

TAO

Oracle



MA DEVA PADMA

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An Illuminated New Approach to the I Ching

MA DEVA PADMA



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*For my daughter, Tika,
and for all you daughters and sons*

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Preface

The *Tao Oracle* is an illuminated tapestry, woven from a blend of paintings, words, and a timeless wisdom that embodies the multicolored aspects of the human condition. Taking years to produce, it has been influenced by insights, adventures, and dreams I've experienced since childhood, and by an ongoing inner journey of self-inquiry and reflection.

My love and respect for the exquisite and profound literary work known as *The Book of Changes* or the *I Ching* is the foundation upon which this new *Tao Oracle* is based. My intention here, however, is to make the wisdom of the *I Ching* more readily accessible to a wider audience by speaking in the language of today, both visually and in the written commentaries. Additionally, the *Tao Oracle* is intended as a bridge to the inner world of meditation.

Whether motivated by imagination or inspired by the rich diversity of nature, painting is my major passion, and not only is my output prolific, it has also taken a variety of forms, including the 79 original works of art published in the *Osho Zen Tarot*. Over a five-year period, the evolution and creation of those paintings sparked a deep and intensely personal journey into myself and into the realm of the subconscious, the kingdom of archetypes and symbols. During that project I realized I would one day try my hand at graphically interpreting the wisdom of the Tao, basing the adventure upon the *I Ching*.

The *Tao Oracle* began as a seed in 1996; today it is being born. It is a merger of a multitude of expressions of the inner and outer worlds into what I call the 64 faces of Tao. It has been created with the support of so many people, and is offered with gratitude to existence.

Preface

I grew up in an affluent suburb of Boston, in the American northeast. Life was far more than just comfortable, and it was easy to take the abundance we enjoyed for granted. At an early age I became fascinated with Eastern art and philosophy, and would spend hours on end in the Asian section of Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I was hungry for anything that could stimulate my active mind and provide answers to my seemingly endless existential questions.

In the mid-70s I headed to India on a holiday. Soon afterward, I returned to America to collect my daughter, having decided to live in the East "forever." Both of us became disciples of the Indian mystic Osho and, as initiates, received new names. A new chapter in our lives began: I found the spiritual guidance I'd been seeking; my daughter, Tika, found freedom.

The romantic ideal of the spiritual seeker gradually gave way to dealing with the burden of life's daily challenges. Many beliefs that had been near and dear faded as deeper truths surfaced. Over time, living in close proximity to Osho, subtle yet deep shifts occurred within my own consciousness. Still, everything took place in the most ordinary way, as simply focusing on daily activities with awareness and totality provided opportunities for transforming unawareness into wakefulness. Whatever else went on in this "search for truth," there were certain unavoidable realities, the primary one being my very vital and independent daughter. Second was my compulsion to create; third, an intense drive to attain my inherent Buddha nature. As an artist I had always migrated to the fringe of society, but wherever it was I called home, I painted. Living in a spiritual community on the other side of the planet from Cambridge, Massachusetts, was

Preface

exotic I was still me, and that meant paper and fabrics, paints and brushes and pens.

Those years were a rich source of creative potential and personal transformation. Early on, the master had explained that creativity was my meditation, that it was the door through which I could merge with the divine. And I was provided with plenty of space and privacy to get on with that “merging.” The creative outpourings took me to great heights, and that sought-after Buddha nature often felt within close reach. Simultaneously, however, being Tika’s mom kept me constantly challenged and firmly rooted in real-time. Initially I struggled with these seemingly opposite aspects of my life. It seemed impossible to become enlightened, create wonderful art, and be a parent all at the same time!

Gradually it dawned on me that interpreting this as opposition was a misconception; what was really going on was that life was simply balancing itself. Whenever one side became overly full, reaching a saturation point, the other aspect began to make itself known, and this corrected the imbalance. Attachment or over-identification with any particular role – mom, artist, or meditator – was certain to generate the need for detachment and adjustment. I was living in a spinning yin/yang symbol and so was everyone and everything else! Life was revealing itself as art, and the mundane was becoming the mystical.

Years later I returned to the States and took a studio in Fairfax, California. As I began developing the concept for the *Tao Oracle*, I visited with Deng Ming-Dao, author of *365 Tao* and *Everyday Tao*, books that had become favorites of mine. The earthy, profound simplicity of how he wrote about

Preface

the vast and diverse nature of Tao had attracted me strongly. Over a cup of tea with him in his San Francisco studio, I shared my ideas for the *Tao Oracle* project. He suggested I not create yet another serious, scholarly, or otherwise traditional I Ching, but that I allow my interpretation of the Tao to surface from experience acquired in my own life. Then and there, I decided to not hold back, to just let the creativity flow, and to trust that the final form this work would take would be “from the heart” and, therefore, in accordance with Tao.

The *Tao Oracle* is the continuation of an evolving life work, and that is to bring greater awareness into everyday affairs, into the stuff of living, and to do this as creatively and lovingly as possible. In many ways the *Tao Oracle* is a natural progression from my first deck, the *Osho Zen Tarot*. Tarot is a pillar of wisdom from the West; the I Ching, a pillar of wisdom from the East. They are different esoteric paths approaching the same mountain peak. And, essentially, their messages are the same. Look within: All the answers to all your questions are to be found there. Receive the gift of life, of being alive, with your whole self, body, mind, and spirit. Find your own unique form of expression and then sing it, dance it, write it, paint it, plant it, or chisel it from stone. Whatever form it ultimately takes is not the issue; rather, through expressing yourself, it is to give something back to life. Life is born anew each moment. Don’t miss it. Life is divine, and so are you.

Ma Deva Padma

Embrace of Heaven and Earth Studio, Woodend, Australia

May 1, 2001

Introduction

During the years I lived in close proximity to my spiritual teacher and friend Osho, there were moments when questions would arise regarding everything from auras to kitchen work. We disciples were urged to write our questions down and be forthright and sincere when seeking his guidance. Occasionally we would be invited to attend an evening gathering to receive his personal response. This was always a special opportunity, and great care was taken beforehand to clear one's mind of any preconceived thoughts about what he might say. The intention was to be fully present and empty, to be "like an empty cup" in order to receive his guidance as fully as possible.

Years later, after the master had passed on and I'd returned to the States, whenever I needed insight or clarity on a particular issue I would turn to my well-worn copy of the *I Ching*. At first I was surprised to find there was no difference in the process whether approaching a living sage or hearing the voice of wisdom that speaks through the *I Ching*. In each case, it was necessary to take the time to clear one's thoughts, to focus on the issue at hand, and to write it down as clearly and concisely as possible. The depth at which the guidance rang true was essentially a matter of how clear I was in formulating my question and how open and trusting I was in receiving the answer. It is not a question of whether the wellspring of wisdom runs true, but whether the thirst is genuine.

I realized that truth, embodied or disembodied, has the same taste in whatever language or form it takes. All wisdom springs from the same source.

Introduction

By adding the gentle influence of meditation to the essential messages offered in the *I Ching*, the Tao Oracle has become an enriching vehicle for self-awareness. It can facilitate your acceptance of change however the winds of change may be blowing in your life. We live in a world of ebb and flow, yet are skeptical of and resistant to change. As a result, we are preoccupied with achieving stability or prolonging youth however we struggle against the natural course of change. To view change as inimical is to fight with life, and that fight keeps us in a constant state of stress.

The wisdom of Tao, as portrayed in the *I Ching*, is highly relevant today. It helps the inquirer gain a broader perspective on the dynamics influencing his or her life at the moment. In its traditional form, the *I Ching* references the world of ancient China, and this can sometimes make the substance of a reading difficult to grasp, but at the heart of the message is the same purity and depth to which I was exposed sitting in the presence of Osho. The *I Ching* freely offers its insights to the sincere seeker.

In the Tao Oracle, the sage becomes multicolored and vibrant through art, directly accessible through easy-to-understand commentaries, and, all in all, much lighter and more user-friendly. The Tao Oracle furthers the tradition of the *I Ching* in an illuminating and inspirational new way, making it possible to acquire insights through pictures that "speak a thousand words" even before referring to the commentaries. With this deck there is no need for interpretation – the cards speak for themselves.

About the Cards

The Tao Oracle cards are catalysts to promote a deeper understanding, recognition, and acceptance of the dynamics of change as it impacts our daily lives. The core illustrations, as well as the symbols, colors, and key words, are the channels through which understanding, recognition, and acceptance can be realized.

The 64 original paintings in this deck are “portraits” of the faces of change, of the various aspects of Tao. The Tao, it is said, reveals itself differently to everyone – and each of these 64 images is a touchstone for the message of the Oracle.

These paintings are not subjective art, nor are they intended to be graphically hip or trendy. They speak, rather, through a universal language of archetypes and symbols, revealing deeper truths by communicating in a vital yet unspoken way.

The world over, from ancient times to the present, spiritual traditions have used art in a variety of forms. Art needs neither translation nor interpretation, but speaks directly to the viewer in the silent, global language of the heart. Whether the vehicle of expression is painting, architecture, mandalas, sculptures, Tibetan *thangkas*, or stained glass, these objective and creative outpourings touch viewers profoundly by offering a glimpse of that which cannot be said.

The vast majority of ancient artists were also masters and created their works with very practical purposes in mind. Taoists believed, for example, that a painting portraying a given quality functioned as a vehicle of transmission – triggering both a recognition of that quality and an experience of its essence to those who viewed the work. Depicting an image as harmonious through

About the Cards

the use of color and form instinctively sparked a sense of harmony in the viewer as well. Exposure to images of intensity and ferocity could instill fear or, on the other hand, heighten the viewer’s inner power and awareness. The purity of the transmission totally depends on the consciousness of the observer.

The traditional I Ching comprises eight basic “trigrams,” or stacks of three straight or broken lines. Combined in pairs, one above another, these trigrams make up 64 “hexagrams.”

Taoist art is rich in symbols depicting the primordial forces we know as yin and yang, and these hexagrams represent the 64 combinations of straight (light/yang) lines and/or broken (dark/yin) lines.

At the lower right-hand corner of each Tao Oracle card is a traditional I Ching hexagram. This I Ching hexagram plays an important role in discerning “the changes,” and the process is described in detail in the section entitled *Accessing the Changes*.

