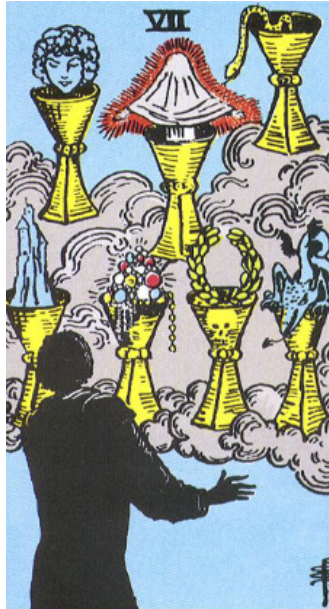


Seven of Cups

by S.F. Brock (2500 Words)



In this Tarot card each cup encapsulates a small story relating to the effect of this cup on the querent:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Outer self | Head |
| 2. Inner Self | Shroud |
| 3. Temptation, Desire | Snake |
| 4. Castle, Tower | Sanctuary, Dreams |
| 5. Jewels | Material Goods |
| 6. Laurel Wreath | Victory, Striving |
| 7. Wyvern | Inner fears, Insecurity |

A man faces 7 cups suspended in the air before him, each holding a different symbol and each cup represents a different choice, a way of being. The seven vignettes below, both male and female tell the story of a choice made and it's outcome. As a fortune telling device the Tarot is highly suspect. As a meditation device it is a weather report on the state of being, something to ponder on.

1. Outer self

Symbol: A Head

I am a reasonable figure of a man, not too tall, not too short, not too dull not too bright, not too fat and not too thin. My age back then was twenty and two. My hair was of an ordinary brown colour, as were my eyes. My hair again was not too curly and not too straight, a slight wave placed it in the mid range, between straight and curly. My lips were not too thin, nor too thick. My nose was, likewise, ordinary being of normal size.

Finished with my first four years of college, I had the choice of pursuing a career in middle management or soldiering on to get a master's degree in business administration and a golden ticket to better salary and better prospects.

A problem, that would prove to be an asset was my keen personal interest in the wilder side of the music business. Too young to be a Deadhead, but not too conventional for Death Metal or Punk, my tastes were more Avant-guard than the norm. I had a Siouxsie Sioux tattoo on my left buttock, safely hidden, but it was there. In college, I avoided sports and shower rooms where my secret mark would become evident.

After two more years of college, I became both an MBA and a Talent Manager. Wheeling and dealing in the music business is a little rougher than financial management but not by much. I got my signed bands good gigs and helped them manage their money and their scandals. I invested in their careers and as a side benefit made piles and piles of money.

Thats me. I am a music entrepreneur and a semi-respected member of the community. Welcome to my world. I used my head and made a good, practical choice. Am I happy? Well, I'm not unhappy.

2. *Inner Self*

Symbol: A Shroud

I was of a contemplative nature seeking the inner nature of all things. When I met David, I found him very concerned with material things. We were, indeed as unlike as chalk and cheese. There was an almost instant attraction. Beneath pleasing social words there was an attraction I could not deny. Accustomed to self discipline, I put him on my mental ignore list and moved on.

Life had other plans. We kept bumping into each other. The office where we worked was vast and our desks were far apart but, somehow, we were at the photocopier at the same time. In the boardroom we were seated next to each other. At lunch break we found ourselves in the same cafe. My set of rune dice told me there were troubled times ahead. I scoffed at fortune telling in all its forms but, sometimes, not always, but sometimes a chance roll got it right.

At my tiny home altar, I lit a candle and offered my image of the goddess a glass of red wine. She spilled it, leaving an indelible stain on the white wool rug in front of the altar. I took this as a sign. My whole life was about to be upset. My valued principles would be destroyed. I slept with David two nights later. We lived together for five years.

David smokes. He drinks. He swears. He went hunting in the Fall with a rifle. He brought home a deer haunch, and I had to cook it. He puts out his cigarettes in the sacred bowl of salt on my altar.

