

THE SACRED ROSE TAROT



INSTRUCTIONS
by
Johanna Sherman

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Foreword

Inspired by the artistry of medieval stained glass windows and Byzantine icons, the artwork of Johanna Sherman provides a definitive link with the belief in the divinity of nature that prevailed during pre-Christian times. Thus, instead of using the lotus mandala of the Middle East, the Sacred Rose Tarot draws on the symbolic rose of Western iconography and the ancient Kabbalah, the Tree of Life, and the cosmos itself—time and space.

While preparing the 22 Major Arcana cards during the years 1978-1980, the artist expressed her viewpoints in private correspondence:

The purpose of the Sacred Rose artwork is to enable viewers to envision the obvious fragmentation of their existence, to recognize and foresee their own inner strengths and, despite the ever-present obstacles that arise in life, to transcend earthly existence.

The Major Arcana of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck presents systematic and symbolic pictures that reveal the experiences of life's progress and development. The symbolism on the cards is not meant to be either occult or mundane, rather it is nature-oriented. Red suggests passion and creativity; white represents purity and initiation. In the sequence of natural progression, initiation is the step prior to the act of creativity.

The feminine aspects of the Sacred Rose Tarot cards are spiritual and lunar; the masculine attributes are physical and solar. Meditation with the deck should be a simple and natural process because the artwork itself is natural and inspirational.

Johanna Sherman believes there should be neither mystery nor uncertainty in esoteric philosophy. Every person, regardless of background, strengths and weaknesses, should experience joy in The Sun card, wisdom in the mystery of The High Priestess, encouragement in the priestly Hierophant, and so on. The artist has sought to evoke spiritual inspiration through the imagery of each of her cards.

The beginnings of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck go back to the spring of 1977 when an unsolicited business card arrived at the offices of U. S. Games Systems, Inc. in New York. The illustrated card depicted several colorful prints including a surrealistic rendition of Pierrot, the pantomime character, dressed like a clown in floppy white outfit, and a young girl in pre-Raphaelite style awakening alone in the woods to the dawn.

While nothing in the designs of the prints suggested anything relating to tarot, the style and colors of each work, their earthy symbolism and the inspirational story that readily unfolded from each scene suggested that Ms. Sherman was an artist who might especially relate to tarot.

More than anything else, the work of Johanna Sherman depicts figures suspended in time and space, yet possessed of a fluidity that conveys spirituality and a variety of active emotions.

I wrote Ms. Sherman asking her to bring her portfolio to our offices. Much to my pleasant surprise, the artist was already familiar with tarot. At the age of sixteen she had presented a class paper on tarot to students of a creative literature class at a progressive high school in New York City. Her interest in tarot had been kindled by the use of a tarot deck in a British film entitled *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors*.

Johanna Sherman's approach to tarot is more intuitive than scholarly, and she experiences and lives the allegorical imagery of each card.

When I first met Stuart Kaplan, I found to my amazement that the earliest tarot decks he sold were to a store in New York where I purchased the first tarot deck I ever owned. Our paths had crossed ten years earlier without my knowing it.

Johanna Sherman and I discussed the first tarot card she would paint and immediately we agreed on The Fool, our favorite. The earthy Fool stepping out into life was completed during the summer of 1977 and appeared in print for the first time in Volume I of *The Encyclopedia of Tarot*.

Encouraged by favorable response to The Fool, we discussed the possibility of her completing the remaining 21 Major Arcana cards. For the next six months the artist prepared various sketches and drawings which she brought to our offices for critique by both myself and George Bennett, Art Director of U. S. Games Systems, Inc. In July 1978, Johanna Sherman agreed to complete the full 78-card deck in two stages, the 22 Major Arcana followed by the 56 Minor Arcana.

The opportunity to see my own tarot deck in print was a personal dream come true. I immediately set to work designing my second card, Death. The Fool represented new beginnings and divine endeavors and it seemed appropriate that this untouched person, so full of hope and ambition, should be followed by Death, the great transformer.

Once the deck was set in motion, it appeared that all of Johanna Sherman's intuitive knowledge and instincts about the symbolism of tarot fused and the imagery of each card emerged in dramatic and vivid colors.

The preparation of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck became an act of love and self-revelation for the artist. The cards reveal the deepest emotions of the

artist while penetrating to the innermost feelings of the reader. Tarot helped Johanna Sherman come to terms with herself and, in turn, she has sought to bare the soul of the reader so that knowledge, understanding and transcendence to new levels of appreciation and existence become possible.