For a wider general audience, the various combinations of six broken or straight lines have little or no meaning – and for this reason, eight new symbols, or pictograms, have been created to represent the energetic quality associated with each of the trigrams. Corresponding pairs of symbols from these eight Tao Oracle pictograms appear, one above the other, in the lower left-hand corner of each card. These, coupled with the traditional hexagram at the lower right of the Tao Oracle cards, make it easier to understand the energetic quality the Oracle is addressing.

About the Cards

In the traditional I Ching, for example, the trigram for The Arousing is composed of one straight (light/yang) line, beneath two stacked pairs of broken (dark/yin) lines representing brilliance flaring upward, illuminating the darkness: ☳

The Tao Oracle symbol for The Arousing is a bolt of lightning: ⚡ It depicts shock; it is a jolt and a huge wake-up call!

In nature, this is expressed as thunder and lightning. In terms of the seasons, the time is early spring. This is when the winter freeze begins to thaw and the whole of life starts to stir. Specific colors have been assigned to each of the Tao Oracle pictograms; in the case of The Arousing, the color is bright red and appears in the yin/yang symbol at the top of the card (see diagram of the cards).

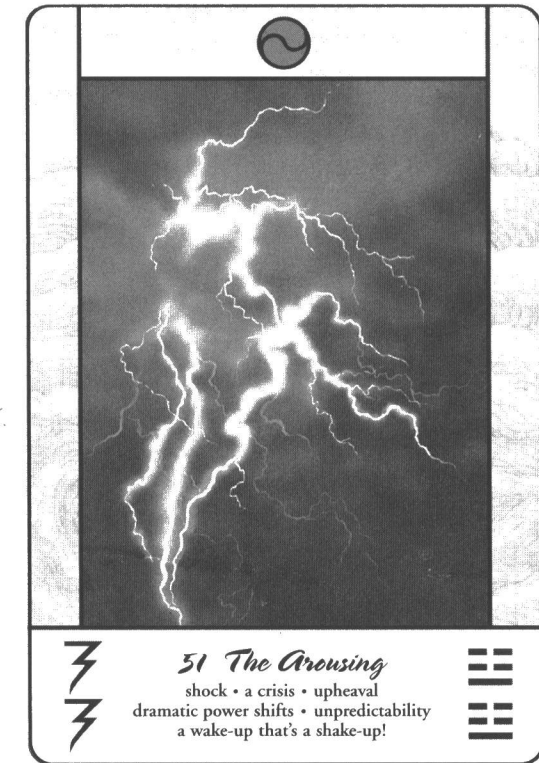
The heart of the Tao Oracle's response becomes easier to grasp by contemplating the "face value" of each card. The text in this book that accompanies the cards explores the Oracle's message more deeply and in greater detail. It also includes "changing lines" guidance for using this deck in conjunction with coins (refer to the section *Accessing the Changes*).

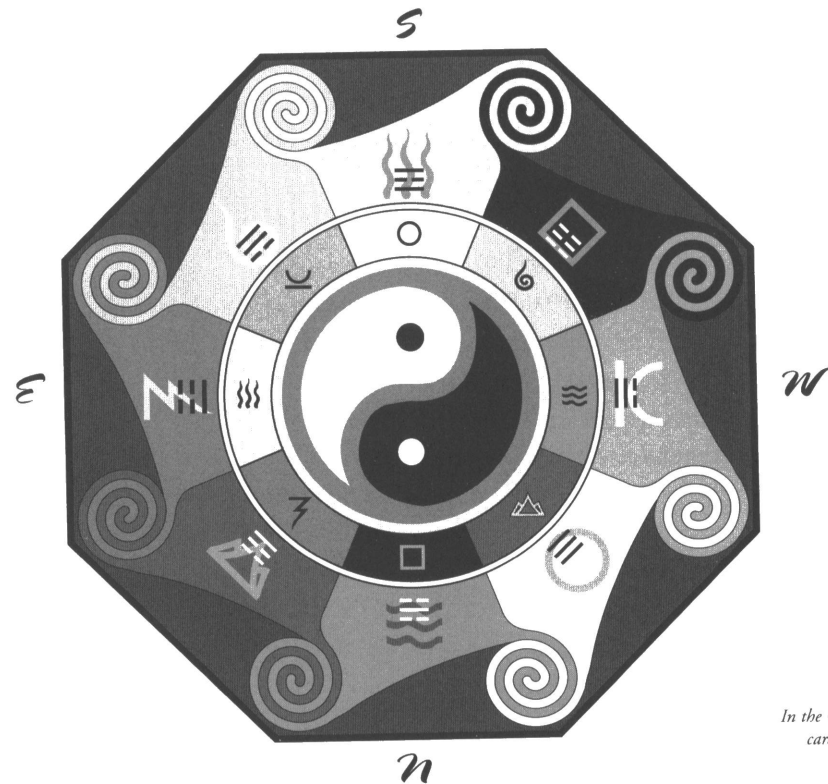
These cards are powerful keys: they paint a rich picture of the insights offered by the Tao Oracle and are a perceptive companion for consulting the I Ching. As a means for self-reflection and contemplation, this deck can be used in a variety of ways. Different spreads are suggested in the section *Card Layouts*.

About the Cards

In the Tao Oracle deck, card 51 is The Arousing:

1. At the lower right-hand corner: the traditional I Ching hexagram for The Arousing is made up of The Arousing trigram repeated, one above the other.
2. At the opposite corner, lower left: the Tao Oracle pictogram for The Arousing is repeated, one lightning bolt above the other.
3. At the top: the pertinent colors assigned to the eight Tao Oracle pictograms appear in the yin/yang symbol – in this case, red above/red below.
4. The illustration depicting the heart of the Oracle's message is central to each card.
5. Beneath the illustration is the number and title of the card.
6. Key words or phrases complete the overall "portrait."





In the Chinese tradition, South in the cardinal points appears at the top.

The Sequence of Early Heaven

"The Inner Circle"

Here the individual symbols are correlated to the cardinal points. In these primary, familial relationships, they are not conflicting but harmonizing to each other.



Axis of South (*Father*) to North (*Mother*)
Heaven and Earth



Axis of Northeast (*Eldest Son*) to Southwest (*Eldest Daughter*)
Thunder, lightning, and wind are
strengthening to each other



Axis of East (*Second Son*) to West (*Second Daughter*)
Water and fire balance each other



Axis of Northwest (*Youngest Son*) to Southeast
(*Youngest Daughter*)
Wind blows from mountain to lake
Clouds and mist rise from lake to mountain

The Sequence of Later Heaven

"The Octagon of Sequential Change"

Here the sequence depicts the seasonal progression throughout a year. It represents a cyclic pattern that is manifest in all of life, in the way that each event is the cause of the one that follows it.

All living things emerge in the sign of
The Arousing, ⚡ thunder (*East, the season of spring*)

The Gentle, ☳ wood/wind follows
(*Southeast, early summer*)

The Clinging, ☵ fire (*South, summer*)

The Receptive, ☷ earth/soil (*Southwest, early autumn*)

The Joyous, ☱ reflecting lake (*West, harvest, late autumn*)

The Creative, ☰ heaven (*Northwest, early winter*)

The Abysmal, ☵ water (*North, winter*)

Keeping Still, ☶ mountain (*Northeast, when the seeds of new life still rest in early spring*)

Tao simply means the ultimate principle that binds the whole of existence together.

The existence is not a chaos; that much is certain — it is a cosmos.

There is immense order in it, intrinsic order in it, and the name of that order is Tao.

Tao simply means the harmony of the whole.

*No temples have been built for Tao; no statues, no prayers, no priests, no rituals —
that's the beauty of it!*

Hence I don't call it a doctrine, nor do I call it a religion.

It is a pure insight. You can call it "Dharma"; that is Buddha's word for Tao.

The word in English that comes closer or closest to Tao is "Nature" with a capital "N."

OSHO

What Is Tao

*I*t is uncertain how long ago the concept of Tao captured the hearts and minds of the Chinese people. Tao is a cosmic approach that respects the interconnectedness of all things, and is similar to what is perceived, in Western thought, as the microcosm within the macrocosm, the understanding that what is above (heaven) is also below (earth). For the true Taoist, Tao is not a belief, but a way of life — one that is focused on establishing and supporting a sense of balance within oneself while living in harmony with the greater balance found in nature. A deeply subtle and compelling approach, Tao is diametrically opposed to the aggressive we-are-superior-to-all-else attitude that has created such ecological havoc for our beautiful planet, and for everyone and everything that lives on it.

The emergence of the Taoist way is virtually inseparable from the origins of the I Ching, which can be traced back to the time of King Wen in 1140 B.C., and even earlier to 2400 B.C. and the mythic ruler Fu Hsi. Many scholars call the sage Lao-Tzu the father of Taoism; however, it remains a source of debate as to who Lao-Tzu really was. Some say he was a mountain-dwelling hermit; others believe he was a scholar in one of the lesser kingdoms of the time. It is also believed he helped the young Confucius understand the deeper meanings of the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching.

The one thing that is known about Lao-Tzu, however, is that before he left the world without a trace of his personal history, he created the luminous, treasured classic *The Book of The Way* — better known as the *Tao Te Ching*. His views on life were absolutely holistic and are very relevant today.

What Is Tao

Rather than an intellectual treatise, they are a living testament to truth. His heartfelt words on the nature of Tao are offered from a crystal-clear consciousness and are an expression of a life lived in complete accord with nature. He often referred to the Tao as “the Mother” who guides us to live as she lives – gentle yet powerful, resilient yet strong, yielding like bamboo no matter how turbulent the winds. This ability to give way, to ebb, to flow without rigidity, to move with rather than against, will sustain us even during the harshest of times. It is the power that achieves change through effortless effort, through nondoing rather than doing.

Struggling against what Osho called “is-ness” is a waste of vital energy – once we are sufficiently aware to realize that life supports the growth of consciousness, but not necessarily one’s personal agenda for success. By falling in tune with the ever-present moment, imbalances of all kinds are brought into balance and harmony is restored. This approach can be applied to every aspect of life. It means living responsibly – responding to, rather than reacting against, whatever is.

Although the essential approach of Tao is thousands of years old, it is a timeless and golden key by which we can return to living in harmony with the wisdom of nature. All that we are and can ever be; all that is and ever was, is born from Tao and returns to Tao.

*There was something formless and perfect before the universe was born.
It is serene. Empty. Solitary. Unchanging. Infinite. Eternally present.*

It is the mother of the universe.

For lack of a better name, I call it Tao.

It flows through all things, inside and outside, and returns to the origin of all things.

