



Wisdom Path
by Judi Thomases
Member A.F.A., N.C.G.R.



Resource Guide Article
Published Fall 1987

Tarot Cards Are Not Devilish!
By Judi Thomases

There are two cards in the Tarot deck that people are always afraid of (people, that is, who don't yet have a strong background in metaphysics) — THE DEVIL card and the DEATH card. Because of these two cards, the Tarot has sometimes been considered "evil" and scary! Nothing could be farther from the truth.

To see this clearly, let's first look at some basics.

One of the first things that students of Tarot learn is that there are two different parts of the deck — the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana. The Minor Arcana refers to one's everyday life, the particulars of which are varied and unique — we all have our share of everyday experiences as embodied in our emotional, creative, intellectual, and material concerns. Lovelife, enterprises, worries, and business, let's say. Common stuff, easy to identify with. These particular experiences are graphically described by the suits and court cards of the Minor Arcana. And these cards are the most quickly grasped by the student.

But what's perhaps not as obvious is that all people also share an inner life of spiritual development and awareness. Awakening to this truth is in large part what's defined as gaining wisdom. No matter how unique each person's everyday experiences are, the wisdom gained thereby is exactly the same for everyone, albeit in greater or lesser doses. Or, to put it another way, no matter how many tales of love there've been since the dawn of time, the lesson of giving is always the same.

So the Major cards refer to this inner journey of the soul, just as familiar to us all. As we evolve along this path to wisdom, or "higher consciousness," we reach certain landmarks, or stages. The 22 cards of the Major Arcana are the visual symbols, or roadmap, of this universal trip. And the end of the road is the same for all who journey there: Self-realization. Cosmic consciousness. Understanding. Nirvana. Liberation from struggle. Oneness.

What's all this got to do with those two "scary" cards?

Well, along the visual Tarot road, the Major Arcana tell the story in pictures and symbols about the steps everyone inwardly takes toward this ultimate goal. Each step, or Key, is a plateau on this path to spiritual understanding.

Those two scary-looking Keys, DEATH and THE DEVIL, have special meanings that can be interpreted as follows: DEATH rarely means that someone is physically dying; instead, it means that "the wise man dies a little every day," that there must be destruction before there can be renewal; in other words, that there is a process of **rebirth** going on. No matter how skeletal the figure, the only thing that's dying is one's outworn constructs.



Wisdom Path

by Judi Thomases
Member A.F.A., N.C.G.R.



And THE DEVIL card means that a stage has been reached in the growth towards wisdom wherein there is an encounter with one's personal "inner demons," one's inner battle between the higher and lower natures which causes one to feel as though there are evil things in life. Sometimes people think this Key represents Black Magic, or Satanism. Notwithstanding some few misguided souls who might actually be dabbling in such foolishness, this Key really describes **any** misuse of one's power for selfish purposes, or any enslavement to a false concept of Power. Just about everyone falls into *that* category at one point or another! However, "that which tempts is that which redeems." So, no matter what negativity is encountered on a life-path, it is actually **a mask or disguise for something that will serve your ultimate enlightenment.**

In fact, the Tarot really teaches that there is no true death, nor any such thing as the Devil. Evil is the illusion created by living in a world of polarity, of contrast. The cosmos is actually a benign and friendly place designed to bring us towards the light (enlightenment)!

Let me give two wonderful examples of these concepts.

At the age of 90, my grandmother suffered a massive heart attack, ending up in the Intensive Care Unit. It was touch-and-go for days, during which I cast the Tarot cards for guidance. The reading I got was one of the most powerful I'd ever gotten because it gave me proof that often the soul can choose its physical death, or put it off, for purposes of its own soul lessons. The cards showed as follows: The Fool (reversed), The Ace of Wands, and DEATH (reversed). My interpretation of the reading — which eventually proved totally true — was that this spunky old lady had a fighting chance to live, but that inwardly it was a foolish choice based on fear of physical death (or transition into a newer state of consciousness). Her resistance to physical death at this time, I saw, might "buy" her more time on earth but only at a cost to the **quality** of her life.

Sure enough, my grandmother survived her ordeal, but only to spend her last two years bedridden and nearly blind in a nursing home, quite miserable in a situation far different from her prior independence and contentment.

Sometimes, DEATH — physical or psychological — is what allows us to wipe the slate clean, and experience consciousness afresh. Physical death, therefore, can be the chance to do this, either when our body is too old or too sick to support any further inner growth, or when we must allow ourselves a release from our present situation to learn new lessons in other ways. (Because of my grandmother's reading, I now believe we choose our moment, and choose our lesson. I believe that beyond the release of the physical vehicle lies continued awareness, continued awakening, until we can eventually again take on another [i.e., reincarnated] physical vehicle.) But physical death is not the only means to cleanse the slate and give ourselves another chance for enlightenment. If the physical vehicle is healthy, yet inwardly there is blockage against going further towards true transformation, a rebirth of another kind — preferably psychological — is imperative. If physical death is the soul's choice, awareness and hard-earned wisdom will be retained. But if physical death is resisted when the moment is right, the wisdom is still learned, only that much harder. That's the way it seems my grandmother chose. So, although the DEATH card needn't mean physical death, it should always mean spiritual renewal.



Wisdom Path

by Judi Thomases
Member A.F.A., N.C.G.R.



As to THE DEVIL card, an excellent example of its actual meaning can be gleaned from a true news story about a couple who ended up adopting the adult male who killed their teenage son in a drunk-driving accident. (Well aware of the difficulty convincing my students that the fearsomeness of THE DEVIL card really embodies a principle that can enlighten and redeem people, I welcomed this real-life illustration.)

Surely, nothing could be more terrible than the senseless death of one's child by an irresponsible drunk with a long history of repeated offenses. To the drunk, the alcohol was his DEVIL. To the parents, the drunk was evil. To the teenager, death in such a way may have felt tragic, painful, and premature. How, then, did these people find the ability to get past all this "evil," to forgive the drunk and adopt him in a spirit of love and aid?

Act One belonged to the parents. After experiencing the greatest hatred they could feel, especially after the drunk's continual no-shows in court, the parents simply couldn't live with this destructive emotion anymore. They needed a new emotion. The only way out of their hate was to forgive. Meanwhile, the drunk tried to quit his addiction, but lapsed. He couldn't live with himself, either. Everybody dealing with their DEVILS!

Ah, but in Tarot THE DEVIL's chains are loose; one can slip out of his grip any time. So a very strange thing happened. The parents surprised themselves by beginning to feel pity for the drunk, a relatively young man. As this dead teenager's mother said, she could no longer merely forgive the drunk; she began to **need** to help him. She sought ways, and eventually succeeded. Meanwhile, the drunk also needed to change, and discovered how to face himself. That which seemed most evil became the path to their respective enlightenment, and now they are a family, sharing love and knowing greater wisdom. For the former drunk, that which tempted — the alcohol — was that which redeemed. For the parents, that which seemed most horrible in life became a catalyst for growth, compassion and wisdom.

And what of the boy who was killed? How was he redeemed? No one can know what karmic choices a soul makes. Did he need to rebalance his own prior life's mistakes? Or did he select a great and dramatic ending? Was his choice to burn brightly but quickly, leaving an impact on many? Or did his soul regret its brief sojourn? We can't answer.

But we can say this: Every experience, even the most awful, is a lesson that will ultimately increase your wisdom. "That which hurts, instructs." THE DEVIL, therefore, is merely a mask for a beneficial cosmic purpose.

Not so scary after all!

COPYRIGHT Fall 1987, Judi Thomases.

All rights reserved. Permission required for reprinting.