

# Timadas Diary

volume 3  
winter



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# “The Last Jew of Vinnitsa”

*John Jeffire*

Victory is hard work but Bingel  
Says we are nearly finished  
And we are all eager to be home.  
I carried bag after bag of lime  
To the edge of the pits  
And it was greatly tiring.  
With such victory, the war  
Will be over very soon.  
We are all ready for holiday.  
It was rather funny that we told them  
They were to report for a census  
Near the airfield and then had them  
Place their valuables on the tables.  
Can you imagine their surprise?  
It was great sporting fun.  
I have secured a rather nice ring  
And a few other such items for you.  
I hope that you are pleased.  
The airplane engines are very loud  
And hurt my ears severely.  
I have been eating well enough.  
The sausage here is passable  
But it's not home.  
The temperature is agreeable  
And the locals are friendly enough.  
Some of the natives have even  
Been enlisted to assist in the process.  
Vinnitsa and nearby Uman  
Are pleasant enough  
But it's not home.



These people truly disgust me  
And I am glad to be rid of such filth.  
They took off all their clothes, even  
The women, and showed no shame.  
Toward the end we did not even  
Bother to have them undress  
And just finished our job as is.  
I am most proud to be a member of  
Einsatzgruppe D and the work we do.  
They are a fine group of fellows  
And most fun to share a beer with.  
Can you believe the final count  
Topped the 28,000 marker?  
The leadership is very pleased with us.  
Victory, though, is very hard work.  
I am anxious to walk with you  
Along the river and hear the sweet  
Music of your voice.  
The Umanka is a stream of swine piss  
Compared to the Rhine.  
The work is finally done.  
Victory is hard work but  
Bingel says we are nearly finished.  
I have a tooth that is rotting  
And smells most horrible but I shall  
Have it fixed before I am to you.  
I've enclosed this picture  
To show you what we do.  
The nerve of that shitty fellow.  
Regards to all loved ones at home.  
To think, it is almost October.

John Jeffire was born in Detroit. His novel *Motown Burning* was named 2005 Grand Prize Winner in the Mount Arrowsmith Novel Competition and 2007 Gold Medal Winner for Regional Fiction in the Independent Publishing Awards. His first book of poetry, *Stone + Fist + Brick + Bone*, was a 2009 Michigan Notable Book Award nominee. Detroit and former U.S. Poet Laureate Philip Levine called the book "a terrific one for our city." His novel *River Rouge* won the 2022 American Writing Awards for Legacy Fiction. For more on the author and his work, visit [writeondetroit.com](http://writeondetroit.com).

# “Of music and light”

## *Daniel Thomas*

"Music is very delicate and it takes, therefore, the soul at its softest fluttering to catch these violet rays of emotion" wrote Debussy.

But the sound  
of Mingus is a house on fire—and mother, father,  
sister, brother dancing with orange flames,  
then climbing to the black roof and rising with smoke  
up to a paradise giddy with the counterpoint  
of chaos and order.

Even those that cannot see  
colors in keys are moved by chords that shine  
like ragged mountains above the plains: the Tristan  
chord from Wagner, Stravinsky's polytonal chords  
of *Petrushka* and *Rite of Spring*.

I first heard them  
as a high school kid, listening with headphones  
late at night in my parents' living room—  
the delicate drop of needle to spinning track,  
hum and buzz settling in the groove,  
then crackle and pop accompanying first notes—  
a head-bowed genuflection—scotch  
and ashtray, Coltrane and Wagner, headphones  
draped, pilot on a quiet transatlantic  
flight, water glimpsed in amber moonlight.

Find the light in just the fading sound  
of a single note that rings and rings in its  
unique vibrations, setting the invisible air  
to move, radiating the space around it,  
changing with every texture it meets, then grazing  
the delicate membranes, hidden skin, of our inner  
ears, so we too shake like

the universe, feeling the energy of motion,  
the ringing of the one moment of the one day—  
its light that slowly, slowly fades away.

Daniel Thomas's second poetry book, *Leaving the Base Camp at Dawn*, was published in 2022. His first collection, *Deep Pockets*, won a 2018 Catholic Press Award. He has published poems in many journals, including *Southern Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Amethyst Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and others. More info at [danielthomaspoeetry.com](http://danielthomaspoeetry.com).

# “Carols at King’s College, Cambridge”

## *Sarah Das Gupta*

Notes from the organ float in harmony,  
with all the shades of notes from centuries past.  
Fading light shines softly through stained glass;  
kings, angels, shepherds, peasants, horses  
reflected across the stone floors, over worshippers,  
choir boys, clergy so the past is infused into the present,  
ancient light re-ignited, itself enlightens the moment,  
now when the Word becomes flesh, that point of Light  
caught in a star, held in the beauty of medieval glass,  
passes across to the crowded pews: an angel’s wing  
caught in an old woman’s glasses, a shepherd’s crook  
reflected on a man’s black winter coat, the Magi’s gift of  
gold shining on a chorister’s dark hair.

The Word reflected in the words of another England, in  
carols of other times of different instability and strife.  
Yet voiced by boys who stand in the same choir stalls  
who sing the same story, who look up at  
the same exquisite roof, a delicate tracery  
which strangely only heavy stone and rock can create.  
Darkness presses in now from the winter evening but  
inside the light prevails, the candles flicker only to  
burn steadily once more.  
Motes of dust dance suspended in fragile beams before  
the organ splinters the silence into fragments which  
scatter even into the present world’s darkest corners

*Note: King’s College Chapel at Cambridge and its Choir of 16 choristers reaches back to its foundation in the fifteenth century by King Henry VI. Today the Christmas Service of Nine Lessons and Nine Carols is broadcast worldwide. The exquisite 80 m long fan-vaulted ceiling is the largest in the world.*

# “Waltzing into Darkness”

## *Sarah Das Gupta*

The decadent notes of ‘Roses from the South’  
sound with a yearning intensity  
on the strings and horns.  
In the Café Central the last glasses of wine  
and brandy still linger with the literati.  
Outside in snowy streets,  
cabs carry lovers to bleak attics.  
In city ballrooms silks swish and rustle,  
couples reflected in mirrors and candlelight  
dance the century and the Empire  
to its inevitably tragic close.  
Soon only memories and reflections will remain  
Outside horses stamp impatiently  
on the icy Ringstrasse.  
Young hussars from fashionable regiments  
have not yet heard of Lemberg or Brusilov  
whose guns as yet lie silent.  
The blue Danube flows now into darkness.  
The gunshots at Mayerling  
wait to fire again at Sarajevo.  
The waltz rushes to its tragic, romantic finale.  
After?  
Only the eloquence of silence.

*Note: The decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed inevitable after the suicide/ murder of the Archduke Rudolph at Mayerling. This was confirmed by the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo and the disastrous defeats suffered by the Imperial armies in the First World War. The Strauss waltzes capture the mood of Vienna at the turn of the Nineteenth Century, hovering on the brink of decline and fall.*

Sarah Das Gupta is a school teacher from Cambridge, UK who taught in India and Tanzania, as well as UK; Her work has been published in more than 15 different countries. Her interests include early music, history, art, landscape and ballet.

# “Written in a cold afternoon”

## *George Freek*

There's no art in the sky.  
It's as gray as a corpse.  
The sun is hidden by clouds,  
awaiting a better day.  
Two serene crows circle  
and return to their tree  
like ladies awaiting tea.  
They don't bother with me.  
I think of the painter Wu,  
his fierce beauty,  
and what it says to me.  
Life is all there is,  
not as we dreamed it,  
or once hoped it could be.

# “Time in its flight”

## *George Freek*

As the sun shines on a new day,  
a bird seems to turn away  
as if from a sermon.

I drink tea with care,  
leaning back in my chair.

It emits a squeak  
of compressed air.

It's October, and flowers  
lie as if in a cemetery,  
everywhere, and then,  
caught in a fierce wind,  
taking them by surprise,  
they careen wildly,  
like epileptic drivers,  
unaware they  
are no longer survivors.

# “Why I read poetry”

## *George Freek*

There's a vacancy  
in my chest,  
where something  
like a clock should be,  
but its mechanism  
is faulty, and as dead  
as leaves falling from a tree.  
The stars blink faintly  
like fireflies  
in a sky as vast as  
the bottomless sea,  
where microbes live  
and die joylessly,  
and they mean nothing to me.

George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" was recently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

# “Bellow’s Widow”

## *Craig Kirchner*

She only knows, sees,  
the sanctity that haunts her,  
he who to others is gone,  
to her is omnipresent,  
sainted in his absence,  
his spirit and scent lingering,  
melting in the handkerchief she  
clutches with gaunt and weightless hands.

Through deep absinth eyes  
she contemplates a sorrow,  
beyond the morgue of emotion,  
the intimate stare  
transfixed under black veil,  
will never move again,  
in prayer or mourning,  
nor morbid tears.



# “Lost in Wheatfield”

## *Craig Kirchner*

I sit lost in the sky of  
A Wheatfield with Cypresses,  
wondering where Vincent  
was lost while creating it.  
Supposedly, left Paris for Arles  
to be closer to nature  
and more individualistic in his style.

Lost, becomes the day's ponderance.  
Does it involve a travel through the subconscious,  
is it a leap to the subterranean?  
My worst dreams are being lost in  
postimpressionist surroundings,  
vivid colors of fear.

We all make the leap,  
not as often or with the same intensity,  
and of course, can't paint,  
but we can get lost in the surreal peace,  
that is artfully stroking white,  
through the field, trees, mountains,  
the green and blue of the moving sky.

Back straight,  
right hand caressing the left,  
so riveted to empathizing with the moment,  
of an otherwise mundane afternoon,  
it becomes only possible,  
when there is no possibility of understanding.



# “State of Grace”

## *Craig Kirchner*

I'm down right now to bile and sweat,  
like lonely, Munch's Despair.

Adrenaline is all I eat.  
My dreams are all cartoons.

I was on top but bottomed out,  
it really is quite funny,

if word gets out, I'm broken down,  
people will send money.

If you think me quite naïve,  
depending on such graces,

the good news is on top or not,  
I get believed both places.

# “Desert Trek”

## *Craig Kirchner*

Transcending trainees  
venerate our trio,  
awed by its regal mystery,  
repressing new passions  
in arid nausea,  
hiking duality trails with camels,  
and bearded earthly kings,  
conversing Bedouin,  
ethics, monogamy,  
time journeys by association.

We sip kava,  
quietly laugh,  
at this our evening entourage  
and their youthful dialect.  
Then a pause, gasps,  
the black trail  
brightens silver with the Star.  
The Magus points west.  
Myrrh is in the air.

# “Morning in Amsterdam”

## *Craig Kirchner*

The whirr and whine  
of rubbed-clean antique glass,  
the hand-crafted homage  
of skyline above Canal Street  
as it lays below the window at first light.