The Tao is great. The universe is great. Earth is great. Man is great.

These are the four great powers.

Man follows the earth. Earth follows the universe.

The universe follows the Tao.

The Tao follows only itself.









LAO-TZU

Tao Te Ching









The Book of The Way

Translated by Stephen Mitchell

The Dynamics of Yang

Pictogram				
Color	white	red	blue	dark green
Trigram				
Name	The Creative	The Arousing: Thunder	The Abysmal	Keeping Still: Mountain
Chinese Name	Ch'ien	Chên	K'an	Kên
Attributes	authority strength power inspiring	provoking movement shock impulsive disturbing	facing danger difficult emotional obstructing	rest meditation stillness enduring
Action	to empower	to share	to risk	to limit
Familial	father	1st son	2nd son	3rd son
Developmental	transformation death	birth	fetal	maturity
Animal	horse	dragon	pig	dog
Elemental	metal	electrical	water	stone
Anatomical	head	feet	ears	hands
Seasonal	early winter	spring	winter	early spring
Directional	Northwest	East	North	Northeast
Numerological	1	4	6	7

The Dynamics of Yin

Pictogram				
Color	black	jade green	yellow	pink
Trigram				
Name	The Receptive	The Gentle: Wood/Wind	The Clinging: Fire	The Joyous: Lake
Chinese Name	K'un	Sun	Li	Tui
Attributes	yielding supportive devotional intuitive	penetrating subtle influencing dispersing	enlightening clarifying communicative intelligent	communicative pleasurable sexual expressive
Action	to give away	to penetrate	to radiate	to open
Familial	mother	1st daughter	2nd daughter	3rd daughter
Developmental	womb	adult	conception	youth
Animal	cow	cat	phoenix	sheep
Elemental	earth, soil	air	fire	flesh
Anatomical	belly	thighs	eyes	mouth
Seasonal	early autumn	early summer	summer	autumn
Directional	Southwest	Southeast	South	West
Numerological	8	5	3	2

Consulting the Tao Oracle

Traditionally, the voice of wisdom that speaks through the I Ching is often enigmatic and aloof. In creating these cards, the intention is to bring the sage “down from the mountain” to the people.

At the start of an Oracle reading, remove any potential disturbances that could pull your attention elsewhere. Turn off the TV and phone, find a quiet space where you can be alone, and bring your full attention to the session. The aim here is to create a pleasant and relaxed environment, a private sanctuary to which you can return for your readings time and time again. It helps to define your intention by defining the space.

For your reading, in addition to the deck of cards and the Tao Oracle book, you will need:

1. Three coins of equal denomination. Use these three coins for your readings only. Wrap them in cloth or keep them in a box with the cards and the book.
2. Pen and paper, or a diary in which to note your query and record the results of the reading.
3. A smooth clean surface for spreading the cards and tossing the coins.
4. If you wish, to support the mood, you can light a candle and burn your favorite incense during the reading.

Consulting the Tao Oracle

Make yourself comfortable and relax your breathing. Take a few moments just to sit quietly and collect your thoughts. The more focused and clear you are in formulating your question, the more direct the Tao Oracle’s response will be. “Either this or that” queries should be avoided, as well as jumbling several questions into one. Defining each issue, so that each is addressed separately, helps bring clarity – even before the reading begins!

Hold the deck in both hands and shuffle the cards, keeping your question in mind. Take your time; don’t hurry. When you have finished shuffling, proceed by using one of the card spreads suggested in the book – or draw a single card, contemplate its illustration, and then consider the key words and symbols. For an in-depth meaning of the Oracle’s message, read the commentary in the book. After the session, allow some time to digest the message.

If you decide to inquire into the stable or changing nature of the message, you can cast the coins following the instructions in the following section, *Accessing The Changes*.

Accessing The Changes

To discover the changing or stable nature of the Tao Oracle's response to your question, you must use the traditional method for consulting the I Ching: the casting of three coins. This ancient technique will be familiar to many of you; however, the approach described here has been specifically designed to work with the Tao Oracle cards. Whether or not you are familiar with the I Ching, to access "The Changes," please read the following instructions carefully.

Accessing The Changes

Three coins of equal denomination are required to discern the changing or stable nature of the Tao Oracle's response. If you are using one of the card spreads suggested in this book, you would cast coins for the card in the "insight" position. If you simply draw one card, and wish to inquire further into how its message may be changing, you would use this method as well.


Step One: To discover any changing lines.

In the lower right-hand corner of each card, a traditional I Ching hexagram appears — a stack of six straight or "broken" lines. In these traditional hexagrams, the six lines are divided into two trigrams, or groups, of three straight or "broken" lines.

- a. Copy the hexagram from the card you have selected to the paper upon which your question is written.

Accessing The Changes



- b. Decide which side of your coins represents "heads" (yang) and which represents "tails" (yin). This is significant because:



Three heads are drawn as  and are called a changing yang line.

Three tails are drawn as  and are called a changing yin line.

- c. You are now going to "build" a second hexagram to the right of your original hexagram by throwing the three coins six times to reveal any changing lines. Each throw relates to a line in the hexagram, and all hexagrams "grow" from the bottom upwards. The first throw of the coins corresponds to the first, or bottom line; the second throw to the second line; and so on until the sixth throw, which gives you the top line for the new hexagram you are building.

- d. The key to this new approach is that throwing three heads or three tails is relevant only when they match the lines in your original hexagram.

For example, if the bottom line in the original hexagram on your paper is  (yang), and you throw three tails,  (yin), it is not a match and the line does not change. Simply copy the line to the right, unchanged from how it appears in your original hexagram.

On the other hand, if your first throw produced three heads (drawn as  yang), it is a match and would change your bottom line into its complementary yin line (drawn as ). Copy the changed line to the right of your original hexagram.

Accessing The Changes

Identify changing lines with a mark such as a dot, an x, or an asterisk (*) to note the changing character of that line. Place the mark beside the line. To its right, draw the changed line.

Any other combinations should be disregarded, such as two heads and one tail, for example. In such cases, simply redraw the line as it appears in the original hexagram.

e. For an example of a complete coin throw, see page 37.

Step Two: Revealing the Tao Oracle's message.

After throwing the coins six times, marking any changing lines, drawing a new hexagram to the right of the original hexagram, and reading the Tao Oracle's commentary for the original hexagram, you are now ready to read the text for any changes you have cast. The text for The Changes always appears on the two pages following each commentary. In the example on page 37, you would read the Tao Oracle's commentary for Hexagram 14, and then its commentary for Lines 4 and 5 on the following pages.

Step Three: Finding a new hexagram.

Refer to the Tao Oracle chart on the outside back cover of this book. Match the lower trigram (the lower three lines from your new hexagram) with its exact counterpart in the "Symbols, Lower" column at the far left of the chart. Similarly, match the upper trigram (the top three lines from your

Accessing The Changes

new hexagram) with its exact counterpart in the horizontal "Symbols, Upper" column at the top of the chart. The numbered box where these columns intersect reveals the number of an additional message. This new insight reveals the likely flow of events influenced by your changes.

If no changing lines are cast, however, this denotes a persisting condition, and underscores the insights offered by the Tao Oracle.

Example:

The hexagram from your card		The changes to be read	New hexagram
Top line	_____	_____
Line 5	___ * _____	changes to	_____
Line 4	_____ *	changes to	___
Line 3	_____	_____
Line 2	_____	_____
Bottom Line	_____	_____
Hexagram 14		Changes into	Hexagram 9

True words aren't eloquent; eloquent words aren't true.

Wise men don't need to prove their point;

Men who need to prove their point aren't wise.

The Master has no possessions.

The more he does for others, the happier he is.

The more he gives to others, the wealthier he is.

The TAO nourishes by not forcing.

By not dominating, the Master leads.

LAO-TZU

Tao Te Ching

The Book of The Way

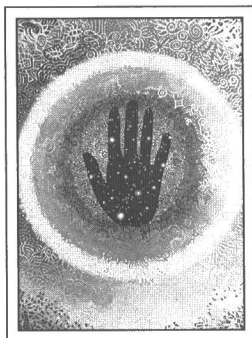
Translated by Stephen Mitchell

The 64 Aspects of the

TAO
Oracle



The Creative 1



The Creative represents ultimate potential. It only manifests in an atmosphere of receptivity so charged that the quickening flash of inspiration can arc across it. In ancient China this potentiality, brimming on the point of being, was accorded the highest respect and was attributed to heaven. Known as the dragon power, it was depicted as an illuminated dragon continuously twisting in the darkness of the void. In the West it has been called the hand of God that creates all things. Because its very nature is the lack of a fixed form, the enormous energy of The Creative is undefinable. This is the primary active force that is spontaneous and unpredictable, untiring in a nature that is eternally in motion effecting change.

Remaining in an attitude of openness, with a yes to the twists and turns of life unfolding, attracts The Creative. When expectations are dropped, we are able to yield to, and be transformed by, what comes from heaven. In that receptivity we become available for The Creative to descend—stimulating inspiration. It is as if, waiting in an attitude of openness, you are impregnated with the seed of creative expression. Through its potency, everything is made manifest: the entire universe is governed by its principles, across all dimensions from the molecular to the cosmic. Its signature is visible throughout nature and human consciousness.

The Creative is yang, the active principle balancing The Receptive, the yin principle. Their entwined harmony is depicted as the yin/yang symbol; they are utterly interdependent and can never



1 The Creative

be separated. This mighty force must have something to act upon, and inspire into being.

This moment is ripe with potential and the Tao is emphasizing the male dynamic, highlighting energetic going forward, expansiveness, and tenacity. Heaven wants to work through you, and it requires fortitude to channel that energy for the greater good. To operate freely, this principle relies upon the yielding, receptivity of the yin feminine principle; nothing will cause it to retreat faster than rigidity that masks as power. There is tremendous advantage in being blessed by the power of heaven; therefore, it must be used intelligently with humility and respect.

This compelling yang power cannot be prevented – or manipulated to your will. Any attempts to egotistically impose upon it only distorts the outcome. Then the “best-laid plans . . . often go awry.” Because mind is always dissatisfied, always hankering for the “new and improved,” we fiddle around, interfering with the steady unfolding of The Creative. It is foolish to hurry it along impatiently, or to try to alter the dynamic that is at work.

