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*I TAROCCHI NUOVI*

**Twenty-One Major Trumps from a  
New Tarot**

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# I TAROCCHI NUOVI

or,

*Major Arcana of the Sacred Ordinary*

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## Preface:

I presume to offer a glimpse of a new Tarot. The major arcana of the deck are ordinary things of this world, and the suits are not four but infinite, for there is no end to the counting numbers, and no end to the things they can count. This deck is prefigured in a story published half a century ago called "The Infinite Tarot," where there was talk of the Ace of Sewing Machines and such like. There are no such racy conjectures in the present pack, of which after research and deliberation I offer to the world only the Major Arcana, the Trumps. Of course there are many ordinary things in this sacred world, but these seem to have special cogency, special power to alert the mind to the sacredness of ordinary things. I use the Italian title to honor the great primal images of Mantegna's *Tarocchi*.

RK,  
January 2014

*PRELIMINARY ADVICE:*

**TO THE QUERENT  
WHO SEEKS AN ANSWER FROM THE CARDS**

1.

But what are you looking for  
in all these pictures?  
They're all dead people by now,  
the Husband, the Child,  
the Nun, the Prophet lying  
drunk beneath his tree,  
the Tree, the Cellar Door,  
the Dog. Dead or fallen  
ruinous and sad. Are you sad?  
Do you come to the cards  
the way you'd drink some wine  
or call a friend you haven't seen  
in years? Did you ever know him  
anyhow? The images don't lie  
because the images don't die.

2.

Did you know I'd be here  
when you came in, a sly voice  
no louder than a silken  
dress on a thigh, a whisper  
of light in the dingy trees  
around your yard? Why  
can't you take care of anything?  
Do you want to wind up  
like me, a voice yearning,  
yearning for ears, doesn't  
really matter, even yours?

3.

But I can tell you everything.  
You whisper to the cards,  
they whisper to me, I whisper  
to you. A lot of susurrus  
to go round, mice in the pantry,  
tiny endless appetites questing  
like you for anything. Like me.

4.

Because I began out there like you  
then got trapped in it. I asked  
and it answered, I leaned close  
to hear every detail, and before  
I knew it or could flee, the voice  
became my own. And I've  
been talking ever since. Now  
what was it you wanted to know?

## THE TAILOR

crosslegged on his table  
in strong sunlight  
finding old stitches  
in an older coat.

He will unpiece it  
and take each scrap  
and make a new coat  
for a naked man.

Meantime he squints  
at the fraying thread  
praying to the God  
of seams and sewers,  
Hera's aunt,  
the Spider Queen  
of Anatolia  
who taught us  
to connect.  
And why not?

Magic lives between  
the skin and the cloth,  
silk or hide  
makes no matter.

Magic is all.  
He unstitches  
and stitches afresh  
in fine red thread—  
under the table  
wind is blowing

scraps of linen  
here and there.

You and I are  
just a week from being born.

## THE SAILOR

she wears a T-shirt  
a white sailor's cap,  
nothing more.

She stands at the bare  
mast pretending  
to be the sail.

The wind is deceived  
and comes through her  
driving the boat  
across the almost.

She faces forward,  
the wind insists,  
the wind intuits  
her destination.

The moral of this card  
is give yourself  
to your goal, all  
the everything else  
will help you  
and hold you  
and understand.



## THE GLASS OF WATER

A man holds it  
in front of his chest  
but his eyes are not on it,  
they look out at you,  
viewer, querent,  
whatever you are.

Unknown to him  
or at least unnoticed  
there is a woman in the class  
small, perfectly formed,  
eyes open, rather beautiful  
she is, and she's looking  
right at you too.

This is Melusina,  
the elemental  
daughter of water and air,  
you need her to live.

When the man has drunk his water,  
all of it or only some  
she will still be there,  
adrift before his eyes

and yours,  
                  floating  
out from the image  
into your world  
or whatever you call it,  
this thing around you.  
And then he gives it to you.

