

THE SUIT OF WANDS

by Christine Payne-Towler

Key words for the suit of Wands include energy, will, desire, and charisma. The wand symbol is, at its most primitive, a rough club of wood, sometimes showing sprigs of new



ACE OF WANDS
SCAPINI DECK

green growth emerging from its weathered grain, occasionally aflame like a torch. A more refined version shows a magical wand or staff, collecting and focusing life force according to the user's will. Like a conductor's baton, this symbol leads and directs the unfolding action, and the participants instinctively know to follow the one who holds this symbol of authority. Because the element connected with Wands is fire, the qualities of boldness, ambition, drive, competitiveness, and initiative are highlighted. Whenever a Wand card appears, actions are being taken or suggested, change is in the works, and a challenge to the will is implied.

The more esoteric Tarot decks reveal that Wands symbolize the life force, also known as Kundalini, Qi (Chi), or Prana—the animating energy that fills every living thing with vitality, without which nothing could live. Through the correspondence with fire, Wands also represents the light that conquers darkness, whether it's a candle in the window or the sun at the center of the universe.

This metaphor applies to the Wand of Prometheus, a hollowed-out branch within which he smuggled coals of fire from the realm of the gods to bequeath to humans in the ancient Greek myth. Scientists today speculate that the human mastery of fire was the first catalyst toward the development of civilization.

A further wrinkle on that myth is that in the Hebrew alphabet and the Phoenician (mother tongue of all Indo-European languages) before that, the letters of the alphabet were said to be originated by ancient priests observing the constellations in the night sky and noting down in “tongues of flame” the glyphs those constellations described. Prometheus is one form of the god Mercury, who traditionally rules all alphabets, numbers, glyphs, signs, symbols, and writing in general.

So the code of “fire from heaven” not only refers to the arts of cooking, forgery, pottery, and other early technologies, but also the skills of reading and writing, mathematics, codes and ciphers, and all the sophisticated tools we humans have invented to raise our consciousness, become more accountable, and invent the world we now inhabit. Wands represents the inventive, entrepreneurial spirit,



ACE OF WANDS
IBIS DECK



the quest for excellence and greater command, and the power that belongs to whoever can wield this force skillfully.

Ace of Wands

The Ace of Wands symbolizes a pivotal act, or fateful step, that will set loose the chain of events leading toward your desired goal. As such, it refers to a birth or new beginning, the inauguration of an endeavor, and the necessary commitment to see a project through. It embodies the aroused Will, and one-pointed, aims at the bull's-eye.

Two of Wands

The Two of Wands—so often portrayed on this card as crossed wands—imply a deadlock due to energies working at cross-purposes. This could refer to an internal situation, an equal split between optimism and pessimism, for example, or a situation where you feel



TWO OF WANDS
WAITE DECK

“damned if you do, damned if you don’t.” It could be a standoff with another person, or with limitations externally imposed upon you.

There may be a creeping dread of self-doubt, perhaps that you have bitten off more than you can chew. Give yourself a moment to take in the full implications of your situation. Regain your bearings before launching yourself back into action. Deal with concerns before they become regrets!

Three of Wands

The Three of Wands symbolizes an inner balance that allows you to feel reasonable

optimism about new endeavors you are committed to. In the illustrated Tarot decks, the protagonist is standing on his balcony, watching his ships leave the harbor, loaded with trade goods for far-off ports, dreaming of the fortune he will reap if all goes well.



THREE OF WANDS
DELLE STELLE

He must be patient and trusting, because he will have to wait at least a year to find out how his ships have fared, and meanwhile he has a lot of resources tied up until they return. Only those truly confident in their ideas and abilities would take such a risk. This card represents the energy a person needs to undertake great adventures and accomplish notable deeds.

A detail that sometimes appears in the more esoteric Tarots is a winged wand with two snakes twining around it, called the caduceus, which is Mercury’s wand. This is an ancient symbol of the healer or shaman, one who can travel between the worlds to rescue souls from death or possession. Perhaps the feeling of empowerment this card represents points to the internal mechanisms of self-healing. Perhaps it refers to the courage it takes to be an entrepreneur or an inventor, which is in itself a magical process—bringing not only opportunity for success, but an awakening to higher potentials.

Four of Wands

The Four of Wands is the teamwork card, illustrated by two couples who have come



together to create something profitable and enduring and grant a gift to the future such as a factory, hospital, theater or university. They



FIVE OF WANDS
THE DALI TAROT

represent the founding families of the future metropolis that will grow around their inspiration. It will take time to build on such a grand vision; eventually other people of ambition and talent must be attracted to this nucleus for it to fulfill its potential. What we see here is the start-up, the founding visionaries committing their energies to designing the blueprints and laying the groundwork. This partnership is the prototype for society or any grouping where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Five of Wands

The Five of Wands symbolizes struggles caused by ambitious maneuvering and the spirit of competition, which jostles to push the self forward at the expense of others. There is a fine line between demonstrating personal excellence and making others feel like losers. It may be necessary to ask yourself who really benefits when we all fight so hard for such small rewards. Am I serving a negative, manipulative agenda when I start applying battle metaphors to business? Even when your only motive is to be the best you can be, to get yourself noticed and define what is unique about you, it is still sensible to minimize the number of egos bruised in the process lest your successes be celebrated alone.