To remain in harmony with its course, and so benefit from its infinite resource, remain open and willing to work intuitively and spontaneously with what is offered to you now. You are empowered to inspire by having been inspired, so think big, let your dreams be grand. Cultivate integrity, kindness, and humanity. Allow your nature to develop a relaxed alertness, in harmony with the way of Tao, for then the power of The Creative can become the wind beneath your wings. Let the hand of this heaven principle reveal the higher, visionary perspective which is there in potential for us all.



The Creative 1

The Changes

Bottom Line

Wait. Do nothing. Patiently prepare the way for the new to appear; it will bring increased understanding and support.

Line 2

You are in touch with the inner voice of intuition. Trust it and be free of the limited perspective of doubt and hesitation that has kept you immobilized.

Line 3

Anxiety and frustration are muddying your clarity. Stop pushing toward what you thought was the goal. Let the goal, and the way to it, reveal itself. You may be surprised to find it is something very different from what you thought.

Line 4

Remain flexible. Your fear of failure is undermining the exhilarating experience of personal empowerment and expansiveness that naturally accompanies The Creative. Let your intuition guide you; if it feels right in your gut it is right.



1 The Creative

Line 5

Being in tune with The Creative illuminates and gives definition to your life. Allow yourself the time and space to absorb and honor what is happening for you. This enlightened quality radiates effortlessly and attracts others to you; be gracious in sharing the gifts that are so abundantly offered by existence now.

Top Line

Your hunger for success is distorting clarity and creating arrogant behavior. The nature of Tao is to restore balance: in your case, by bursting the overinflated bubble of ego and its aspirations, and returning you to earth. You are ripe for a fall – but it is in the nature of things that this is how we learn. Perhaps next time you'll remember this fall and will be more alert.

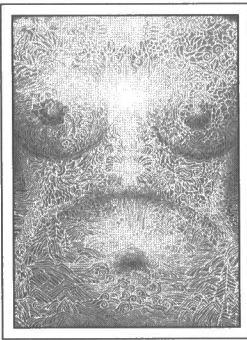
*All six lines changing: This is the alchemy of yang becoming yin,
metamorphosing The Creative into The Receptive.*

Strength and gentleness unite in fluid harmony.

Be firm – but remain gentle, and you will have, and bestow, good fortune.



The Receptive 2



The Receptive is yielding and passive. It is the sign of devotion, the yin principle that complements and balances The Creative, the yang principle. Her symbols are earth, the cow, in contrast to the dragon of heaven. Together they comprise a complete cosmology – out of which life is brought into being and into which it returns at death. In human life, the most obvious manifestation of yin and yang is the relationship between female and male. However, the interdependence of these principles is also present in the relationship between parent and child, teacher and student, guru and disciple – and within each of us, in the apparent duality of our

sensory, physical experience of life, and the more subtle spiritual experiences, or the body and the soul of being.

Receptivity is dependent on the dynamic spark of creative inspiration to be activated into productivity, just as creativity is dependent on, and nourished by, the fertile ground of emptiness. When The Receptive complements The Creative, it functions as a womb, an empty canvas on which an infinite variety of creations can be made manifest. This image is best represented as Mother Nature in that she nurtures and supports all living things, generously bestowing form and beauty.

Receptivity is a fine balance; it is docile, open, nurturing while being intensely devoted and strong enough to persevere through even the most difficult of times. When this yin principle is in a negative manifestation it envies, complains, and competes for authority, generating chaos and

2 The Receptive

dissolution. Or else, like a couch potato, does nothing but wallow in passivity and indolence expecting every whim to be catered to.

The strength of receptivity is in its depth, its infinite capacity to absorb and support action. Just like the darkness of space which sustains all matter, it is a reminder that this is not the moment to act impulsively but to take time, give space, and consider the far-reaching effects of any action that might be taken. If you push now, however resolute you may feel, you are steering away from your goal, toward confusion and difficulty, and it is more than likely many others will be dragged along with you. Waiting doesn't mean weakness, or uncertainty; rather, by recognizing that for now your energies are best placed supporting others, you are not only acting intelligently but with sensitivity. Once you put the full weight of your support behind anyone or anything, they can't help but be strengthened by it. Any enticements toward making your own power plays or claiming your share of the limelight would be untimely. The power of your presence is bolstered by your total devotion to what you intuit is the wise way to go. Knowing clearly where and with whom to invest your energies will require a cool, detached perspective. Carefully considering others' objectives will help you support the plans that ring true for you.

Lao-Tzu referred to the Tao as the Divine Mother that in her absolute emptiness is eternally birthing all things and the cosmos itself. The essence of emptiness is present within each of us, and like a blank slate receives whatever we write upon it. The dark vast qualities of yin are indeed great, and to appreciate its support is to be humbled in gratitude.

The Receptive 2

The Changes

Bottom Line

You have noticed a slowing down – but beware of lethargy bringing things to a complete standstill. Alertness will help you spot the first signs of dissolution, enabling you to take precautionary measures, reversing the negative trend in time.

Line 2



Stop worrying about being right or wrong. In the moment you can't help but be in synchronicity with the Tao. The only thing that gets in the way of being totally in the dance of life is worrying where to put your feet.



Line 3

Stop hungering for recognition and trust that your time will come. There is a deep and subtle transformation taking place. Attracting attention to yourself now would be like eating an apple before it's ripe.

Line 4

Self-discipline, although not easy, is essential now. Maintaining a low profile is the only way to avoid attracting aggression and envy from others.



2 The Receptive

Line 5

Although you may be in a prominent position, your function is subordinate to that of others. To remain in harmony with the way the Tao is moving now, be content to be supportive from the background. Let go of any nagging fears that you'll be overlooked or that your contribution isn't respected. Keeping a low profile will bring success.

Top Line



Your efforts to dominate are creating harm for all concerned. Anxiety about your self-image may be whetting your appetite for power and recognition – at the expense of overall harmony. This loss of perspective is alienating you and hurtful to others.



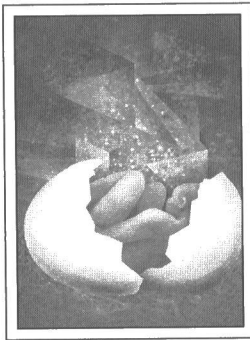
All six lines changing:

The Receptive metamorphoses into The Creative.

There is no advance; neither are there setbacks.

Accepting this strengthens fortitude and patience.

Difficulty in the Beginning 3



What might seem like chaos and confusion around you or within you right now is actually a much needed jolt. It's becoming apparent that certain aspects of the life to which you've become accustomed are dramatically being shaken up. Whether you think you're ready for it or not, the outgrown is already falling away. Just as the smallest seed requires tremendous energy to break open, once it does it leaves the shell behind. Then, faced with innumerable challenges, it emerges from the darkness into the light. This happens in the right timing of things.

In retrospect, you will see this as a birth that not only strengthened your ability to "roll with the punches," but increased your capacity to endure difficult transitions. In the interim, though, you have every right to feel vulnerable and shaky, but don't let that stop you! Much of what was a source of security and protection is being buffeted to the point where it is difficult to know what you want, which way to move, or what is expected – and there may be questions and doubts in many areas of life where once there was unshakable certainty. But feeling doubtful now is not necessarily a bad thing – in fact, it is an inevitable part of the process of dismantling the old to clear the way for the new. However difficult or painful it may be, this is a vitally important stage of growth.

Rather than feeling sorry for yourself or mourning what is lost, prepare to face the new challenges and possibilities that will soon appear on the horizon. The nature of this particular

3 Difficulty in the Beginning

journey is that once it has begun, there is no turning back. Although at times the landscape might seem totally unfamiliar, keep a steady pace and stay in touch with the real needs of the moment rather than projecting into the future. Any attempt to create a plan or "make sense" of things is premature and will just lead to repetitiveness, frustration, and unnecessary confusion. So be gentle with yourself, and go slowly. There is no rush – each and every step counts.

Your capacity to trust in the mysterious rhythms that are impacting your life now is being strengthened, and as a result you may discover yourself approaching change with an inner calm that once would have seemed impossible. Breathe deeply and stay alert. Don't be shy or too proud to ask for help when it's needed, and receive it with humility and gratitude when it's offered. You may know someone who has walked this walk and whose wisdom will be a source of support and encouragement for you now.

Likewise, tune in to the inner guide, the voice of truth that speaks from your intuition. If you respect and stay in touch with its guidance, taking the time to listen, you'll find it never fails to dispassionately reveal the next step. Patience, perseverance, and gentleness with yourself are essential now. Though challenging nature strengthens every growing thing, just think what an intimidating and arduous journey it is from the egg to the open sky! Get into the spirit of adventure while taking care not to put yourself or others at risk; there is much that needs to be attended to. It's the dawn of a new day and you're more than ready to move on; if you weren't, the Tao wouldn't have provided this opportunity.

Difficulty in the Beginning 3

The Changes

Bottom Line

Sometimes it's appropriate to take a step back and realize that you don't have to do it all by yourself. It can be difficult, though, for those who are too stubborn to take the risk of being humble enough to ask for help, or to take it when it is offered. Just remember that it's still your path, and your unfolding, and accepting help now doesn't have to change that fact at all.

Line 2

There are times when it's best to do nothing at all, even though that may feel a little uncomfortable. But the discomfort you might experience at the thought of taking a breather and waiting for the fog to clear is nothing compared to the discomfort you could engender if you were to plunge straight ahead into a thicket of brambles.

Line 3

Navigating the unpaved back country roads can be tricky. That puddle up there could be just that – a puddle. Or it could be a washed-out bridge that's going to land you in water above your head. Listen to the whisperings of your own intuition, and if there's a local around who can advise you, don't hesitate to ask.



3 Difficulty in the Beginning

Line 4

When you've been driving along confidently in a certain direction and suddenly realize you are lost, you have two choices. You can stop and ask for directions, or you can aggressively push on ahead, and end up needing a tow truck to get you out of the mud. It's your call.

Line 5

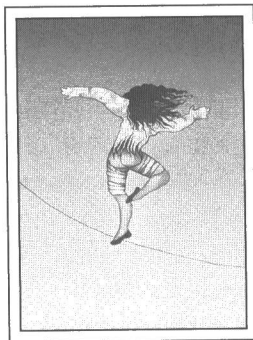
Impatience is a quality of the ego that wants to prove itself, to leap tall buildings in a single bound Superman-style and leave ordinary mortals on the ground gasping in admiration. But great oak trees are not grown in a single day, nor is an integrated human being grown by dazzling feats of achievement. It's the small things done beautifully that make life truly rich, and in the beginning of things these small things are especially important.

