

October 29, 2020

Timely Tarot: Letting Go with the Death Card by Lisa De La O Wyman

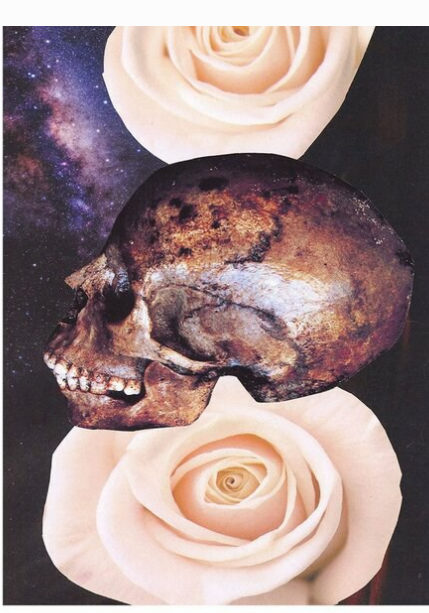


TIMELY TAROT: LETTING GO WITH THE DEATH CARD

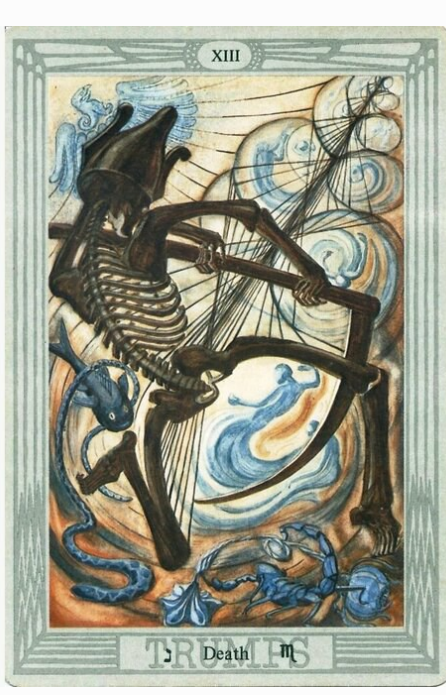
by Lisa De La O Wyman

We are finally stepping into the deepest magic and mystery of autumn with Scorpio season. Halloween draws near, and the invitation to plumb our own depths is tantalizingly extended. For millennia, this time of year has represented the same thing for many cultures across the globe – the dying away of things. In fact, Halloween itself originates in the ancient Celtic holiday of Samhain (sow-en), which in Gaelic simply means "summer's end." It was a time to give thanks for the final harvest, reap its remaining bounty, and clear away the fallen fruits and dried leaves for burning. Our own lives follow this pattern of planting, growth, harvesting, and dying, not just from the beginning of our lives to our last breath, but over and over through the many stages we reach and different roles we inhabit.

Death is not a stationary experience, but rather a changing of form. There is movement from one place to another, a perpetual motion forward as we cycle through the various chapters of our life book. The Death card of the Tarot can help us flow through these sometimes challenging transitions by reminding us that this process is inevitable and in many ways what we want. How could we ever progress if we continued to hang onto what we've outgrown? Death brings new life. It's both the end of something and the beginning of something else. It moves us from what is to what will be. The Death card and energies of Scorpio season can teach us how to do this with grace.



