TAROT AND THE FOUR MAXIMS OF MAGIC

To Know, To Will, To Dare and To Keep Silent

These four maxims are the foundations of Ceremonial Magick within the Western Mystery Tradition. They are useful guidelines for any kind of magic or spell work, and they are coded within one of the Magician’s most effective tools - the Tarot.

To Know

Every Magician starts out as an apprentice and learns his or her craft from her master, or a good school of magic. She is schooled, tested, and once the arts are mastered, she is finally accepted into the magical community.

A Mage must know what he is doing on many levels. Like his icon, the pentacle (a five pointed star), he must be knowledgeable and in control on five points - the physical, intellectual, emotional, psychic and spiritual levels in order to handle the tremendous powers that an adept works with. He must be clear and exact, for he cannot afford vague imagery or misunderstood messages. There must be a purpose for every element of the spell or ritual, and it must be thoroughly understood. Language is everything in magic, and he must use it carefully. For instance, when doing a spell for prosperity, a magician does not word it, “I ask the Powers to end my poverty and bring me riches.” One does not introduce the negative concept of poverty into a power working, or it may act on the expectation of poverty. An effective mage will say rather, “I ask the Powers to show me the true path to prosperity in a way that harms no one, and to give me the strength and wisdom to follow that path and achieve my heart’s desire with only positive results.” This wording includes a moral clause, an expectation of success, and a happy ending.

A Magician knows her tools – the books of magic, the ceremonial sword, the magic wand, the healing cup, the pentacle of manifestation, in all their many manifestations – athames, brooms, cauldrons, stones, etc. She knows her magical history, the Asian shamans, African conjurers, Native American medicine men, the European legends of Merlin, Odin, Baba Yaga, Hecate, Morgan le Fay, even the modern fantasies of Gandalf, Harry Potter, Merriman, Alice in Wonderland. The Magician knows the magical universe in which she lives, and her place in it. She knows how to prepare and how to protect herself. And she knows what she can handle, and what she cannot.
To Will

A mage’s will is his engine, his drive, and his intention. It is the fuel that makes things come to pass. It is the energy source behind everything he does. A magical will brings all the elements together, the purpose, the knowledge, the tools, and the drive to make it happen. The source of will is usually emotion. When a mage wills himself to do something, it is because he wants it or needs it. It is something that will make him happy. Will fulfills Want, and is a powerful motivating source. People who have wonderful ideas, but never act on them, do not have the drive, or will to achieve. It is an essential ingredient for success in any endeavor, and critical to successful magic.

To Dare

To dare is to do. A magician has to go through the motions to achieve her goal. Her knowledge and desire are her tools, but then she has to find the courage to move, set the work in motion, and make it happen. She must have the confidence that what she is doing is good and needful, and she has the right to bring her magic to fruition. She must believe the Gods (or the Fates) are with her, and she can dare to ask them for their help.

To Keep Silent

In some ways, this is the hardest maxim of all, for we are a communicative species. But this is the final maxim in an act of magic, and failure can undo the working, or even reverse it. One of the secrets of successful magic is the Art of Letting Go. When the work is finished, the magician must trust that it is successful, and let it go in his mind, moving on to his next project, or just getting on with his life. Dwelling on the magic, talking about it, tracking it, worrying about it, sends a psychic message that it will not work, or that it will end badly. Letting go is part of a magician’s essential self mastery.

A Magician works alone, or within a magical group, witch’s coven or Druid’s grove. Within the group is a bond, and part of that bond is secrecy. There was a time when practitioners of magic could be charged with witchcraft and burned at the stake. Up until very recently, it could be considered illegal (for instance, giving psychic readings). And in many places, magic is still ridiculed and feared and can cost a practitioner social standing, a job, child custody, etc. Silence can be necessary for very practical reasons.

Elements and Maxims

The four maxims also relate to the four elements;

To Know relates to the Realm of Air, in the Eastern quarter. Air is the arena of the intellect, that place where we store knowledge and experience. It is the Magician’s Tower where he keeps his tools in perfect order, studies his magical tomes, prepares his magical plans.
To Will relates to the Realm of Fire, in the Southern quarter. Fire is the fuel of desire, the home of passion, the thrust of need, and the engine that moves us toward our goal. Fire is a basic element of energy that runs throughout the whole universe, our world, our bodies and our minds.

