

The Thing Itself

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by  
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# the thing itself

By Tallulah Woitach and the Things Themselves

**This book is dedicated to my dear Cole**

**Thank you for your guidance, brilliance, endless patience**

**Giving method to my madness**

**And having a brain that works just like mine**

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# Part I

- 1 -

**Ace of Cups**

they happened to ride through the loosely grazing all

reciting resplendent revelations

the high road having slept for best

each night visited by a vision

that merit setting down in memory

meaning seemed to wander for many days

sir, you have purpose

but not in the time gone.

**Queen of Cups**

what am I meant to do  
with this preposterous medieval robot  
shrugging off the shape of space?

fair mermaid

thinking will keep you

on the shallows

don't be a basic beach

trying to win

a staring contest with mystery

sink to swim

grow gills just to breathe

swim all the way

down to god's seat

**10 of Cups**

in short, I was a smile bitten off into a ball  
rolled towards some impossible magic lantern

we are Eden's eternal echoes  
not boastfully, but in acknowledgement

all my life

I will live off my own soul

gone into contented exile  
freed from all that oppressive, useless tinsel

I wanted to show you that I was no ordinary mortal

and now I'm leaving you as a friend

keep walking the rainbow bridge

keep meeting people of all kinds

and there is no better place



**Judgment**

my life is a feather on the back of every generation

sharpening the tooth of glory

fermenting vitriol into victory

spaceship swarms murder pit and pendulum

moths of invisible light smoke your remains

lose your eggs

your will's wall cruelly hung with jewels

your scream whiter than snow

you were angels more than everything

squint to ascertain

stunted nightmare strands

stockpiled scaffolding

numbness classified spitting as domination

the method reliable

but outdated

inferior emotions practice leftovers of castrated catharsis

instead, privately groom volcanic vitality

into the aquatic blubbering of disciples

I dedicate this listless sickness

pungently inspire the devotions of strangers

with tapestries of travesty

the concrete descends

into organic hypnosis

Ineffable—

but felt all the same

**The Fool**

“it’s a dangerous business...  
going out your door.  
step onto the road,  
and if you don’t keep your feet,  
there’s no knowing  
where you might be swept off to.”

—JRR Tolkien

luck of the golden dragon  
returning to the white  
wingéd horse of ease  
  
the most sublime zero  
  
the beginning in the end  
the end in the beginning  
  
supernatural abilities defy  
the laws of heaven and hell  
an almost childish anything

the world is your playground, troublemaker

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flutter through  
get away with everything  
a heart that's pure will bend kings

And  
in its way  
does what bees do  
for the one who  
knows  
their luck is a dangerous creature

jabbing kings

in disguise

**10 of swords**

sorry

i came here

to lick

my wounds

i don't even

lick my wounds

i *gnaw* them

i'm a little bit

of an idiot this way

god must be rolling it's eye right now

**The Hermit**

I need my moon milk  
raw rain plays in my head  
she made the floor an attempt to defend herself  
until saying anything else behaved ridiculously

penetrate the sources of the sea  
walk in the recesses of the deep  
take the path where light dwells  
and know it is the way home

have you penetrated?  
put aside the times of adversity?  
scattered over the dispersed earth?  
followed the thunderstorms?

send an ambulance up to the clouds  
order water to cover you  
dispatch the lightning on its mission  
for the young raven cries out

as it wanders its way to god

**The Moon**

witness gold change its interior figure by the art of fire

why should you be so simple as to believe

the principles of nature

the four elements

forbear to rehearse amongst the rest.

busy yourself with such experiments

be beneficial to the public.

be wiser here, after

answer a certain rock

containing golden sands

hollow within

but held together by gum

come to its full strength

and perfection

in a warm hand dissolving every day

for some certain time

what was i saying? confusion.

old decayed in the bigness of a little pea  
smeared surreality harmlessly ominous  
the places you go when body descends to sleep.

run the itinerary, close your eyes, retrace steps,  
hope the holes in your invisible net aren't too wide  
sand down the sharp edges, make everything less accurate  
the meaning is completely different if you say the word differently.

tongue becomes paper, paper becomes dust, dust becomes air i can taste on my tongue.

but here i am, blatantly immortal, isn't it a bit indecent?

like these stars that shined me into existence, no language fully speaks itself—for language needs *us*

is spoken into existence with every flick of the temporary tongue.

realign this cacophony.



**The Tower**

“They can live in my new world

Or die in their old one”

—Daenerys Targaryen

I'm looking forward to watching you fall.

scars heal quite nicely into a vortex of fate

a forest of whisperings growing to going

send kingdoms crashing down

juggle dragon eggs

brush off forgotten bones

Seize sheer seething

before it suffocates

under gravely gradual grief

throw the overwhelming question

arouse human voices

force the moment to its crisis

leave them no lairs

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everyone's a pawn

I will not be schooled by a world

unpredictable and cruel

percolate unlimited arteries

a scheduled spectacle

delightedly decimating

the ravings of the sick nurse a sick world

a sweet shot of good trouble

gets to the center of it all

as for mischief, there is no greater delight

stare into the greedy abyss, and spit

into its soulless, bottomless face.

it's your turn now

everything you've ever felt, ever buried

forget the bottle

*let chaos Reign*

**The Empress**

**I.**

fill me

her busty sigh

her lovely shell

her silent roar

you —

call that innocence

I'm warm

dark

open.

