under the pseudonym Fiona Macleod. Sharp, writing under the pseudonym Fiona Macleod, described Dalua as being the “Dark Fool, the Faery Fool, whose touch is madness or death for any mortal: whose falling shadow, even, causes bewilderment and forgetfulness.” Contemporary mystic Ellen Goldberg notes about The Fool: “We start our spiritual quest because we’ve been bitten by the shadow.” The Dark Fool, or Faery Fool is that shadow and thus, Key 0 is the start of a spiritual quest.

The Great Fool as a doctrine conveys the human tendency to seek out its own savior, a savior who must appear “as the result of some extraordinary

accident.” Here, the Fool denotes a sense of unreasonableness to salvation: salvation cannot be obtained on reasonable terms. Thus, salvation and the messianic archetype are personified in the Great Fool: there is a requisite madness to religion and the pursuit of salvation—so it is the pursuit of the Fool. The Fool *is* the savior.

Finally, there’s the tradition of reading The Fool card as the Holy Ghost, the spirit of God. In this tradition, the Fool is on a quest for the Holy Grail, much like Percival, one of the knights of King Arthur’s Round Table. Here, there is an interpretation of fate and destiny woven into Key 0—Percival was born to a noble knight, but after the father dies, Percival’s mother raises him secluded in the woods so that he would never walk his father’s path. When a band of knights pass through the woods and encounter Percival, the boy walks the path of his destiny anyway, despite his mother’s best efforts to thwart it, and becomes a Knight of the Round Table.

Early on Percival comes across the Holy Grail, kept by the Grail King, a wounded man who cannot walk, and so fishes in a small boat. However, at the time, the young Percival does not recognize what he sees as the Holy Grail, so he misses his opportunity. Later, in retrospect when he realizes he had in fact found the Grail but did not know he had, he makes a vow to rediscover it once again. Later, it is Sir Galahad who finds the Grail, but does so accompanied by Percival and led to the Guardian Ship of the Grail by Percival’s sister. In this third tradition, Percival is The Fool. Key 0 is interpreted through the allegory of Percival’s quest for the Grail, an embodiment of the Holy Ghost.

The three versions of Key 0 skate upon these three traditions of interpreting The Fool. In The Initiate card, there are the two reliefs of the Green Man in the archway and the Easter Egg. In The Seeker, the hands in prayer and the hands seeking to receive from the divine powers suggest the quest for salvation. Note that in *Spirit Keeper’s Tarot*, Key 0 signifies the astral self, and so it is the astral self—The Fool—who is the savior, though it will take a long and arduous externalized quest before the seeker realizes who, after all this time, the savior is. The Keeper, or “Spirit in Petition of Spirit,” is a rendering of the Holy Ghost and the depiction of one appointed to lead the Keeper to the Guardian Ship of the Grail. Here, the trinity of doves also stands in for the Triune God.

Key o: The Initiate

Upon the first step of the threshold is a resting dog, or is it a fox spirit? Layered here are references to the warrior Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster, and the goddess Morrigan; Hecate; the kitsune fox spirit of Japanese lore; and Anubis. A fox is a faithful companion and guide to the mystic. The fox is also emblematic of the Norse goddess Sigyn, consort to Loki. Here is both a familiar waiting for the Initiate to take the first steps over the threshold and an omen of guardian spirits standing by. In Zoroastrian magic, the dog symbolizes a beneficent spirit companion who protect a magus against demons and curses.

To mark the beginning, note the words on the first stair leading to the threshold: Ab Incunabulis (“from the cradle” or “from cradle to grave”). The Initiate vows a life-long commitment to The Path, and no matter when the Initiate has come now before the threshold, it is known by all of Time and Space that the Initiate has always, since birth, been destined to stand here and take this Path.

Awaiting the Initiate at the front gates is the primordial cosmic egg of creation, born from the aether, the embryo of the Divine Androgyne, the embodiment of Pangu, the legend of the first living being created by the gods. This is the Orphic Egg. Inscribed upon the egg are the words: Ab Initio Mundi (“from the beginning of the world [to this day]”). No matter what point the Initiate takes the steps onto this Path, this Path in wait of the Initiate has always existed, will always exist.