Waiting on the stoop,  
knowing it won't take you long to  
get bathed and primped,  
thinking how it takes centuries,  
to become this tolerant,  
tranquil, detailed, diverse.

The only perceptible nuance  
of movement a light gray smoke  
curling above the rooftops of shops  
and narrow, stair-stepped homes  
whorling over barges to the bridge,

and then as though choreographed,  
Monks parade by on Dutch dew,  
chanting Dies Irae in the must morning mist,  
a mantra of Delft dawn  
welcoming this early riser.

# “Aceldama” *Craig Kirchner*

Crusts of prophecy spoil  
on leavened lips.  
Standing water turns to sour wine.  
Temple priests gorge and glut,  
silver their need to own,  
to crucify.

A lone, angel-nurtured tree,  
stark against apocalyptic sky  
has grown heavy with  
devil-knotted limb,  
lured the keeper of the coin,  
kissed the traitorous bowels,  
that twitch and gush about.  
Flowers that were once white  
are now magenta,  
and bees suckling for honey,  
now swoon and die.

A brick hardened soil,  
in the barren potter's field  
refuses to absorb the blood,  
viscera, intestines, and brains  
bursting to frantic thunder,  
pooling in serpent stench.



Craig Kirchner thinks of poetry as hobo art. He loves storytelling and the aesthetics of the paper and pen. He has had two poems nominated for the Pushcart, and has a book of poetry, *Roomful of Navels*. After a writing hiatus he was recently published in *Decadent Review*, *New World Writing*, *Wild Violet*, *Ink in Thirds*, *Last Leaves*, *Literary Heist*, *Ariel Chart*, *Lit Shark*, *Cape Magazine*, *Flora Fiction*, *Young Ravens*, *Chiron Review*, and several dozen other journals.

# “A Small, Exquisite Gallery”

## *Michael Loyd Gray*

There was only the one painting.

But a line formed around the block as soon as the sun peeked over the horizon. Feet shuffled and voices rose and fell. When it rained, umbrellas blossomed. Anticipation hung in the air like a pesky gas. The Curator looked out his office window. He had become an old man, his beard white. Rain streaked the glass, his view distorted.

“More every day,” he muttered to his assistant, Jarvis.

“Did you expect something different, Curator?”

The Curator glanced at the floor, arms over his chest.

“No. I suppose I didn’t.”

“Then, all is well.”

“We must certainly say that it is, anyway.”

“The rain doesn’t seem to slow them down,” Jarvis said. “Like ants, really.”

“I suppose they’d swim here, if necessary.”

“And why not, Curator?”

The Curator saw certainty in Jarvis’s face.

“What will they do when winter comes, Jarvis?”

“They will wear warm coats. And stomp their feet.”

The Curator nodded and glanced at his watch.

“Okay, Jarvis – time to let them at it.”

Jarvis unlocked the double doors and people streamed in, water dripping off umbrellas and shoulders and hair as they eagerly trudged along, awaiting their turn at the painting. People expressed surprise and then delight when it was their turn. Sometimes, Jarvis had to keep the line moving when someone became transfixed in front of the painting.

The Curator retreated to his office for coffee and looked again out the foggy window, at the reactions on the faces of the first ones to leave. He had to wipe the condensation away to see better. People lingered on the sidewalk, in pairs or small groups, talking with great animation. He studied faces carefully.

He believed he saw – gratitude.

The Curator reached for the bottle of bourbon in a desk drawer and poured some in his coffee.

He was grateful for the bourbon.

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Jarvis shooed the last of the people out and locked the doors. It had been a long day of hordes tramping in and out, water everywhere. The Curator fetched a mop from a closet and set to work.

“There are people for that, Curator.”

“I don’t mind. It gives me something to do.”

“But you are The Curator.”

“What of it?”

Jarvis placed his hands on his hips, the look of frustration The Curator knew well.

“It’s unseemly, Curator.”

“Define unseemly, Jarvis.”

“Improper?”

“It’s just honest work,” The Curator said, smiling thinly. “And good exercise for an old man.”

“It’s beneath a Curator.”

“So you have said. Many times.”

“Well, it’s my job to help you, Curator.”

The Curator stopped mopping and looked at Jarvis.

“And you do the job magnificently.”

Jarvis looked quite pleased. The Curator was sure that Jarvis missed the trace of sarcasm.

Janitors soon arrived to finish mopping the floors and to then wax and buff them until they shone terrifically under the track lighting. The floors were waxed and buffed every evening. It was felt that the painting deserved such attention to detail and cleanliness.

Jarvis looked around the gallery after the janitors departed. The Curator stood by the door, his hat in his hand.

“Excellent,” Jarvis said, eyeing the brilliant floor.

“Very shiny, to be sure,” The Curator said. He was already thinking of a bourbon at the little bar down the street at the corner.

“It really is an exquisite small gallery,” Jarvis said enthusiastically, his hands together like a praying minister. He was next in line to become The Curator.

“It’s small, alright,” The Curator said.

“Minimalist,” Jarvis said.

“Have it your way. Go on now, Jarvis. It’s getting late.”

“You’ll be along soon, Curator?”

“Of course.”

Jarvis hesitated but then went out the door.

The Curator put on his hat, even though hats were forbidden inside the gallery. He stepped in front of the painting and gazed at it for a few seconds, shaking his head. It was actually just a frame on the wall, and not even an expensive, gilded frame worth inspection at length.

It framed nothing at all.

He stared at it, a wave of rage building and cresting. He went to the storeroom and searched among the pieces banned by the regime, that were earmarked for private collections and not the public. He found a Reinhardt that he remembered “did not go far enough,” according to an obese cabinet minister.

The Curator sighed and then allowed a faint smile. He went to the door, looking back once, and his smile expanded. He locked the gallery door behind him and walked to the corner bar and sat on a stool, toward the back, where the light was dim, and he could drink in the shadows and contemplate retribution.



Michael Loyd Gray is the author of six published novels and nearly 40 published stories. His novel *The Armageddon Two-Step* won a Book Excellence Award in 2019. His novel *Well Deserved* won the 2008 Sol Books Prose Series Prize. He also won the 2005 Alligator Juniper Fiction Prize and 2005 The Writers Place Award for Fiction. He earned a MFA from Western Michigan University and a bachelor's from the University of Illinois. He lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he collects electric guitars, teaches English, and roots for the Chicago Bears.

# “A Gathering at Ahmed's”

## Norbert Kovacs

*(Response to Cous Cous Served to Guests by Mohamed Ben Ali R'bati)*

Ahmed invited us--his several friends through business-- and our wives to enjoy dinner at his large house near the open-air market. That warm, bright day, he hugged me in greeting at the door, and his servant led my wife and I into the great hall. There I discovered Abbou the happy merchant, Mahmoud the bustling grocer, Farouk the artistic weaver. We were often in each other's shops about town, doing business, sharing news, but here in Ahmed's home, I sensed a conscious intimacy with them. We were now apart from the larger world.

In small groups, we sat, closely huddled, on the long, dark carpet of the hall. The men shot remarks quickly across my circle, eager for an audience. Abbou talked about his latest fabric sale, his new ideas to sell customers. Mahmoud griped over the increase in prices, the difficulty to hire good workers. His wife Nour, tucked in her scarlet habib, listened quietly, making brief comments to confirm him. She was truly a supportive wife. My wife liked her.

As we talked, the kitchen servants entered the hall, large, hooded dishes of cous cous in hand. Heads turned towards them on the ready. A man came to each group and placed his dish in the midst of their circle. Then he raised the lid, and the delicious scent of the stew on the cous cous spread among us.

Our host, who had gone to change for dinner, descended the stairs to us. Ahmed stepped regally in his fine, green patterned robe. I watched him from my huddled group, feeling that he provided well for us that day.



# “The Bedroom or Survivor’s ABC”

## *Reema Rajbanshi*

The following is a chapter in my experimental travel memoir *A Woman Named Lightning, A Man Named Victorious*. As postmodern practice, I outline my process below.

1. I randomly pulled notecards on which I had written a letter.
2. I set a timer and wrote a flash prose entry per letter.
3. I drew images of key Asian/American Pacific Islander figures that resonated with each major arcana and suit card in the tarot.
4. I paired text and image without directing meaning.

A “List of Illustrations” identifies each image and may be found on the last page.

Reema Rajbanshi is the author of *Sugar, Smoke, Song* (Red Hen Press, 2020), a linked story collection exploring the experiences of Asian/American women and immigrant life in the U.S. Stories were previously published in journals such as *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Confrontation*, *Southwest Review*, and *Blackbird* among others and have placed in contests. A scholar of Literature, Rajbanshi has an Indigenous film essay in *The Routledge Handbook of Indigenous Development* (2022). A prior travel memoir chapter “The Courtyard or A Man Named Victorious” was published in *Sunspot Literary Journal*.

A

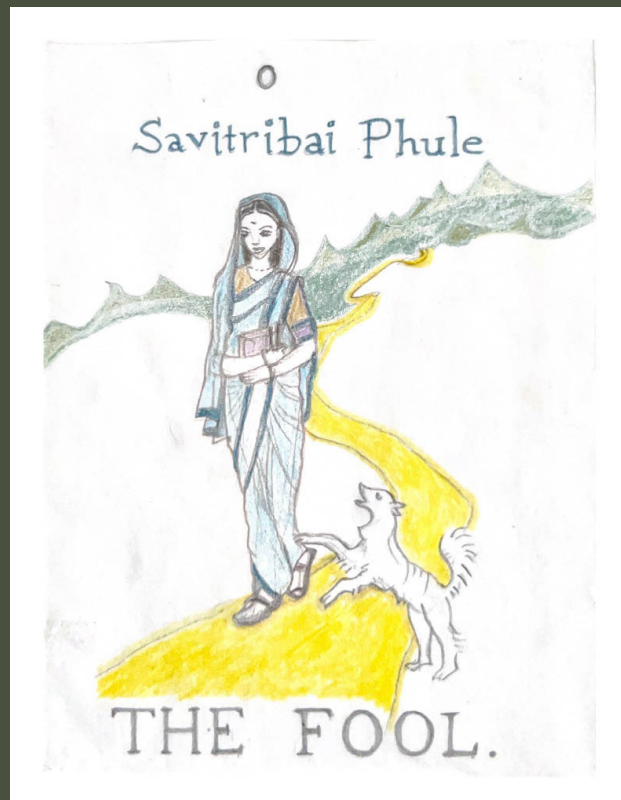
*A is for art.*

Tarot Number-Image: 0, *The Fool*

Most days, I pull cards, so that something-someone-spirit (if you believe in this) can reassure me. I pulled these letters, from twenty-six paper squares I'd cut, for this dictionary too, because the way I learned to survive what happened didn't read like a primer anyone had ever given me. And I speak three languages decently, can ask for help in two more.

Art is where I promise myself, *I will be free*. Here I rebuild my body from other people's torches at 26, 32, 36. Art wields its wand and says, *I turn you into life. Rise, speak*. When I am drained from hours of teaching and grading, I crawl into the white-flowered armchair my cat religiously claws and, word by word, revive on pages that neither judge nor turn from me.