Top Line

One quality of difficult beginnings handled well is that they give way to less difficult times. When the difficulties just continue, or get worse, it's usually a sign that you have strayed so far off course that you're going in the opposite direction from that which you originally intended. Painful to realize, but best to bite the bullet and start over because you can't get there from here. And just think – you'll have lots of valuable experience to help you next time!



Youthful Folly 4



In a very real sense, each new day begins as an empty slate. The lessons to be written on it are as yet unknown. Some aspects of the curriculum unfold over many years or even lifetimes; others are as immediate as putting one's hand in the fire and finding out that it burns. But running like a thread through all of life's lessons is the fact that growth and maturity come through being able to find creative solutions to problems, and persevering even when solutions can't be found.

Life is compassionate – if you miss a class, the opportunity for making up the lesson will surely arise. It might come much later, and almost never comes when you expect it – but nothing is left incomplete, nothing is left out or overlooked. Until you learn what you are destined to learn, you will be tested again and again by the great teacher, the Tao. Only when you have thoroughly understood the lesson will you be able to move on to the next level.

You might find yourself at the moment seemingly stuck somewhere in this process of learning. The understanding that you need in order to move on to the next step seems to be within reach, but somehow you are held back.

It is important to remember that understanding a thing intellectually is a good beginning, but it is not enough. When you are really put to the test, the only useful knowledge is what you have truly integrated into your bones and marrow. No amount of study can bring about true wisdom.



4 Youthful Folly

And nothing exposes the gap between “book learning” and wisdom like a time of Youthful Folly.

The quality of the hexagram of Youthful Folly is intrinsically impatient – it wants everything now. It would like to be as clever and knowledgeable as others, and must try on many different hats before finding one that fits. It hungers for respect and finds it excruciating to have to wait for a green light so it can show off its power by gunning the engine and leaving rubber on the streets as it roars out of the intersection at top speed. But if you give in to such impulses, or if you try to bluff your way into or out of a situation without really being prepared for the consequences, you'll end up simply exposing your immaturity.

A classic tale that describes Youthful Folly is that of “The Sorcerer's Apprentice,” where a young pupil is eager to try his hand at magic and avoid the drudgery of attending to his daily chores. He is a bright and observant student, so when he waves the sorcerer's wand he succeeds in summoning magical helpers – but then he falls asleep, oblivious to the havoc he has unleashed. Eventually he is rescued by the sorcerer and admonished. His negligence has created a near disaster, but the experience proves to be priceless: the understanding that if you haven't mastered yourself, your words and deeds have little credibility in a crisis, and can even bring danger to you and to others. Only through maintaining awareness and being mindful of the consequences of your actions can you live more consciously, responsibly, and in harmony with Tao.



Youthful Folly 4

The Changes

Bottom Line

It's important to keep just the right balance now between discipline and playfulness, seriousness of purpose and relaxation. Too much relaxation and play, and nothing can be accomplished. Too much discipline and structure, and nothing new and innovative can be learned. Be like a tightrope walker, and keep your eye on the platform at the other end of the wire.

Line 2



Sometimes you find yourself in the position of the one who carries the wisdom of experience, while those around you are struggling to master the ABCs. Enjoy the opportunity to share, and be grateful that it has come your way. The only lesson for you right now is to give freely of what you have, so that you create space in yourself to receive more.



Line 3

When little thought is given to the deeper ramifications of your actions there is a “wild ride” quality to life. When you become too fixated on reaching the goal of the moment, you risk overlooking the deeper lessons that are being offered to you now. A time-out may be in order, to take a wider look around at any details of the landscape you might have missed by following too narrow a vision.

4 Youthful Folly

Line 4

Everybody needs, and is granted, the space to make mistakes. Without trials and errors nobody would ever learn to walk or talk. But when the moment of truth comes, and you realize that a mistake is a direct result of your own foolhardiness, it can be painfully embarrassing. Don't try to skip lightly over any feelings of humiliation you might experience as a result, and at the same time don't wallow in self-blame. The lessons we learn most deeply are often those that feel the most uncomfortable when we are learning them.

Line 5

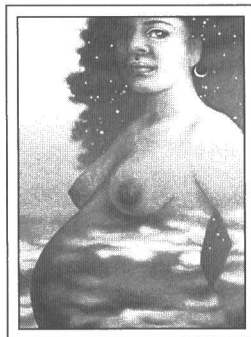
Transformation happens through diligence and perseverance in spite of difficulties. The passage can be greatly facilitated by developing a relationship with a wise friend. Seek out somebody whose own life shows that they relish the opportunity to grow, experiment, and explore – and accept with innocence and an open heart any guidance they can give you.

Top Line

Real insight arises from a deep “yes” to each lesson that life brings, including the painful ones. If you have fallen down and skinned your knee, don't be discouraged. Just pick yourself up, brush yourself off, and keep moving.



Waiting 5



The timing is not yet ripe for the change and release you are seeking. It may feel as if waiting one moment longer will cause you to burst, but wait you must. Although it appears that nothing much is happening, on a deeper level great changes are taking place. And when the result of those changes finally unfolds, you need to be present to receive it, centered and calm.

The kind of progress taking place now is invisible, being guided by a power greater than your own. By forestalling any visible outer progress, the Tao is providing you with time to nurture your inner strength and get ready

for what is to come. The gift of Waiting that is being offered now, if you can receive it, will empower your ability to accept and appreciate the “is-ness” of the here and now.

When a time of waiting is at hand, there is a need for inner work or personal practice that prepares you for birthing the new. The single most important requirement is your willingness to step back from the desire to push forward. It means suspending future plans and fantasies and consciously bringing yourself back again and again to the present moment. In every transformation there must be time to build up inner strength, even though that timing might not fit with what you think should be happening. The ripening that is occurring requires that you wait in trust, in spite of the fact there are no clear indications as to the timing of events. There is a deep process at work within your own being that must be completed before external events can shift.

5 Waiting

Life is not working against you now; in fact, it never works against any of us. We are challenged in myriad ways throughout the whole of our lives to find a sincere “yes” to what life provides. But this needs maturity, and maturity means being able to take a detached overview that is concerned not primarily with outcomes or goals but with understanding and awareness in the journey toward them.

While you are waiting, keep your outlook positive and your body healthy. Tend to the ordinary with extraordinary care. By putting your focus on strengthening your sense of well-being, you will be cooling down and redirecting the energy of impatience and aggression toward more creative pursuits. Remember that any obstacles you might encounter are not permanent conditions; rather, they are life’s way of steadying you and bringing you into a more centered state.

In retrospect, you might find that much of the energy that you have spent in pushing for results, planning new tactics, and seeking solutions to problems has succeeded only in busying your head and bringing you back to “square one” – in other words, it has created more trouble, not less. Stay on track by nurturing self-awareness and waiting patiently and with optimism for the tide to turn. When it finally does, you will be more than ready to embrace the new.

Waiting 5

The Changes

Bottom Line

Anticipating problems and working out how to deal with them ahead of time can be useful – but it is not useful now. It's time to accept the fact that there are some things that simply cannot be foreseen. All your attempts to prepare yourself for what you think is to come will only agitate you and disturb the energy that is better spent in getting your feet on the ground in the here and now.

Line 2

If you haven't been able to resist the urge to make a preemptive strike, you might now be dismayed to find that it has turned out to be just a bad move. If this is your situation, don't draw further attention to yourself by trying to defend your actions or rationalize your blunders. If you can manage to gather up your dignity and sit still for a while, your impatience will be forgiven and forgotten as events continue to unfold.

Line 3

When you race to the top of the hill on your own in the middle of a heated battle, you shouldn't be surprised if both sides start shooting at you, thinking you're one of the guys from the opposing side. The only intelligent thing to do in such a situation is to make of yourself as small a target as possible. If you can find some shrubbery to hide yourself in, even better – about the time your heart stops pounding and you can catch your breath, the circumstances will have changed and you can rejoin your friends, perhaps a little wiser for the experience.



5 Waiting

Line 4

Silent sitting provides the opportunity for reflection, and it becomes possible to see that in reality the situation is neither bad nor good. The real task is to come to a place within your own thinking that can detach from any judgments that you may be harboring about yourself or others. The best way to take a distance from the hurricane that surrounds you is to sit still at the very center of it.

Line 5

Really living in synchronicity with the flow of Tao requires self-awareness and alertness to the rhythms of change. When the opportunity arises to take a breather, make sure you take full advantage of it. Enjoy the rest, but remember not to fall asleep – there is still much more to come that will demand your total attention when it does.

Top Line

Learning about endurance, tolerance, and maintaining your composure in spite of delays and difficulties are essential life lessons that cannot be bypassed if you are to become mature. You might now find yourself in a position that brings you a deeper level of appreciation for the inexplicable perfection in the timing of things. In the midst of chaos and difficulties, this understanding will enable you to recognize help when it comes, and to accept it graciously and with gratitude.



Conflict 6



Conflict is fundamentally a clash of wills – and the clash arises first of all within each of the combatants. When an individual or group feels strongly about the rightness of an idea, a proposal, or a certain way of doing things, it is easy to lose sight of a bigger picture, where each vantage point offers a unique and valuable perspective. And when opposing sides of a conflict get “locked in” to their positions, both lose the perspective that is needed to come to a resolution. In fact, the atmosphere can become so overheated and tense that each party begins to see the struggle as a matter of life and death.

The first casualty of such a clash is to the potential that lies within each of us to experience ourselves as an integral part of the whole – vast enough to embrace a 360-degree perspective and strong enough to step out of the fight-or-flight duality. There is always a third option, which involves neither surrendering one’s own deeply felt truth nor forcing an unwilling other to submit to one’s own desires. But this third option requires that the clenched fist be relaxed into an open hand, and that the heart and mind be kept open.

It only needs one of the combatants to step out of the battleground in order to change the whole scenario. Not by “giving in” or retreating to plan a more cunning strategy, but by taking a walk up the hill to higher ground where the view is all-encompassing. Both energy and vision are contagious – whether the contagion is defensiveness, anger and fear, or the understanding that

6 Conflict

each of us is a unique and treasured member of a greater whole. Which kind of contagion we spread is a choice that is available to all of us, all the time.