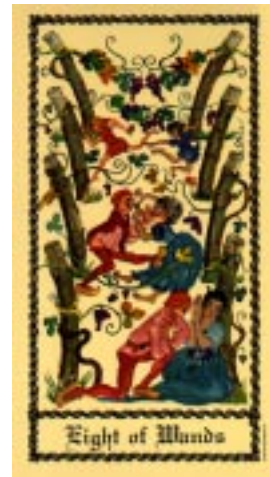
Six of Wands

The Six of Wands represents the respect and acknowledgment due to you for your efforts to solve the problems of your community. The image is most often that of a victory parade after the celebrated general has helped the troops win a pivotal battle. It took the whole tribe to win the victory, of course, but it was the leader's heroism and clarity under pressure that inspired them to overcome. Your "team" is thrilled that you made them into winners. Relax and let them celebrate, even let them lionize you for awhile. They are seeing in you their own better selves—a victory indeed!

Seven of Wands

The Seven of Wands shows a person who is nearly always successful in working his or her will in the world. This is a person who is truly gifted, standing head and shoulders above the rest, a standard-setter and exemplar who exceeds previous conceptions of what is possible.

In the history of the Tarot, this person would most likely be an admired and feared warrior who has vanquished overwhelming adversaries, but nowadays your stellar accomplishment could just as easily appear in the world of the media, politics, the arts or business. Beware of the creeping smugness that begins to appear with this card. Being successful does not make you invincible, and it does not indemnify you against errors! Enjoy your "fifteen minutes of fame," then get back to your tasks or your head will swell, to the



EIGHT OF WANDS
THE SCAPINI TAROT



detriment of your ability to succeed again.

Eight of Wands

The Eight of Wands often shows a flight of spears or staffs moving through the air in formation, as if a hidden group of archers had let fly all at once. The title of the card will often echo the idea of swiftly unfolding events, whether of intentional design or unpremeditated. There are also versions which emphasize the agricultural cycle, paralleling the yearly crop cycle with the swift growth of children into adults with children of their own.

In each case, the emphasis is on the necessity of change and the challenge to keep up with it. With the turning of the seasons we are constantly being plunged into precipitous change,



NINE OF WANDS
WAITE DECK

Nine of Wands

The Nine of Wands almost invariably indicates a need for rest, some time out to mend wounds and savor victories. Although it's hard to do, cede the field

to fresher teammates for now. Release the ego's attachment to being the one at the top.

In the pictured Tarots, the protagonist is shown as too exhausted to be effective in defending his gains, yet resisting the suggestion to ask for help or just step down. He or she hasn't had the chance to totally heal from past blows, and is still up there taking another beating. This is the fix that comes from mak-

ing oneself irreplaceable. Fight off the maniacal thought that only you can save the day! Stop rebuffing loved ones who want to help you.

Ten of Wands

This card represents an all-out effort, an obsessive commitment to a task that demands everything you have. The person in the pictured cards is in no position to rest until he makes it

inside the stout walls of the well defended castle in the distance. If he fails, he will become prey for the highway robbers after dark. It doesn't matter that he's overloaded and underfed. With this card, you just have to do whatever it takes to get to completion, and nothing can be allowed to interfere.



XVII
SLAVE OF SCYTHES
PAGE OF WANDS
IBIS DECK

Page of Wands

The Page of Wands is a unique individual, a nonconformist, often quite a bohemian, and independent by nature. He requires little in the way of outside affirmation or approval. Perhaps a malcontent, often an innovator or inventor, this Page will only serve others until he figures out how to get others to serve him.

His freedom is so important to him that he would rather go as a peasant among strangers than inherit a fortune with strings attached. Don't be fooled by his humble appearance. He is a future captain of industry or world conqueror, now serving his apprenticeship. He's sometimes seen planting his staff like a flagpole into the earth, out in the wilderness where he can start fresh, without having to make any compromises. You might think of him as a



wild card.

Knight of Wands

The Knight of Wands is a rabble-rouser and fire starter, a feisty and easily provoked character who attacks first and asks questions later. This Knight is quick to anger and enjoys a fight, so much so that he experiences some disappointment at the thought of diplomatic solutions. In his own fantasies he sees himself as trying to help, rescuing the world from its own



QUEEN OF WANDS
SCAPINI DECK

craziness by imposing his sense of order on the space around him.

His vices are bossiness, paranoia and overkill. But sometimes his energy is perfectly appropriate, like when his assertively protective nature is defending threatened treasures or interfering with dark forces. The trick is to keep a sense of proportion when this Knight unleashes his fire, because he really enjoys intense experiences and is always ready to take it to the next level. Once in awhile, that kind of kamikaze intensity is perfect, but on a daily basis, it is exhausting.

Queen of Wands

The Queen of Wands represents the natural manager, an organizational type whose gift it is to create teams and assign tasks, seeing to it that the job runs smoothly and all phases of the operation are keeping up with each other. She'll be sweating in the sun along with her

crew, inspiring everybody to keep up and keeping the job fun with her infectious energy.

She is the best kind of supervisor to have because she is so much like a challenging but encouraging mother who knows you have it in you to do your best work under her direction. She believes in her charges, and they work hard to please her. She is not, however, sentimental. Like a good farm wife, she views her crops, her animals, even the people who work for her, as necessary tools for the achievement of her goals. If any aspect is no longer productive or cost-effective, or if it's time to take the lambs to slaughter, she can let them go without a second thought. Do not look to her for sympathy.

King of Wands

The King of Wands represents the classic conquering hero. He's a charismatic leader, entrepreneurial and ambitious, and is always creating new adventures. He does this because he hates to stay home and "mind the store"—he gets to feeling itchy and restless, bored with the predictable. If you need a crusader or someone to take on a big challenge, he's your man. He prefers and needs a big assignment, and would rather lead than follow.

It could be said that he has a bit of an ego, as evidenced in his enjoyment of flattery. Always a performer, he overachieves in situations where it will be noticed, but in private he wants to be served and adored like the head lion of the pride. Ever the benevolent despot, he makes life wonderful for those he loves, and the opposite for those who displease him.