**II.**

the empress declared her mind to the ape men

gave better instructions than they expected

majesty is such a great and able judgment

# Part II

**Eight of Wands**

faster! faster!

said the witch

no trace of fog now

the sky became bluer

everything so happening

every day showed more plainly

how enthusiasm was checked

rather than doomed

labors would soon end

and amusement believed

it would drive away

I promised myself everything

once my creation was complete

**Death**

an artist is someone who cannot die, even if they wanted to

must i die this hard, though

in order to sing your praises?

as crooked teeth so achingly

strain against their braces?

salted wounds rust the pyre

wrathful venom haunts the darkest depths

hoarded holiness dissolves into guilted grief

death is such a handful.

take this pile of bones

make them into one

skeleton sodomy slaking

atlas of sacred places

will i be missed

by space

that used to be

me?

these wings are no longer wings

but merely fans

beating the whiteness of bones

till oblivion atoned

in an old house that is always listening

what was spoken remains

sinks into the story

sand rehearsing the hollow note

in the key of the color of midnight

where souls swing to life

it is time for the gilded hearse

there is nothing at all to be done

all twined and tangled together

what is

confiscated

is what is received

**Knight of Pentacles**

upon my ordinary oath

have you found no one?

no more than a chasm

strive in vain in the adventures of the holy grail

the rest will stand no chance at their goal

for they are the quest

sometime in conversation said let us go on

may god lead us to a place

where we shall find some part

of what we seek

we shall find nothing in the direction that i come from

nor in the quarter you have traversed

it was unlikely

untried as yet

a path which left the pursued any adventure

a huge expanse of unfamiliar

disheartens them a lot



an ancient chapel set on a seemingly abandoned arriving

shields unsaddling their horses hillside

they laid down,

unbuckled their swords,

admitted their prayers,

and knelt before the good.

**The Star**

**I.**

brilliant as the color of embrace, she sails for night

prisoner freed to nakedness, the tree's sister

breeze born as angels do

come in dirt

for there will always be more growling

but we will also be more

so hum a gentle tune

one the air likes

day's moist coolness kisses joy's wet smile

salt the soft steel of secret hearts

holy hole where sacred steam may live

even the fever of desire decays

but the sky lingers

**II.**

it's true

you can survive on nothing but hope

star shining at night encroaching

even as the tower crumbles

starlight shimmers in the stillness of certainty

crying is just as delicious as laughter

tears, water of the heart

christening itself in its own release

today i give this ragged self away

until then, leave the gods to

puzzle out what our words meant

but keep on meaning them.

**III.**

only the strangest angels

dance in the deepest waters

for beauty is nothing

but invisible light made seen

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daylight licked our moving

lips with wakeful sleeping

still moving moving stillness

sweet child,

angels always hover over you.

IV.

make a wish

wish granted

go girl

haunt eternity

night lives deliciously

in the fever of a young secret

listen to this vast universe

dark clouds awakening, devouring broken liquid

I make my own brothers

and desire is less

**The High Priestess**

taste the fruit of the underworld

flavor of the everyday wearing away

till there is more you in lost

than remains

teach us under sleep, where all waters meet

in a world of time beyond

the floors of silent seas sleep so peacefully

no prophets, no great matters, no greatness

still as these rocks

words are questions waiting to be answered

**The Lovers**

just like a killer sunset soul stirrer

the angel of heavenly fire looms

high above our bickering dualities

fire obeys only one law:

spread

the kingdom

the holiest of holies

the immaculate gaze

the mind in love with itself

some clues must remain a riddle

a dizzying fluidity rising like the morning

enjoy all the fleeting days

for this is your portion,

heavenly flame

one of those graceful creatures divinity dispensed

incensed innocence in a sense

let me climb my mane

before day breathes

before the shadows of night are gone

before the moon's goblet gathers milky rivers of plenty

did you know St. valentine was also the saint of beekeepers and epilepsy?

trembling floods of golden sweet

caring for creatures

shake

sting

secrete

**Three of Swords**

“even your not being here  
is warm with you”

—Rilke

**I.**

little heart

dispossessed

white rage glaring

gasping fury till something akin to  
the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss  
staggered with sudden sequel

confessing grasps what can never be grasped

so I caught him, yes

I held.



II.

I loved you like a goddamned idiot.

I miss that

more than I miss you

picking at a splinter that's not even there anymore

a nightmare in captivity

parsing out particles of geometry

a hole in the universe

the shape of my friend

a piece of negative space

aches in my head

a scar

where your swords used to be

**The Hanged Man**

“do not let those who cannot see convince you you are hallucinating”

—unknown

head over heels for directionless space

hang by your ankles

till every last bit of resistance

tumbles out with a jangle

to be upside down

in an upside-down world

is to be on the right side of

Things

a body flirts with falling

blood rushes to the head

if you can't hide it, advertise it

That is the root of your height.

jolly back behind eclipse jelly

the world's weirdest ice cream flavor

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zapped by the existent jolt

pity those who will never

dispel their illusions

hang above the world

hang from heaven above

be stranger than whatever they call

strangest

# Readings

Abridged transcripts

**Reading 1, for Part I.**

**Question: how do I make these pieces into a whole?**

**Cole**

Ultimately it's the product. And it's not a huge thing in the sense that: you'll finish this and you'll do another thing.

So the first ten cards, you should have a specific question for them. And it shouldn't have to do with the book, with the project. But it shouldn't be the only question you have because there should be another one. And if you think of it as a two-part structure, whether or not that's clearly indicated, then there are two different revelations of the material.

I want you to have a real question. Not just a question *about* something, but an *actual* question. I want it to be a real question about you as a poet.

I think the material of this project has questions in it. What does it mean to write poetry and share it? That's one of the implicit questions here. Why do that?

**Tallulah**

Isn't that kind of the implicit question of like, almost all poetry, though?

**Cole**

I'm not saying they're unique or exclusive to you. I'm saying they are questions that are raised here. What does it mean to be a poet. What does it mean to be a poet and what does poetry do? What does poetry do for me? What does poetry do for others? So questions like that that are the real ones, not the technical ones and not ones that might feel generic, but they really are real.

**Tallulah**

I'm trying to kind of figure out how to bridge the gap between treading in the mystery with also knowing how to make these poetic declarations and have them sound and feel truly authoritative. Edicts that you're going to come to understand later on. Treading that line between unintelligibility and meaning. Making this feel like it coheres into something

**Cole**

Show me how it coheres. Show me how these pieces cohere.