When finally, I had had enough. I moved back to the tiny town where I had grown up and in the grove of sacred trees just a mile out of town I made a little altar out of sticks, lit a fire and began a summoning.

“Spirits of Air, Fire, Earth and Water, I call on you. He has profaned your altar. He has slain a sacred woodland creature. When he calls on his God it is only to place curses on another human. He offers no spirits to you but profanes his body with the wine sacred to your use. I do not ask you to harm him for such harming would come back on me. I ask only this that you give me back my pure spirit before he polluted my life. If you

cannot alter time, alter my memory so that it is cleansed of all thought and memory of his presence. Erase him from my mind.

The spirits did more. They took away his luck. With his luck went his job, his looks, his money, his health. I look after him now and I am content since the nurturing heals me and replaces the old memories with new ones. Friends says I am such a saint!

3. *Temptation, Desire*

Symbol: A Snake

They say I'm a clever fellow, that I notice things. I am always open to new experiences. I'll try anything once, always trying to find out what I really want. So many choices, too many choices and I want them all, but time and mortality make that impossible.

Today I chose aquarium fish. I bought a whole kit including tank and air pump, filter and gravel. All I need a fish, oh, and some stuff in a bottle to get the chlorine out of the water. I'll start with a goldfish.

On the way to buy the goldfish I stop at a little bookstore and while searching for a book on my new fish hobby I stumble over a book on painting miniature models of little warriors and scaly science fiction monsters. Sounds like fun. I should get a couple of those and some acrylic paint and brushes. I can paint a little warrior while watching my fish which I still haven't bought.

I'm still heading for the pet shop to get a goldfish. Daydreaming as I walk I imagine myself, for no particular reason, in a tropical forest. I pause beneath a young leafy tree and imagine jungle sounds but the noise of passing traffic soon shatters that illusion. I walk a few feet further on and find myself by the window of a men's clothing shop. The window features a man surfing while wearing a glorious Hawaiian shirt covered in leafy designs, pineapples and brilliant red flowers. I want one! In the change room I put the shirt on. I leave glowing with pleasure.

Today I feel complete. I bought the goldfish, a big one and set him up in my new tank. I bought the little models and acrylic paints putting them on my desk. I'll decorate them later. For now, my day is complete. I wonder what tomorrow will bring?

Tomorrow! It's a whole new day. I am reminding myself to be prudent with my coin. I go out for a walk with only my keys for company. Arriving at a local park I sit for a while on a park bench, observing but not a part of the scene. I start to feel a tightness in my chest. I want something but I know not what. I try to empty my mind of thought for

one minute, trying to achieve a Zen-like calm. I last about twenty seconds before my monkey-mind starts scrabbling about remembering things, thinking about things, wanting things, needing things.

I need some milk but can't buy any because my wallet is at home. Reluctantly, I leave the park bench and nature behind and head for the siren call of money. Have to have money. I promise myself I will only buy milk.

4. Sanctuary, Dreams

Symbol: Castle, Tower

In my tower of self, I am complete. I need no company. My books and stamps are company enough and I am content in my own mind. "My home is my castle", as the saying goes. I have worked hard. I made much money. Being a reclusive man by nature, I wanted an isolated spot. The blessed Internet has made it possible to work from home, for the most part.

My company pretty much ran itself since I had hired good staff. Free to choose, I chose a place in the country close to a small town but not too close. The house itself had been a large farmhouse, sturdy and unpretentious. I had it gutted, keeping the outside facade of simple, rural homeliness. Inside it was all fitted out to my liking. The attic was my office, a whole floor of technology of every sort useful in the mercantile trade.

Enough of generalities. I said my home was my castle where I could safely dream in peace. My dreams were not extravagant but very precise and particular. I collected stamps although collection is too sparse a word for my treasure of Philately. I specialize in stamps with images of birds, ships, and insects. The main room downstairs is devoted to my passion with desks, lights, magnifiers, special tweezers, all the tack and gear of this divine hobby.