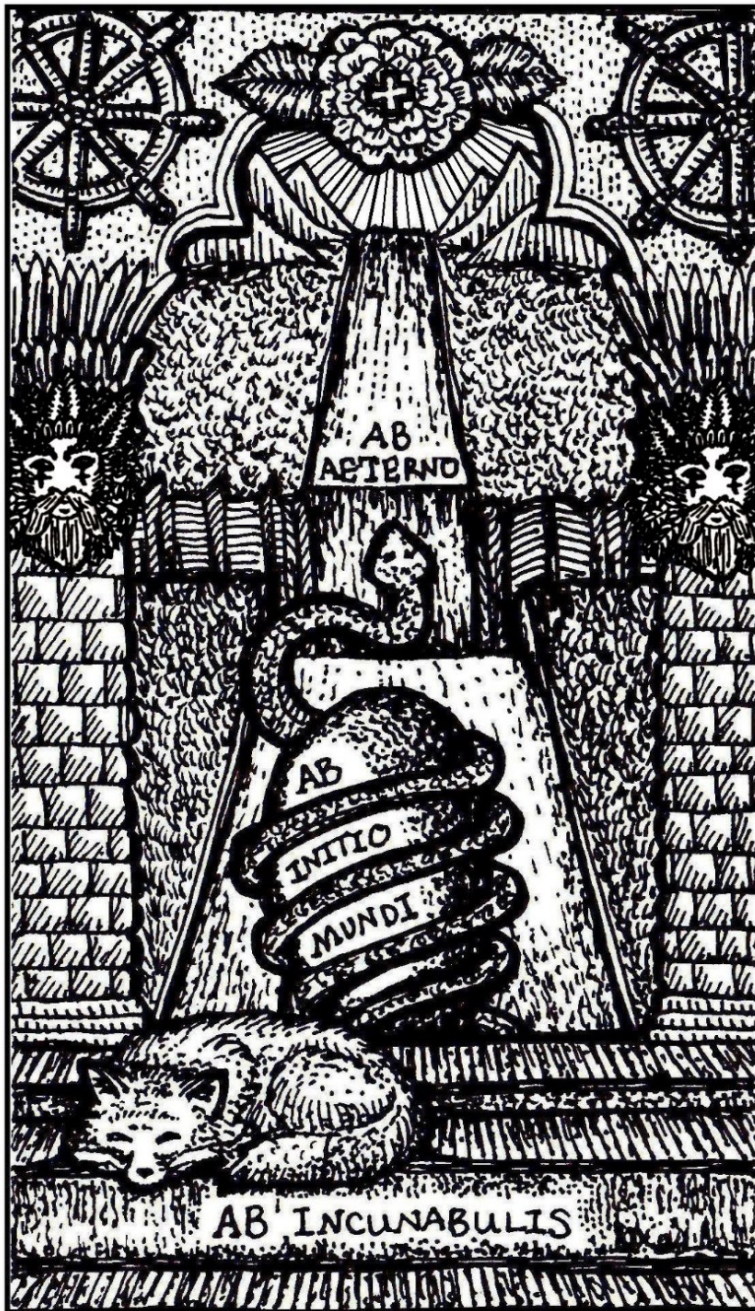
Note also that the two Latin phrases presented so far in the card’s imagery are also encoded into the invocation prayer to The Recording Angel on the frontispiece to this *Book*.

The cosmic egg depicted here is also the alchemical Hen’s Egg, where the four elements are joined together (the yolk is Fire, the white is Water, the membrane between the white and the shell is Air, and the shell is Earth) with the fifth element, which is that potential for life at the center of the yolk. The Hen’s Egg is said to be the perfected metaphor for producing the philosopher’s stone.