[reading from tarot guide book]

“In this particular order, there are two different structures, one of which resembles a cross, the other of which is a straight line of cards. In fact, these two different groups are related horizontally. Leaving the 10th card, the Empress, standing above the rest and aloof. This card is not really involved in the action, for it symbolizes what will be the final influence, the result and outcome of the matter raised by the querent in the formulated question.”

So that is the final influence, the result and outcome of the question you formulated.

“It is likely that this Celtic system incorporates one group of six cards and one group of four for philosophical reasons, and together the digits from 1 to 6 add together and the result is 21, which is the number of figured cards in the major arcana. The group of six cards relates to the position of the querant in regard to the question. So we're talking about cards one through six, which is the cross this whole bit. Yeah, that is, that relates to the position of you in regard to your question. And all of those cards are involved with questions of the self in relation to spirit and matter. The trinity of Spirit enmeshed in the trinity of Materiality. The line of four cards is really three cards, half of six with one card standing aloof. And this Trinity stands for Spirit Liberated from Matter. The question, which is why they are interpreted upwards from bottom to top, ascending to the spirit and toward the 10th card, which summarizes the entire figure, the three as half of six, still with only one half of the querent's nature with his spirit. The 10th card summarizes this spiritual ascent. The diagram.”

So the first card that came down, the ace of Cups?

### **Tallulah**

That came out also when I was shuffling reversed. interesting.

### **Cole**

The basic cross is the ace of cups crossed by the queen of cups. And right now we're dealing with the self, yourself, in relation to the material and spiritual matter of your question. So. These first two cards represent you in relation to the problem set by the question.

Second card laid across the first represents the obstacle with which the querent is faced, either consciously or not.

**Tallulah**

Queen of Cups, she always looks angry to me? And like, trying to figure it out? Like, what is this mysterious, weird object?

**Cole**

The cynic.

**Tallulah**

There's no better way to answer it than, like "trying to win a staring contest with mystery." Always trying to ask these questions that can only be answered through the practice. And having to surrender to that.

**Cole**

The stalemate, the refusal to surrender, the stubbornness. Or the: I want to understand it first.

**Tallulah**

Feeling like understanding is the way into it and trying to have royal dominion over the supernatural. Rather than realizing that that's what's working *through* you. A certain stuckness with trying to figure out the formula. But if we knew and understood, like as poets, I don't think we'd do it. You know?

**Cole**

Yeah, yeah. You need humility. So the obstacle, as I hear you saying it, is a sort of like, tenacious, clinging to the idea that understanding can get you where you want to go.

**Tallulah**

I feel like a kind of responsibility. I don't want to give readings to myself even, before I've studied each card and really gone deep into my occult studies. But the whole point is that, in the end, it's you, direct download from the impressions, like Rorschachs, rather than "I want to make sure that I'm certified"

**Cole**

Is it that you don't feel ready yet?



**Tallulah**

Perhaps. Yeah.

**Cole**

Or perhaps that you're procrastinating?

**Tallulah**

I think I don't feel ready. Yeah. And I just want to feel ready.

**Cole**

The need to feel in control and prepared. Adequately prepared.

**Tallulah**

Yeah. I want to feel adequately prepared. I feel like even now at this project, I'm like, I don't think I adequately prepared. I should have somehow done more or, like... I don't know. It feels like there was...I don't know.

**Cole**

It sounds to me like the queen of cups is the perfectionist in you.

So that's the obstacle.

What about the ace of Cups? This is you in relation to the problem set by the question.

**Tallulah**

Ace of Cups.

It's the Holy Grail.

It's God's hand coming with that water, that divine endless font.

It would never end flowing and it's just kind of generous and you can't exhaust it.

And it's a dove also coming in like the sacrament of sainthood or Christ or whatever it is.

Aces are very lucky cards. A lot of people say they should be understood as the major arcana too in that like they're so, you know... they're the epitome or whatever. There's a different word I'm looking for, like kind of... you know this.

**Cole**

Apotheosis?

**Tallulah**

Yes! Apotheosis! I learned that word recently.

When I see it [ace of cups] I think about spilling out from the heart and being uncontainable and how when I really do love my work, the questions disappear because it's just loving the work, loving the doing of it. And when I'm just by myself and playing around with words and I just get lost in that. I showed you that thing where I was doing the list of words moving it around and saying: "I am going to actually finish these, because I like doing it, and it's good to be playful." That essence of when being an artist is the joy of being with yourself and creating.

**Cole**

Here's what I noticed. And I hear, too, the things that you sort of seem to think of, or just the way you spoke makes it seem like you think they're different. The first thing you mentioned was a sort of infinite plenitude. This loving, generative activity that embraces all parts of the process. And is basically unextinguishable.

It's constantly regenerating energy. Spilling it's fecundity.

So I see that as your gift: you are uniquely sensitized to transform experience into language.

And to feel it in a way others don't and to transform it.

And this is *\*always\** happening! It's your default.

**Tallulah**

Even when I'm not trying to.

**Cole**

Correct. But then you also said that it's like, sacred. It's like God. It's the Divine. And that sounds like something on the surface at least, that you would hold in reverence. And hold in awe, and *not* feel like comfortable in yourself and playful before.

So it seems like it's the sacred aspect of what you do by default that invites the queen of cups in as an obstacle. Because she comes in and says, "Whoa, whoa, slow down, little girl. You're doing something sacred here. Are you really prepared? Are you really respectful enough?"

**Tallulah**

*Are you really respectful enough?* Yeah, that's the question. I keep asking other magical practitioners, like: "do you ever feel like no matter what you do with the ritual, you're not doing enough? And that's, like, disrespectful?"