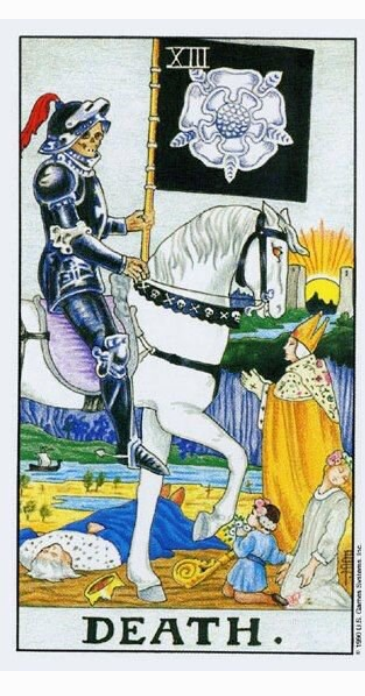
Death card The Lioness Tarot deck



Death Card Thoth Tarot deck

Ruled by the planet Pluto, Scorpio is a fixed Water sign. Scorpio represents the cycle of life (sex), death and rebirth, the underworld journey. An intense, probing sign of powerful emotion and psychological inquiry, Scorpio is interested in tunneling beneath the surface and exploring the depths. Complex motivations, power dynamics, and societal taboos are all areas of interest, with a desire to truly understand and feel into the shadows that drive our behaviors and can ultimately become the light that fuels our regeneration. Represented by the symbols of the scorpion, eagle, and phoenix, Scorpic energy is about transformation and alchemy. How can you take your base metals and turn them into gold? How can you encounter your inner personal darkness and pain into creativity and compassion that touches others? Scorpio helps us to meet our inner fear with acceptance, to walk into the dark cave and find the glowing treasure amongst the creepy crawlies and terrifying darkness. We are not perfectly filtered selves, but gloriously complicated beings of light and shadow that can transform at will.

The constellation of Scorpio is also known as *Scorpius* (Latin for "scorpion"). In Greek mythology, the gods sent a scorpion to attack the boastful hunter Orion and curb his excessive pride. Scorpions are deadly creatures known for their sting, which is also associated with the Scorpic tendency towards feelings of vengeance. However, this energy, like the cycle of the phoenix, can be burned away and leave behind ashes of forgiveness, equanimity, and positive action.



Death card Rider Waite deck



Death card Moonchild Tarot deck

The Death card, associated with Scorpio, is number 13 in the Tarot deck. Long reputed for being a symbol of bad luck, 13 actually has a lengthy history as a sacred number. For centuries it was associated with the goddess, the feminine principle, and considered to be very lucky. Before science unraveled the mysteries of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth, women were regarded as beings of magic and spontaneous creation. Their bodies mirrored the cycles of the moon, which was a fundamental rhythm of planting and harvesting societies. The moon has roughly 13 cycles per year, with 13 moon phases in half a month. Also considered the number of the witch, or "wise woman," 13 represented the highly respected females in ancient communities who made healing balms and tinctures, helped deliver babies, and provided intuitive guidance and wisdom. As the ancient Church grew in influence and power, the wise woman and female body was gradually vilified until any association was regarded as highly suspect or evil. Number 13 became connected with public hangings, typically held on Friday the 13ths (with 13 steps on the gallows). The Knights Templar were also killed on a Friday the 13th, and Judas was the 13th guest to the Last Supper of Jesus Christ.


The Death card generally depicts the figure of Death riding on a white horse and holding a scythe. This bears a relationship to the Grim Reaper, harvesting, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Death is often shown wearing a suit of armor, which indicates a need for protection. Death reveals our vulnerability, our tender underbellies beneath the shielding we engage to make ourselves invincible, and dare I say, immortal. In the Rider-Waite version of the card, there are people in the foreground, included a felled king, representing how death dismantles the egoically-driven parts of our lives. It is the great equalizer. Rich or poor, young or old, beautiful or beastly, death takes us all. It frightens and humbles us – but more importantly, it enables us to be reborn in another form, if only to become compost for other life. Energy can be neither created nor destroyed. No one knows for certain what happens on a spiritual level after death, but we are certain that our bodies can always transform into nourishment for another creation, and that part of us keeps on living.

Beginning in the 13th century, the Death card of the Tarot was untitled and called The Nameless. Death defies knowing. It undoes us, and we become unbound by form. It represents release, transition, and preparation for rebirth. Death 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 soaking up more sunlight. It's the cycle of life . . . and death . . . and rebirth. Allow yourself to be reborn.

The Death card represents loss, grief, release, and transformation. Change is the foundation of life. Sometimes we crave it and others we violently avoid it. It allows us everything wonderful and dreadful and exhilarating and on and on, over and over. It also takes it all away again and again. We live through many death cycles, and we are always reborn with new experiences and loves and ways to grow. The Death card helps us learn to face the unknown with courage, to stay humble and curious and learn to adapt to loss and what comes after.