The serpent coiled around the egg symbolizes the creative life force, a divine masculine, and both the power of healing and potential for immortality. The serpent is also a manifestation of the Green Man, a symbol of spring and the cycles of nature. The many lifetimes and incarnations of The Initiate is what has led to this moment.



○. THE INITIATE



Spirit in Search of Experience

(continued from Key 0: The Initiate)

The egg also calls to mind the mythical stone egg of the Monkey King. According to legend, the Monkey King was born from a stone egg, which was an enchanted womb. A wind blew across that stone egg (the elemental power of Air, corresponding with Key 0) and the Monkey King was hatched. His first act was to bow in reverence and acknowledgement of the four quarters and four directional guardians.

In the near distance there is a chasm that the Initiate must cross. To cross, it will require a leap of faith. At the two top corners of the twin pillars marking the first threshold is the wheel of the ogdoad, symbolizing the eight primordial deities of Egyptian mythos and the eight immortals of Chinese mythos, relaying the first message: The gods are always watching as we take each intrepid step forward on our destined paths. The path leads into the horizon line where rays of a white sun shine down. Supplementing the eight-spoke wheels, there are eight rays of light emanating forth. The mountains symbolize knowledge attained.

It is also the circular ichthys symbol (ΙΧΘΥΣ), for Christ consciousness. At the top center is a white mystic rose. The center cross indicates divine oversight and protection on the journey. Once the Initiate has chosen to cross the threshold and journey beyond, the animal familiar will wake up and follow faithfully behind.

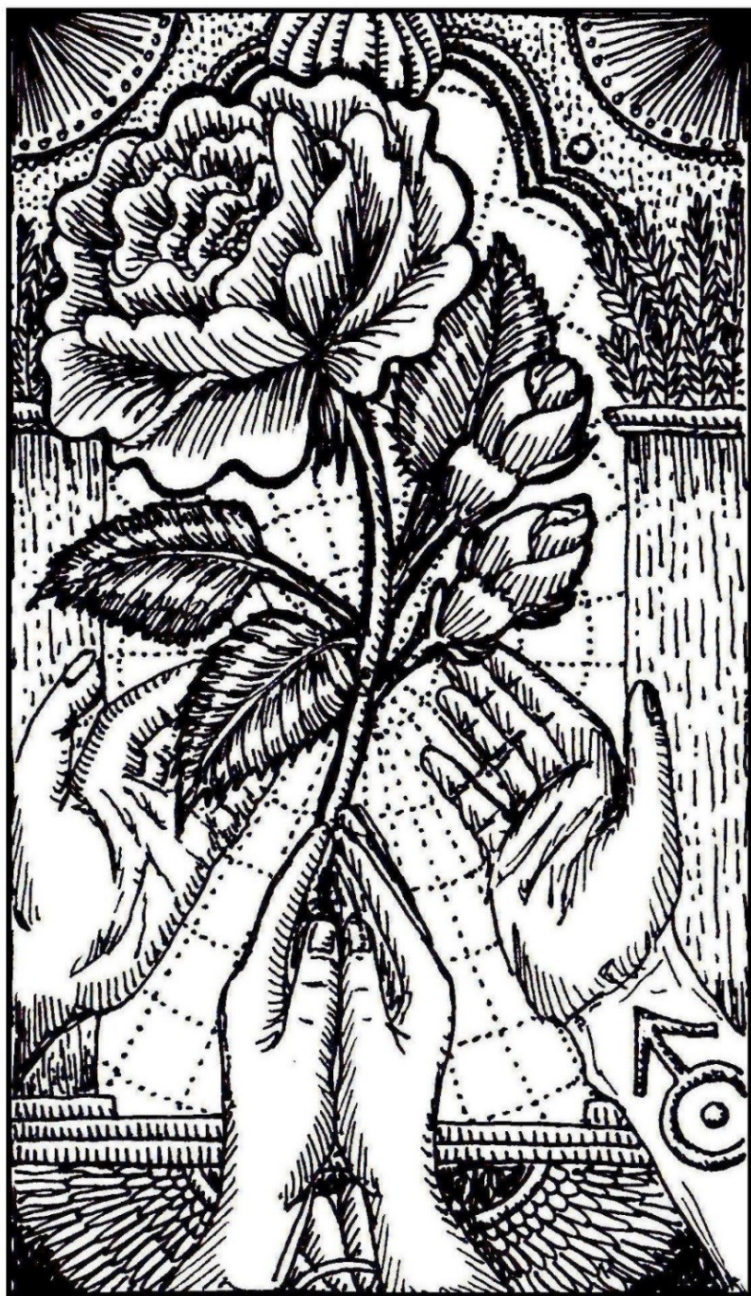
Marking success after the leap of faith has been taken and the Initiate has reached the other side: Ab Aeterno ("since the beginning"). Since the dawn of Time, this Path has marked the Initiate's destiny.