Art looks for "accountability," found in no dictionary. Accountability means mothers unlearning boys being boys. Not forever, not without flipping to "consent." Accountability means listening to survivors without reaching for knives, so that in art we can ask for what we know we will not receive. Accountability sounds like purveyors of systems—26's adoptive mother, a white professor, or his surrogate mothers, Black refugees—acknowledging, *what he did was wrong. We hear, we see*.



B

*B is for beautiful.*

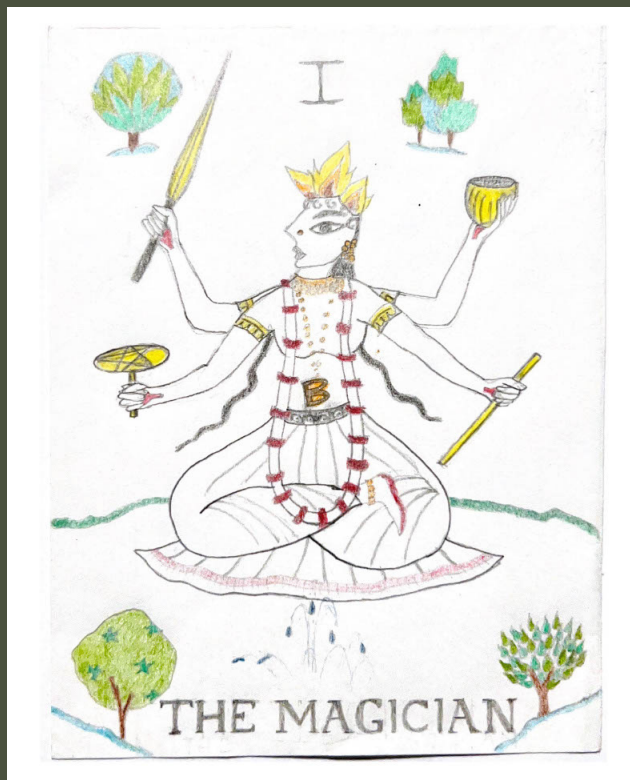
Tarot Number-Image: 1, *The Magician*

When men say a woman is beautiful, does it mean she is at higher or lower risk of being raped? Does it mean she meets some visual cliché, some semi-racist ideal, some fleeting benchmark they call *objective*? What did *beautiful* mean when I was 16 (skinny, self-conscious, hirsute) and mocked by strange boys, then 20 (lauded, groped, Eve-teased) and questioned by strange men?

When men (and women) say a woman is a *bitch*, does it mean she is too beautiful, not beautifully serviceable, or an outcast from the Club of Beauties? Does *bitch* mean a female dog or a female dawg or a fee for male dogs or a femme-ailed dawg or an F-ed up male dog or some synonym in-between?

*Bitch* has meant an Asian/American woman drawing a circle about herself, crouching on haunches in the middle to re-build shelter from cast stones. *Beautiful* has meant a serrated keyhole opening onto a road strewn with shards of friendship and safety and self-esteem.

A *beautiful bitch* is mobbed like Eurydice in the final scene of *Orfeu Negro*, when jealous women tear off her clothes, not because she is lovelier but because she is beloved by the playful lover-cum-god with his death-defying flute.



C

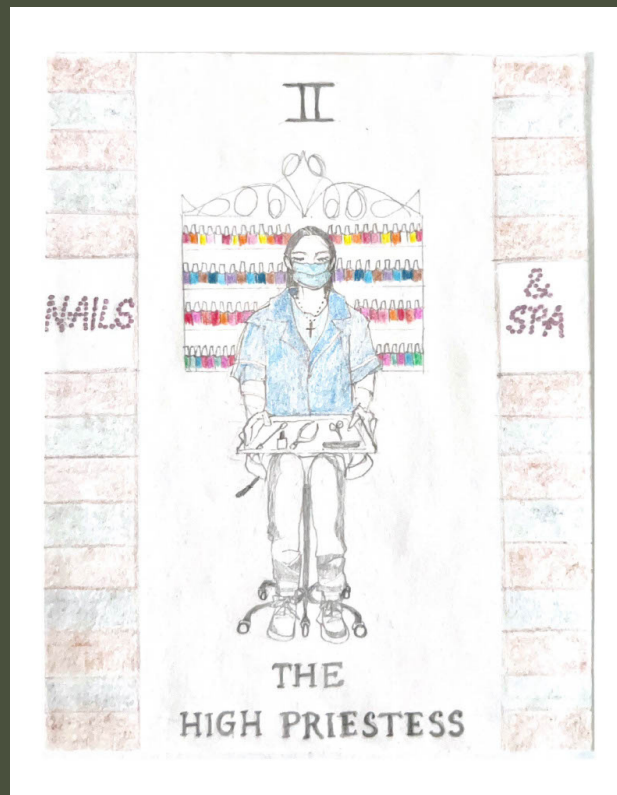
*C is for care.*

Tarot Number-Image: 2, *The Priestess*

At 26, care meant writing my book, without gathering debt to hand my parents or myself. I overworked: as restaurant server, rich kid tutor, IT nanny, library worker. I was clubbing then, where I met 26. The thinness of my self—the fragile limbs, armor, sense of men's lust—meant pretty did not safeguard me.

At 36, care meant a pool I'd crawled to and carved, adorning it with bathing suits, medicines, prayers. I began walking and swimming after three years of limping towards what I thought would be an aching future. My surgery at 32 had excised a knee-size lipoma from behind my left knee, what the surgeon said would take a few weeks to heal. 26 and the last boyfriend of my 20s had touched that lump, asking if it hurt, why I still had it.

36 only saw what the lump left behind: the heavier body he desired for its plumpness and loyalty, the slower gait that meant I'd walk behind but not away from him. He cheated on me when I flew to Brazil that summer, released by the slow miracle of three years' healing and a surprise research grant. I sent so many photos of Rio—a city I grew to love, where I ate kibbe in the streets, browsed bookstores and museums, offered jewelry to Iemanjá at the beach—while he found the knife with which he'd hobble me again.



D

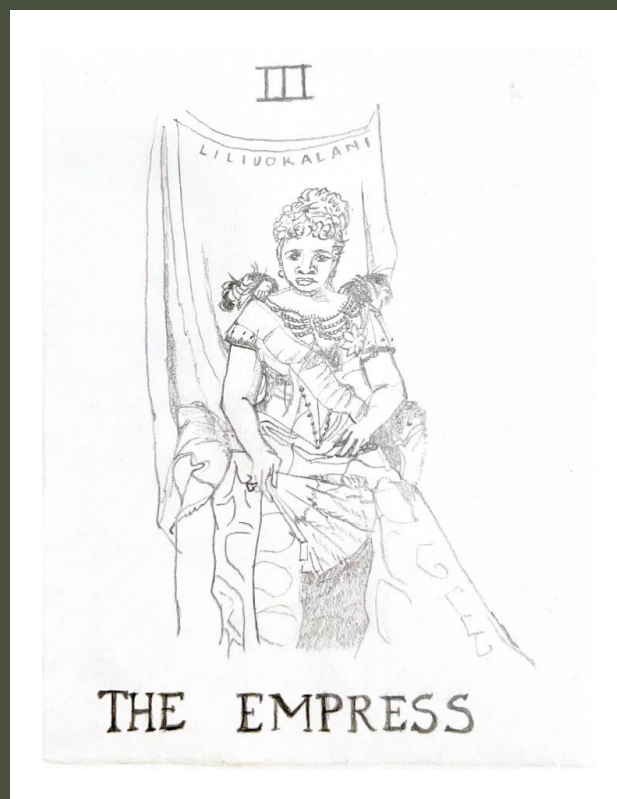
*D is for divination.*

Tarot Number-Image: 3, *The Empress*

Most days, I shuffle an Oracle deck and arrange tarot, a practice I began in Northern California where 26 and 36 happened. I remember moonlit tarot readings with hippie friends in gardens, beachside tarot readings with a writing bff for future work and new love, casita chakra readings with my Reiki healer-shaman who, I believe, helped heal my lame leg, my darkened spirit, my fear that I couldn't be with a man again, *please*.

My mother had an uncle who had the gift and had told her as a girl she would marry a man with a scar running down his left cheek, that she would live far across the ocean. My mother, like most Assamese, knew the river intimately but hadn't seen the ocean; my father had a scar he got from a knife fight as a boy, denting a cheek the same flush as mine.

A few times, I've intuited something coming: the shattered ketchup bottle the night before Sarah's stroke, the coffee cup grinds like a pyre before my roommate's mother succumbed, the six of wands success cards before Kate, the Red Hen Press editor, texted me on my Amtrak ride, that she had news about my manuscript. Divination means that you see, not whether you want to.



E

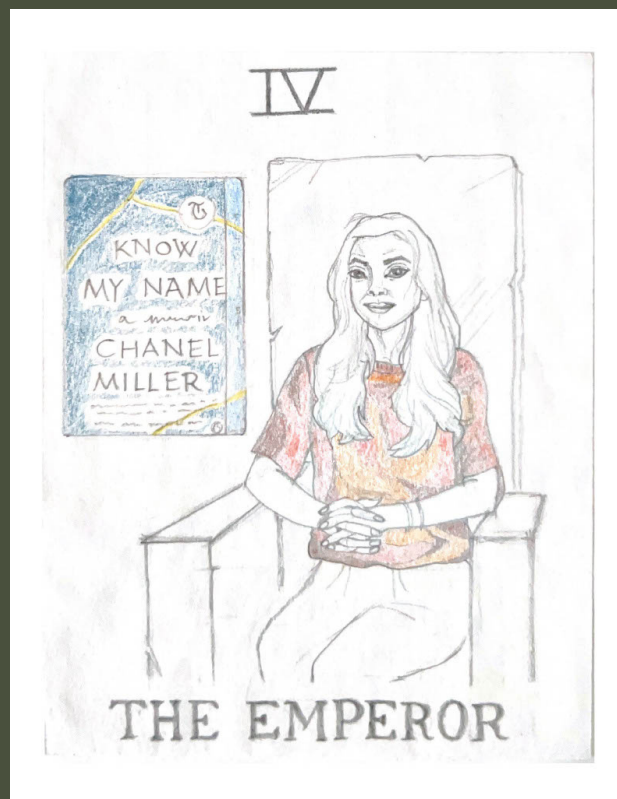
*E is for emergenc(y).*

Tarot Number-Image: 4, *The Emperor*

There were no sirens at 26 or 36 in Northern California. The sounds I learned were men whispering their strange fantasies into my ear: *a massage please, what an Indian doll, I'd pay for you on an expensive menu of pussy*. There were no Survivors Anonymous meetings at 26 or 36, because I hadn't spoken aloud to myself the gravity of the damage. Do such meetings exist in any world I've traversed? There was not a single person from my ethnic community who stepped forward and said, *I believe you, I'm sorry this happened, how are you managing?*

I am waiting for survivors to introduce ourselves by name.

