

Four of Chalices: The Hollow Void



Card Description:

A meditating monastic is impervious to the external world of offerings around them. A profound discontent has driven them here. They are practicing Seon sitting meditation, dressed in robes signature of Korean Buddhism. They have put up walls around their mind—the precondition for finding one’s Path of Light.

In the distant background is a temple inspired by the Jeungsimsa Obaekjeon Temple atop the Mudeungsan mountain in South Korea, in the city of Gwangju.



From clouds a Hand offers a single chalice, one featuring a band of jewels and metals from the overturned imperial crown in Key 13: The Reaper.

And yet they are not succumbing to the enticement of that single chalice, symbolic of emotional and material attachments.

Rather, they seek to comprehend the dharma through knowledge of the Mysteries. The three chalices above and behind them feature the name of the bodhisattva Kuan Yin (관세음보살, gwanseeumbosal), a tribute to the practice of *yeombul* recitation. Each of these three chalices bear the dharma wheel. The three chalices symbolize the monastic's yield to faith and destiny.

On the meditating monastic's two lower arms are one Korean variant of *om mani padme hum* (옴 마니 반메 흠, om mani banme hum) and on their two upper arms, a second variant (옴 마니 파드메 흠, om mani padeume hum). Two hand mudras are formed: one for connecting inward, to cultivate inner alchemy, and the other for connecting outward, to cultivate outer alchemy. *Om mani padme hum* is a Buddhist mantra for invocation of the four-armed manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, or the Mahayana Kuan Yin.

The monastic's feet are in half-lotus position (rather than full-lotus), symbolizing that they have only been newly initiated onto the Path.

The Reaper's scorpion is perched on the tree (a link back to Key 13 from the Major Arcana).

The scorpion represents Serket, goddess of magic and healing. She was the great Mother Goddess in Lower Egypt, around 6000 BC to 3000 BC, dating her as one of the oldest goddesses of the Neolithic Egyptian pantheon. According to mythology, Serket was present right from the beginning, before the creation of the universe.

Serket as the goddess of venomous creatures, depicted with a scorpion, is also closely associated with death, hence the pictorial reference from Key 13: The Reaper. A common epithet for her is She Who Causes the Throat to Breathe. She is also associated with death and as a caretaker over the souls of the deceased. The ancient practice of medicine, which could be practiced by both men and women, was associated with Serket, designating physicians as Followers of Serket and the medical practice as the Rites of Serket.



When Isis was raising her son Horus, Serket and her Seven Scorpions helped protect Isis. Any time Isis ventured out, three of the Seven Scorpions of Serket accompanied Isis to guard her from Set.

In the Four of Chalices, the scorpion in the tree is sent by the goddess Serket as a guardian of protection to watch over the meditating monastic. Likewise, just as Serket protected Isis when the goddess was in seclusion, Serket will protect you in your solitary journey inward.

The Mesopotamian goddess Ishara is also symbolized by the scorpion, as is Malinalxochitl, the Mesoamerican sorceress goddess.

For the pictorial key of The Hollow Void, I blended Korean Buddhism and Ancient Egyptian religion, and while that is an expression of my own imagination, there is archaeological proof of trade and cultural exchange between the kingdoms of the Korean peninsula and North Africa/Middle East through the Silk Road. Thus, there is some historical basis for the blend. Artwork featuring the Persian goddess Anahita, for instance, has been found in Korea dated to the Silla Kingdom. The *keum-boo* gold filigree technique in traditional Korean art can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms Era, learned from craftsmen and merchants bringing goods from Egypt.

PRIMORDIAL INFLUENCES:

- Astrological: The Priestess, The Chariot
- Numerological: The Emperor, The Reaper, The Initiate

MATHERS ATTRIBUTION:

Blended Pleasure

Card Meaning:

This is the “contemplating the meaning of life” card. You feel like you’ve lost sight of the Purpose, and now you just need a moment to yourself to reflect.

Like the story of Isis hiding from Set, and Serket protecting her, you reject offerings from the superficial world. There could be a deeper element of trying run away and hide from the world.

If the Four of Swords: The Convalescent is about withdrawing from external stimuli to physically heal, then the Four of Chalices: The Hollow Void is about withdrawing from external stimuli to emotionally and spiritually heal.

You feel like an empty shell of the person you once were, and that’s a good thing because you will be filling that void with that which will spiritually satiate, and that which will give you a greater sense of weight and worth.

The snag, or dying tree still standing, portends that you’ve come to the end of the road on one journey and will be starting a new. Snags, or deadwood, are prized in woodwork and craftsmanship for their beautiful texture. As an omen in your reading, what’s up next for you may be a repurposing.

FOUR OF CHALICES: THE HOLLOW VOID

This is the spirit of reviewing that which has been brought into physical form, but has manifested errors or suffering. There is a sense of discontent for that which has been created, but do not lose sight of the principle that all things created have purpose.

This is the spirit that conducts reevaluation. The spirit's name is The Hollow Void because it is the sense of meaninglessness for that which was intended to hold meaning. The Hollow Void is the space in between, formed after the collapse of physical mass. It is feeling the heavy weight of emptiness. It is a snag in your life ready for repurposing.

In the Thoth, this is the Lord of Luxury and Mathers describes it as Blended Pleasure. Here, "luxury" is in reference to refinement. This is a pursuit beyond survival or necessities. This is not about living; this is about discerning the purpose of life. Think Maslow's hierarchy of needs in developmental psychology. The Four of Chalices denotes the top of the pyramid in that hierarchy—the need for self-fulfillment or actualization.

This is a point in your life path where you're thinking beyond your basic needs, or even community, social, or emotional needs. At this point in your life, you're seeking to manifest your full personal potential.