**Cole**

That's her. That's her. But like you said: If I am totally immersed in the experience, I don't think those thoughts. I don't have those questions. But the minute the *sacred* manifests, then it's almost like debilitating because it's like, "Oh, no, I'm not worthy. I'm not ready."

**Tallulah**

And I also thinking about the Jewish poetry thing of God is the most mislabeled name of all. I keep seeing again and again how like when I try to consciously think about God or the Divine, that always brings me farther away from it. Versus like when I'm in that flow. And you can't get to that by trying. You sort of have to stumble by it to accident. Because otherwise, you're just going to be like, "I'm not ready for sainthood. How dare you even think that." And like, how can I serve whatever duty I feel like has been given to me adequately?" The other thing I think about is how a fountain again is regenerating and there's like no end or beginning. So the queen of cups separates you from the divine and things in a very like Christianic way, like "Oh God, it's this thing outside that you're like praying to rather than that God is you.

**Cole**

God is You.  
And me.

**Tallulah**

What pleases the God in you?

**Cole**

That's right. Okay. I think we've identified your position in terms of your question more concretely. So the first: your position towards the question. "They happened to ride through the loosely grazing all/ reciting resplendent revelations/The high road having slept for best/each night visited by a

vision that merit setting down in memory/ meaning seemed to wander for many days/ sir, you have purpose, but not in the time gone.”

**Tallulah**

The thing that stands out to me was “the high road having slept for best” It's the paradox of the high road is surrendering or giving up the idea that you can take the high road. That you can, like, somehow ascend and be transcendent by just going to the low of "hey, let's just play around with words and see what shit happens."

**Cole**

I see that all over this poem. “They happened to ride through the loosely grazing all” That first line is so great. So this makes sense for me. And the first one.

The second one is the obstacle: “What am I meant to do with this preposterous medieval robot shrugging off the shape of space?”

**Tallulah**

I thought that maybe that was kind of silly. And just my over-literal describing.

**Cole**

But I love it!

**Tallulah**

Thank you. I was thinking how Ariana [Reines] said poetry is a technology. It is the medieval robot square in its roundness and impenetrable. And maybe it's empty, like the tabernacle being empty, but that being a sacred emptiness, too. With whatever aleatory processes I'm doing, it's like they're pregnant with meaning. But also they're not. They're just like. Things put together. But that's kind of the point is that from an emptiness still like you can know. like even if tarot is all random or whatever, it's still going to bring you to something.

**Cole**

The third card symbolizes the conscious aim of the querent relative to the question. The fourth card represents the subconscious aim of the querent

**Tallulah**

Relative to the question. Conscious aim and subconscious conscious aim.

**Cole**

Subconscious aim. The fifth card represents the querent himself. The sixth card represents the field of relationships with others. Relevant to the question, however indirectly.

**Tallulah**

So conscious aim. Uh... prosperity?

Having a great time making art and just kind of being really happy, doing it and being happy making things? I really love writing songs and how fun that is. And when it's fun and it's fun to do it and when it just feels nice and good. And I just want to keep every day doing creative practices that feel fun. I see myself already continuing this practice, because isn't it interesting to not just pull a card, but then have a completely kind of novel reading through pulls of words?

The joy of that—it's marriage of heaven and earth, material and spiritual, united into one. It's the balance of feminine and masculine, child and adult. You can be both, you know.

I'm trying to get... I don't know. I'm not going to say that I'm “not trying to get back,” but like, you know, accessing like, that kind of like... Part of me that's always been there, like even since I was little? That's kind of just like, you know... I don't know. I feel like Noticing The Gleams and just playing around with just being artistic for the sheer joy of it because you can't be otherwise.

But also like the joy of the things I've learned as I've gotten older as an adult, the intellectual understandings that I couldn't have had when I was younger. And sometimes I tend to see those as an enemy, like, “oh, my intellect is going to keep me from breaking through to enlightenment” or to, you know, a better poetry. And that's why I need to over-rely on aleatory or feel paranoid that I need to do that. But I think marrying the two. Someone said the correct use of intellect is knowing how to break through these kind of illusions we put ourselves in and to get to that nonintellectual place, paradoxically so.

It's about home too. It's about finding a home in poetry.

**Cole**

So then the subconscious aim of the question.

**Tallulah**

Judgement. Judgment day.

This is a really creepy card to me, with the corpses and the going to God. It looks like a diagram of some kind of Freudian thing with the super ego or the above horning down some kind of message and being heard by the lower parts that are maybe revived back to life by that. The first thing I thought was just like how exhalatory it is, trying to judgment, trying to make a final answer. I'm always trying to find the final answer.

**Cole**

And so the subconscious question is like, "am I good?" Or something along those lines?

**Tallulah**

It might be that, but I mean... It probably is that. Very much so. Yeah.

**Cole**

Will I be will I be judged positively?

This is the subconscious aim of the question. So this is not the part that you would not necessarily recognize or want to recognize.

**Tallulah**

Yes. That's why I need you to.

**Cole**

So I think judgment there is like a desire for validation.

**Tallulah**

Yeah. I still think about what you and Robert said to me of like, "the first thing we said was: she's a poet. Tallulah is a poet." And how deeply that still strikes and how much I still feel like I need that recognition.

**Cole**

That's the position of the field of relationships with others.

**Tallulah**

Yeah, I was going to say relationships with, like, other artists I admire. I still feel self-hate and deep criticism of "Oh, I'm not like them in this way" or "I should be more like them" or whenever I had maybe the opportunity to meet someone who I admire, feeling like they're not going to like me. I need them to validate that I am like them in order to make it real. And to not feel that pain of separation. I just have a lot of affection for who I *think* they are and what their work means to me.