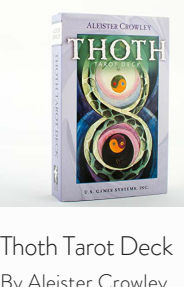
Death gives life meaning and value by reminding us of what is finite. It motivates us. It's an inevitable change with a largely unknown outcome. The change cannot be prevented. It's already happening. This is true in many areas of our lives – the friendship that's been on auto-pilot for a decade, the job that you stopped caring about two years ago, or the person you're dating out of boredom rather than affection . . . the death process has already begun. Will you proactively prune the leaves or let them fall? What are you forcefully keeping alive? Only you can know the answer.

When my clients pull the Death card, it's not about anyone actually dying. What it's usually about is an invitation to let go and move through the cycle of change with grace and trust. The person might be considering a change in their lifestyle, or sensing that a loss of some kind is imminent. There may be grief, but it can remind them of what they value and help them re-center. The Death card encourages them to accept it and explore how they can support their own rebirth. You too can be an active agent of transformation in your life. If you want different results, you need to make different choices. The death card provides ripe opportunity for this. The truth is that you are going to die someday. So then - how do you want to live? The time is now, the potential awaits, and the cycle of death and rebirth eases the journey. Take some time this season to reflect upon which of your leaves may be ready to fall away, and let them go with love and gratitude. The seeds of colorful new foliage are already germinating within you, vibrant and beautiful with the energies of new life.



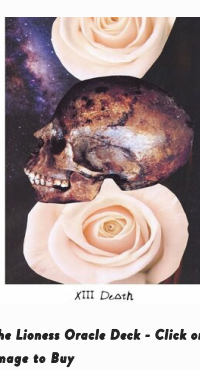
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Thoth Tarot Deck
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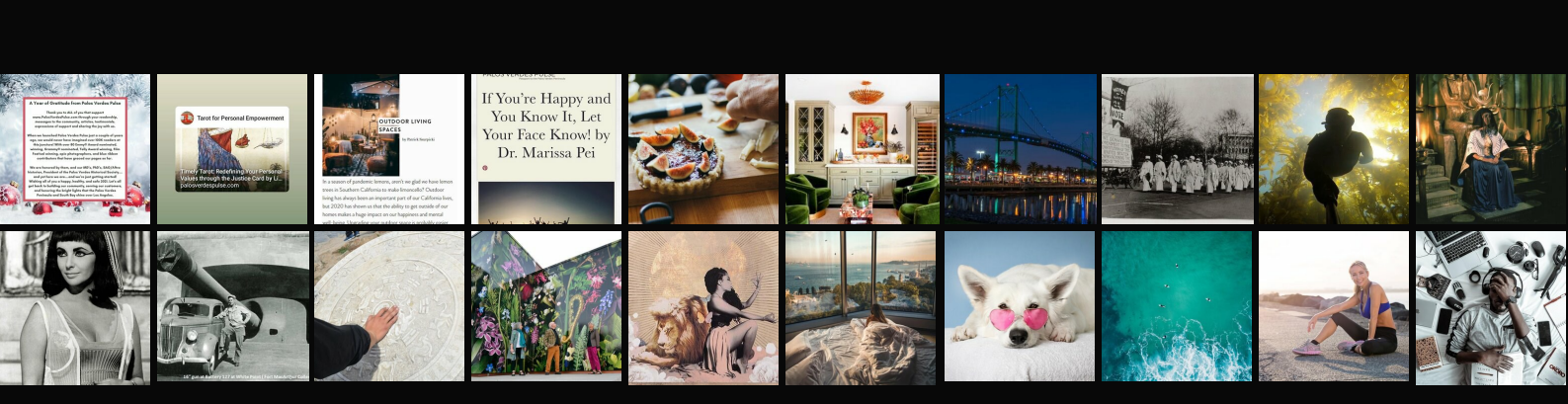
Lisa De La O Wyman is a Tarot reader and writer based in Redondo Beach. At Tarot for Empowerment she works with individual clients, private parties, and special events. Through her work she seeks to connect people with their innate power as well as encounter the mystery in everyday life. She can be reached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

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