The twin pillars feature the relief of angel wings, portending to the Initiate what awaits beyond this threshold. In the architecture of the pillars, there are also the twin heads depicting the Green Man, who personifies a rebirth, return of spring, and the cycle of growth.

This is the Mystic Fool, a Spirit in Search of Experience. Use The Initiate as Key 0 in the tarot deck when inquiring about a new undertaking, when a Path has not yet been chosen or taken, or when insight is needed on which road to take forward. Use this embodiment of the Mystic Fool when what is sought is experience. For common use of the deck, this version of Key 0 can be used for The Fool, as the symbolism here is more familiar to RWS readers. This is the astral Self commencing a journey to reunite with God.



O. THE SEEKER



Spirit in Search of Science

Key 0: The Seeker

Before the threshold, marked by the twin pillars, two hands clasped in prayer offer three white roses to the divine spirits. One is in full bloom and two are still rose buds. White roses symbolize reverence, esotericism, *to keep silent*, and purity of spirit. It indicates that the Seeker has been cleansed and consecrated, and in a serene state prior to coming before the threshold for communion with the Divine. This is the adept as a Mystic Fool.

The two closed rose buds indicate that which still has not been revealed to the Seeker. After crossing over to the other side of the threshold, upon communion with the divine, the closed rose buds will open in full bloom.

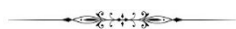
Supporting the clasped hands on either side are palms open and ready to receive. Upon the right wrist of the open palm, the astrological glyph for Uranus, the planetary correspondence for Key 0. Astrologically, Uranus represents science, progress, ingenuity, and unconventional knowledge.

Decorative adornments on the bottom platform of the threshold indicate a gateway into the realm of the celestial and angelic. In the top two corners of the archway are emanating rays of light and at the tips of each corner, an arc of eleven orbs, the numerological sign of the angels, the master number for The Tao, The Way, the sky and earth, and knowledge of God. This is the mystical number of prophesy and connection to angels, devas, and bodhisattvas, or spiritual power in combat against darkness.

A luminescent halo of light shines out from the other side of the pillars. It is the light that the Seeker is about to enter and, on the other side, find illuminated the Answers the Seeker has been looking for.

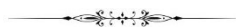
This is the Mystic Fool, a Spirit in Search of Science. The Seeker commences the inner and outer alchemical journey to Know God. Use The Seeker as Key 0 in the tarot deck when divinatory insight is sought, when the adept needs guidance mid-stream along a path, or when divine communion is sought. This is the Mystic Fool who seeks knowledge, wisdom, truth, and to better understand the operations of the Universe and of the Divine. This is the Seeker in search of systematic knowledge of the cosmos. Use this embodiment of the Mystic Fool when what is sought is systematic knowledge, wisdom, and truth; the Key endows the powers of Ars Notaria, the ability to interpret the Light by seeing the Light. This card is the Divinatory Anchor.

To commence divination, gaze into Key 0: The Seeker card with hands clasped in prayer, envisioning that same rose within your clasped hands. Calm the heart, center the mind and spirit with the pale golden light, and then open the palms as pictured on the card to receive the light. Visualize yourself crossing the threshold into the golden light, ready to receive divine insight. Open your eyes, place Key 0 as the significator card into the deck and proceed with the divination.