And it feels just like a lot of rejection. And I just want all of the my favorite artists to love and adore me and tell me I'm just like them. And so then I could know. the grasshopper by Chekhov really struck me as exactly what I've felt in a lot of ways. Like, you know, everyone telling me like how great and talented I am. And also feeling like, "Oh, but I don't think that others who maybe I'm only related to distantly and not directly and personally would." I don't know. It's um. Yeah. Wanting to be told that you're good and feeling like maybe you're not and maybe you're feigning it and just thinking about it. Like you saying "you're a poet. It's unmistakable." Like, I'm almost worried I could fake it somehow.

**Cole**

Imposter Syndrome.

**Tallulah**

Yeah, like, underneath I'm just writing bad high school slam poetry, which is poetry, but it's not.

**Cole**

You are not, Tallulah.

What about the fool? That's your position as the querent, the question asker.

**Tallulah**

I still have a lot to learn and I'm just starting out on this journey and I recognize that this is not the end. It's maybe the very beginning, maybe realizing I'm an idiot, which is cool.

In the way that we all need to realize we're idiots in the platonic sense.

**Cole**

If we don't, we are really, really screwed.  
Because we know maybe 1% of what's going on.

**Tallulah**

On just like the literal sensory level of what we know that we don't experience? All the colors we don't see?

**Cole**

We don't even use 80% of our brains.  
So the seventh card, the hermit symbolizes the attitude you have toward yourself which is of great importance in determining the outcome of the question.

**Tallulah**

I'm a recluse maybe starting a revolution. I think "Oh, maybe I like really need to just go to a cabin in the woods and be by myself to, you know, really be."

**Cole**

Yourself.

**Tallulah**

Or not just that, but like, that's what it would mean to really dedicate yourself to the art and not just have it be a thing you're doing after you hang out with people on a Wednesday night.  
I feel like I'm still treading in the halfway between being a person and being a poet. And that being a poet, being an artist, being a saint—you have to make some pretty drastic. I think my solitude often feels impinged upon. That's why I like staying up at night, because it's just me and the universe or whatever. Being a human and being a person is always going to bar you from the project of poetry. But also, it's necessary. Because what else is a project of poetry but figuring out how to be fully human?



**Cole**

Okay, so the next one, the eighth card symbolizes your environment, the spiritual force of the situation associated and involved with the question.

**Tallulah**

The moon is confusion. And two towers thinking of dualities and polarities and tamed and untamed wild and more domesticated things crawling out of the ocean randomly. I don't know why there's a lobster there. That's always struck me as kind of funny. The tides in the tide. And the moon.

Lobsters can live indefinitely? I think maybe the two oceans also. So those maybe are two different polarities. It's like there's a river flow here. So they separate. And like, I still feel stuck in thinking of things as duality. Like, you know, even in the way that I talk and as much as I'm trying to dismantle it, saying like, "Oh, am I a real poet? Is this real poetry or is this high school slam poetry? Is this bad poetry? Is this good poetry, is this high or is this low? I can't write about my feelings without it being dumb."

**Cole**

So the environment, the spiritual environment of the question involves seeing a duality. Okay. The ninth card [The Tower] symbolizes hopes and fears, summarizing the previous two cards.

**Tallulah**

I hope to cause chaos.

I also fear chaos and scary things befalling me and being zapped out of my tower set on fire... but am also trying to cause it.

**Cole**

So you want things to come to a crisis and you fear them coming to a crisis?

**Tallulah**

And losing what I thought that I've built up so far

**Cole**

I heard I think I might need to make a radical shift to be alone and not try to do poetry as a hobby outside of my other concerns like but go all the way.

Either really doing it or it's bullshit.

**Tallulah**

Yes.

**Cole**

And then so the tower to me does summarize those previous two cards, because there's the recognition that bringing things to a crisis may be necessary or the feeling that it is necessary.

And then duality is the fear: If I bring things to a crisis. What if it turns out that it was still bullshit, not real? Like, I need to do something extreme. Like go live alone in a cabin. Or blow up the world and unleash something by bringing it to that crisis that I do not want that I cannot handle.

This really about like the fear associated with following through your narrative of what it would mean to do the thing that would make you “really” responsible, “really” respectful, “really” trained.

**Tallulah**

Yeah. I fear it. And that's obviously why.

**Cole**

The synthesis of these things as they join together to form a new influence.

If you imagine these as two entities that entrain with one another to produce a third entity with its own emergent properties and behaviors. It's that.

**Tallulah**

I'm trying to figure out two words so that my brain can try to marry them together. Live through the senses. The white winged horse of ease is what feels good

Instead of being like, “Should I be a hermit? Should I do this? Should I do that? All this “Shoulds” instead of

what do you actually want?

And trusting that what you want is going to lead you to whatever is meant for you  
or whatever you're meant to give to the world  
and not feeling like that's something that you have to strain for.  
That it's something that just happens when you sink down  
and are connected and actually feeling what you're feeling

**Cole**

You don't always need to be feeling something else than you are.

**Tallulah**

My revelations come from pleasure more so than just pain.

**Cole**

Yes. I think when you're accustomed to feeling badly—either physically or mentally—it becomes a default. Sometimes you don't notice. We don't notice what we're actually feeling. This is true of everyone. And to do that requires many things. But one of them is a sense that it's safe to do that.

**Tallulah**

I'm really trying to break through to my heart and it feels like there's been so many layers that have kind of confused that or stop that from happening or like that, you know, are self-protective saying that it's hard for me to feel things way to distract myself from the fact that I am maybe feeling things that are kind of painful, like are kind of sad.

**Cole**

You know Tallulah, sometimes when I check in with my heart, I'm *astonished* by how much pain is in it. And I'm like, "Oh, *that's* why I don't actually pay attention all the time." Because I tune into it, and I'm like, *Holy fuck*, it's like it'll never cry itself out. And it's kind of dizzying. There are other times when I do this and it feels very different. But it's the extremity of it that's a little bit disturbing.

**Tallulah**

*Also* expecting pain or thinking pain is or should be the default like, "oh, isn't love pain in the end?"

**Cole, (holding up the ace of cups)**

This is love. This is love.

