



Divination

THE SIX WOMEN FORMED A CIRCLE ON THE GROUND TO one side of the fire, sitting cross-legged on their towels and facing each other. They sat close enough for their knees to touch, and their blankets were wrapped over their shoulders. My towel was placed in the center of the circle. “Sit here, Joseph,” I was instructed.

I carefully stepped through the circle of women and started to sit down, wrapping my towel around my waist. “Face me,” whispered Rhonda. I turned to face her; she seemed to be sitting at the head of the circle, if there was one, and I sat cross-legged like the rest of them with the fire at my back. My blanket was handed to me and I wrapped it around my shoulders like everyone else. The evening air was beginning to feel cool on my bare skin.

I seemed to be in an altered state of consciousness. My brain felt very elastic and passive and I didn’t feel like talking. I was hungry and tired and I didn’t know what was in that tea they gave me earlier, but now I was feeling very strange. My intellectual processes seemed to have gone into neutral. Although I could still think very clearly, I was no longer dwelling on my thoughts. I was going with the flow of things, watching images gently pass through my mind like leaves floating on the surface of a stream. It was

an extraordinary state of mind, one completely unfamiliar to me.

The women joined hands. Rhonda took my hands in hers. The women on either side of her put their free hand on Rhonda's knee. In this way, we were all physically connected, all touching each other. The circle of women bowed their heads and became totally silent except for their deep breathing. The only sound other than the crackling fire behind me was the constant, piercing call of tree frogs hidden in the surrounding trees.

Rhonda closed her eyes momentarily. Then she looked at me and said, "Joseph, we're going to do a reading now. We'll ask the powers that can't be seen to come to us and reveal information about your situation." She placed my hands on her knees. Reaching into a canvas bag behind her, she pulled out a small black velvet pouch and untied its drawstring, removing what appeared to be a deck of thick, oversized playing cards. Handing the cards to Sandy, who sat on her left, she placed her hands upon mine, which were still resting on her knees. I tried as best I could to hold my gaze onto her eyes. I felt like I was looking through her, rather than at her.

Sandy held the cards for a moment, closed her eyes, then passed the deck clockwise, to Deb. This was repeated until the cards had been passed, full circle. Rhonda again took the cards and held them between her breasts, to her heart, eyes closed. After shuffling through the deck, she chose one card, all the while holding me with her piercing gaze. She laid the selected card face up on the ground in front of me, between my knees.

"The King of Rods is your personal card, Joseph. This card represents you specifically. It signifies a gentleman of noble character, usually married, just, and honest. A countryman."

Leaving the card on the ground, she held the deck to her breast again and closed her eyes, breathing deeply. She opened her eyes, stared into mine, and drew another card from the deck. "This is your character card," she said, lay-

ing it on her right knee. “It’s the Ace of Swords. This card represents a personal triumph, one of great force.” She stared at it curiously, then returned it to the deck. “However, it may represent a negative or a positive force that you vanquish. That remains to be seen. Take this deck in your own hands and hold it to your heart.”

I did as she instructed.

Then she spoke in a low, earnest voice. “Close your eyes. Focus your thoughts on your situation. Think of your aunt and her instructions, and ask for her guidance. Try to be single-minded. Concentrate.” At this point, all the women began to hum in a manner reminiscent of the chanting they had done earlier. The sound was soothing and caused me to go deep within myself, almost into a trance. I concentrated as best I could. The sweat lodge had left me feeling like a rung-out washrag, relaxed and limp. Holding the cards against my chest in both hands, head bowed, I thought about Lucy and everything that had happened so far. After these thoughts passed, all thoughts then left me, and I was filled with only a question: “What should I do now?”

“Shuffle the cards, please.”

I slowly shuffled them until I thought they were thoroughly mixed. “Cut the deck into three piles and set the three piles face down on the ground in front of you.”

I did so, placing the three piles of cards in the narrow space between our legs. Rhonda picked up the three piles and put them back together into a single deck. The other women continued holding hands and quietly chanting. One by one, Rhonda removed cards from the top of the deck and laid them in the space between us. She set my “personal” card, the King of Rods, in the center. The first card she drew off the deck was laid on top of my personal card. She laid the second card on top of that one, turning it sideways. The third was laid above the personal card, the fourth below it, the fifth to the left, the sixth to the right; the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth cards were placed in a vertical row to the right of all the cards. After drawing the

ten cards, she set the remaining deck behind her, out of sight.