## THE DOG

It doesn't love anybody  
and nobody loves it.  
It is ugly  
the way a man is.  
Always ready  
for the next thing.  
The next thing makes  
us ugly, he is ugly,  
stupid and fierce.  
Like a man.  
He stands  
on four legs, stolid,  
ready for the next thing,  
he faces us directly  
like a man,  
straight ahead,  
not looking up.  
His name is Ready,  
Ready Dog.  
Behind him we see  
if we can break the almost  
hypnotic ill-will of his glance  
two whaleback hills  
left from a recent  
glaciation. A dog  
in a landscape  
tells us all we need.

The earth  
is not malevolent,  
not stupid, not fierce.  
And everything has happened  
already,  
    so there's nothing  
to be ready for.  
The Dog means

don't do it  
whatever it is,

**The Dog**  
means a broken record  
of a song you never liked  
they played all through  
your childhood.

Don't do it. **The Dog**  
means your husband  
will beat you, your wife  
cheat, your children  
convert to ugly religions.  
**The Dog** means the wrong god.

## THE CELLAR DOOR

The cellar door  
stands open.  
It leads down  
to a little Galilee  
between the earth and  
how much of heaven  
fits in a house,

a between place  
like between your eyes.  
Such words  
we rest on things,  
hoping they don't  
slip away by night.

It is day now,  
you can see this  
innocent aperture  
leads gently down—

would you go down there  
with me  
if I call you  
by the name of another?

2.  
Why should we lie.  
There are so many ways  
into a single house.  
I offer the low path,  
humid, cool down there,  
whitewashed stone walls  
gentle menace of furnace,  
sump pump, dust.  
Cool dust,

not so different  
from remembering.

3.  
The picture  
is out of breath.

It just wants you  
to go in.

Humble yourself  
to the low  
ceiling of the actual.

Talk to anybody  
you meet down there.

Later you can  
help him up the stairs.

## THE TREE

The tree is named Marie.  
She stands slim and tall  
out of uncertain shrubbery.  
Slim but not so  
young as all that —  
even the slightest tree  
can be old, smart  
and cool and free,  
can say what she  
likes and what she means.

She is unusual  
in answering to a name —  
usually things and silent  
processes leave  
such absurdities to us.  
But she consents.  
She raises her head  
to heaven and  
consents and consents.

Everything happens to her  
but nothing happens to the tree.  
How slim she moves  
slow in the whirl around her,

if we didn't have to  
believe so thick in time  
we could see her dance.  
Accomplish for yourself  
her assent  
                    and time will stop.  
Any tree can tell you that.

## THE PROPHET

His prophecies all come true  
in and as the children  
round him.

People call them  
his daughters  
but we know better —  
these little girls  
are all of his fathers,  
a man needs many  
fathers,

especially a man like him  
with long beard, baldheaded,  
words in his mouth,  
speaking for the gods.

He is a prophet,  
he sleeps all the time.

All around him  
his fathers are playing  
sprightly, tender,  
doing deep intelligence  
in the sunshine  
of his brow.

What can this mean?  
It means that prophecy  
is truth

and truth  
a kind of dream  
that has us  
and we wake.

## THE SHOE

Gurdjieff said you could  
cover the world with leather  
or just put on a pair of shoes.  
Same effect for you,  
different for the planet.

This is not that kind of shoe.  
Dainty, tall, needle-heeled,  
dainty, faintly silly, the kind  
that goes with New Year's Eve  
and empty champagne glasses  
tossed on the lawn  
of Schuyler House years ago  
no, wait – that's  
just a memory,  
just an ordinary  
mental thing  
no leather.

A shoe has very little memory  
though a lot it could remember,  
a shoe gradually takes on  
the deformation of the foot  
and does a little damage  
of its own,  
                    slowly though,  
slow.

            This shoe  
(any shoe)  
is waiting for you.  
If the shoe fits,  
we say, little reckoning  
how rare that is  
and what terribilità  
when that happens,  
a good fit,



the primal wound,  
the promised land  
invaded, a well  
in the desert, hold me,  
love scalds me,  
they scold me, old men  
with beards,  
jabbering prophecies.