To Dare relates to the Realm of Water, in the Western quarter. Air initiates, fire activates, and water releases the magic and lets it flow into the universe. Water is also the realm of psychic energy, which is a powerful catalyst for magic. To dare is the act of courage where the mage has done all she intended to do, and must release the energy and let the magic happen.

To Keep Silent relates to the Realm of Earth in the Northern quarter. Earth completes the circle and grounds the energy. The magician closes the ritual and walks away in silence, leaving the universe to manifest the spell. The Mage speaks not of what she has done, but trusts her intentions, the Gods assistance, and lets it go.

**Tarot and the Four Maxims**

These four maxims are coded throughout the Tarot in different ways.

On the Magician’s table you will find his four tools, which are reflected again in the four suits. He has his Sword of Air, which represents his knowledge; his Wand of Fire, which represents his will; his Cup of Water which represents is ability to let the magic flow; and his pentacle of manifestation, which represents completion and the silence of letting go. In this one card, the Magician, you have the whole of the maxim - to know, to will, to dare, and to keep silent. But the Magician is only your initiator. He places his tools in your fool’s bag and bids you on your way.
From here you can go directly to the world of the elements – the court cards and pips. These are arranged in the four suits, Swords (Air), Wands (Fire), Cups (Water) and Pentacles (Earth). Each card has something to teach you about their energies. The Knights and Pages are the sentinels and guides, the Kings and Queen are the teachers, and the pips (cards Ace through ten) are the stages of the journey.

**Tarot and Meditation**

There are many ways to use the Tarot cards, besides divination. The cards are so rich and deep in symbolism that they are perfect “mandalas” or meditation cards. One way to understand the Four Maxims at a deeper level is to meditate with cards that signify those maxims. There are many choices for these maxims, and the below is just one array: The Hermit (To Know); To Will (The Magician); The Fool (To Dare); and To Keep Silent (The High Priestess).

**To Know**

The Hermit is also the Sage, who holds the lantern of illumination and knowledge. He is a contemplative soul, a guide, a counselor, and a manager of resources. If the Tarot had a librarian, it would be the Hermit. In the stage that you are acquiring knowledge, planning a rite, gathering resources, the Hermit would be your guide. Seek him in meditation for inspiration and enlightenment.

**To Will**

Once you have gathered all your resources and have a plan of action, you seek the Magician to engage your magical will. It is here that your passion to achieve is invoked, and the work begins. Seek the Magician in meditation to invoke your magical will.

**To Dare**

The Fool performs the magic rite in a state of divine trust, stepping off the precipice and letting the magic happen. Seek the Fool in meditation to give you the courage to Dare.
To Keep Silent

The High Priestess is the Queen of Mysteries. She is the keeper of sacred scrolls and records. In her, your actions are recorded and you can now let go, keep silent, and trust that your rite will achieve its purpose. Meditate with the High Priestess to learn the value of Sacred Silence.

Tarot and Archangels

But there are four more helpers on the way, from the celestial realm. The Four Archangels, Raphael in the East, Michael in the South, Gabriel in the West, and Uriel in the North. All four appear in the Tarot, with Uriel being the most misunderstood, for in the Tarot we call him the Devil!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Know</th>
<th>To Will</th>
<th>To Dare</th>
<th>To Keep Silent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RAPHAEL</td>
<td>MICHAEL</td>
<td>GABRIEL</td>
<td>URIEL</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;God Heals&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Who is Like God&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;God is my Strength&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Light of God&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air, East, Swords</td>
<td>Fire, South, Wands</td>
<td>Water, West, Cups</td>
<td>Earth, North, Pentacles</td>
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The Four Archangels in the Tarot are celestial winged creatures, the messengers of God. Yes, even the Devil.

**Raphael** is represented by *The Lovers*. One of the greatest maxims in magic and philosophy is “To know thyself”. In the Lovers the archangel rises from a cloud and presides over our male and female selves – the yin and the yang. The tree of life is behind the male, the tree of knowledge behind the female. The purple robed angel spreads his hands wide in blessing the couple, or two sides of the same person, with self awareness, the basis of knowledge.
Michael is represented by Temperance. This card shows the Archangel as the Alchemist, and actually contains all the elements within the card – air, fire, water and earth. This archangel teaches us to control our will, to direct it, to temper it so that it will be useful. This is a card of self mastery.