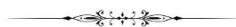


A significator card need not be used. In such cases, The Seeker marks the confrontation of a threshold, a decisive act that must be taken to initiate a journey. How Key 0 is read in a tarot reading will differ just the slightest based on which of the cards are used. With The Initiate, the journey to come is one for gaining experience. With The Seeker, the journey to come is one for gaining advanced knowledge.

When The Keeper card is used in the place of Key 0, how this Key is interpreted may diverge substantially from the precedent that has classically been set for interpreting The Fool card. With The Keeper, the card's appearance in a reading (when no significator card is used and therefore Key 0 could be a card pulled into a spread) we see that enigmatic woman looking back at us. She is a handmaiden to the higher gods and angels, a messenger between realms who is now here to wait on the querent, as if asking the querent, "What is it that you want? What is it that you need?"



The significance of Key 0 in *Spirit Keeper's Tarot* diverges from more common interpretations of the card. Typically, a trickster energy is read into Key 0: The Fool. In *Spirit Keeper*, the primary function of Key 0 is to designate the astral self of the querent. Thus, when it is not in the capacity of a significator card and Key 0 shows up in a reading, it is the querent being confronted by the querent's own inner self, and needing to reflect on why such a mirror would be held up compelling the querent to face the inner self.



Note: My drawing of Key 0: The Keeper is based on an old wedding photograph of my mother in a bridal *qipao*. Everything I am able to do is because I've inherited it from her. So it makes sense to me to memorialize her in the Keeper card.

Key 0: The Keeper

This is the astral Self in communion with God. Through paneled doors, an unnamed spirit guardian who sees you and takes note. In time, the Keeper will come to recognize the Keeper. An iris earring hangs from her left ear and an iris is embroidered onto the front of her dress. It is the personification of the goddess Iris, messenger of the gods, symbolic of the nexus between the physical world and the spirit. She is the personification of the rainbow, symbolic of Divinity, liminal space, and lucid dreams. She is in consort with Zephyrus, the god of the western winds, residing in the Stronghold of the Zephyrs that the Holy Guardians of the Swords protect. The iris is also a powerful symbol and talisman for pathworking through otherworldly realms. Behind the guardian at the gates are pale golden rays of light.

