

TAROT *of the* ABYSS

SAMPLE

By Ana Tourian

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INTRODUCTION

According to many Western traditions, the world began formless and chaotic, as a deep, dark abyss. There was nothing, not even light, and certainly no matter in existence. In the instant that Spirit willed it, out of that darkness came light, the source of all that is. That light gave rise to the entire universe, first as energy and then as matter. Through their combination and interdependence, galaxies, solar systems, and even living things arose. Out of nothingness was born the world. Out of the abyss came forth the light.

Tarot of the Abyss is born out of the same notion, though of course on a smaller scale. We all start off our tarot experience as beginners, shapeless and void as the abyss. With every shuffle of the cards, a little light dawns. With every reading performed, our knowledge and ability improves just a little. We grow, evolve, and develop, metaphorically moving from chaos to cosmos.

I can't remember a time when divination was not part of my life. In some shape or form, it has always been present. As a child growing up in Romania, I remember visiting my great-aunt and watching her read coffee grounds. She used to say "The first sip is the most important; make sure you state your intention clearly. What do you want to know?" Once the last sip was taken, she'd start the process of turning the cup, rotating the grounds that were left inside, and flipping the cup over to settle. She used to tell me all the events she was seeing, and the different paths I could take to change the course of certain events. I thought it was pure magic—that somehow, she had this otherworldly power to predict the things that were yet unseen. As I grew up, a cup of coffee was always waiting for me.

I have never been a coffee ground reader. To no avail, my aunt tried to teach me, showing me the patterns and figures and their possible meanings. The idea of having such knowledge at her fingertips was fascinating. It was

clear to me that we were given keys and clues that can help us navigate this beautiful, mysterious life. And this revelation brought me a great sense of comfort.

I've always been a visual person. Images that told a story were easy to understand and become immersed in. When I was thirteen, I befriended a wonderful card reader who lived in my building. I'd spend hours watching her lay the cards. I was surprised when I noticed she spoke to them as she shuffled, almost enchanting them, as if she were talking to an old friend. Through her whisperings, I could make out a poetic rhythm. Even at that young age I knew I was witnessing a very intimate process. The transition from a mundane setting to a very mystical one was quite clear and familiar, even though the medium was different. The pathways created through the cards were the same as those created by my aunt through her coffee readings.

In Romania, card reading—also known as cartomancy, is a very common form of divination. However, years ago there

were no books on such practices. Everything was passed down by word of mouth and practice. There really was no way of learning unless you knew a cartomancer, who usually read standard playing cards. Not to mention that traditionally it is expected that those who want to learn the art of cartomancy, have to “steal” the knowledge, as diviners liked to call it. The common belief is that you must “steal” the craft by watching. And I was a very diligent watcher. I’d sit there weekly and ask her to read for me. That is how I initially learned.

Within a couple of years, I was doing readings for friends and family. I have to admit that at the time, I was completely stunned at the accuracy of my readings. The images I saw began to take shape, and slowly led to stories that appeared to form from some depth of which I was not consciously aware.

One day, a woman asked me to bring her a tarot deck from the United States. I had never heard of tarot before, and was quite stunned when I picked up a

Rider-Waite deck. It was full of such beautiful images! Needless to say, I bought two decks that day—the Rider-Waite for her and my first Tarot deck, The Mythic Tarot, which became a good friend of mine. I loved that deck, and still have the original one to this day.

I'm not going to say it was easy. I spent years pondering over the guidebook that came with the deck. I memorized every single card and meaning. Yet, for some reason, I felt there was something missing. I was straining and trying to do it “by the book” so to speak. And whenever something is forced the results are usually less than desired and somewhat temporary.

There was nothing natural in forcing my mind to take in all those meanings. I had forgotten all about the “stealing” method that I had learned. There was something fluid to that way of learning, it was intuitive and that's what I was missing. Therefore, one day, I put the book aside. I tried to speak to the cards as I'd seen my teacher do. I created

my own little chant, something that linked the cards to me and solidified our bond. It was our little secret, and so my new journey began. I started seeing their stories in much more detail than before. I was used to reading 24 playing cards. Now I had 78 cards that I had to understand and form bonds with. It was a very fun journey and along the way I found many beautiful decks that spoke their story, each with their own unique personalities. I never imagined becoming a deck creator. I like to call it an act of serendipity.

Tarot is a beautiful system, designed to mirror the journey of the soul through the universe and on a macrocosmic stage, our own life journey. Its structure is broken down into two categories: the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana. In total it is comprised of 78 cards, each with its unique stand-alone message. There are twenty-two Major Arcana cards, which show the different progressions of the soul, followed by the Minor Arcana, itself divided into four elemental suits (Air, Fire, Water and Earth). Each

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