A shoe  
is always listening.

In the picture  
the shoe is patent leather  
and gleams like coal  
gleams like calm sea at night,  
all the comparisons  
fit neatly in its last,  
snug in its pointy toe.

There is no living  
being in this image —  
an absence speaks,  
the implied woman —  
all dressed up, or off  
in bed now or  
dancing barefoot  
on the lawn at Schuyler  
House years ago,  
no, no,  
no memory, no  
more than me and you,  
remember, on the lawn,  
when you said I felt  
like the wind, no, stop,  
the shoe is empty.

That's what it means.

Think about everything  
that is missing  
while all the rest  
is still here.  
Shoes are about going,  
an empty shoe  
is about being gone.  
Think deeply  
about absence,  
permanence,  
the sea at midnight,  
the empty rowboat,  
the champagne, grass  
stretching over the prairies,  
wind styling the grass  
vanishing in it,  
the wind. The wind.

## THE HUSBAND

He holds a hammer in his hand.

He holds a wounded sparrow in his hand.

He holds a yardstick in his hand.

He holds a letter in his hand he hasn't finished reading.

And never will.

He holds a key in his hand.

He holds an antique ormolu clock on his hand.

It tells old time.

He holds a book in his hand, it's open, pages riffled by wind.

He holds a kitten curled up on his palm.

He holds a photo of a lost love in his hand.

He has forgotten her name.

He holds a mirror in his hand but does not look at it.

Who knows what he would see?

He holds an ear of corn half-eaten in his hand.

He holds a bottle perhaps of water in his hand.

He is sustained by the simplest things.

He holds a rifle in his hand.

Does he know how to use it? Not sure.

He holds a butterfly net in his hand.

He feels ridiculous but he loves things.

He holds his hand out and a dragonfly lands on it.

He holds his father's cane in his hand.

He holds a map of China all open and dangling.

He holds a silk stocking draped across his wrist.

He holds a branch of holly in his hand.

He holds a wad of paper money in his hand.

He holds a pair of scissors in his hand.

He holds a bell in his hand.

He holds a dog-leash in his hand but no dog is in it.

He holds a wooden flute in his hand.

He holds a red ball in his hand.

He holds a kitchen strainer in his hand.

He holds a stone in his hand.

He holds nothing in his hand.

## THE NUN

At first glance  
we think we see  
a slender waterfall  
hurtling down  
between silvery rocks.  
We look again  
and see it is The Nun,  
perfectly still  
in her flowing robes.  
A woman made of water  
dressed in quick air,  
her mind aloft.  
She is married  
to the light, Light  
used to be human too  
before it reached  
the goal of humankind  
and became  
the ordinary light  
bending in from far away,  
the sun, we think,  
bending down to light  
our way. And marry her.  
We want to too,  
and she is used to that,  
how many purposes  
she has served  
in our literature,  
she has been  
the emblem of silence,  
devotion, modesty,  
obedience, repression.  
She is used to our  
silly comparisons.

In truth (she explains)  
nothing is like  
anything else,

                    and I  
am barely like myself.  
Naughty children,  
do you think water  
is repressed? Water  
always knows its mind,  
goes where it wants,  
gets in everywhere.  
That's why I am so still,  
be still if you can.  
That is what I mean.  
The stiller I am  
the everywherer I can be.

## THE TELEPHONE

Eventually technology  
goes away.

    The Roman road  
still goes there  
but nobody's on it.  
Nobody goes it.  
The telephone is black and shapely,  
oval base and round dial  
with little holes for our fingertips –  
a very sensual device  
nestled in our palm, pressed  
along cheekbones to our ear,  
squeezed between shoulder and neck,  
a bold Italian lover  
must have thought it up.  
And from the hard cup  
a thin voice comes.  
We use things  
    to hear each other.  
Without things there would be nothing to say.

It is a kind of weather in your hand.  
When it rings you rush towards it  
or hide under the pillows  
or stare out the window determined  
never to hear his voice again.  
Whoever.

