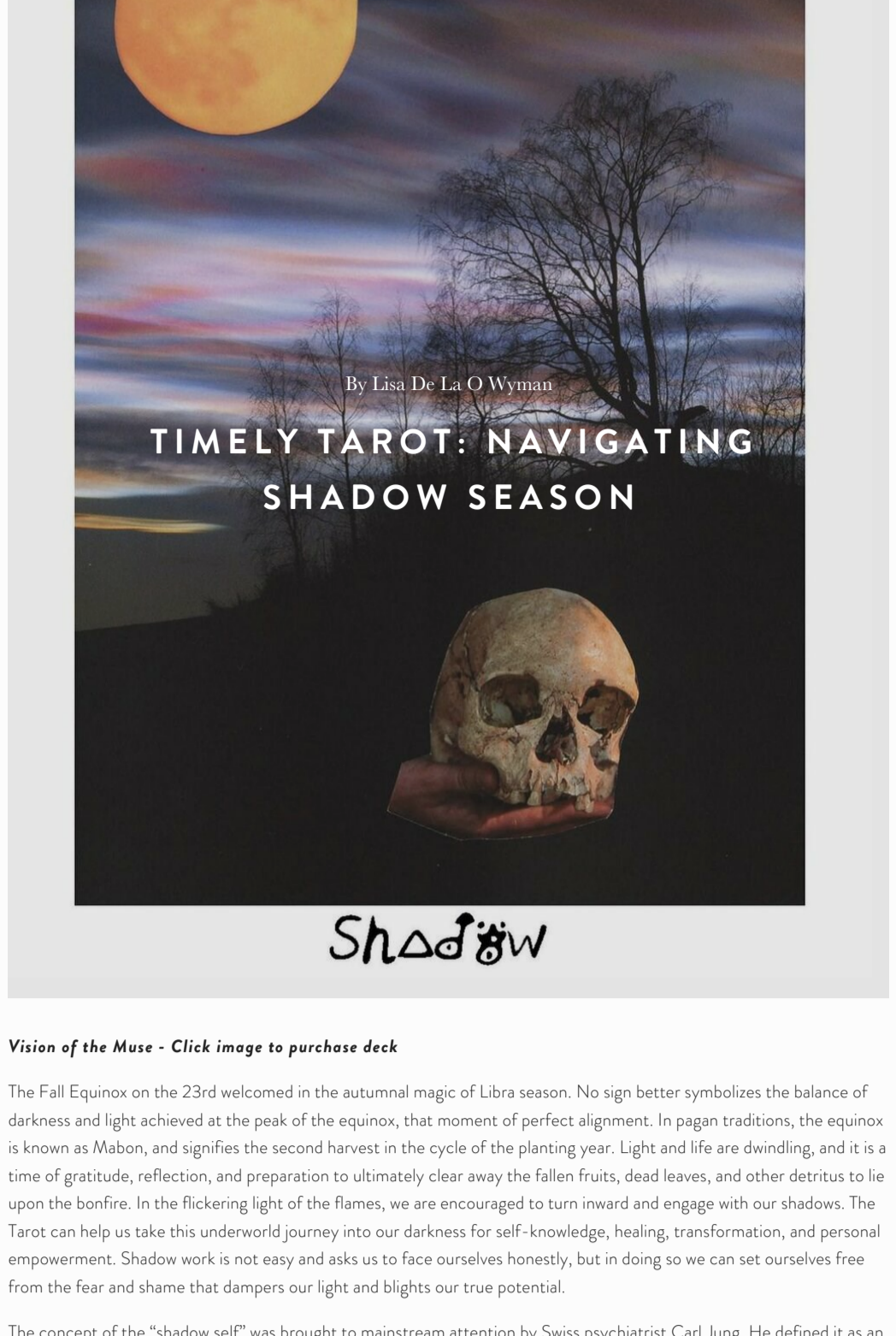


September 30, 2021

Timely Tarot: Navigating Shadow Season By Lisa De La O Wyman

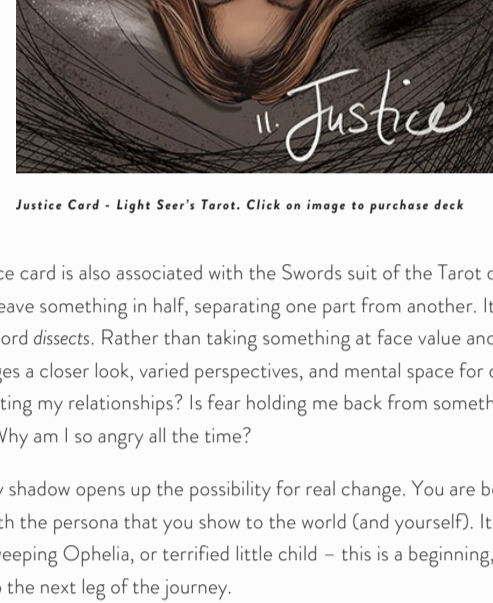


Vision of the Muse - Click image to purchase deck

The Fall Equinox on the 23rd welcomed in the autumnal magic of Libra season. No sign better symbolizes the balance of darkness and light achieved at the peak of the equinox, that moment of perfect alignment. In pagan traditions, the equinox is known as Mabon, and signifies the second harvest in the cycle of the planting year. Light and life are dwindling, and it is a time of gratitude, reflection, and preparation to ultimately clear away the fallen fruits, dead leaves, and other detritus to lie upon the bonfire. In the flickering light of the flames, we are encouraged to turn inward and engage with our shadows. The Tarot can help us take this underworld journey into our darkness for self-knowledge, healing, transformation, and personal empowerment. Shadow work is not easy and asks us to face ourselves honestly, but in doing so we can set ourselves free from the fear and shame that dampens our light and blights our true potential.

The concept of the "shadow self" was brought to mainstream attention by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. He defined it as an unconscious aspect of the personality that the conscious ego does not identify in itself. He stated that "everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions. . . . Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses of other people." While Jung certainly awakened the 20th-century Western world to this concept, it is a deep truth known throughout the world for ages. In many different cultures, religions, and spiritual systems there is found some version of shadow work and how one might engage. While some declare that the shadow self must be conquered or destroyed, Jungian thought and other like-minded perspectives agree that the only real answer is integration. The shadow, after all, is an aspect of who we are as human beings. It's part of what makes us whole. In trying to annihilate it, we remain fragmented. In pretending it doesn't exist, we lie to ourselves and others. In projecting it onto another, we vilify and harm them. By hating it, we hate ourselves.

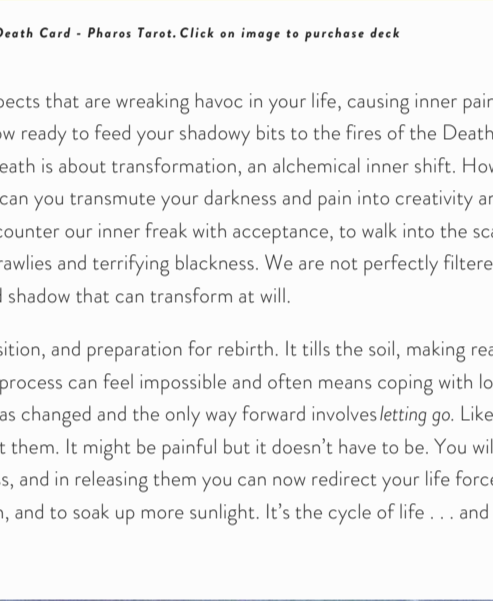
So how do you even begin to approach shadow work? How can Tarot help? We begin with the Justice (or Adjustment) card. Ruled by the Air sign of Libra, we use the power of our mind to begin sorting through the information we have before us. Libran energy is concerned with equality, balance, and ethical decision-making. Symbolized by the scales, it's seeking symmetry in all things, a harmony found through constant focus on refined adjustment. The scales are a means of identifying where true balance resides. In going deeper, Justice invites us to employ discernment, recognize our accountability, and take responsibility for the reality that our intentions and actions have created. Justice is intimately connected to the concept of karma, which simply means momentum. Karma is the law of cause and effect - what results from your actions.