I have had friends I can count past both hands who are survivors. Some would use the word while others would not. We talk about what happened in ellipses, as if that were the only grammar in a world where proper sentence construction for our details won't fly. We talk about what happened in halting voices, over the phone, evening obscuring our faces—white, Indian, black—in corners and corridors of austere buildings. We assume what happened can be uttered in one paragraph at most. There is no verifiable beginning, no just ending. There is only the alarming middle.



F

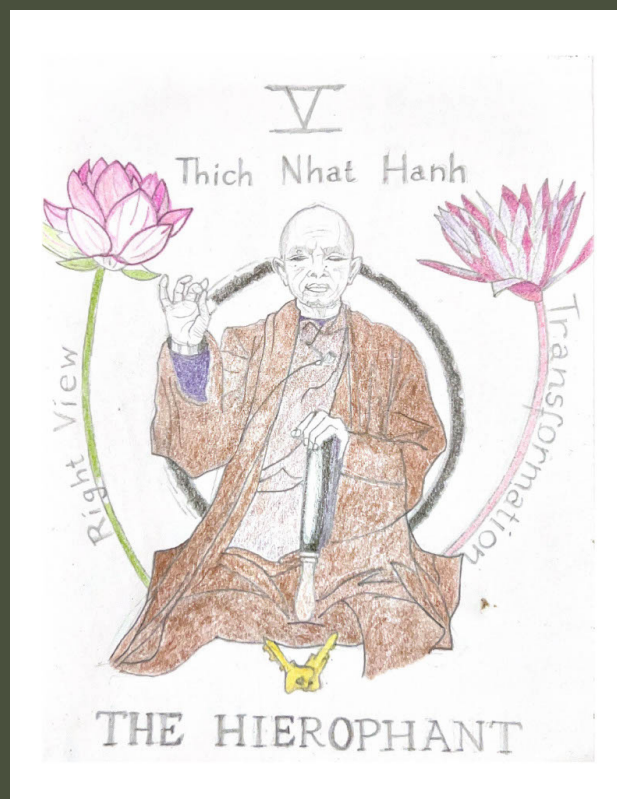
*F is for friendship.*

Tarot Number-Image: 5, *The Hierophant*

The first time I named what happened to me was when I sobbed over the phone with my poet musician friend, M. (M swooped in for those threadbare years when I needed a staunch feminist, the kind who had the unapologetic brio of Jewish mothers demanding hot water at the local gym.) *Say it, that's right*, M said, when I cried that what had almost happened that night felt like what had happened five years before.

I'd been followed and blocked in my car one winter evening, by three Bangladeshi men in their car, which I'd nicked on the rearview mirror while turning. The men insisted I join them in a garage to pay for repairs though it was past ten PM. My apologetic pleading, that I had a flight the next morning for my cousin's last rites, my promised payment and contact information did not move them or their car. Only the cops settled the issue, walking with me to an ATM from which I paid the men fifty dollars. The woman cop, a kind Latina, widened her eyes and said, *a garage at this hour?*

I didn't tell the cop or M that the men had read my driver's license and recognized my surname as Assamese, that they might have been settling an older score, as my closest cousin suggested when I reached Assam. He couldn't bear the end of my story, rising from the dining table to walk out.



## G

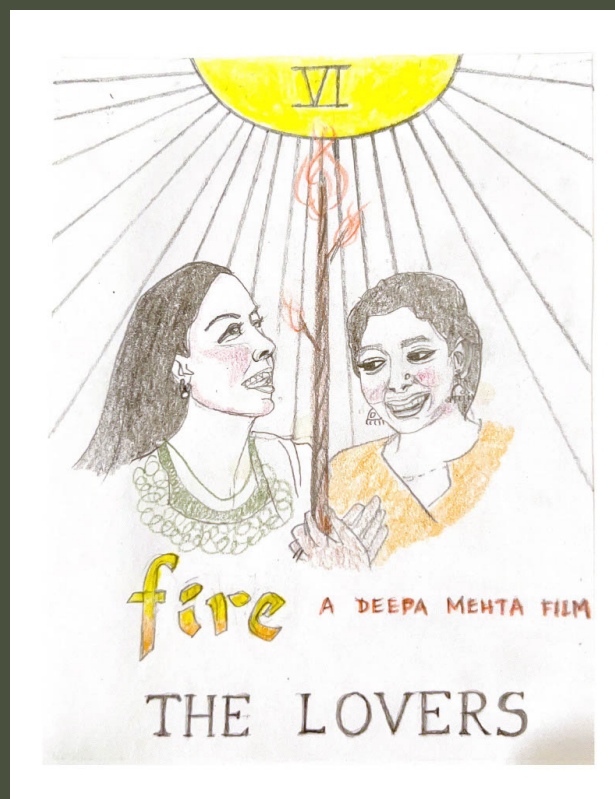
*G is for girls.*

Tarot Number-Image: 6, *The Lovers*

As a girl, I played with dolls whose hair I cut, believing they would grow Rumpelstiltskin-style, yellow straw into gold. I was a touch wild at home, hanging with Assamese girls from tree branches, gossiping about boys and dreams upside-down. As early as first grade, I was made to choose between S, who chased boys around the playground in jeans, and K, who wore dresses and make-up like her prissy friends, what kind of girl I was going to be. Black or Puerto Rican? Tomboy or girly? At school, I chose to sit rather than hang.

At 40, I gape at girls hurtling through these streets of life. Girls holding their mommies' hands, no higher than thighs, hair covered in rainbow cascades of clicking barrettes or hair ribboned up in pigtails like catch-her-if-you-can leashes—but always in bright dresses. This is the one time it is decent and safe to wear bright dresses. I watch others watching girls like the girl I was, from car seats under railroad tracks or midnight subway benches or behind computer and phone screens that, with one click, will eat them alive.

I remember warning and protecting my sister from those who watched girls like us, without divining she would fail to do the same for me. I remember hurtling into the End of Girlhood on so many gazes and gaze-aways, learning that a girl is an extraordinary joy for just a nanosecond.



H

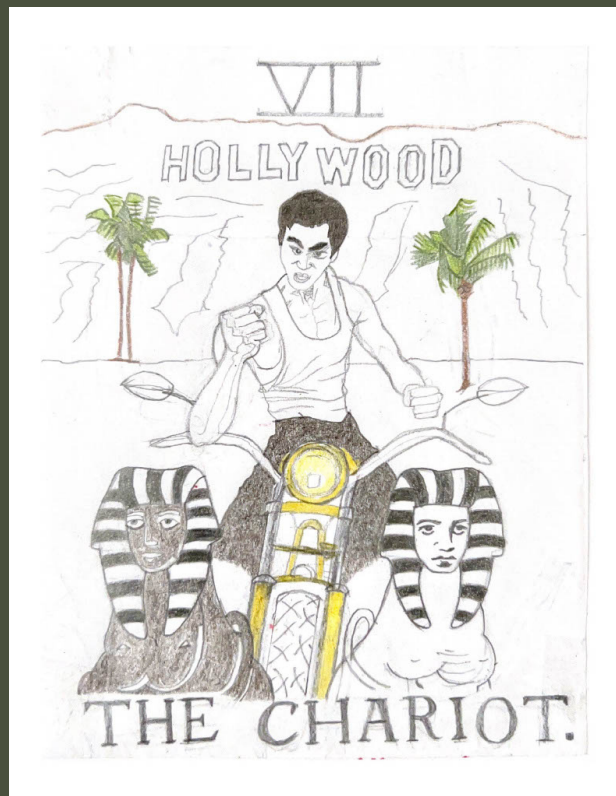
*H is for hatred.*

Tarot Number-Image: 7, *The Chariot*

Sometimes, hatred means an offering to survivors other than hospitality, that remedy they preach about in ivy-laced buildings and social justice warrior rings. Sometimes, hatred means a Respectable Woman uniform: knee-length or low hemline, assessing eyes, the assurance of a woman who's never been rubbed the wrong way by a man, just by some younger woman's lure. Sometimes, hatred means a gaggle of girls with tight tees and shared slang, passing Dorito chips and a soda between them, as swiftly as they pass *The News* about some *Girl Who Went Too Far*.

In the hierarchy of humiliation, nobody wants to be the piñata.

Sometimes, hatred means sleepless nights—of which there will be many, when girls like me wake to an invisible pistol pointed at our chests—and the sweetest fantasy is when we pull out our own gun. And. Shoot. Them. Not. Quite. Dead. Because hatred means not-quite-dead is the worst place to live. Sometimes, hatred means a dog the townspeople set on errant women who wear a scarlet R. The women stay sidelined, prodded and paper-balled but never answer back. The dog looks respectable too, very white with blue eyes and a tag that reads, *Property of Some Man*.



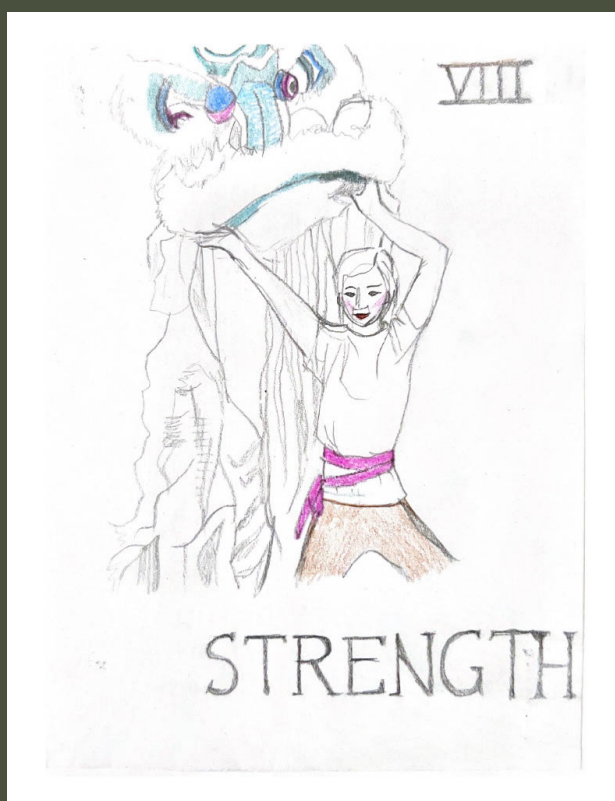
# I

*I is for Indian.*

Tarot Number-Image: 8, *Strength*

From an early age, this word will confuse me as well as others: ambiguously brown, in/conveniently small, dot or feather—buffalo or cow—black or white will haunt me across the years. I is for Indian means the black boys up to middle school will play with my touches-the-toilet braid, will compare me to a doll, will try to kiss me until I disappear from the eyeline of desirability under baggy clothes, hormonal hair, Einstein-block glasses. Post/college years, it will be the Indian and white boys who see me as zoo-hologram they might test their developing sense of mastery upon. So that I'm left repeating ad infinitum, *I is for Indian is not how I describe myself.*

I is for Indian means when I am harassed or assaulted or raped, especially by working class men of color, I have no right to speak up. Because I is for Indian is the beneficiary of the Civil Rights Movement, the daughter of professional migrants, the denizen of model minority land where nothing can go wrong. I is for Indian means, at my younger sister's wedding in Santa Barbara, an old white man chats me up at a Starbucks, telling me about living with his squaw in the hills. I humor him, nodding, until the young white employees walk in for their shift, chiding him. Squaw means rapeability on Turtle Island, but I'm careful about telling this story lest someone accuse me again of pretending to be something I'm not.