The first step on that walk up the hill is to take a step back from the present embroglio in order to cool down. Fundamentally, the task begins with oneself. Ask first, without placing blame, how the conflict got started. Look for the root of the strife within your own self and your own agenda, and shift the focus away from any preoccupation you might have with “the other.”

Each of us has learned all kinds of “survival” techniques in a world that reveres the powerful and those who take dynamic, aggressive action – “winners” in a word. But too often “winners” need “losers,” and nobody wants to be one of those. What were you afraid of losing at the beginning of this affair? And have you made a choice to follow that fear rather than a sense of your own strength and value?

By looking within to identify your own investments in a conflict, you can learn much about yourself and your fears and vulnerabilities. By seeing them clearly, you gain the humility to forgive and be forgiven, the strength to take responsibility for your weaknesses, and compassion for the vulnerabilities of others.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Sometimes the best thing to do is to drop out of a conflict before it even begins. If it's too late for that, the next best thing can be to drop out of it as soon as it has started. One thing about the will to power, which lies at the root of all conflicts: if you don't give your power away, nobody can take it from you. When you keep your power to yourself, that's the end of the game

Line 2

It's always the ego that gets provoked – the authentic self knows exactly who it is and where it stands. And the old saying is true, that in waging our battles we tend to become like our enemies. You don't want that to happen, do you?

Line 3

Opening up to the possibility of unification helps remove the “blinkers” that keep your vision limited, and makes it possible for old rigidities to give way to flexibility. By doing this homework – of self-work – greater understanding is possible, self-respect increases, and a more spontaneous approach to daily life begins.

Conflict 6

6 Conflict

Line 4

Every no-win situation or conflict contains the hidden potential for a win-win outcome that can enrich all involved. Those who are in a position to actually “defeat” their opponents have a special responsibility and a unique opportunity to look for the win-win solution that brings long-term benefits rather than settling for a taste of victory that is bound to be momentary.

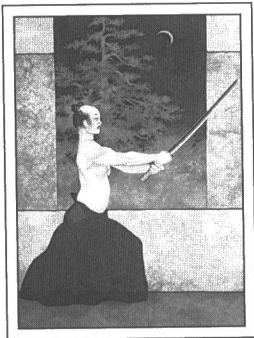
Line 5

Don't even attempt starting anything new until the present conflict is resolved. Like removing a splinter from your thumb, it is painful but necessary in order to prevent further harm. If there's one available, it's a good time to bring in an unbiased mediator who may be able to shed light on areas of unclarity.

Top Line

When things reach a boiling point the flame underneath the pot doesn't magically go out by itself. However difficult it may seem, it is essential to work steadily toward resolution. In the beginning it feels galling to the ego because the ego hates nothing more than the appearance of vulnerability. But in the end, comfortable clothes are a lot less painful than a suit of armor.

Discipline 7



When the time to mobilize “the army” has arisen, it is a clarion call for self-discipline and much needed clarity that is stripped of emotional excess and undaunted by mounting chaos. It may seem now that you are surrounded on all sides by potentially undermining forces that threaten to chip away at the foundations of all you stand for. This is neither the time to act hastily nor the time to allow the present conditions to continue any longer without your intervention in the hope that they will change of their own accord.

You may be experiencing your own reserves dwindling, and you can ill afford to wait any longer for others to come to the rescue. By not taking matters in hand now, you risk being drawn into emotional tangles or swept up in conflict and bickering that will only worsen the already degenerating circumstances.

In order to achieve long-term objectives you must avoid any tendency to go for the “quick fix.” Cutting your losses by taking the easy way out might seem to satisfy an understandable desire for resolution, but the effect of such actions can only be short term. Whether you are in a position of leadership and your actions affect many, or the conflict you face is within your own consciousness, you are being tested to the maximum now.

The spotlight is on the urgent need to get a handle on your diminishing resources. Whether the challenge facing you is social, spiritual, or physical, the fact remains that you cannot afford the

7 Discipline

slightest trace of immature or undisciplined behavior. Marshal all your strength now to focus on taking care of each situation as it arises, and in doing so, leave no detail unattended, no stone unturned. Do not relax your awareness even for a moment. This will need all your skill in spotting and reining in any little tricks of the mind that might interfere with your awareness by besieging you with fearfulness or self-doubt.

However threatening the current situation may seem, it should be carefully considered from different angles before any action is taken. Gaining some overview now will enable you to formulate the right strategy. Put aside any restlessness and anxiety that might surface, and don’t fall prey to reactionary tactics. Confronting others head-on will only create resentment and a desire for revenge, although the opposition may not be obvious and it is wise to play it very close to the hip in order to plan your next moves in privacy.

Don’t shy away from or deny the powerful energy that wants to forcefully assert itself through you now. Instead, work to harness it so that it can be creative and support a solution to the present dilemma. You might have to act alone, or if you are fortunate you will be able to find companions to help you in your task. Like defusing a bomb, addressing the situation that confronts you now will require a good deal of patience and skill. But if you succeed, it will benefit you and everyone around you.

Discipline 7

The Changes

Bottom Line

Rushing into anything out of anger, anxiety, or frustration will attract trouble like flies to honey. Take the time to consider what lies at the roots of any anxiety you might be feeling. Wherever you feel tensions in the body, consciously relax that tension by breathing in spaciousness and clarity and breathing out fearfulness and confusion. This is the perfect opportunity to learn the knack of releasing tension when it first begins to tighten its grip.



Line 2

If you have a talent for communicating with others and bringing order out of chaos, now is your moment. Give freely of these talents, without holding anything back. You may or may not be recognized and applauded as a result, but as your actions begin to bear fruit it will be apparent that everybody involved has benefited, including you.

Line 3

To act out of awareness is very different from reacting out of frustration. It may be that you've been swept up in enthusiasm and emotional extremes that have thrown your inner equilibrium out of whack. If you now find that you've been placed at a disadvantage, it should come as no surprise. Make efforts to restore your inner equilibrium so that you can act with more clarity.

7 Discipline

Line 4

An effective army never rushes blindly into situations where it is likely to be slaughtered! Don't let pride or reckless enthusiasm keep you from making a strategic retreat when retreating is the most intelligent, if not the most glamorous, course of action. There's not much consolation in being a hero if you're not around to pick up the medal.

Line 5

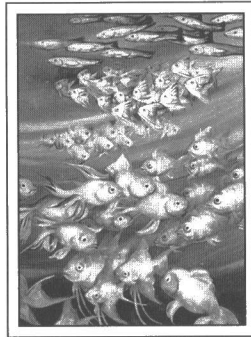
If you find yourself on an emotional roller coaster or fluctuating between anger and paranoia, it is possible that somewhere your creative energy has become blocked. Frustration often manifests as defensiveness and aggression. Take responsibility for your impatience the moment it begins to surface. Instead of gnashing your teeth and wringing your hands, create some simple disciplines that help you to restore inner balance and a sense of well-being.

Top Line

Some form of energetic daily routine will ground energy that could otherwise easily create accidents or problems with others. This is the moment to begin replacing unconscious behavior with a renewed sense of purpose. Everything around you now will support the self-discipline you need to strengthen your awareness and inner calm. By focusing on light and depth, flexibility and alertness, this self-discipline will not be a heavy, rigid affair.



Holding Together 8



The time of Holding Together supports all efforts that need harmonious and integrated cooperation with others. The only requirement is that each individual's commitment and involvement should be matched in intensity by everyone participating in the endeavor. Much more is possible when individual differences take a back seat to the overriding goal of maintaining harmony. Although some things may feel restrictive to individual personalities, ultimately everyone is benefited when the "me first" ego isn't indulged.

There is an intangible energy that attracts and bonds otherwise separate parts into a singular functioning, or oneness of purpose. In human terms, it is evidenced in friendliness, coworkers, the qualities of brotherhood and sisterhood, or community spirit. It's the invisible "glue" that creates heartfelt connections through a shared vision and common experiences. This quality can manifest in any sphere of activity – work, play, or the spiritual life of a community.

In order to fully take advantage of their time spent together, each member of a group must be willing to share responsibility and perform their part of the task at hand. The ideal is to find the knack of moving in complete accord with one another like a school of fish, as though of one body and one mind. A genuine spirit of goodwill toward one another that overrides the glitches and the uncertainties of any group effort will strengthen the connections among all the members. A group that acts in such all-encompassing unity can withstand any adversity that would otherwise create

8 Holding Together

great difficulties for an individual. It goes without saying that heartfelt bonding between people is not only empowering of the entire relationship, but of each partner as well.

Keep in mind that any truly alive alliance must have an inspiring nucleus at its core that serves as a center point for integrating and unifying the group. If others have been gathering around you for guidance, be generous, receive them respectfully and offer what you can, sincerely. If it has naturally come about that you are playing a more central role in the group venture, you're there because you are meant to be. We all have unique capacities and for some there is a potential for leadership; although few ever actualize it, it may be that you are one of those few. Don't shy away from the opportunity if it arises, for it is in synch with the Tao and you will be supported as it's needed.

The ability to guide others requires attentiveness to the unique needs of each individual. Leaders who are devoted to empowering others readily share their capacity for decisiveness, personal resolve, and uncompromising integrity. Before assuming such a responsibility, take time to be alone and consider what the voice of your heart is telling you. Listen dispassionately to the pros and cons, weigh it all in the balance, and above all avoid being swayed by group enthusiasm. The voice of inner truth always speaks with clarity. If you find there is a yes to taking on the responsibilities of a leadership role, then making a wholehearted commitment to the community is what life requires of you now. It has the potential to deepen your self-awareness, your understanding, and your compassion toward others.

Holding Together 8

The Changes

Bottom Line

Becoming part of a community means there certainly will be confrontations that you as an individual would never face. But when you are willing to give your best for the good of all, the spirit of teamwork deepens. The potential for success in any collaboration will be measured by the degree to which each member is inspired and devoted in his or her contribution.

Line 2

Competition, which comes about when an individual ego needs to assert itself in order to rise above others, undermines solidarity. If you are fearful of losing your identity in a group setting, you can become defensive, argumentative, and petty as a cover for not joining in. Rather than worrying about the exposure and vulnerability that might lie in uniting with others, take the risk of not being an outsider for a change. If you follow your own intuition and trust your value to the group, your integrity will not be compromised.

Line 3

If, after a thorough self-examination, you still feel discomfort at the prospect of becoming part of a group effort, chances are it's not the right situation for you. Don't take this to mean that you have to become hostile or antagonistic, or in any way get involved in trying to oppose the efforts of the group. Just remove yourself in a friendly way, and save your commitment for something that is more in tune with your inner truth.