Did I mention books? My shelves are groaning with them I have the history of shipping, tomes on Entomology and three bookcases of bird books. Ask me about the Hawaiian Crow, nearly extinct and a rare jewel among the corvids.

I need no company except my books and my stamps. My agents scour the world for more of the same.

I reside content in my castle home and need no moat since all is electronically guarded.

5. Material Goods

Symbol: Jewels

I have a lot of stuff, so much that it is starting to suffocate me. I no longer get rid of a thing then something else comes to take its place. Amazon has a permanent grip on my wallet. I think they are putting everyone out of business, not just the book publishers. If I need multivitamins, I find that Amazon's tablets are \$6.00 cheaper than my online Supermarket store and they deliver the next day. How do you compete with that?

I think of Amazon as a vast treasure chest of desirable jewels, each glitteringly cheap compared to retail stores but not, however, cheaper than goods from the Chinese supplier of all things, Temu. Temu is Amazon's rival and sometime supplier. The same electronic ding-dong on Amazon is at least five buck cheaper on Temu with the only disadvantage being a two week wait for the goods to arrive.

All this is not fiction, you say. Well, it should be. Such convenience it like a Science Fiction future tale, except the future is now.

There! That's my rant. Now that I made myself understand that I do not need any more stuff I am going on a stuff diet. Looking around I see so many things to do and be. First, I'll organize all my treasures. That should take a while. I'm going to set up a work area where I can play with my treasures. I just need one thing, a really good monitor for my second computer workstation. I need a few more shelves and a larger wastebasket. That should do it for now.

6. Victory, Striving

Symbol: Laurel Wreath

I believe I've won the battle. My chief rival has departed to heaven or hell. I care not which. I alone have the monopoly on the most desired and necessary item - salt. They must have it. Cannot live without it. We are an inland kingdom hemmed in by mountains with only one major pass for the camels to come by. He who controls the pass controls the salt. I do not tax or hinder the traders. My only demand is that all salt, every single grain of salt must come to me and I pay the traders fairly for it but those who are not traders must pay me dearly. I am the King of Salt. They crown me and celebrate me. On my brow rests the wreath of triumph.

We have good land and good rain. The people grow grains and plants for food, with but a small amount of land used for cattle and sheep. There is a rumour of deep caves glistening with salt. If they exist, I will find them for I am the King of Salt.

I do not sleep well of late. My dreams are perforated by the cries of armed peasants seeking salt. I keep a small army to surround and guard me. They are paid in salt and guard me with their lives because of that.

I eat much meat, and it is well salted. I keep tubs of briny pickles which I love. I have grown fat, and my weight signifies my wealth and my power. I am a little out of breath lately and have servants carry me about in a litter to avoid walking. Occasional pain in my chest is eased by opium, also brought in by the traders.

My alchemists are actively seeking the drink of immortality. They have not found it yet.

I relax on my comfortable throne and eat another pickle.

7. Inner fears, Insecurity **Symbol: Wyvern** (*mythical draconic beast or lesser dragon*)

Things are not enough. Nothing is enough. I am cracked and empty vessel. when I seek to fill the void at my centre nothing stays. Everything escapes me. Tomorrow might be better, or it might not.

I am walking down the street looking at all the nice houses. If I had a house I would have to clean it, repair it, pay taxes on it. My neighbours might be bad.

The store I'm passing had a "Salesperson Wanted" sign in the window. How can I do sales when I can't even sell myself. Everyone can tell I'm not worthy of notice.

That was yesterday. Today I'm on top of the world. I can do anything. I apply for that sales job, and I'm hired immediately because I have such a winning, sunny personality. I might run for public office in my spare time. I have so much energy. No time to sleep. There's barely enough time to eat. I sold ten refrigerators today. Everybody feeds off my energy. My energy is endless, or is it? I'm beginning to feel a little tired. Perhaps I will sleep tonight. Tomorrow is another day.

I wake full of dread and the cycle begins again.