Rhonda stared at the cards, wide-eyed at first, then, after quite some time, her eyes narrowed. The women, as if on cue, abruptly ceased chanting.

Finally, she broke the silence in a whisper. “This is what the cards say about you and your situation, Joseph. Listen carefully,” she instructed. “Your personal card is covered by the Judgement card. That is the first card I drew. The Judgement card covers you completely. It signifies that you are growing in awareness, that you will have a shift in personal consciousness toward a union with the Universal. It is a very significant card to be covering you, and it means that you’re being watched over by angels in regard to this situation. It also may mean something more ominous. The card shows the archangel Gabriel, and thereby signifies the Last Judgement. That may mean he is heralding either souls to the heavens, or ushering in a cosmic shift of some sort. Somehow this will overshadow everything you do in regard to this situation.”

“You are being crossed by the Eight of Rods. That is the second card I drew. It represents forces of either good or evil, and signifies great expectations, and a powerful momentum toward a desired end. It speaks of a rapid movement toward a goal, and of a spiritual journey. It’s a traveling card. Your journeying is not over — you must travel again.”

“You are crowned by the Nine of Cups. That is the third card, the one above you. It represents what you aim for, but what has not yet happened. It is your card for the future. The Nine of Cups signifies victory, well-being, and happiness. It is the ideal which you yearn for.”

“The fourth card, the one beneath you, represents what has already happened. It is the Seven of Cups. This is your foundation card. You are building upon this now. The Seven of Cups signifies earnest seeking, but it suggests that you lack a tenacity to translate ideas into reality.”

“The fifth card represents an influence that has just

passed or is now passing. It is The Fool. For you this card is not reversed or upside down, so it's a positive card. It represents both nothingness and unlimited potential. It says that you must make an important choice, and it's telling you that you should not try to do it alone, that you should seek guidance."

"Your sixth card represents what will happen in the near future. It is the Eight of Swords, and it signifies an inability to extricate yourself from a difficult situation. Although you must go on with your endeavor, you will feel bound and trapped."

"Your own attitude toward this situation is indicated by the seventh card. It is the Ace of Swords. It is the card of triumph."

"The eighth card represents the attitude of your friends and family. It is the environment that surrounds you in this situation. It is the Seven of Swords, and it says that those in your environment believe that you're not doing your task well or properly. They think your planning is bad and will fail, although they may not be thinking clearly on this issue. You may become dispirited by others."

"The Sun has appeared as your ninth card. It indicates your desire for contentment, liberation, and attainment of personal goals."

"The last card, the tenth, is a culmination of all the preceding cards. It is the Moon." At this, Rhonda stared at the cards and shook her head, almost imperceptibly. "The moon is a reflector. It may reflect your subconscious, or something else," she spoke quietly. "The Moon signifies disillusionment and fear. You will have a deep yearning for security and fulfillment. You may be faced with a harsh and perilous period, including deception. You and your loved ones may be exposed to threatening situations."

Rhonda fell silent. After a moment, I asked, "What does that mean?"

"What does it all mean, Joseph? If I must interpret this for you, then let me say this," She closed her eyes, took my

hands in hers, paused a moment, then said, “It seems obvious that you are destined to pursue a journey of some sort. You have become embroiled in something greater than you can understand at this moment and you cannot extricate yourself from this situation. You have felt trapped and reluctant to continue, but you *must* continue. It is your destiny. You believe in yourself, and have a strong confidence that you can achieve your goals, but others around you do not see you in this way; you may become disheartened by them. You have blundered your way so far with doubts and skepticism, and now you must earnestly and with utmost seriousness seek out the guidance of others. You must physically travel yet again, and at times you may be faced with difficult, even perilous, situations. However, you will be watched over by an Angel or Angels, perhaps even the Archangel Gabriel, the one who is prophesied to rule over Armageddon. The cards know all and would tell us more if we were clear enough to ask the right questions.”

“So, where do I go from here?”

“We don’t know.”

“Well, how do I find out?”

“We can consult a crystal.”

“What crystal?”

“A sacred crystal. In my house. On the windowsill.”