**Tallulah**

I'm still trying to unlearn the symbols that have seemingly stood for certain things in my life.

Like, “*that’s* probably what you're hiding, isn't it?” Always defaulting to these things instead of letting myself expand past it. “I guess we'll go and feel that because it's—

**Cole**

Easier.

**Tallulah**

It's easier, it's not confusing.

**Cole**

Gives a false sense of certainty.

**Tallulah**

Yeah. Instead of dealing with like

maybe you're feeling pain from a question you're just starting to realize

maybe what you're actually sad about is that there wasn't anything to lose in the first place

And there isn't going to be anyone who is The One

The one who is always going to mean more than everybody else.

You realize no one is going to transcend anyone else.

It’s really disappointing to think like “oh, they are also just a person.”

**Cole**

And disappointment is a big measure of pain.

So I think this is a really good reading.

**Cole**

“The Empress. This card is meant to represent the force resulting from the meeting between the juggler and the Lady Pope. The image is that of an empress seated bearing in her left hand a scepter

and in her right hand a heraldic shield. This image represents the evolutionary outcome of the course adopted by the juggler in his decision to put aside his baubles and look for the real meaning in life. We see that the wimple has evolved into wings, which connote a heavy, *heavenly* relationship and perhaps an emphasis on the solar nature of the two elements: lunar and solar, contained within the hat of the juggler, suggesting the idea of spiritual achievements being the outcome of his chosen course. The basic shape emphasizes the inner quality of this card, for the droop of clothing between the knees and the head with its double crown are the bottom and top points of a lozenge shaped quaternity. The implication is that the same small lozenge which we saw in the previous card.”<sup>1</sup>

**Tallulah**

Which is the high priestess?

**Cole**

Yeah. “The Lady Pope has now grown. The potential has been developed and the whole image is one of fecundity.” *Whoa*. I said that [earlier]

**Tallulah**

What's fecundity?

**Cole**

Being full. It means fertility, actually. Yeah, but I didn't mean it in reproductive sense. I meant it in like, a sense of being an endlessly generative.

“The implication is that the same small lozenge in Lady Pope has now grown, the potential has been developed, and the whole image is one of fecundity and inner life. The scepter, which is surely a link with the scepter of the minor arcana, reminds us of the baton which the juggler held also in the left hand. The implication is that the potential of the baton or magic wand has also been realized and its value is now clearly recognized. The symbol on top of the scepter has been related to the astrological sign for Venus, but it is in fact, more precisely the cross described by Solow as the higher ternary acting upon the spiritual quaternary, which is a precise summary of the nature of this

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<sup>1</sup> *Book of Tarot*, Fred Gettings

card. the Hebrew letter gimel on the Italian card is linked with the idea of enclosure, which finds a correspondence in the graphic structure of the card.

The letter is also associated with the throat and speech, gimel, *Gub*-sound. The sound, the angelic nature of the wings indicates that the speech will be friendly, helpful and constructive speech, unlike that of the double card for whom the Hebrew Zion is associated with destruction. The Empress is sometimes called Isis, Eve, Lilith and Gypsy Queen.”

### **Tallulah**

It's also telling to what I've been thinking about with all the disability stuff—going between anger and goodwill.

But Venus. I have 6 planets in Taurus. I'm a child of Venus.

Fecundity, though. It's good to see that. I have brought a fullness to a lot of inquiries. The seed of a development is coming to a fullness that I am proud of and has opened so much and changed so much. Not making an idol of any way that you work, and always knowing that you can do it differently and always find more. And so I guess the fecundity is the seed.

### **Cole**

*Yeab!*

### **Tallulah**

Of the beginnings and the fool

It's literally you.

It's the openness and the ever passing through.

There's always more things to experiment with.

The cut outs are like card pulls in that way.

### **Cole**

“The Empress indicates wisdom, spiritual strength, and the influence of the moon and the sun. Femininity and fecundity. And elegance. And intelligence and splendor. But in reverse, it indicates coquetry, vanity, a lack of practicality, frivolity and prodigality.”

[note: prodigality, though not the “meaning” means for me—the need to be a “prodigy”]

What I would invite you to think about from the dark shadow of the Empress is that:

Maybe this judgmental voice that comes into the poem isn't wanted there? The one that calls people out, including yourself, and says, "Bullshit. You call that...Whatever?"

Maybe you don't want the language of calling out or disparaging.

Or catching someone out and being like, "I know what's *really* going on. maybe that.

Maybe that's why this is the culmination piece,

because it's all the things you said about love and fecundity,

but also a reminder than maybe the work you're called to do isn't about satirizing.

You might just think differently about some of the poems if you're if you're imagining in a tension between the satirical mode and the mode of awe and wonderment and childlike joy.

**Tallulah**

Childlike joy vs. like, "oh, look, I've—

**Cole**

Been there, done that.

**Tallulah**

or "I know what I'm doing here, and I'm calling attention to it to show how self-aware I am of what I'm doing."

**Cole**

This obstacle, this judge, this perfectionist, this caller out of hypocrisies might not be best employed in your poems, or at least in this book. Yeah. Yeah, that's really what I honestly take away.

**Tallulah**

Yeah, this was a very cool thing to do. I love how we brought divination the few times we've done it and done it sparingly, it's been a great overview or going kind of deeper and also just really acknowledging and this is a mystical project, the project of poetry.

**Cole**

Yes, it feels very fitting. You know, it's like everything we've done has felt right.

**Tallulah**

It was really cool also to do the reading without like, “Oh, I don't know anything about the card” but “Okay, I'll come up with an answer now, I guess.”

**Cole**

You do you do really perform miraculously when you get rid of the Queen of cups.

**Tallulah**

Indeed. Being put on the spot, my quote unquote winging it is always winging. In the sense of being given a wing.

**Cole**

Being forced  
to fly.

