

It's In the Cards

by Fairfield

The Knight of Wands rides again.

Chapter 1 of 1

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I, Lucius Malfoy, am a cad.

The reader might wonder if I'm a redeemable one. That's too improbable for me to worry about it. Redemption is hard to come by.

Opportunities to be a cad are not so hard to come by. They seem to fall from the sky as effortlessly as the shower that caused me to duck into Madam Melagrana's tent at the Renaissance Fair.

"Have you come for a reading," asked the lady sitting at a table lit by candles with a deck of Tarot cards in the middle, "or for shelter?"

I confessed it was because of the rain. She placed her hand on the deck of cards and said she was willing to provide succor for those facing a storm of rain as well as those facing a storm of spirit. I was admiring her quickness of mind when my eyes adjusted to the light and I recognized her.

"Parvati?"

It had been a long time. I noticed her wedding ring. She said her husband was a stockbroker. I asked if he knew she was a witch. She said she would tell him if the occasion arose, but she didn't think he would care. The way she said it made me think it was from an indifference to her, not a tolerance of witches. I left unexpressed the thought that Parvati would make an excellent trophy wife.

"What brings you to our amateur fair," she asked.

"Admiration of the talent," I said. "The jugglers are good. The magicians are impressive. Even the monks selling indulgences seem authentic. Of course, they warned me about entering the tent with the Devil's pack of cards."

"I know it's all in good fun," she said, "but I feel like breaking a teapot over their heads."

There it was: our ancient fear of being hunted.

I asked if that was why she displayed a pomegranate outside her tent – a wicked fruit, promising earthly delights. She nodded yes. I asked what her husband thought of her fortune telling. He thought of it as a good way of drumming up business. She had a box of his business cards on the table, and after performing her card stunt, she was expected to recite a spiel about having fulfilled their spiritual needs, the customers were ready to fulfill their financial needs. I asked if she handed out any cards. She made a face and shook her head no. She daily shredded a dozen of them before returning to hubby.

"The money I collect goes to the Renaissance Fair Committee," she said. "It pays for the fair grounds and the evening feast, which is quite good."

I mentioned that learning the cards and interpreting the spread took a high level of skill. Parvati gave me a sharp look, but it softened as she realized I was sincere.

Prompted by this show of appreciation, she confessed that she wished she could find someone to read for her. I offered. In response to her quizzical look, I said I only used

the minor arcana: there's no need for excessive drama, and I said the five card spread should be sufficient.

"The principle of the string quartet," said Parvati. "No hiding behind a lush orchestra. Either the composer has something to say, or he doesn't."

Where had this lady been hiding, behind her airhead, trophy-wife façade?

What won her over was my suggestion that she make the usual charitable contribution for the reading. She understood psychic exchange. We did the usual shuffling and cutting, and I began the reading.

"The first card represents the present."

I dealt the seven of cups.

"A difficult choice must be made. Temptation may appear."

Parvati nodded.

"The second card represents past influences still having an effect."

I dealt the four of pentacles.

"Apprehensive of change because of risk of security. A card of earthly power and wealth but without emotional or spiritual gain."

Parvati took in a sharp breath.

"The third card represents the future."

I dealt the knight of wands.

"An event or person enters your life quickly and unexpectedly. Energy within yourself that is ready to come to the surface. It has the power to change your life."

Parvati was listening raptly.

"The fourth card represents the reason behind the question. It sheds light on the second card, the influence of past events."

I dealt the three of swords.

"This card speaks of the ability of an excessively rational approach and desire for power to harm the spirit. You may gain insight that it is time to expand. There was a betrayal, perhaps of yourself, but if you rise to the challenge, your heart may emerge from the darkness."

I had Parvati's attention.

"The fifth card represents the potential within and for the inquirer."

I dealt the six of swords.

"Mental clarity that it is time to move on. It can appear to be a defeat, but the only viable solution is to leave the past behind and transition from negative to positive."

Parvati was giving me a hard look. "Where did you learn that," she asked.

"My uncle," I said. "My uncle taught me that the cards have a lot to offer even if one does not believe in divination. He thought the meanings assigned to them represented the collected wisdom of observing human life."

"An interesting point of view," said Parvati.

"But he did warn me that the usual interpretations put too much emphasis on spiritual growth," I said. "It's a bias of people who are attuned to these things."

"Are you saying that a period spent acquiring something besides spiritual growth, of securing one's physical wellbeing is acceptable?" she asked.

"Of course it is," I said.

She gave me a warm look. She had found someone who was sympathetic to what she had done. But she said she kept thinking about the future card, worried that it meant a defeat where she would lose everything she had worked for. I replied that its interpretation would depend on the other cards. Perhaps, it implied a surrender, only a partial one.

Her eyes gleamed. "Do you think it's related to the Knight?" she asked, taking my hand.

I folded her hand in mine, looked into her inviting eyes, and told her that all the cards were related. She looked wistful, shook her head, and said that she never surrendered.

Lest the reader forget that I am a cad, I thought about the Knight riding the Palomino called Narcissa who always resisted surrendering. But ride her he did – lovely face, lovely face realizing the Knight would take her – spread thighs, spread thighs gripping the Knight – shapely form, shapely form tensing with unbearable ecstasy – sweet smile, sweet smile knowing the Knight was capturing her.

"Does anyone think about the Knight's horse?" asked Parvati.

"Only those with imagination," I said, "but the Knight rides only the best steed."

I coaxed Parvati into my lap. I said, "I always imagined her with golden skin and a mane of midnight black."

We were breathing the same air. I said, "The Knight would demand an intelligent partner, a brave companion who enjoyed the adventure as much as he did. The two are well matched."

I encouraged Parvati as she caressed me and nuzzled me. She was relaxing and sighing with pleasure. She drew back and gave me a knowing look. She had decided to let me do her. I love women who are aware of their actions. Her kiss was deep and warm.

From MuseAmusant: Tarot cards, pomegranate, broken teapot.