

## TAROT'S WILDCARD: THE LADY AND THE LION



From the Rider-Waite Tarot deck

Felice Derkinderen has studied the Tarot for over sixteen years and started working as a coach using the cards as her main tool seven years ago. The earliest Tarot cards date from the 14<sup>th</sup> century but recent [research](#) shows that the themes, symbols and archetypes depicted by them are older than language itself and have been passed on by oral tradition.

When I first started learning from Felice in her Amsterdam practice a lot of what was going on for me was linked to the eighth card, called 'Strength'. Facing some turbulent times the card became my lifeline on more than one occasion; when chasing the attention of a lover, the next exciting project or spectacular wilderness destination. It helped me to understand which old familiar program I was running and supported me to give myself some credit, even some love on the good days. Which is exactly what the card is about according to Felice: unconditional, raw, hardcore love. Fasten your seatbelts for a ride with the beauty and the beast.

**The card shows a woman and a lion. Would it be right to say we are both?**

Yes, if we are whole we are both. Overall you can see the Tarot as a philosophical system that is based on dualities and bringing those together. Every card depicts a duality in its own way. On the eighth card this becomes extremely visible by the opposition between the gentle lady and the savage lion. The duality is referred to in a lot of ways; by the lemniscate above the woman's head, her movement towards the animal and the other way around. On some varieties of the card the lion is literally coming out of her and they have become one creature. This shows how she is totally connected with the wild energies of lust, passion, ego, and instinct the animal stands for. She has integrated them without being ruled by them in an unconscious way.

**On the image the woman is so close to the lion she can touch him and the lion does not seem to mind, seems even to be enjoying it. What happens if we do not go into interaction and ignore our lion?**

Then we will fight or love our lion in the other. We will attract people who mirror this other part for us and want to be in a love relation or sexual relation with them, or we attack them. In the end everything wants to connect. There is a certain attraction which makes you want to learn from each other and receive each other's energy. If that does not work through a love declaration, the other option is to attack. In love and war everything is permitted, they say.

The lion also stands for creative energy which can be used in a good or in a bad way, think for example of sexual energy. So here the theme of power comes in. It is impossible to decide who is in power on the card. The woman can't force the lion to surrender because if he uses his claws once she goes knock-out or worse. She has to face her fear of death in order to be able to look into his mouth. She comes bare-handed, without weapons, vulnerable. He has to face his fear of starving, his primary urge to eat her and his fear to show himself fully. Both sacrifice a piece of themselves to meet the other. This moment of unconditional love gives them a pure and shared power.

## VULNERABILITY

### Love is the key to it all?

Exactly. Unconditional love is the only way to tame the lion without breaking it. Mind you, this is not a sweet kind of love but a raw one. It is about loving your shadows and owning them. These dark sides is what the lady sees when she looks in the mouth of the lion. To do so brings you consciousness about how things work inside of you and this brings the freedom of choice. The question this card asks you is: how can I be powerful through being vulnerable? The moment you have accepted, integrated and even loved the aspects you find disgusting about yourself nobody can get to you revealing dark secrets about you anymore. Before that point there is a lot to lose.

Take the card as an invitation to go and explore the darkest depths of your personality where all your addictive and compulsive behaviour resides. Step one is not to mind they exist. With enough love you can go to step two and look into the lion's mouth to see where they come from. The better you understand where something comes from in yourself or the other, the more love will be generated.

This is compassion on the deepest level which can come out as hardcore love. Think, for example, of a wolf mother killing her fatally wounded cub because it has no chance of survival. In these situations you are radically asked to stay in the loving without judgement. It is easy to come up with a judgement about how someone acts if you don't know what is driving them.

Can I tell you a secret about love? I secretly fall in love with somebody's imperfections. You might recognize this. When you look at your beloved who is asleep snoring – that is what you fall in love with! Those are the specific things that make somebody real or different; the small mark, the crooked finger. There is always a part of you about which you don't realize it is why somebody else likes you. Not the things we all consider important and spend time with in front of the mirror. I find that beautiful. If we would all understand that a little bit more we could all show ourselves more.