8 Holding Together

Line 4

There are pros and cons to any union. Participating in a group means some things must be given up; yet, if in your belly the attraction is strong enough, such a sacrifice can be a small price to pay for the enriching experience of fellowship. If the pull is not really strong, then it is best to go your own way. Be clear, though, that turning away now could mean you are passing up a great opportunity, so consider the whole picture before making a move.

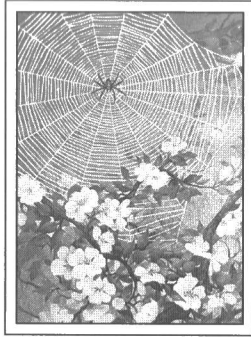
Line 5

There is a subtle and deep nourishment that is made possible only through the challenge of union. Keep an open mind and be alert, because now is the time that you may stumble across your tribe, or they may find you – and what a joy it is to connect with “your people”!

Top Line

You may have fallen prey to a doubting mind that would much rather sit on the fence and criticize or fantasize than participate. Indecisiveness or wavering too long can put us in limbo, and it can become so habitual that any opportunity that comes along is missed. If you see that this is your situation, learn from it and make whatever changes are necessary so that you don't become a permanent “outsider” to the special joys that arise from joining together with others.

The Taming Power of the Small 9



The taming power represented here is in learning to appreciate and work with times of having little influence. Due to circumstances beyond your control, any effect you can have now will only be experienced in ways that are so subtle they may seem downright invisible. The ego can experience such times as impossibly irritating and frustrating. You may be chomping at the bit to change the situation, yet all your attempts seem to fail. This can be all the more irksome when you clearly see the direction things are going yet feel powerless to do anything that might steer them in a direction you favor.



This is a precious time for taking care of small things, paying attention to details, and making repairs in preparation for greater possibilities of influence that will arise later on. You can work quietly from behind the scenes now, and be attentive to eliminating habitual and unproductive modes of behavior. Look within to see what attitudes you may be carrying that undermine your sense of trust, or your ability to deal with others from a stance of gentleness and receptivity. Avoid getting involved in the desire to push the river; instead, practice watching events unfold with dispassion and with a passive alertness.

Getting caught up in busyness might lead you to miss the fleeting moments of opportunity. Be aware of a dichotomy that may predominate at this time: being overly ambitious in a drive for a more powerful position, or becoming so complacent that you fall asleep in moments of indifference.

9 The Taming Power of the Small

Finding the balance here means alert watchfulness and being relaxed in the knowledge that you are attentive and available for whatever might be needed at a moment's notice. Carry on with your work from a detached viewpoint that is not invested in particular outcomes. Such detachment will help you more accurately discern the subtle influence of changes that are already affecting the situation.

Although your powers of influence are restricted now, it does not mean you're out of the loop. Life is giving you an opportunity to explore your humility and your ability to work with what is, even when it feels as though all the excitement is happening somewhere else.

Take a lesson from the spider. She works tirelessly to prepare her web, unbeknownst to those around her. However many times her work may be damaged, she tends to the repairs as soon as she notices they are needed. She never postpones, and she never seeks attention – her strength is in her ability to blend into her surroundings. She does what she needs to do without wasting energy, and when all her preparations have been tended to, she is able to be utterly still, utterly alert, and to wait in trust that eventually some tasty opportunities will come her way.



The Taming Power of the Small 9

The Changes

Bottom Line

Take care of your own affairs now. Work quietly and diligently to do the best you can in each and every moment. Life may not feel as though it's giving you what you want, but it is most certainly providing what you need.

Line 2

By observing others who are in circumstances similar to your own, it is all too clear that for the time being, any rush to get ahead will guarantee a loss of respect and will ultimately invite disappointment. Drop the desire to advance now. It is counterproductive, will drain your energy, and can easily create conflict with others.

Line 3

External influences, whether you are aware of them or not, are opposing you now. Ignoring the signs and aggressively pressing forward is likely to greatly increase the potential for failure. It may be that a hostile atmosphere is brewing that could very well upset a relationship. Where recognition or praise were expected there may have been a seemingly unwarranted reprimand. However, to quit now, even though there is so much miscommunication and difficulty, would be a mistake. Try a gentler, more low-key approach, but maintain caution and alertness. The time of danger is not yet past.



9 The Taming Power of the Small

Line 4

A return to balance and a sense of well-being should be the focus now. Whatever the source of stress and anxiety might have been, work diligently to get free of it. Be gentle and forgiving with yourself and others. New challenges await you and you will be able to meet them from a stronger position once you have managed to return to more stable ground.

Line 5

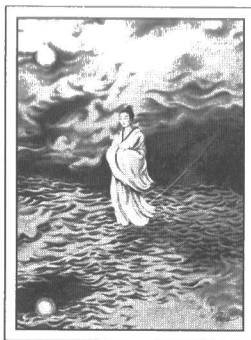
Be conscientious and sincere in all your dealings with others now, as your actions will have far-reaching effects in the direction of reinforcing well-being within yourself and in others. Expressions of generosity that are authentic and openhearted go a long way toward enhancing harmony in relationships and increasing prosperity for all.

Line 6

After so much hard work, the time has come for a well-deserved rest. Take full advantage now of this opportunity to enjoy the fruits of your labors. Be aware that the full-on energy that you have been required to put out can now easily relax. Life is supporting you to slow down. Don't fight it; use the time to replenish your energy reserves from within.



Treading 10



There are basically two modes of conduct in human life: conduct that arises from ego, and conduct that arises from essence. While it can be a lifelong endeavor to acquire the inner awareness, centering, and integration that enable you to act from essence, the hexagram of Treading characterizes a situation where the differences between these two modes of conduct come sharply into focus.

When you feel impatient or irritated with someone or something, it is a sure sign that the ego is agitated by the possibility its desires won't be met. The ego isn't hard to identify once it begins aggressively promoting its own

cause and pushing others aside to get its way, regardless of the consequences. Cut off from any influence other than its own wants, the ego fuels an inner attitude that undervalues other people and, consciously or unconsciously, oversteps their personal boundaries. You tend to believe you have special dispensation to go for it regardless of whether "it" is in sync with the rest of life or not. Anyone who is seen to be working at cross purposes to the ego's agenda is self-righteously dismissed as irrelevant, inept, or impossible.

In situations involving the completion of a project, or working together with a team, ego-driven conduct never takes responsibility for the glitches, but it is quick to claim the credit for any success. In situations of private unhappiness, it is the ego that wants to avoid all responsibility by placing blame on some other person, superstition, or outside force like fate.

10 Treading

Once we have lost the awareness and integrity of essence and become distracted by the demands of the ego, we tend to start acting like robots, using old conditioned-behavior patterns that are so entrenched that we start thinking this is what makes up "me." For the ego, functioning from habit is trouble-free because it can play out its favorite program of fantasies and projections without interference from the risky reality that opens up when sensitivity, spontaneity, and trust are allowed to lead the way.

The essence, on the other hand, is so self-assured and at home in its own skin that it has no need to prove itself by advancing its own goals against the goals of others. It is happy to move on the middle path and takes great interest in the challenge of remaining aware of each step on the way. When you act from essence, in other words, you act with awareness and sensitivity to all the variables in play, including the feelings of those around you, the demands of the times, and how your actions might best promote a greater sense of harmony and understanding. This is particularly true when you sense that there is trouble brewing somewhere "out there" or within yourself. When you act from essence, you understand that marching to the beat of your own drum is not contradictory to playing in harmony with the band. We tread this fine line between egoistic drives and essential awareness throughout the whole of our lives. Getting savvy to these individual attributes of human nature makes the going a lot less treacherous, and a lot more rewarding.

The Changes

Bottom Line

People who know their own value have no need to disparage the value of others, nor will they join the ranks of those who try to use others to advance their own aims. When you find yourself surrounded by egomaniacs, the best way to conduct yourself is with dignity and simplicity. It will be nice if a few others somehow come to their senses and follow your example, but that's really not your concern. Staying out of the fray will be its own reward.

Line 2

The stage is set, the costumes are ready, and the entire troupe of actors is on the stage. The trouble is, they all seem to be trying to play the lead role at the same time. Don't fall into the trap of thinking it's your job to sort them out, or to demonstrate that actually you yourself are the best person for the job. There's a seat reserved for you in the audience where you can sit back and chuckle at the drama.

Line 3

One of the ways that ego can sabotage essence is to try to persuade you that what you must do is so "essential" that any means justifies the ends. This is almost never the case – in the laws of existence, means and ends are inextricably linked. So no matter how worthy the goal, if unworthy means are used to reach it, the consequences of your conduct will be quite different from what you imagined.

Line 4

No matter how wobbly you may feel now, it's okay to go – slowly, gently, and with caution. Above all, work within your limits, be forthright about what you can and cannot do, and respect the boundaries of others. Slowing down makes it easier to perceive the way. As the surrounding atmosphere gradually clears, it becomes possible to consider alternative approaches that you might otherwise have missed if you didn't take your time.

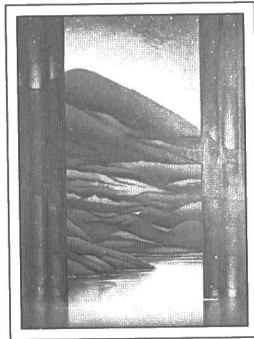
Line 5

Sometimes it can be hard to tell the difference between the quiet commitment of the essence and the cunning determination of the ego – but only from the outside. From the inside, you know perfectly well which mode of conduct is at work. But you have to take the time to go inside and look at the situation from there. Depending on what you see when you get there, you might want to reevaluate where you're coming from and switch gears.

Top Line

Like the tree is known by the fruit, so the conduct can be evaluated by how it affects the inner and outer environment. If you're feeling stressed out, there's likely to be some ego involvement in what you're trying to do. If all seems to be going well for you, and the whole situation seems to be benefited by your actions, you are probably right in tune with your essence.

Peace 11



To experience Peace on any level is a blessing. It represents a state of perfect balance, appearing as a stillpoint in the eternally changing climate that is Tao. These periods of harmony mark the delicate period of transition between darkness and light, the moments of dawn or dusk, when all feels right with the world and one experiences a deep sense of well-being and freedom. Such moments are luminous, and shimmer with promise. Heaven is manifest on earth and life feels divine.