Justice Card - Light Seer's Tarot. Click on image to purchase deck

As an Air sign, the Libran Justice card is also associated with the Swords suit of the Tarot deck. In Justice, the sword is a tool of discrimination. It can cleave something in half, separating one part from another. It breaks things into smaller pieces for deeper examination. The sword dissects. Rather than taking something at face value and labeling it based on an initial emotional reaction, it encourages a closer look, varied perspectives, and mental space for discernment. Start asking questions - are my actions hurting my relationships? Is fear holding me back from something that would be good for me? Why do I resent that person? Why am I so angry all the time?

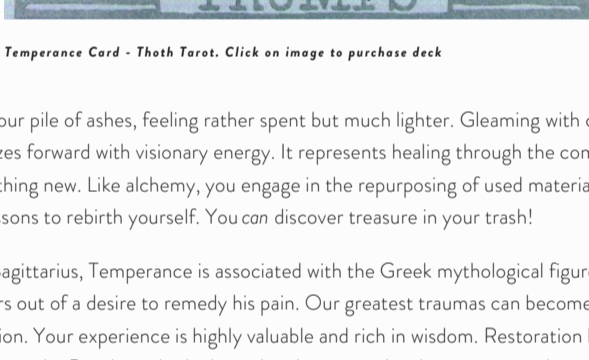
Taking that first step to identify shadow opens up the possibility for real change. You are beginning to understand a whole other set of motivations beneath the persona that you show to the world (and yourself). It's okay if you discover an inner jealous beast, raging volcano, weeping Ophelia, or terrified little child - this is a beginning, and you now have the self-knowledge needed to carry into the next leg of the journey.



Death Card - Phoenix Tarot. Click on image to purchase deck

So you've identified shadow aspects that are wreaking havoc in your life, causing inner pain, or have just outlived their purpose at this point. You're now ready to feed your shadowy bits to the fires of the Death card. Ruled by Scorpio and associated with the phoenix, Death is about transformation, an alchemical inner shift. How can you take your base metals and turn them into gold? How can you transmute your darkness and pain into creativity and compassion that touches others? Scorpio helps us to encounter our inner freak with acceptance, to walk into the scary cave and find the glowing treasure amongst the creepy crawly and terrifying blackness. We are not perfectly filtered selfies, but gloriously complicated beings of light and shadow that can transform at will.

Death represents release, transition, and preparation for rebirth. It tills the soil, making ready fertile ground for newness and change. Preparing for this process can feel impossible and often means coping with loss. It may be a relationship, a job, or an identity, but something has changed and the only way forward involves letting go. Like a tree in the autumn, your leaves are falling, are meant to fall. Let them. It might be painful but it doesn't have to be. You will be different, but that's okay. Your leaves were dry and lifeless, and in releasing them you can now redirect your life force to beautiful new buds, to strengthening your root system, and to soak up more sunlight. It's the cycle of life . . . and death . . . and rebirth. Allow yourself to be reborn.

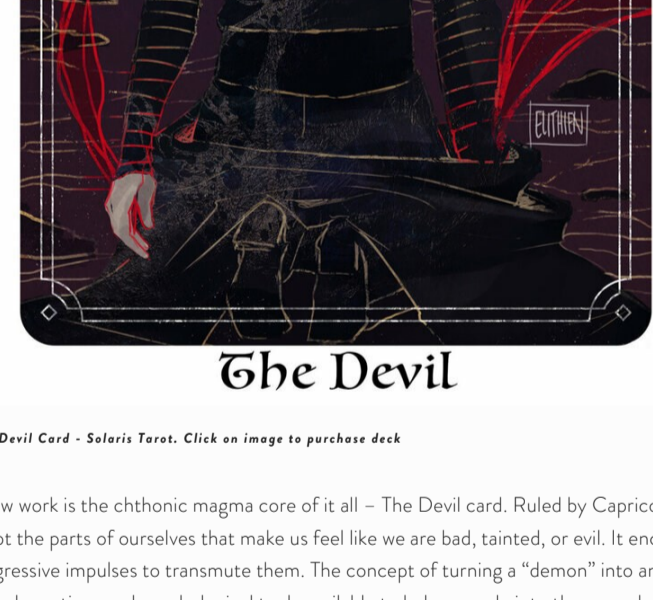


Temperance Card - Thoth Tarot. Click on image to purchase deck

Now you're sitting with your pile of ashes, feeling rather spent but much lighter. Gleaning with creative and purifying fire, the Temperance card blazes forward with visionary energy. It represents healing through the combination of various elements to create something new. Like alchemy, you engage in the re-purposing of used materials, old experiences, past pain, and hard-earned lessons to rebirth yourself. You can discover treasure in your trash!