J

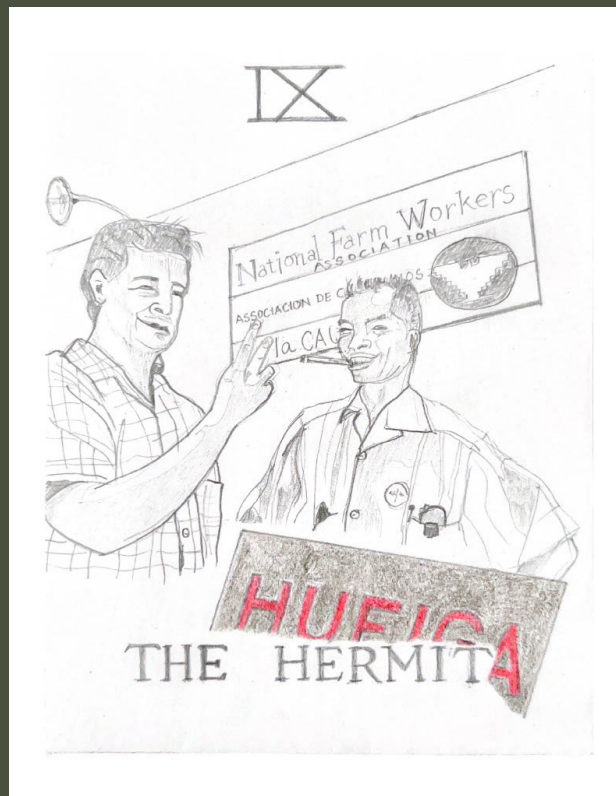
*J is for jealousy.*

Tarot Number-Image: 9, *The Hermit*

Sometimes, jealousy is a switchblade in the gloved hands of white supremacy and it slices certain ways at me (if not all Asian/American women). Anyone can borrow this blade. I have a catalog of jealous incidents I will not name that have upended if not razed my life, my self-esteem. An absent sister, grad school peers, old friends now-monied, colleagues who see only *model minority* in capital letters.

We use this switchblade on each other, though the stories of who slices at whom varies Left and Right. This is a story planted from my two feet in which I grieve receiving jealousy rather than solidarity from people of color I identified with who did not identify with me. This is a story of slicing from white, Black, Native American, Latinx, men, women, and students swimming in churning waters. This is a story of healing from white, Black, Native American, Latinx, men, women, and students slipping over anchors to harbors where residents say what survivors crave. *We believe you. Sit with us. We will hold your story.*

If jealousy is Scylla spiraling my boat of forty years to shores with flags larger than bedsheets on which I was harmed, solidarity is any swimming being that extends its tentacles in caress and carries us to the surface to breathe. Theirs is the choreography of living: *we hunt, we leap, we don't watch each other drown and call it winning.*



K

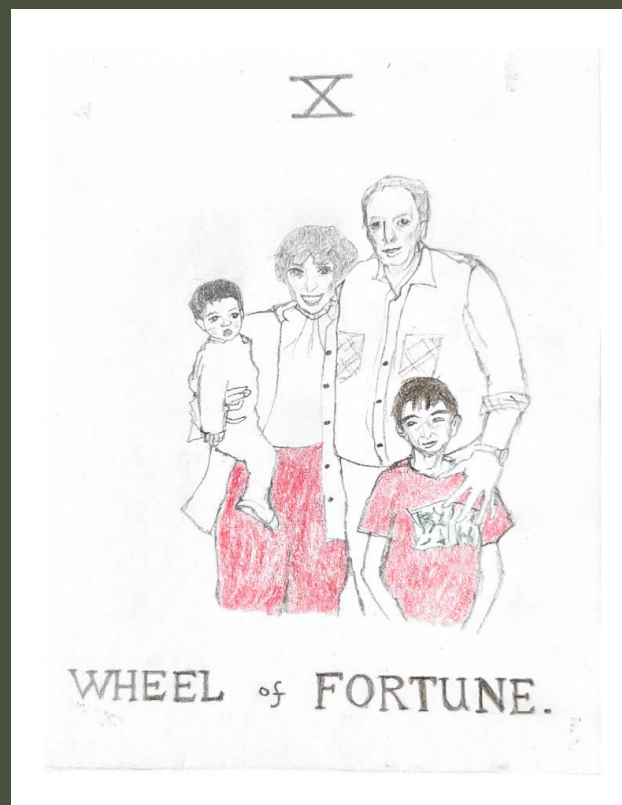
*K is for kin.*

Tarot Number-Image: 10, *Wheel of Fortune*

K is for kin, which shifts radically when you are a survivor. Those you thought would hold you— women, feminists, lefties—defend the perpetrator, maybe because there's something in it for them. Those you thought would turn away—men, traditionalists, strangers—come forth with their own stories, might offer shelter or meals or grant audience for your facts.

They are wrong to teach you that kin is matter-of-factly blood. Your sister, with whom you haven't spoken in years, other Indian women whose own bruises you cradled—their smirks and backs have salted and gated your shame. Survival teaches you that kin is stitched slowly, through the passing and giving of irradiated stories as if they were the warm stones of friendship. Kin does not look like a moniker, does not even look like you.

Why do I sense that writing these facts—truths it took years to speak—means tiptoeing between the Right, who will jump at one interpretation, and the Left, who will jump at another? Your kin live between poles, surprise encounters on your travels. As when you hiked for desert bloom your last spring in San Diego: cacti with bristly arms and magenta-flamed tongues swollen with rain.



L

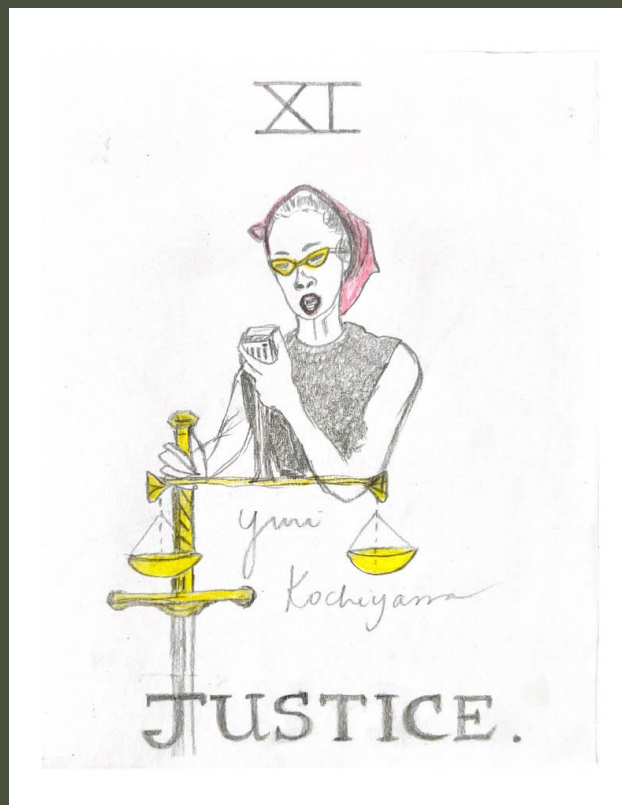
*L is for love.*

Tarot Number-Image: 11, *Justice*

Love is my jasmine plant, ordered after my myomectomy at 38, that sprouted, in over a year, into a green octopus that offered anemone-like blossoms in Philly winter. Love is always my father, sometimes my mother, to whom I have never confessed 26 or 36, but who always suggested that sex should be joyous, that I should discover what I liked (my father advised), that an orgasm was nothing to be ashamed of (my mother explained), back before I was 26 or 36.

Love is what I do every morning, covering the surgical scar under my belly (which I believe grew the multiple tumors it did because it had stored up unspoken pain) and repeating to the woman in the mirror, *you are safe, you are protected, you are worthy of love*. Love is the vibe between me and every male friend who never hit on me, who paused, then pulled back when tension crackled up like a live wire, who bought me a meal instead.

Love is what was missing at 26 and 36 because the culture doesn't teach men that girls are entitled to love, especially darker-skinned girls with mouths and brains. No it doesn't, no matter what the Marxists or hoteps say. Love is the much younger Cambodian boyfriend I had, after 26, who had known rape too and didn't imply like others that it was my fault, who sent me off from Northern California with a boat ride in a lake.



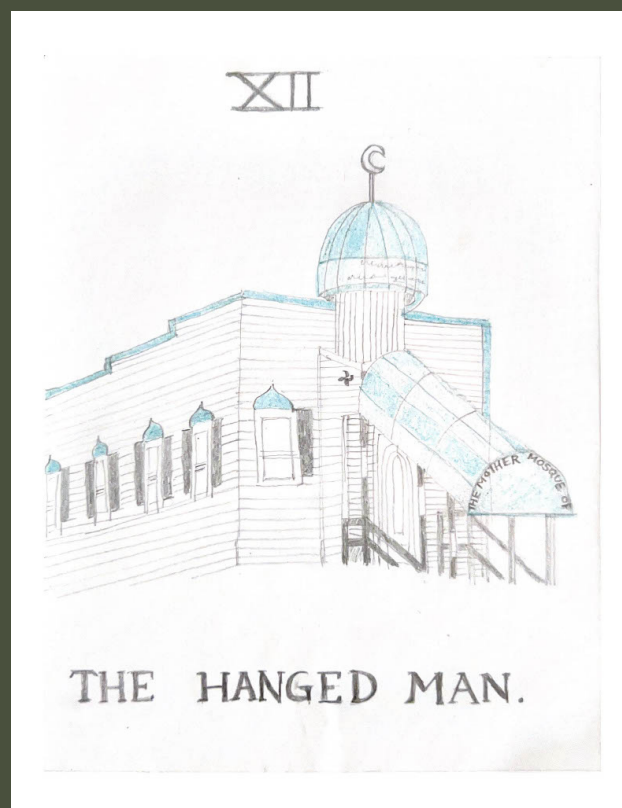
M

*M is for muzzle.*

Tarot Number-Image: 12, *The Hanged Man*

Growing up among immigrants, I understood most muzzles were invisible. There are the muzzles that women put on each other with their gossip and bind tight with their threats of exclusion. There are the muzzles that spread across South/west Asian communities after the Towers fell, as if the debris from that day and all the acts, the wars that followed clogged their throat, stopped them from saying, *I didn't do it*. Those muzzles are a featherweight version of the hood placed over that detainee's head in Abu Ghraib, or second cousin to that woman guard and her unmuzzled glee pissing on a naked man. Flags can be muzzles.