    The telephone  
is a devil's hoof,  
an angel's battered bugle,  
the end of the world.  
The telephone is everything  
you don't want to hear,  
the past catching up with you,

a bad date, an invitation  
you hoped would never come.  
It is a bad thing  
that feels nice in your hand.

Now you have to sit down and think  
of all the things that are just like that.

## THE CHAIR

Stands upright square  
on the bare floor.  
It is a miracle.  
It is both symbol  
and instrument  
of a greater  
miracle. We rose  
from beast.  
We got off the floor.  
We set our hairless tender selves  
upon a chair.  
It is hard so we can be soft.  
It stands so we can sit.  
No fur, no feathers.  
We weave cloth and wear it,  
we sit on chairs.  
This chair  
                  ready for you.  
Sit on me  
                  it says, a soft  
square song  
like a Sunday hymn,  
a piece of white bread.

Sometimes it groans  
or creaks when you  
or I sit down.  
Our conversation  
is in matter. Things  
make us.  
                  When Egypt  
tried to show  
the highest god  
they drew an empty chair.



## THE ANIMAL

Look close and see  
less than at first sight.  
You thought it was  
a bear or a dog or then  
sloth or capybara or  
drowsy wombat and now  
you have no idea.  
It has four legs and seems  
to be covered with fur.  
Its eyes are appealing,  
half open, void of intent.  
If your spouse came  
up behind you and touched  
you on the shoulder  
and said What are you  
looking at? you'd have to say  
I have no idea. Or else  
dissemble and guess  
or lie outright: that  
is a Pleistocene mammal  
now extinct. Your spouse  
would probably not  
believe you, spouses  
are like that, but would say  
Poor thing! because  
spouses are like that too.  
Later you would wonder  
if it meant that thing  
in the picture or you.  
There is much to mourn  
when we look at things,  
especially things  
we can't name, things  
with soft eyes and fur.  
Things who look at you.

## THE FLOWER

These pictures!  
No colors!  
How can we know  
a person's name  
if we can't tell  
red from green?  
what color are they?  
Let me call it  
blue, hydrangea,  
my favorite, wet,  
drenched even  
with rain or dew,  
a thousand flowerets  
on the big head,  
Himalayan,  
Tara holds one  
in her left hand,  
a flower like the sky  
come down  
to touch you.  
But what if it's not  
blue? Who are you  
then? Are we  
who we are  
because someone  
loves us? Is that  
all a flower means?

## THE SALT SHAKER

Chemical of my heart  
come near me  
sprinkling your dangerous  
snow on bland old  
vegetation. Touch  
meat with thy medicine.  
Improve. My blood  
is copper is silver  
is gold is mostly  
salt. I am a tower  
made of salt, fine  
ground sea salt  
from Brittany or Arles.  
I don't know  
where I am from —  
I am a chemical,  
a tower, a flower  
forming where tide  
kisses shore,  
a wavering line recalled  
as if the eye too could taste.

## THE DUCK

The duck moves  
without seeming to.  
The white duck.  
Moves along the pond  
as if propelled only  
by her own purity.  
The duck, the pure  
white of will  
uninflected, the pure  
going without effort  
to be there. The pure  
will. The white duck  
as might be seen  
in Regents Park  
just past the Queen's  
rose garden or at  
the base of les Buttes-  
Chaumont, a white  
duck anywhere  
by will alone,  
no feather out of place,  
body obedient  
to the quiet will.  
The duck. The will.  
The water knows  
what to do,  
the world understands  
the purity of will,  
we go and it lets us,  
we are drawn  
without effort it seems  
to where we are bound,

moved all the while  
by what Eddison called  
“the policy of the duck,”  
little feet paddling  
below. To do  
without seeming to.  
The duck  
rides the pure  
energy of the world,  
purity on purity, see  
Malevich’s mystical painting  
of the duck’s pure will  
called “White on White.”  
The world is wide,  
the world to ride  
and to be beautiful,  
serene as you go,  
soothing the souls  
of those who see you,  
the duck. The duck  
means to be pure  
as your will,  
to allow the inherent  
destination to sing  
you towards it,  
pure, the roses  
seem never far,  
not far the roofs  
of the town,  
the windows  
of pure glass,  
to live in pure will  
glistening in sunlight,  
sometimes crying out  
abruptly, to warn us,  
to show the way.