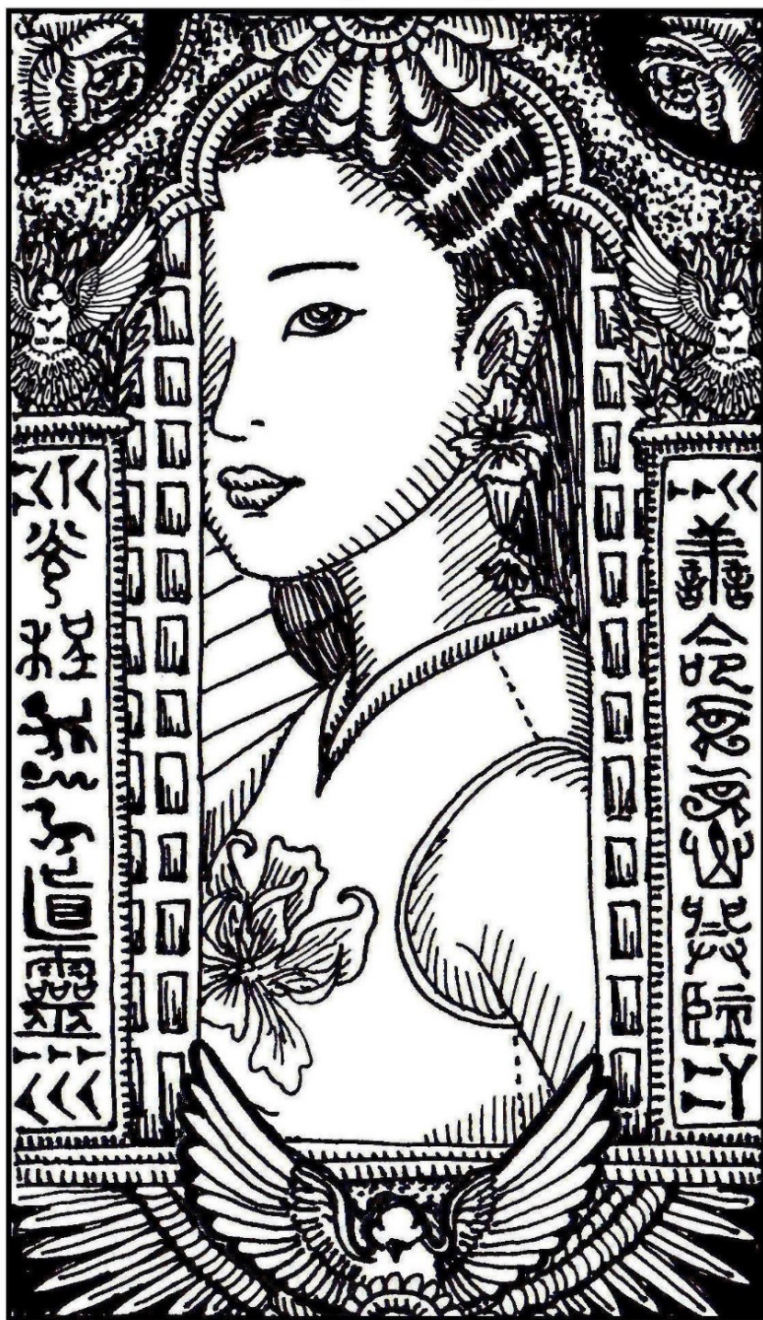
The two rose buds from Key 0: The Seeker are now in full bloom and hanging from the two top corners of the card. Just below each are white doves and at the bottom foreground rising is a third: the presence of the Holy Triune, the many names of the Holy Spirit. The dove also calls to mind the Ace of Chalices, portending a divine prophesy to the Keeper.

Words, here as sigils and commands, are inscribed upon the two pillars. Upon the left pillar, top to bottom: “king” in Old Persian cuneiform; “luminescence” in Chinese oracle bone script; “journey” in bone script; “path” or road in Egyptian hieroglyphics; “path” or teachings in oracle bone script; “spirit” in oracle bone script; and “earth” in cuneiform. Upon the right pillar, top to bottom: “god” in Old Persian cuneiform; “benevolence” in Chinese oracle bone script; “fate” or destiny in bone script; the divine right eye of Ra or *utchat* in Egyptian hieroglyphics; the divine left eye of Ra; “*ka* priest,” priest, or shaman in hieroglyphics; “Keeper” or guardian in oracle bone script; “open” or commencement in oracle bone script; and an ideograph in cuneiform that would be pronounced with a “B” sound, *beta*, (one of the earliest alphabetical letters in human history, over 3,000 years ago). The letter means “house.”

This is the Mystic Fool, a Spirit in Petition of Spirit. Use The Keeper as Key 0 in the tarot deck when engaging in spirit contact. This is used by the seasoned practitioner of the Craft to empower the tarot deck as calling cards for the roster of spirits embodied within the sigils and seals of these cards. While The Seeker card is used for communion with the Divine in the sense of a monad, The Keeper card is used to contact and seek service from the population of the spirit realm. Use this embodiment of the Mystic Fool when what is sought is the petitioning of spirits to assist the Keeper.



○. THE KEEPER



Spirit in Petition of Spirit

Reviewing Your Spiritual Journey

Where exactly are you at the moment in the progress of your own spiritual journey? The following operation working with the three significator cards in *Spirit Keeper* can confirm the milestone you've achieved in the recent past, where you are the moment, and a prophetic message from Spirit about what's coming up next. Bear in mind that this will be a reading about your spiritual path, so the implications of each card will be interpreted specifically through that lens. The signs and omens will conform to the mystery traditions you subscribe to, the manifestations of Divinity you work with, and the metaphysical practices most resonant with you. I'll demonstrate by sharing my personal reading and interpretation.