Every time I wrote about some punk who raped me or was rapey or was an asshole, I counted the women who would come for my jugular waving their flags. This is what made it hard to say men of color inflicted the greatest pain, that two black men had caused me the most sexual harm, that I could give two flying fucks about flags that, if they were used to muzzle me, I would still burn. I don't forgive these men or these flags, though I try-I try, because some of the flag wavers are friends. Is accountability so much to ask? I don't know a single flag-waver who will go after 26 or 36 to set the scales right.



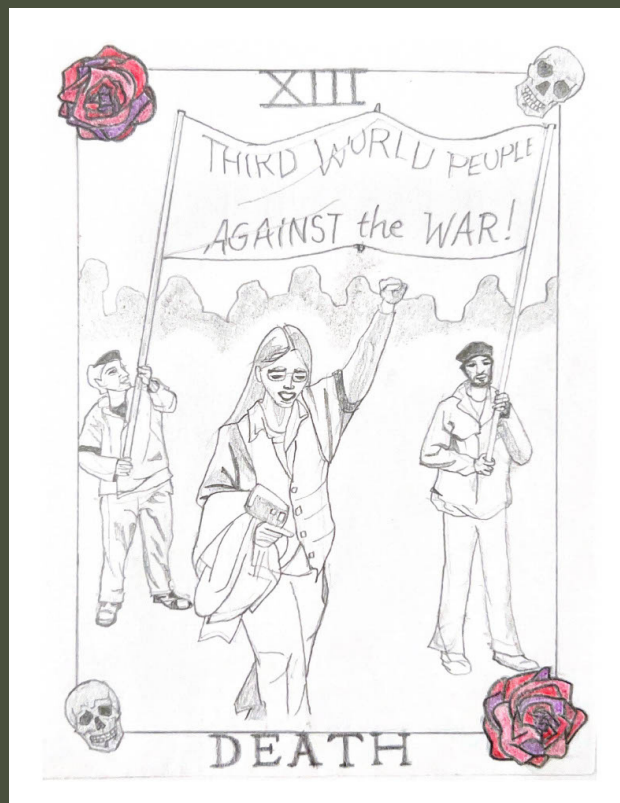
N

*N is for no.*

Tarot Number-Image: 13, *Death*

No is a word girls are taught not to say, on both the Left and the Right. Don't say no to men with money. Don't say no to white men. Don't say no to men of color, especially Historically Oppressed Men. Don't say no to your people, even if it means slitting your spirit. Don't say no, I won't spread my legs, no, I didn't enjoy that dry fuck, no, I won't shut up unless it's to suck your dick. (Dicks can come attached to any kind of body.) Don't say no, that isn't my dream, that fenced house with bratty kids and a padded paycheck. Don't say no, I didn't get enough of that meal dripping with fat, I didn't get enough of that finger-or-tongue exactly where I like it.

No might be armor in the battlefield of life and all the goddamned arrows too. Sometimes, I dream up a skull necklace of nos, like the one Kali wears, and ride to slay the ventriloquist of nos, the border wall of nos. No becomes the name of this dead tribe. I draw their faces in my banned thesaurus of nos. Every morning, I stare at myself naked, adorned by cross-bones I caress and count. I will recite the number like a mantra for girls, teach them how much pressure it takes to form a scintillating no.



O

*O is for operation.*

Tarot Number-Image: 14, *Temperance*

The second operation of my 30s removed a tumor as large as a grapefruit, as off-kilter as a heart. *There were others*, the blue-eyed OBGYN said, a Black woman to whom I will be forever grateful. She and her team cleared fibroids for hours. They'd prepped my tummy as I'd hyperventilated and nodded off, imagining a Rio beach. I believe now my uterus was screaming so I might attempt healing, even writing this.

The first operation of my 30s left me unable to walk without pain for three years. I rammed into 32 soon after surgery, then hid for a year on a mountain ranch in Escondido. I'd wake to peacocks—azure blue, angel white, spotty hybrids—pecking and pooping on the kitchen floor. I'd wake to 32's texts reciting what was desirable about me, what was disgusting, what would get this *sand nigger* killed. The peacocks with their daily unfurling taught me about the vanity of men, especially the peacock who attacked from behind, scarring my right calf.

Operation Orchid is what I call this unabashed effort to save my erotic life. Before I knew about my second operation, my father and I drove to the Orchid Show at Longwood Gardens, where I photographed him walking solemnly in a blue shirt among walls of pink-and-gold, purple and-white spray. I learned that orchids do not need soil to survive. Epiphytes, they adapt to what's around them, arcing towards light, thriving on air.



P

*P is for pussy.*

Tarot Number-Image: 15, *The Devil*

Both times, they told me how tight I was, as if they had been waiting to confirm a suspicion about my Short, Brown, Asian Body. I wonder if this was why, the first time, I was raped the way I was, in the back, as if there were a territory unexplored. Both times, they had loved women they measured me against, women who were Arab, and I wondered, as I had after 9/11, if what had happened had happened because I looked like the wrong group. I wondered, unfairly perhaps, if this would have happened to my mother and sister, who are mistaken for East Asian, or to any white woman, since both men were black.

Sometimes, I fantasize about the kind of pussy an older white man, a gay man who'd interviewed me in fact for the job, joked at the faculty welcome meeting about: *vagina dentata*. I hadn't even known what that was, but I could tell from the men's uncomfortable half-smiles on the couch, all older white men with fancy titles, that he was implicating me. Now that I know the meaning of that phrase, I wish I'd had a *vagina dentata*, all those times in the past and in the future when someone looks at me and sees a tight Asian pussy, so I can snip their tongue before they ask, *why is it always about race?*



Q

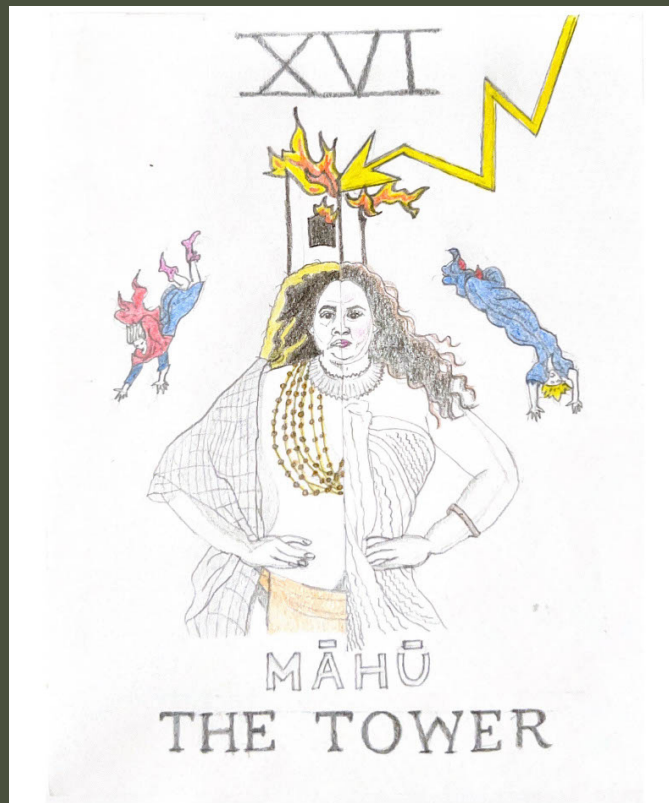
*Q is for queer.*

Tarot Number-Image: 16, *The Tower*

I've only loved a woman once, nineteen in Brazil, after which she wrote me letters for a year, so I don't always claim the word. My official response is *I like what I like, you never know what you'll like, everyone is a little bit fluid if they're deathbed honest*. We are Facebook friends now, my first woman and I, and she uses her colloquial rather than given name, *India* for the long, straight hair she had when we met. She wasn't a mother then or as voluptuous, but she had that stone-dark skin, the overeager eyes and smile, that invisible sack of sadness when we washed dishes with coconut soap, rinsed lice from each other's hair with tea water, kissed each other across a car window.

Sometimes, I wonder if the men I've slept with, particularly the Black and Indian men, were as cruel as they were once they knew my fuller history, though I rarely confess *queer*. But it always charged the air after I told my story, though the words they used were *carpet-licker*, *slut*, *tranny*, words that can get you killed. Should I be grateful I wasn't killed for words that don't capture who I am?

Another reason I hesitate to spell this word is because the most razored cuts I've experienced have been from queer people of color—they're *the worst*, a queer of color colleague confided—vying for a pie piece that must have looked non-existent.



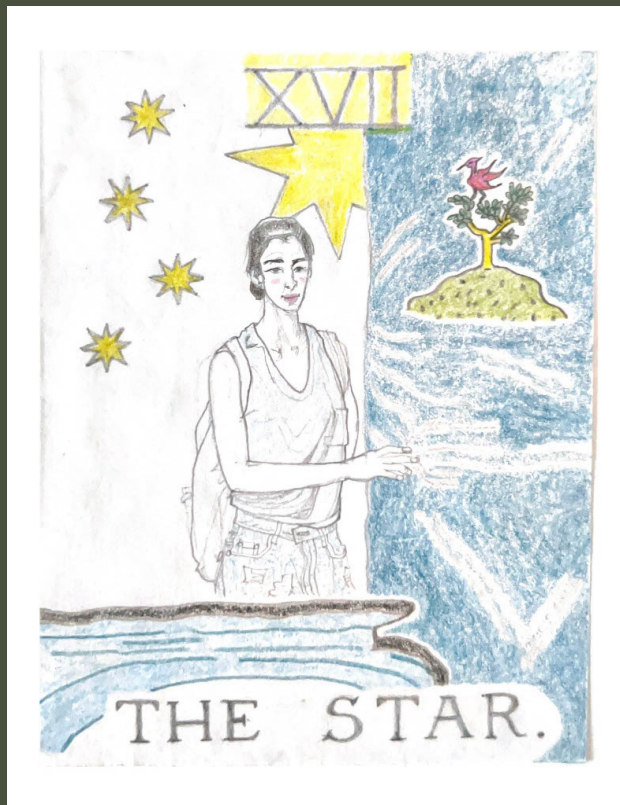
R

*R is for rape culture.*

Tarot Number-Image: 17, *The Star*

How do I RC thee? Let me count the ways. / I RC thee to the measures of your Self /  
Meat that cried *I was asking for it* / *You wench* / For the ends of Being and Ideal / Disgrace  
/ I RC thee even as I look like you / So you learn I have / Many mouths and faces / I RC  
thee freely, as I strive for / Might / I RC thee quietly, as I cloak / my Self / I RC thee  
with a passion put to use / For jilted men, jealous women, the / Crowd's roar / I RC thee  
with a love I seemed to / lose / with these designated names—*bitch, cunt, / slut, pig*— / So  
you stay mum, like an Asian woman / should.