## THE BOOK

is open  
has many pages  
the ones (two)  
you see  
are empty,  
waiting.  
A book is something  
waiting for you.  
Lying in wait  
spread wide  
to catch your eye.  
Your word.  
The ones  
you see (two)  
seem blank  
but who knows  
how many others  
there are, pages,  
full or empty  
and if full  
saying what?  
What words could say  
more than a blank  
page can?  
How many pages  
can you fill?  
When are you  
going to begin?

## THE CLOUD

I think my true love is.  
ever-changing, ever  
saying, always itself.

It goes everywhere, sees  
us all. Can't tell one  
cloud from another,  
all one humidity, so many  
exhibitions of shape, play.

This cloud is our minds,  
a heap of white,  
slow, unstable, a soft  
smile aloft.

When this cloud turns up  
it means you must  
take care of everything,  
herd all your cats,  
dot all your i's,  
sign all your letters  
to the editor,  
and you, are you even  
the same as you were yesterday?

## THE TABLE

Is made of trees.  
Oak legs and maple top.  
The sliding drawer is pine.

On it sits the Easter  
ham, Christmas goose,  
Thanksgiving tofu turkey,  
the roast beef to celebrate  
new job. New house.

On the table the novelist  
scribbles the chapter, the girl  
does her calculus.  
The lawyer spreads out the will.  
Everybody listens  
when a table talks.

And it's all in the trees  
to begin with, they  
deep rooted in the earth  
know about everything  
and the birds tell them more.

The drunk man  
sprawls on the table,  
with unfocused lips  
Kisses the wood,  
mother, he sobs.  
And the cook messes  
with the maid on it,  
the kids play checkers  
a hundred years go by,  
they play Monopoly  
pinochle, and die.



What the trees don't know  
the birds make up for,  
they know all the rest,  
there is no room  
for tables in the sky.

So spread the mail out  
on the wood,  
don't bother opening,  
sit there and cry.

## THE PEN

was a feather once  
on a bird once, crow  
for the finest lines,  
goose for every day.  
You think you have to  
know the word you mean  
before you set the pen to  
paper, parchment, vellum.

No. The pen knows  
for you, the word, all  
the words wait for you  
in the pen. That's what  
a pen is, a slim reminder  
of the mind before yours  
from which you speak.  
All you need to be is ink.

## THE CLOCK

waits. What  
category do  
you be-  
long to,  
comrade?

My time  
the song says  
is your time

or we  
even earlier  
make time  
together.

The clock  
is just an ornament,  
they put  
jewels in them  
to make them go.  
An ornament  
not necessity  
like Ruskin's  
cathedrals  
art over utility.

Time too  
is useless  
ergo also  
beautiful,

*Verweile doch  
du bist so schön*  
cries Faust

*[But stay a while  
you are so beautiful]*

(risking everything)  
not to some  
pretty girl but to  
the passing moment,  
the instant itself  
beautiful  
because fleeting,  
beautiful for being gone.

## THE LAST IMAGE

But if there were a final card,  
last trump, a picture all sleek  
and elegant as you know what,  
some young body flexed to  
spring or pleasure, a smooth  
remembrance, nothing  
more needs to be said?

Divinatory meaning of such  
a thing what could it be?

You have come to the end of asking.

You are oily with answers,  
when you sit down you are Isis  
and when you stand up, Apollo,  
when you lie down to go to sleep  
you are no one again.

It is the picture of a nude  
young man or perhaps a woman  
half-seen through shrubbery,  
his or her hands are holding  
something you will never see,  
not even when, hours later,  
when the sun is finally setting  
and your cup of mint tea is cold,  
you slip into the picture  
and become him, become her.  
And still don't know what you mean —  
there has someday to be  
an end to naming things.