The Three Significators



Begin by shuffling the three Key Os, The Initiate, The Seeker, and The Keeper. Since you're only shuffling three cards, you may need to take concerted effort to ensure randomization and that you aren't subconsciously tracking the cards. You do want to act in good faith to yourself and get the three cards as randomized as possible.

I like to settle into a meditative state, shuffle the three cards while focusing on a mantra recitation, that way I'm thinking about the recitation, not the cards in my hand, or definitely work with the invocation of a divinity while you shuffle, so your focus is on the divinity and not on the cards. Then set the three cards aside and continue on your day. Return a long while later and, with the three cards face down, unknown to you, repeat the invocation and shuffling. Observe this a few times to really ensure randomization. Since this is the type of personal reading you would only do once annually or only at the cusp between milestones of your journey,

take your time with the preliminary work, such as the shuffling, meditation, and invocation of Divinity.

When you're ready, lay out the three Key Os, face down, in a row, intending that the first card you set down (Card 1) will signify to you what you have last achieved. The second card you set down (Card 2) will signify where you are at the moment, and who you presently embody. The third card (Card 3) will signify the role Divinity is presenting to you to embody after you complete your current milestone.

Card 1: What I have last achieved.

Card 2: Who I presently embody.

Card 3: Prophetic message about my next divine assignment.

I did this reading for myself while I was still working on the *Spirit Keeper's Tarot*. Knowing that helps with the context for this reading, and continue to bear in mind that the explanation of my reading here is only to demonstrate what I mean by reading the tarot cards through the lens of your own spiritual journey, rather than reaching for textbook meanings or even what I've written about the cards here in this *Book*.

△ ○ THE SEEKER ◀



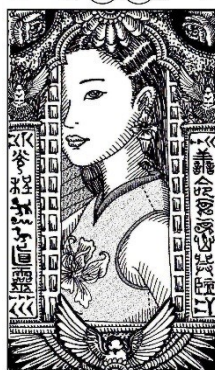
Spirit in Search of Science

△ ○ THE INITIATE ◀



Spirit in Search of Experience

△ ○ THE KEEPER ◀



Spirit in Petition of Spirit

The order the three Key Os appeared to me, left to right, are as follows: for Card 1: The Seeker; for Card 2: The Initiate; and for Card 3: The Keeper. The Seeker card in the position of the recent past makes sense to me, because lately I've been obsessed with trying to understand whether there is a science behind the tarot and if yes, what that science is. Over the last few years, I have absolutely been embodying the role of the Seeker, reading, researching, and exploring by both empirical knowledge (i.e., magical experimentations) and deductive reasoning.

Creating this deck was absolutely a private initiatory process for myself and since this reading took place mid-stream of the process, The Initiate card coming up for the present also makes sense. That means what is up next for me, what Divinity is presenting to me as the next adventure awaiting me, is The Keeper. To me, this means deepening my practices in ceremonial magic, especially when it comes to working with spirits and also trying to deepen my own understanding of this technology—this tarot deck—that I’ve just produced.

The next step of the reading is to take the full deck (the remaining 77 cards), shuffling, and divining a clarifying message for each of the three phases of your spiritual journey that you’re examining. Focus in on Card 1 (which for me is The Seeker) and ask Divinity to comment further. Pull a card. Then focus in on Card 2, and again, ask Divinity for comment. Repeat again for Card 3. My own results are pictured below.



There’s an undeniable pictorial connection between the Two of Chalices, The Joined One, and Key 14: The Angel, which you’ll read later in this *Book* as being ascribed a secondary title—The Two Urns. This links The Angel with Key 6: The Lovers, ascribed a secondary title—The Two Ways. Then there is the sentimental parallel between The Lovers and the Two of Chalices.