Why can I never hope for American Justice, caught between Black-and-White  
scriptures? Why did the Virginia officer, also black, who disclosed the FBI case on 36,  
call him a sexual predator, then coax me not to report him? Why did he diminish the  
gravity of what 36 did to women I'll never meet yet feel rapport with, *to things we do when  
we're dumb and young*? Why did the Virginia officer laugh when he said he'd looked  
through our WhatsApp—*I know, you were just in love*—then back off only when I said, I  
*recognized being targeted on minimal evidence in the last fifteen years*?



# S

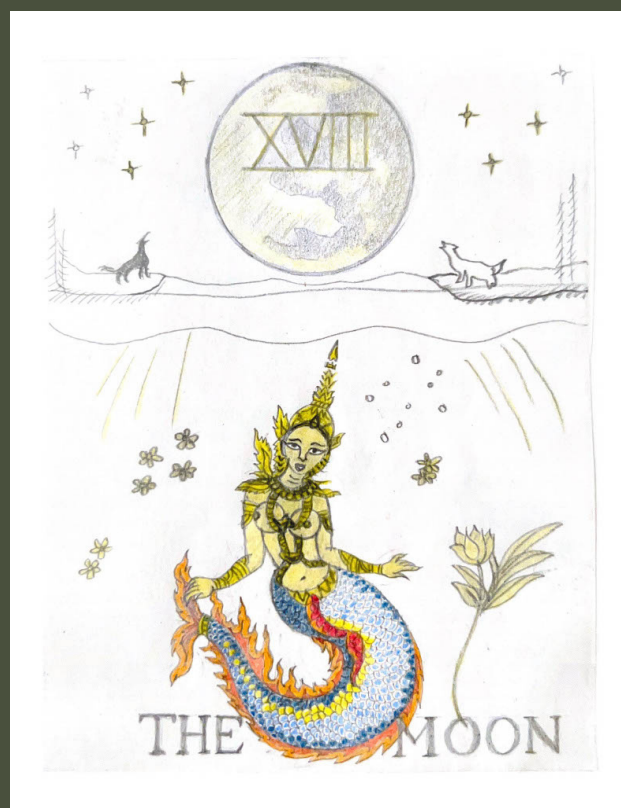
*S is for sex.*

Tarot Number-Image: 18, *The Moon*

Sex is something you stopped enjoying.

You came only once with the Narcissist who, on second thought, was rapey too. The way he'd walked back and forth behind you as you sat writing the first room of this memoir, about your cousin's funeral rites during the Damini protests. The way he invited you to his 35th birthday, most of the restaurant swarmed by his friends, and joked before them about gifting you a pearl necklace. (Awkward silence.) The way he forgot the other guests to grind against you without asking, the way he never asked clearly in the coming months, *do you want to*, but simply unbuttoned you, the way he never remarked on the fact that you never came. The way he couldn't hear what you were saying was, *be careful with my dreams, women like me are targets in India, there is a special number on Delhi trains for us, there is a long history of men like you bedding, then discarding women like me.*

S is also for sex that is unapologetically kinky, verbal, and leaves you peeling your skin for the skins beneath. Sex before the mirror, sex before a party, sex before breakfast, sex between boyfriends, sex by yourself which feels safest and satisfying. Sex with a not-so-bad boy who is hearing into your silences, who is trying to get you to the place where your vowels and syllables feel fresh again and entirely, entirely yours.

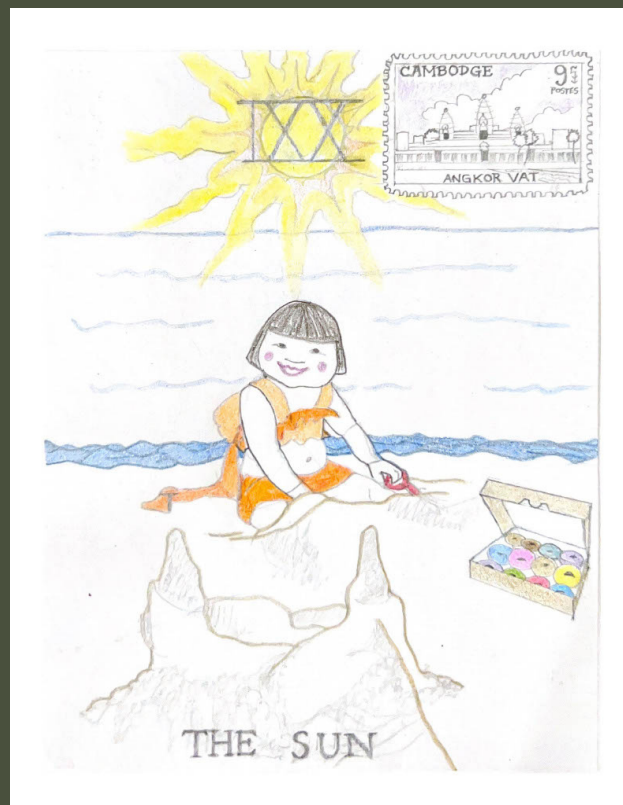


T

*T is for tenderness.*

Tarot Number-Image: 19, *The Sun*

Tenderness is medicine. Tenderness is my cat Alma, whom I saved from being a mangled corpse on Philly streets, placing her chin on my forearm. Tenderness is my father holding me to his belly as I sob over an ex, saying someone who loved me would not make me feel like this. Tenderness is an aunt, chosen rather than blood, washing my feet with rosewater when I am laid up with dysentery in Guwahati, Assam. Tenderness is the student who, after I explain how neoliberalism devalues us and after years of malicious students, posts a paean on myprofessor.com. Tenderness is my body after my myomectomy, when I lie on my back in bed for six weeks, walking gingerly to the bathroom, the kitchen, the corner for my blue car. Tenderness are girlfriends who swill wine and salt popcorn past midnight, spewing jokes about love debacles across well-worn sofas. Tenderness is my doctoral advisor waiting in a crowd on graduation day to meet my parents who, tender too, fly doggedly from the Bronx to La Jolla. Tenderness is my friend Celia, chosen sister who shows up for the ceremony with a sunflower bouquet and calm smile. Tenderness are the sertaneja women—Andrea and Marilza—who teach me to cook couscous and top it with papaya cubes, who brew herbal teas to wash lice from my tangled hair, who coax me out of my teen reticence to consider the Brazilian penchant for extravagant love.



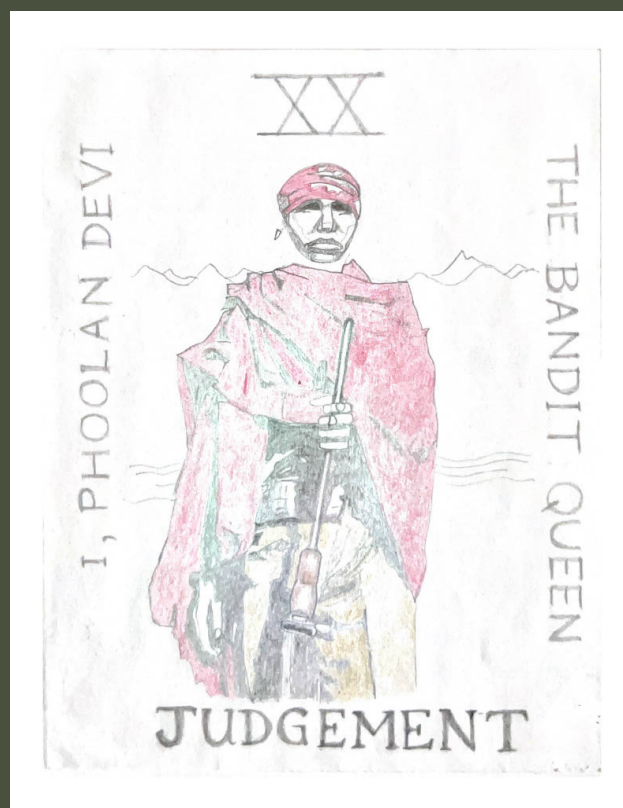
U

*U is for understanding.*

Tarot Number-Image: 20, *Judgment*

U is for understanding that boys will be boys and girls will love boys will be boys, if there's money in it. That I was alone and undefended because I was a brown girl with no money in it. That I was hyper-visible, after an invisible adolescence, because I was Indian, whatever that meant to those who hit, then rode unscathed. That there is no re-writing those moments, what should have been shimmering years of young womanhood, a narrative never mine in the American bildungsroman. That there is no placard for me off these pages, not on the Right or Left, only dusk when animals commune and mime their secrets.

U is for understanding that I should not be underestimated, not even by myself. That I am Eurydice, retrieved from the Dead by Love's music, and worshipper to Oxum, the sweet-water goddess slaves prayed to for protection by charm, for experiencing pleasure again. That there are men who would bear my story against women who would burn me for telling it, feminists against fauxminists. That I was hunted—for my beauty, my naivete, my vulnerability (a black elder healer said)—and handicapped by my sense of unworthiness, my black-and-white idealism, my fear over my own raw sound.



## V

*V is for voice.*

Tarot Number-Image: 21, *The World*

It took several years for *this* Asian/American woman to assemble *this* alphabet. There is no real language in which I can define exactly how it went. There are only found letters, ellipses, fragments. There is no world yet in which this wouldn't have happened, wouldn't happen again.

Most days, I deduce the world wants me to have no voice, wants only a few things lolling in my mouth: someone's dick (rolled in their flag), someone's self-serving platitudes, someone's ego stroking lies. It feels like a slow-mo version of what my second surgery felt like, an intubation tube stuffed down my throat till I lost consciousness. I am grateful to Eve Ensler for staging taboo phrases, banned junctions: vaginas, violences, female vendettas. At one rendition of her play, as an undergrad at Harvard, a reserved peer smiled to a clapping audience upon telling us the vagina had more nerve endings than any part of the body.

I wonder how my voices sound when all I've heard is the way *her voice* sounds to others. A crystallized bowl of honey. A feral cat shrill at night. A waterfall of blue pearls. A foghorn in an ancient storm. A taped-over voice too shy now for karaoke. A pitch-deaf voice gurgling in water. A voice that spits glass shards of fact. A voice that is gossiped about by lesser voices. A voice too sick and tired to give a fuck.