**Tallulah**

Pushed out of the nest, and then all of a sudden I'm just talking and then I'm like “Oh, shit!”  
See, this is why I just need to keep doing things in the instant.

**Cole**

Spontaneous and sweet.



Part II  
Question/s

How do I edit the poetry I receive while preserving its  
prophecy?

How do I follow my intuition, exert control, while also  
surrendering to this vastness?

How do I listen to the wisdom of my past lives while  
also creating this one?

How do I prune the brittle dead parts without  
accidentally throwing away seeds?

How do I edit these with humility?

How do I edit them?

(Which seems like fundamentally changing what I  
received. there's a lot of parts that I'm deciding 'this  
doesn't make any sense', 'this doesn't work', while also  
preserving it.)

So how do I let it become more itself rather than less  
itself?

How do I sculpt it without destroying it?

[Tallulah talking to Tallulah for 40 odd minutes]

**1<sup>st</sup> card: 8 of Wands**

You've been thinking about this enough. You know, just shut the fuck up and do it. Like, do it. Do whatever you do. The heart of the matter is you need to do the action. You need to strike. You need to type that page. You need to cross things out. You need to just make it happen and hand it in. And that, the movement, the literal, the actual time trajectory, you know, like I'm doing this right now, it's doing things timed and having an end point. I think that's kind of the heart of it. You just have to hand it in and get it done and that's going to push you to that flow and into that rhythm.

The doing of it and just kind of being quick, like trusting the speed and like, you know, the impressions you get in speed, like you can't really ponder and hem and haw over it. You're just like: this is in, this is out. When I edit poetry on the spot at readings, it's very spontaneous and of the moment. But I make a decision *in that moment*. So make a decision in the moment and trust it.

**2<sup>nd</sup> card: Death**

I'm going to die and I want to leave behind a legacy and I want my soul to continue. This particular person I have been—I want its ripples to be felt and to influence others and help others and be a good thing that continues and resonates like a note that can never end and just kind of goes on into infinity. I mean, every note when you play it never quite ends because of that, because the airwaves changed things before. Every time you strike a note, every time you speak a word, that changes the world *permanently*.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Card: Knight of Pentacles**

So the ending of this project, there may be a sadness and reluctance. How do I continue it and not let my slow perfectionism be the slow death of me?

Art is supposed to be fun. It's not supposed to be this grueling process. And perfection always, I think, is married to spontaneity. I always feel like I'm never doing enough.

No matter how much work I do on it, I feel that I somehow I half-assed it, you know? And I didn't take it further or realize something I could have. But yeah, I think just not thinking about it too much and not be so meticulous and be more in the flow of it. That's water. The inspiration of it. Don't worry too much about the products. Just do the work and then let it be done.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> card: The Star

Give up hope. It's another illusion, you know. Like the Tao says, "hope is as hollow as fear."

Too high of hopes paralyze. Like "oh, like I'll make a perfect magnum opus. I'll reach the mystical if I only do the right things. And maybe I'm not doing that as much as I can."

She's pouring out her jugs. She's naked.

Letting go of the hope that there's some higher plane that will save me.

Cole said giving up the fact that you should be doing it other than you are, because that, you know, that discredits my life as it is.

And I *like* my life and I like the way that I am and the way that my brain works and the way that my art works. And I don't really want to change it, you know? I just want to nurture it.

Give up the belief that I'm not already the star shining  
and just like pouring freely

So it's not necessarily giving up the star  
but it's giving up *questing* to the star,  
to realize I already *am* the star.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> card: The High Priestess

I am always walking the holy path, no matter where I am  
and what I'm doing.

And I really should trust that  
trust the work that comes out of it and comes out of me.

I am a high priestess. I am a mystic.

And I want to continue to tread in that water, and in that mystery  
and hold the Torah in my hands and hold the moon on my head  
wear the moon on my head as a crown

And have it at my feet  
and have my robes flow like water, indistinguishable.

I want my very fashion with which I adorn myself to be of a gradient into the divine mystery.

Between those pillars and between this hidden garden of pomegranates

Persephone, the underworld—queen of flowers, but also married to the king of the dead.

Treading contradictions and accepting them and not feeling the need to squash them.

Being so pregnant, the pillars being inverses of each other,  
the white is on the black and the black is on the white.

opposites aren't opposites. They're just mirrors of each other.

They're just inversions. They're each other's twins.

The cross at her heart, Christ-like nature.

To be a savior, to be a mystic, to be a modern day messiah.

Because we don't really acknowledge the high, that world, the underworld, the mysterious, the  
unnamable, that place that we go to when we meditate.

"Be still and know that I am God. A challenge to go deeper. Look beyond the obvious, hidden and  
obscure, and recall the vastness. It is not always necessary to act to achieve your goals. Sometimes  
they can be realized through a stillness that gives desire a chance to flower within the fullness of  
time."

So that's another purpose, the darkness of pregnancy. A seed is in the dark and sprouts forth from  
that.

"Everything is gestation and giving birth,

letting every impression and every seed of a feeling come to completion

within the dark, the unconscious

where your intellect cannot reach

and awaiting with great patience, the moment when a new clarity may be born.

This is what it means to live as an artist, in understanding as well as creating." —Rilke

You need to have humility to the powers that you serve and recognize that you're not its creator, but  
its conduit. Make communion to what is higher and not feel the need to unravel it.

6<sup>th</sup> Card: The Lovers

Let's just talk about the obvious. They're lovers. Okay? I think it's important to trust the first impression. Being lovers with my poem, with my art, loving it, having it love me back, loving it like, *sincerely* loving it. “what happens deepest inside you is worthy of all your love” —Rilke  
Giving it blessing. Being the angel above my creations and being the humble humans under the creation of the angels and under the guide and watch of the angels and knowing when to look up at them with the feminine and when to create with the masculine.

The creative and the receptive are not mutually exclusive. This project for me has felt like I have been receiving by creating—or creating by receiving. Mixing the different processes until I can't tell, which is inspiring which and it becomes indistinguishable, duality disappearing.