Through its rulership by Sagittarius, Temperance is associated with the Greek mythological figure of Chiron, "the wounded healer" who treated others out of a desire to remedy his pain. Our greatest traumas can become the source of compassion, empathy, and healing action. Your experience is highly valuable and rich in wisdom. Restoration becomes an act of rebirth. The Temperance card follows the Death card, which involves letting go. It asks us to surrender to inevitable change and the cycles of life. But the energies of our life don't die - they simply change form. Like dead leaves, they become mulch for new growth. Temperance has you working with that mulch - mixing it, applying it, envisioning the new life that will spring forth. You've faced symbolic death and are now able to heal and act with agency. Your "death" breaks you through to another level of consciousness. You are evolving and awakening to your connection to the energies of the universe. The angel of Temperance is a helping guide (much like Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*), supporting your continuing development through times of both struggle and joy, the glimmer of hope after a long underworld journey.

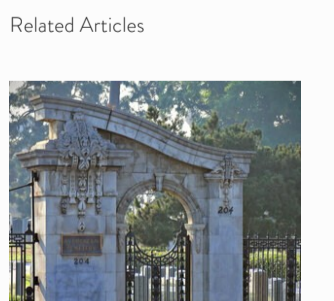
Healing means making changes, learning new information, utilizing resources, and accepting support from others. You must stretch beyond what you did before and to think creatively in service of change that will support a new mode of being. You'll have to make different choices and commit to a new level of discipline. Healing requires change, taking risks, the establishment of new habits, and the dedication to a new way of life. In some Tarot decks, the Temperance card is also called Art. Indeed, Temperance is Art, the art of your own life. Think about yourself as a constantly evolving work of art.



Devil Card - Sefaria Tarot. Click on image to purchase deck

Underlying our shadow work is the chthonic magma core of it all - The Devil card. Ruled by Capricorn, it helps us to understand and accept the parts of ourselves that make us feel like we are bad, tainted, or evil. It encourages us to gain insight into our transgressive impulses to transmute them. The concept of turning a "demon" into an "ally" is not new, and there are many spiritual practices and psychological tools available to help us wade into these murky waters. According to energy worker and author Lisa Erickson, "Tibetan Buddhism, for example, includes practices such as *Chöd*, for transforming parts of ourselves that we don't like or that cause us suffering. Instead of trying to battle or destroy these personal 'demons', we recognize them as a reflection of something we need. By befriending them within ourselves we can find out what pain we may be in that we haven't been recognizing and offer this part of ourselves nurturing and care."

The Devil card is also a call to tap into our magic, power, and creativity. Our primal wellspring holds reserves of treasure when we learn how to work with it. It asks us to get intimate with what lights us up in a raw and wild way. Are you afraid of your innate power? Are you suppressing what makes you exciting, visionary, and vibrant? By reclaiming your power you also reclaim freedom of choice. You can take the pain of the past, or behaviors regarded as wrong and repurpose them into something beautiful and affirming. The Devil card is also connected to the narrative of Lucifer as "light-bringer" and Eden's tree of knowledge as awakening humanity to consciousness. The Devil card doesn't ask for obedience, instead encouraging you to face the truth - your truth. It helps you destroy the lies you tell and the illusions that you use to feel better about yourself. It's a gatekeeper of your enlightenment and liberation. As Jung said, "one does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." Shine the light on your shadow, explore its potential, and heal yourself to greater wholeness this season.



Lisa De La O Wyman is a Tarot reader and writer based in Redondo Beach. At Tarot for Empowerment she works with individual clients, private parties, and special events. Through her work she seeks to connect people with their innate power as well as encounter the mystery in everyday life. She can be reached via Instagram and Facebook at @tarotforempowerment email at info@tarotforempowerment.com , and www.tarotforempowerment.com

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