W

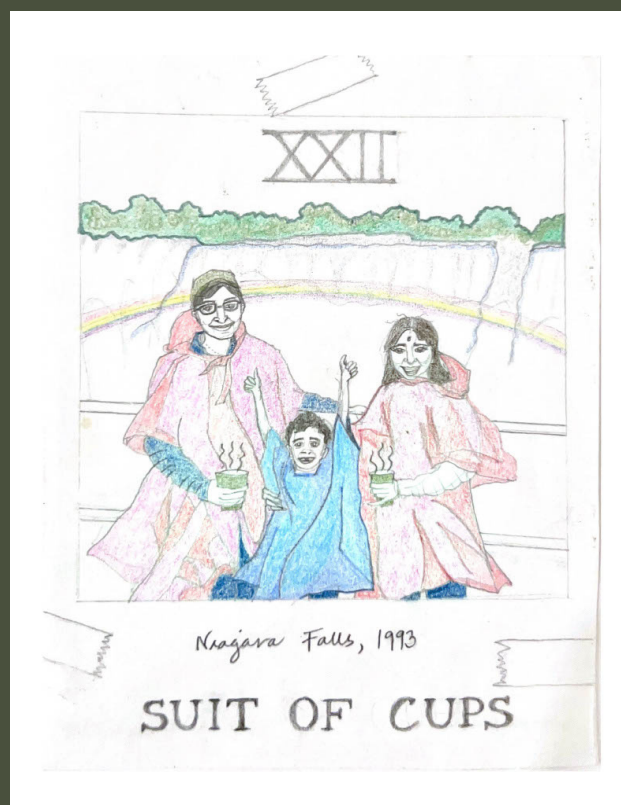
*W is for why.*

Tarot Number-Image: *Suit of Cups*

Here are the whys I was given. Why did I give 26, an Ethiopian painter, my number at the club? Why didn't I say *no* more loudly, right away? Why did I plunge headlong into 36, an African American veteran who I'd learn, after switching coasts, was engaged? Why didn't I leave after he came inside me, though I said *no*, then yelled *you're not a mother* when I took Plan B?

Here are the whys I still hold. Why didn't so-called friends warn me about 26, *he's sketch, don't trust him*, or at 32, *that one's an alcoholic, this one's a narcissist, do you believe their religiosity*? Why do lefties choose the sacred cow of Oppressed Black or Brown or Working-Class Man if that individual has harmed their friend? Why isn't the culture or law clear about assault or rape or even consent?

Here are the why's I'm traveling towards. Why did I get lucky enough to find love again? Why did I clench my fists and decide, *I'm fighting for my inner life*? Why did I walk away from roads with identity labels for roads that zigzagged with signs reading *welcome* and *joy* and *authenticity*? Why did I choose the thorny path to forgiveness, where I find my reflection in both carcass and oasis, where I mouth mantras like *it is ok to be imperfect, we are not so different, the nature of the Universe is love*.



X

*X is for x-rated.*

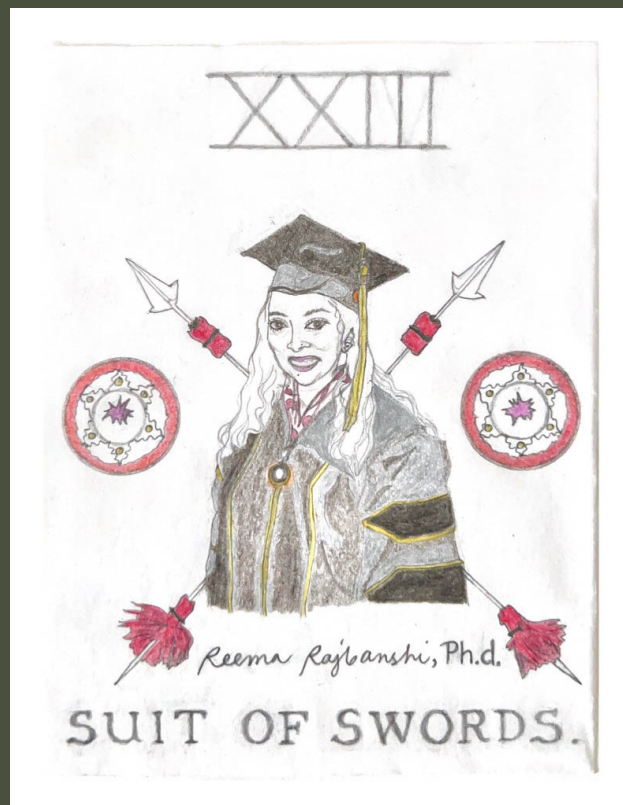
Tarot Number-Image: *Suit of Swords*

“Thank you for modeling for us,” they say. There’s the morning-after photo the Native Male Writer posted on Facebook, without your consent. Myriad strangers, presumably Native, presumably North American, derided you behind screens: *old, ugly, India Indian*. Only one Native woman protested, she wouldn’t let a sister be treated like this.

“Thank you for modeling for us,” they say. Native Male Writer snapped that photo, also without consent, in the string of days you’d dated. You still wore the tawny gown you’d worn to the bar the night before. He’d taken so many photos, a bespectacled man with the roar of a wounded beast, that you’d assumed the best rather than the barrage in years to come: *nigger, cunt, revenge porn*.

“Thank you for modeling for us,” they say. The Mayan scholar who introduced you to the Native Male Writer berates you for asking for help, though the Sexual Assault Resources Center disagrees, *that’s part of her job*. You discovered she’d told a professor for whom you grade, a white Cuban woman who cares little for Asian American issues at a UC, who hints she’ll side with the scholar because *that’s my girl*. An African American graduate student in History seats himself at your café study table and jokes about telling his mother to show her boobs *to attract the honeybees*.

“Thank you for modelling for us,” they say.



Y

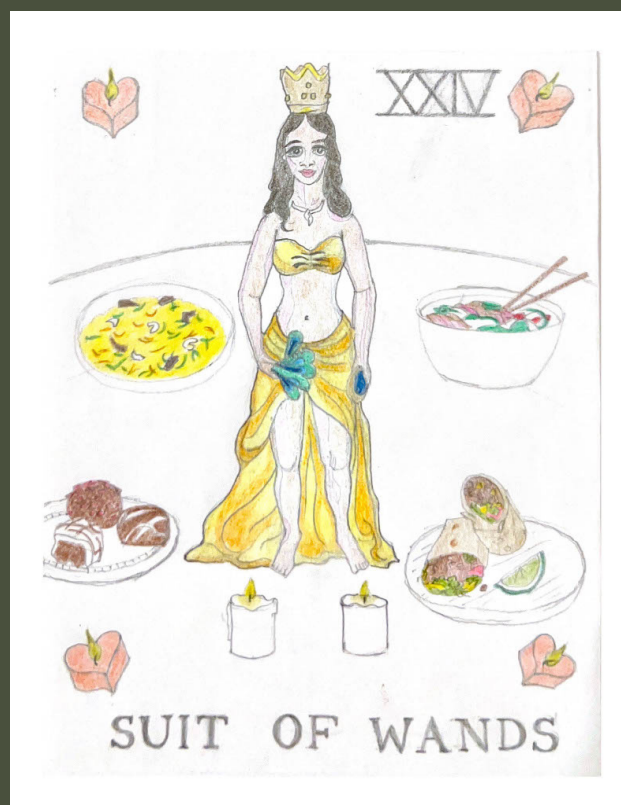
*Y is for yes.*

Tarot Number-Image: *Suit of Wands*

Part of my healing, post surgeries, has been to say yes to joy. This is what trauma stole from me, taught me that erotic color had forever fled, that some part of myself would always live in a mausoleum.

First, I said yes to eating, wanting a shield between myself and men. So I grew into the body that rape and surgeries gave me: thirty pounds heavier, tits and thighs and ass, a body that wasn't my younger body whose lines had been crossed, a body I could reclaim as my own. I said yes to seductive, secret pleasures: morning masturbation, chocolate during my period, a shrine to Oxum, beef in burritos and pho and biryani, candles all over my apartment day or night. I never want to forget that I have power here in this tiny, flitting oasis called joy.

The first time I remember being punished for yes was in kindergarten. An older black boy who'd been left behind had leaned over during break: *do you know what a kiss is?* I'd lied and said no but I'd peeked at my mother's soap operas, and wanted to test this persistent Jamaican boy who dangled a kiss like a key. When another kid tattled to the teacher, a strict black woman who'd held me in high regard as a goody-two-shoes, she'd widened her eyes: *is this true?* The boy was the one sent to the corner but I remember feeling complicit in a kiss.



Z

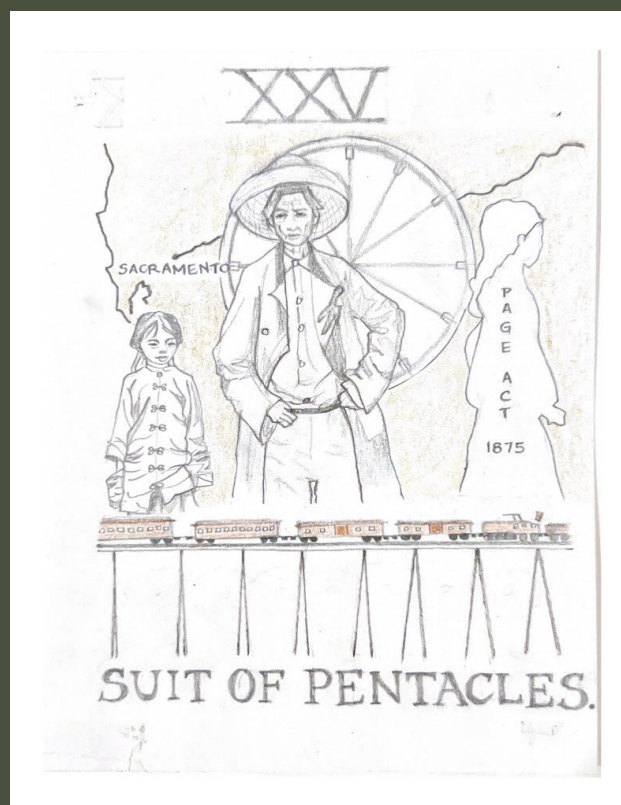
*Z is for zen.*

Tarot Number-Image: *Suit of Pentacles*

I imagine zen as a future garden planted by girls like me for girls like me. There will be a sign out front that reads *boys like girls like me maybe allowed*. But the important, non-negotiable quality is that this is a garden of the future now, where in the split second after assault, when we've sobered up to the hit we've taken, we envision a Zen Garden for Girls Like Me.

Maybe it will be atop a mountain, like Deer Park Monastery, where I meditated with the gentle, long-robed monks and wandered up to manmade ponds of lotus and into a glass-ceilinged prayer hall with a harp. Maybe it will look like Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, where I drove with my father, wandering and photographing each other among walls covered with bromeliads, orchids orange and furious, sulphureous and spunky. They cascaded over bowls in a hall for some wedding made more remote for girls like me.

Zen will be a rock garden where we can walk in soothing circles in a pond of sand, rimmed by boulders and benches and nobody—except for our unseen, unfelt bodies and maybe God. God, where were you at that moment we imagined the Garden of Zen? We didn't see any footprints in the sand. We saw ourselves shivering, weeping in the tide, at a loss for words.



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