Gabriel is represented by Judgment. “Judgment” is not a negative concept, it is a critical thought process. This card shows the Archangel Gabriel blowing his horn, calling the individuals back from slumber or death, to rise from the waters of their emotions and dare to act on their decisions. From Gabriel’s realm, we send our magic out into the world.

Uriel is represented by The Devil. This is the most misunderstood card in the deck (after Death). The angel wings have turned to bat wings, his palm shows the sign of Saturn, his minions are chained in iron, he has claws instead of feet, has asses ears and wears a rams horn crown. Uriel is the bringer of light, and yet this card is about darkness. There are no depictions of Uriel even closely resembling the Tarot’s Devil. But the message here is to keep silent, to keep the truth hidden. We sometimes do this by disguising the truth. When we look with mirrored eyes, we see the Devil in reverse, as its own opposite, and in that, the truth is finally revealed.

The Archangels and their Tarot Cards

Tarot and Magic

How do we use the Tarot to follow the Four Maxims of Magic?
Magic is a matter of intent, and using the imagery of the Tarot to illustrate our intent is incredibly effective. There are many ways to use Tarot in magic, but in this article, I will show how to use it specifically to follow the four maxims of magic.

As shown in The Magician card, mages usually work within a designated space where they have constructed an altar. This can be a table of wood, stone, tile, or whatever pleases you, or even just a white altar cloth on the ground. If you are a minimalist, or traveling, the Tarot provides almost a full "magic kit". Like the Fool, you can carry it with you, slipping it in your pack. Wrap the deck up in a piece of cloth that can also be your altar cloth. White, gray or black are neutral colors, but if you want, you can use your favorite color or a color specific to an element that you want to work with (Air – yellow or gold; Fire – red or orange; Water – blue or blue-green; Earth – green or brown).

Magicians work with four main tools, which are shown in the Tarot Aces. Lay them out on your altar cloth in the appropriate directions – the Ace of Swords to the East, the Ace of Wands to the South, the Ace of Cups to the West, and the Ace of Pentacles to the North.

If you want to bring the Archangels into your rite, to remind you of the maxims, to add their own celestial energy, welcome them in the four quarters by placing them in the appropriate directions, near or on top of the Aces.

After drawing a magic circle, speak a magical incantation, something like:

We greet Raphael in the East  
With the Ace of Swords  
The Power of knowledge  
Is in our Words

We greet Michael in the South  
With the Ace of Wands  
The Power of Will  
Our Passion responds

We greet Gabriel in the West  
With Cups, the Ace  
The Power to Dare  
Our Dreams we embrace

We greet Uriel in the North  
With the Ace of Shields  
The Power of Silence  
Our Strength never yields
Thus, you have asked the archangels for their help, and remembered the four Maxims of Magic to create a powerful Magician’s Spell. At this point you may use the deck (or a second deck) to create a tableau of your desire.

Creating a Tarot Tableau can be fun and creative. You are basically putting together a storyboard of what you would like to see happen. After drawing your circle and invoking the elements, inviting the Archangels, you choose cards to indicate what you would like to bring about. Below, is a love spell, by creating the elements of a love story.

Tarot “storyboard” Spell

The Knight of Cups: A man with a true heart is seeking his heart’s desire. This card often depicts the Grail Knight, the one whose heart was so true that he was permitted to view the Holy Grail.

Two of Cups: Two individuals have found each other and share their cups (hearts) with the blessing of the divine (the winged lion).

Four of Staffs: This is a celebration – a wedding. They are celebrating under a canopy of four staffs decorated with greenery and flowers. Those are the four magical maxims, which they used to bring about their hearts desire.
When you’ve laid the cards out, take time to contemplate what you have done, perhaps journal it in a magical diary. This is to know.

Allow yourself to feel your passion, your desire, let it activate the spell. This is to will.

Complete the spell and let it go out into the universe. Thank the Archangels and the elements for aiding you in this endeavor, and let the energy go. This is to dare.

Close the ritual, place the cards back into the deck, fold up your altar cloth and put your tools away. Tell no one. Just let it happen. This is to Keep Silent.

**Biography**

Susa Morgan Black is a Witch (N.R.O.O.G.D.), Druid, (O.B.O.D.) and priestess of the Avalonian Tradition. She has studied Tarot through B.O.T.A., and with Dori Gombold and Thalassa, along with many workshops with superb San Francisco Bay Area teachers, including Mary Greer and James Wanless. She is currently studying with the Tarot School (Wald and Ruth Amberstone). Email: susab@ravensrock.net