You can also see the angel as man transcending duality—the man or the woman, female or masculine, taking in or putting out, doing by chance or creating from the self. It's above that. The solar power blessing it all.

Embracing that I am one, whole with the divine

Not holding my poetry to the standard as projecting false things onto the lover. Not putting so much pressure upon it to always be a revelation. And my salvation. Remembering that's something you can only get directly from the spiritual experience, which is meditation and spiritual practice. I'm not saying poetry and art making isn't spiritual practice, but seeing them as distinct and not collapsible.

Because all the poems I end up writing like about God or to God, they always fall flat. Whereas the ones that I don't put that expectation, that pressure on—it always *comes* and I know that it comes from that source. So, yeah, not making an idol out of the poem and just being free, really just making to see what will happen and how the angel may emerge.

Your bushes are on fire. You got a lot of apples that are sweetness if you just bit into them.  
See yourself.

I do still see myself as a melancholic trying to use art to save me. Tortured artist who's always going to feel somewhat sad, even if I can't identify the reason why, and that I'm just meant to live with these swords in my heart and that the drips from the blood will be the ink for beautiful poetry and notes to a song.

I don't know if that's true, and I think it's sometimes present in some of my poetry, and I don't know if it's the thing I want.

Shedding the self like the snake, I'm shedding these like old stories that I thought were just inextricably part of my soul and realizing

no, it's just a thing that calcified over you like a skin

and you outgrow it because you get bigger, and you can't help but outgrow.

Even if the snake wants to keep its old skin, it still gets out of

it breaks through it because its expansion is greater than its the remnants of what it used to be.

just because you were hurt, you don't need to hold onto your hurt to honor it

it can be integrated into your heart in different ways.

an astrological reading said the healing part of me is very close to the hurt part of me.

the wounded healer and it's not necessarily a wound then, because you made it into a tool for connection and grace. You honor it, and you feel the weight of it, but it doesn't necessarily sting.

It doesn't feel like it's something that's stabbing you. Let go of that idea that it needs to be dark and

sad. Or that I am a tortured artist and always will be, because that's actually just a preconceived

notion that gets in the way of receptivity. Any fixed notion of the self just distances you from being

in the flow and experiencing the spontaneity of it. Because then I project onto myself, like I project

onto the poem, things that I think are true of myself, rather than just like being in an active receive.

### **8<sup>th</sup> card: The Hanged Man.**

Well, the hanged man is the perfect card for this position because it's literally hang to discombobulate yourself.

You hang yourself upside down to get an outside perspective. you don't necessarily need someone *else* to give you an outside perspective. You can hang *yourself* upside down, change your perspective, disorient yourself so that language can teach you more than you know.

Flipping your identity, inverting it, inverting yourself and subverting your own self expectations. You're not on the earth and grounded always. We are stuck in our little lives. But here, you're hanging from heaven. You're hanging from this surreal viewpoint and everything's topsy turvy. You have to surrender to the strangeness.

The blood's rushing to the head and he's starting to feel dizzy, but in a good way. "The main lesson of the hangman is that we quote unquote, control by letting go. We, quote, win by surrendering." We control by letting go. We win by surrendering. "He has made the ultimate surrender to die on the cross of his own travails, yet he shines with the glory of divine understanding. He has sacrificed himself, but he emerges as a victor. The hanged man also tells us that we can move forward by standing still. By suspending time, we can have all the time in the world."<sup>2</sup>

Making it as easy as possible and not straining to be upright or be doing intentionally. Just hanging down and letting what flows into you, flow into you, but knowing goes to the high priestess. If I look downward here also at the other line—the three of swords and the lover's—letting go of the idea of love as heartbreak, and true art as pain, letting go of that too.

The knight of Pentacles and death look very similar. So I think those are a pair. The death of being so precious and obsessive over everything I do as if I'm going to die tomorrow, as if I need to make a perfect artifact. Just throwing that away and. Yeah, moving on.

The eight of wands and the star, if we put those next to each other, it looks like they're coming at her. The hope is the thing propelling this forward, the hope in the project of poetry.

Keep believing in it and keep pouring and know that you're never going to exhaust it. You don't need to *board* anything—what's good is good and will be there, and what's not will be filtered out.

I did this spread in the shape of this one rune that I pulled yesterday. "Its function is similar to that of a seed which is produced by a plant in order to regenerate itself. In the case of a human

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<sup>2</sup> Rachel Pollack, Seventy Eight Degrees of Wisdom

being, it is the storage of information for future life. This is what is implied in the Amerindian saying that you are your own grandfather and grandmother.

Your reincarnation. It's an opening in which the seed is stored, the seed of life, the masculine principle, the root, the semen contains the seed of life which is contributed in the blood of the feminine principles that which holds it through gestation so that it can come forth into physical being."<sup>3</sup>

Makes me think of the pair of the magician and the high priestess—the magician who is manifesting and bringing into physical being and combining all the elements, being a lightning rod who's making things happen

And the High Priestess, who's doing it through non-action and through the non-doing and the allowing in the gestation rather than the birthing. "The power that stores potential and holds it until the time is right for it to be released as active energy. Everything in existence undergoes a gestation period before it can be manifested. An opening, an entrance to another state of being and emergence, coming to a new realization of the enormity of one's own multi-dimensional beingness. And another stage in evolutionary development.

Accept your power, your own medicine. Do those things you were made for."

I think that concludes this tarot reading.

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Meadows, Rune Power



**Texts that were consulted over the course of this project**

The Ultimate Guide to the Rider-Waite tarot by Johannes Fiebig and Evelin Burger

Holistic Tarot by Benebell Wen

Learning the Tarot by Joan Bunning

Rune Power by Kenneth Meadows

Seventy Eight Degrees of Wisdom by Rachel Pollack (rest in peace)