Felice Derkinderen

## HUNGER

**The card shows at the same time wildness and the taming of it. What does it teach us about the shadows of wildness?**

What you aim for is to set the wild free without it taking you over unconsciously. You tame the lion but without breaking it because the power has to remain free. On some varieties of this card you see how the woman ecstatically rides the animal, fully in connection with her wild power. But this is a dangerous path with a lot of booby traps.

Without her the lion is destructive because he is hungry and only wants more. Without him the lady can't manifest her insights and gentleness. The trick is to connect both so they can serve your higher goals and you can remain true to what you want to be and express most. On one hand wildness is important because it is the starting energy of things. You need it to break through the boundaries of your compulsions and conditionings to your conscious personality.

On the other hand wildness gets really tricky if it is undirected. When you explore it in that way you will have an absolutely interesting and immensely exciting time but at some point you will be burnt-out because the hunger is never quenched. This hunger is of a deeper kind that can't be satisfied in the external world no matter how much you travel, how much sex, money or status you have. You slowly turn into a junky because the hunger is only getting bigger and you have to do more and more extreme things to get the same feeling. When you are non-stop in the doing you will lose yourself. You are still doing something but you have become a robot.

This is a good moment to retreat and to check in with yourself why you are doing what you are doing and whether you still like it. Wildness leads to excess. Anything you do too much becomes ordinary. If you eat the most delicious date every day you will find dates horrible after a month. When something is special to you, you want to protect it and treat it in a certain way within a safe container.

## HELPFULNESS

**Would you say the card is a cultural mirror of our society where all the doing and action is applauded so much?**

When it comes to the aspect of doing, yes. Our world definitely is very goal directed. But in another way not at all. Our society is rather mind dominated and focused on the intellect while the card is about the physical experience of things and the deep understanding of it. A person who has this card as their personality card, a card one carries with them throughout life, might be dyslectic or autistic or can have trouble learning somehow because they take in knowledge in a totally different way.

Originally this could be the woman in the woods who speaks with the animals. The fact she can might mean she doesn't master human language fully which can lead to exclusion. She is the witch, the healer, the female shaman. Her language of healing, probably with herbs and her hands, is different from the one we are used to. In that sense the card is absolutely no mirror of society. This woman is different. She is wild and she has the courage to be herself and stand for her deviating conviction even though she knows this might not be welcomed. Once again we are looking at strength through vulnerability. She shows us all creatures are essentially the same and embodies healing power and true helpfulness.

We all know the longing to help the ones close to us and to be available for the other. At the same time there is the longing for freedom to follow your own path, to do your own things and have time for them. This asks you to learn to set your boundaries.

A possible projection we might have when wanting to help someone is to get angry with the one we help for not having time left for ourselves. We don't manage to observe how we offered help without the other asking us to but are really upset about the amount of time they 'took' from us. This is very different if you have looked in the belly of the beast and understand you are the one who went there to heal something you deeply resonate with. This means the fact that it has cost you so much time is because you wanted it yourself. On that moment the other is no longer 'guilty' and you can set your boundaries. You are the only one who can come up with a healthy balance between taking care of yourself and pure giving, without expecting something in return. It is a stepping into adulthood on the level of time and energy management.

**What could be a first step for the Tarot layman to work with the lady and the lion in daily life?**

Pretend your enemy or someone you strongly dislike is your friend. Imagine they tell you a story about you, only you are not listening as yourself but as a friend. What do you hear? Or take the one thing you hate most about this person and turn it inside. For example the fact it is never good enough for this person. Say it to yourself out loud: 'It is never good enough (for me)!'. You might realize it touches some point within you where you undermine yourself and that is why you find it so immensely irritating in the other. The other helps you to become aware of where you are a slave. The other helps you to become free.

*Lien De Coster*

More information?

[www.essencecoaching.nl](http://www.essencecoaching.nl)

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