When the Major Arcana cards were completed in 1980, the original rendition of The Fool—the special card that had opened the door to Johanna Sherman's commitment to painting her own tarot deck—seemed somewhat out of place and perhaps destined to remain by itself. For this reason, a new, slightly modified version of The Fool was prepared for inclusion in the Sacred Rose Tarot deck.

Johanna Sherman is a devoted practitioner of meditation and student of esoteric sciences. She is content to remain near family and friends, yet through the tarot she is willing to touch the emotions of other people. It is the hope of both the artist and myself that each card of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck will reach the heart of the reader and serve to clarify and enrich his or her life.

Stuart R. Kaplan

New York

Introduction

The pursuit of knowledge has many disciplines. One that has been studied for centuries is the set of 78 cards known as the tarot.

The tarot is one of the most fascinating mediums of self-knowledge. Like an ancient Rorschach test it opens the subconscious each time the deck is spread. Each symbol has a place in the collective unconscious and thereby the psyche of the individual(s) using the cards is stimulated. Whether used as a tool for self-development or as a focus for psychic projections, the tarot functions effectively within the realms of one's own mind, and, as the ancient and modern seers know, the greatest mystery is within.

The Major Arcana represents the ancient rite of initiation from the lower self to the higher self. The Minor Arcana symbolizes our desires, needs and hopes by the suits of Wands, Cups and Swords, respectively, with the integration of all elements taking place in the suit of Pentacles.

Back Design

The back design of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck comprises five mystic roses entwined in a lattice of branches and resting upon a bed of green leaves representing the fertility of nature. The roses are the western equivalent to the sacred lotus of the Orient.

Cosmic Rose (center) suggests time and space.

Red Rose stands for sacrifice.

White Rose is purity.

Blue Rose represents the impossible.

Gold Rose signifies absolute achievement.

The symbolic roses appear throughout the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana of the Sacred Rose Tarot deck.

The 22 Major Arcana

The following description of the 22 Major Arcana cards includes an explanation of the symbolism found on each card, the application of colors, which signify forces and abilities, and interpretations of each card for the purposes of meditation and divination.

O THE FOOL

Description: The earthy figure of The Fool, dressed in peasant shirt and knee-length mountain pants, strides into timeless space, a half-smile on his lips. The rocks and earth blend in stained glass imagery while around him multi-colored flowers burst through the rock crevices.

The white rose in The Fool's right hand represents physical purity and initiation. The purple bag over his right shoulder suggests Karmic lessons and their influence over his life. The butterfly symbolizes the power of divine metamorphosis. The white dog biting at his leg represents The Fool's basic nature that tries to hold him back; the animalistic nature of humanity might prove to be its downfall on the journey to spiritual enlightenment and development.

Beyond The Fool, the landscape, both fertile and barren, indicates the range of opportunities as well as dangers that lie ahead. The ladder pattern of the red straps on his legs suggests personal sacrifice; each strap represents one of the seven steps to universal consciousness, similar to the seven chakras of the Hindus. The zodiac belt bearing the sign of the balance, Libra, suggests the need for harmony, especially when viewed against the green background of productivity.

The Fool's hat with its red and purple balls suggests the power that results from the combination of creative passion and spiritual development. The red shirt reveals his love of adventure and the

purple britches indicate power inherent in movement. The Fool passes through the kabbalistic Tree of Life and he is our guide into the eternal mysteries of the Major Arcana.

Divinatory Meanings: Innocence and divine spirit. Childlike enthusiasm. Great expectations. Visions of the young and dreams of the old. The cosmic journey despite earthly pitfalls and obstacles. Enthusiastic encounter with nature.

Reverse Meanings: Opposing elements. Obstacles. Naive attempts. Hindered development. Apathy. Madness. Foolish actions.

I THE MAGICIAN

Description: The iridescent figure of The Magician rises above earthly concerns. He seems to float in time and space, complacent and in full control of his magical abilities. He is the manipulator and juggler of his destiny. A golden aura emanates from his physical being, indicating that he draws energy from the cosmos and also dispenses energy to those around him.

The red robe signifies creative passion and the purple tones reveal his inner power. The double nimbus above his head represents esoteric knowledge, the combining and flow of male and female energy. The talisman bag around his neck contains herbs for protection. The Magician deals with forces beyond the capabilities of most people, thus the need for the talisman.

The will and power of The Magician summons from the sparkling cosmos the four suit symbols—sword, wand, cup and pentacle—all tools of his trade. The magical paths of power emanating as rays from the upraised sword, include music, dance, ritual, herbology, astral projection, meditation, love and psychic development. The Magician nourishes and inspires the multi-colored roses that spring forth around him.

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