I interpret the Two of Chalices here as an affirmative validation that I've succeeded at a union or synthesis of essential polarities and that "both cups are now filled." I also read it as a confirmation that I have achieved a certain level of communion with the Holy Spirit, and this is feedback that the communion I perceived was significant.

The Archangel of Healing appearing as the herald for my present tells me my current developmental phase is toward cultivating knowledge of healing modalities and further contemplation of spiritual or psychic medicine. Finally, as for what's up next, there's the Stronghold of the Grail as the angelic messenger appearing to me.



Specific to the *Spirit Keeper's Tarot*, Strongholds (or Pages) indicate that an additional card can be drawn, because the angel comes bearing a message, which is in that sealed envelope. Thus, pull an additional card and place it by the Stronghold, acknowledging that this additional card is the message that the angel brings to you from Spirit. Here, I pulled my additional card next to the Stronghold of the Grail: The Golden Shield.

Note also that with a majority of Empyrean Court spirits appearing here, I would read that as strong angelic presence and affirmation of the angelic work I've been doing throughout the crafting of *Spirit Keeper*. How I look ethnicity wise in tandem with how The Golden Shield looks to me ethnicity wise is also not lost on me in this specific personal reading.




I also consider the elemental balance of these cards: all three of the initial cards are elementally Water, and I find that consistent pattern to be significant. My focus is going to then go to my correspondences for Water, which for me calls to mind ritual purification and purification of karma, in addition to healing and intuition development (or developing a stronger and more faithful trust of my intuition).

Then there is the Fire correspondence of The Golden Shield to consider. In elemental dignities, whether you're looking at Eastern or Western esoteric correspondences, Fire and Water clash. Yet in terms of alchemical processes we must undergo toward achievement of our magnum opus, that Great Work, after *albedo*, the purification process corresponding with Water, is *citrinitas*, which is yellow or gold, corresponding with Fire. The alchemical chronology from Water transitioning into Fire in the near future tells me at present, in Initiate mode, I'm about to pass on and, shall we say, level up very soon. (Or at least that's how I'm reading the cards here.)

I might further interpret this reading as an omen to work more attentively with the Archangel of Healing, and if I subscribe to the four archangels named in the Abrahamic faiths, then the name of the archangel I associate with Water and/or healing.

When Spirit communicates with us, every symbol holds multiple layers of meaning. So The Joined One, or Two of Chalice, for example, is presented to me for one reason on a mundane psychological level, perhaps conveying a concrete incident from my daily life, and equally for a second reason on an emotional, creative level, and equally for a third reason on what might

be deemed a paranormal level, and so on. For many of us, matters of mundane concerns are still very much tied to our spiritual concerns, so don't dismiss everyday meanings of the cards here just because they don't feel transcendent or esoteric to you.

<p>ARCHANGEL OF HEALING</p>  <p>Angel Who Salves and Purifies</p>	<p><i>Physical Implication.</i> This is going to point to the area of life pertaining to the liberal arts, humanities, and creative or artistic endeavors. I would also read this as someone serving the archetypal role of an ambassador, to some capacity. This is the card of a compassionate leader.</p>
	<p><i>Mental Implication.</i> Social charisma, the capacity to emotionally connect with people, my emotional quotient, my religious or spiritual beliefs, artistic and creative qualities, and empathy—these are the mental implications I associate with the King of Cups.</p>
	<p><i>Spiritual Implication.</i> For me, I will see Kuan Yin through the lines of the Archangel of Healing. I also read a divinatory message directing me toward cultivating higher skill level in holistic healing modalities.</p>

Which of those three prongs of implications is the Archangel of Healing (traditionally the King of Cups) presenting to me in my reading? I would say all three. The three implications represent three parallel points on different levels of depth in my spiritual journey at the moment, so all three are worth my consideration.

Final point about my reading: in my private interpretation of it, these cards yielded more specific messages, though it did not feel right to me to share all of it, and I also believe what I have shared is sufficient to convey the general instructions on how to approach this reading operation.