When we are at peace, the outlook is clear and positive. New undertakings seem well worth the effort, and all our dreams are within reach.

Life is exhilarating and uplifting once again; new possibilities appear out of the blue, unfolding effortlessly. Past struggles suddenly seem to have faded away and the road is clear to progress in any direction we choose. As perfect as it all seems, don't miss the opportunity being offered now by squandering the time in self-indulgence. Present conditions come with a caution: use the gift of this moment well. Do not become lulled into unconsciousness during this period, for the delicate balance of peace can easily be lost through lack of awareness.

We tend to fall asleep or lose awareness when peace descends, because the child in us wants to believe that everything is finally as it's supposed to be and should stay that way forever, as in a fairy tale. But nothing stays the same forever; life is an ongoing journey, a dance of light and shadow, and our lives are a fleeting reflection of that vast movement, not the source of it. You must

11 Peace

remember that you are part of a flow and learn to move in sync with it, rather than against it. In the natural cycle of things, there is a time for fruition and a time for dissolution. These aspects are not in opposition to each other; one is not good and the other bad; rather, they flow into one another and are interdependent. Stop worrying about things you can't control and getting lost in details, and expand your inner vision to encompass this understanding. Embrace the holistic view of things.

You can be certain that the present conditions will not last indefinitely, so use this time to reach out to life with your whole being. Let others know your dreams and plans. Be open to whatever comes your way and consider every possibility; there are great opportunities hidden in the most unexpected places. Whatever your dream, you will attract the support needed to set the wheels in motion. Take time to consider the influences that have brought about this moment, for harmony and well-being are born from balancing extremes. In nature, the sweetness of springtime invariably follows winter's restrictions, and the same applies in our own lives, both inner and outer. When we are great, we are a reflection of the greater. When we are foolish, we have forgotten that, whether bad or good, we are always children of the Tao.

The Changes

Bottom Line

This is a time of expansiveness, when it is possible to have a positive influence. Although there may be problems, by working gently and diligently you can weed them out and clear the way for progress. Joining forces with others of like mind, in an atmosphere of cooperation, increases the well-being of all.

Line 2

Avoid judging others. Make room inside your heart and mind for their contribution. Although their approach may seem inappropriate or troubling, it is wise to remain open-minded and not get thrown off balance by their influence. Maintaining balance requires flexibility, intelligence, and the alertness to see through manipulative tactics. Avoid factionalism, as the “group mind” approach, though an easy path to follow, is a subtle avoidance of personal responsibility.

Line 3

Expecting peaceful times to last forever is to invite disappointment. It is far wiser to approach events from moment to moment, in a state of equanimity. Remember not to fall into expectation of either positive outcomes or difficulties, and your maturity, independence, and centeredness will increase.



Line 4

Others will respect you not because of any show of cleverness or boastful attempts to impress on your part, but because of your natural simplicity and sincerity. You don't have to say a word – the ability to maintain composure and persevere even during times of difficulty speaks volumes about your personal integrity.

Line 5

A harmonious union is brought about when the stronger is self-sacrificing and modest in approaching the weaker. Competition and comparison should be avoided at all cost. Although there may be a gap between you and another, don't let it become a chasm by fostering an attitude of superiority.

Top Line

Accepting the situation without fighting it or bemoaning your fate requires self-discipline and maturity. Put your energy into strengthening meaningful relationships and pay greater attention to areas that you have neglected, in either your relations with others or your own well-being.



Standstill 12



The time of Standstill arises when all that was once humming along seems to grind to a halt. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, doors of communication are closed and progress seems impossible on any front. One thing is said, another is heard. Difficulties and delays pile up to the point of paralysis and finally it's impossible to know how or even if to proceed. It's like trying to shovel snow in a blizzard – however diligently you try to restore the sidewalks to their pristine, preblizzard condition, the pesky white stuff keeps piling up, and finally you're so exhausted you can't go on.

These outer circumstances can also provoke an inner crisis and leave you feeling as though you have failed somehow, or that life has forgotten about you. Feelings of disorientation can arise, as the plug seems to have been pulled on so much of what you assumed would continue along a track you so recently had all mapped out and under control. To the extent that you have linked your identity with that hum gone so suddenly silent, it can challenge your very notions of who you are.

The current impasse may be operating on many levels simultaneously, so it's important not to get snowed under by self-doubt or depression. From a different perspective that might not be apparent right now, the entire dynamic of life is unfolding to perfection. It's just that it is not what you hoped for or expected. In times like this, the best course is to take care on a fundamental level of all the little things that are in need of maintenance, attention, or in some cases elimination. This

12 Standstill

also applies to ways of doing, being, relating, and thinking. Any attempt to hang in there out of duty, or because you don't know what else to do, will not be helpful at this time. It's time to *Stop!* and see that the only result of spinning your wheels is to bury yourself deeper in the snow.

Creative work can still happen when there's a freeze on, but it happens in an atmosphere of peaceful and cozy retreat. It's an ideal time to take a break, turn your focus inward, and become attentive to all the little intimate things that contribute to your inner strength and nourish your sense of well-being. If you've been hoping for some miracle or miracle-worker to come along and change things, recognize that this hope is just another way of being stuck. By doing your part to melt the ice from within and restore the connection with your trust in life, you will be giving yourself a much needed rest from useless struggle. And as a bonus, you'll also be preparing yourself to emerge when the time is right, already in tune with the spring thaw that is bound to come.

Standstill 12

The Changes

Bottom Line

It is really not an option to make an effort to somehow fit in with a stagnant situation. The compromises that you would have to make in order to do this will contribute very little if anything toward breaking the impasse. And there is a very real danger that, by going against your own inner sense of what is right, you will be exposing yourself to infection by the stagnant atmosphere, and your own energies will be further weakened.

Line 2

Even when you're doing your best to break through, for one reason or another it can happen that all your efforts hang suspended or fail completely. It's possible that the other players in the game either don't yet feel the pain as you do, or are somehow invested in things staying just the way they are. Trying to "sort it all out" in such a situation is bound to lead to a labyrinth of crossed signals and misunderstanding. Better to watch your breath than to waste it shouting at those who are unwilling or unable to listen.

Line 3

Before getting into any finger-pointing, look to yourself first, try to understand where the creative principle may have become frozen within your own being. Be cool and detached when you look within to discern where you may be unconsciously responsible for the stagnation in order to avoid having to cope with change.



12 Standstill

Line 4

There are some people whose energy is actually ideally suited to go into a stuck situation and unstick it. But along with the brute strength that is sometimes needed for such an effort, a delicate touch is also required. Otherwise everybody can just freeze in place even more, like animals caught unexpectedly in the headlights of a car. If you've got the right combination of skills, then go for it. But stay mindful of all the nuances lest your good intentions be misunderstood.

Line 5

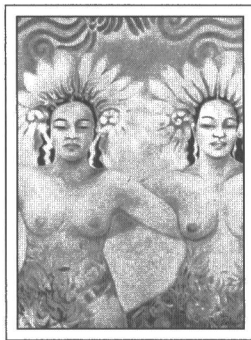
As soon as the situation starts to loosen up, it will be clear that the wait was worth it. But when it happens, better to proceed with alertness and caution than to rush right into the breach trailing your enthusiasm and relief. New times need solid foundations, and solid foundations can be built joyously – still, they are built one brick at a time.

Line 6

While waiting out a period of standstill it's important to be watchful for signs that the opportunity has come to finally bring it to an end. The right combination of timing and renewed determination to move things forward is critical to making the transition out of stagnation as smooth and as fruitful as possible.



Companionship 13



The focus now is on human relationships – how each person can best realize his or her individual potential within a love relationship, a family, or the larger community, and how a gathering of individuals can come together and function as a harmonious whole.

Working together toward common goals strengthens the connections between people and enriches the larger community. There is a special warmth that comes from combining forces, or gathering together with others of like mind. It is easier to withstand hardship with the support of the community, and the joyful moments of life are even sweeter when they

can be celebrated with friends. Put quite simply, we need one another. Our individual qualities are uniquely ours, but they are polished and refined through interaction with others.

The willingness to be open with unequivocal respect for each individual's uniqueness is the lubricant that keeps relationships running smoothly. A deep trust gradually develops between those who share a common vision and work respectfully side by side toward its realization. No matter how diverse our backgrounds may be, when we come together in an atmosphere of sincerity and trust, we can actualize even our most utopian dreams. As each member of a partnership contributes in his or her own way to the achievement of a shared goal, the bonds between individuals in that endeavor are strengthened.

It takes time for our roots to grow strong in common ground with others. The strengthening

13 Companionship

happens over time and through all kinds of climates. The totality with which we can share our capacities and talent is the litmus test of how nourished we feel by the association. If we find ourselves withholding energy or wavering about whether to stay or go, it is a sign that we are not ready within ourselves to make any commitment, or that we simply have not found the partner or fellow travelers we are seeking.

This said, in an atmosphere of trust, in fact, no one is monitoring how much is given, or judging what form a contribution should take. In an environment where comparison is the rule and where the norm is for everyone to be constantly measuring himself against the other guy, trust is impossible. Every individual has a part to play in the greater scheme of things, and although a structure might be needed for the smooth functioning of a group, it has nothing to do with hierarchy. Real unity – the kind of unity that distinguishes a community from a mere crowd – lies in a profound quality of mutual respect and a deeply felt recognition of the value of each and every participant.

Finally, a spirit of harmony among friends, between lovers, or within a community needs to be centered around a core that serves as a kind of invisible glue to hold things together. This can be an individual who is loved and respected by all, or it can be a shared understanding and vision of life that moves in the hearts of each.

Companionship 13

The Changes

Bottom Line

The one-man band has no real place in the nurturing of fellowship. Instead, fellowship is like an orchestra. There are many different instruments, each with its own capacity for making music. Alone they have a beauty in their own right; together, they can create something larger than the sum of the parts. If you have an opportunity to play in an orchestra, take it – it can add a richness of experience that will also enhance your solo performances.

Line 2

Whether companionship takes the form of an intimate relationship between two people or a larger community of family and friends, it is vital that each person's individual strengths have room to grow and that they avoid creating relationships of dependence. When individual strengths are united in accordance with inner truth, they create an energy field that can manifest heaven on earth.

Line 3

To be on the journey through life with another can be a tremendous blessing if both are mindful of the fact that change is the nature of things. It may be that a moment of parting comes sooner than expected, or the companionship might grow stronger over many years, finally to be altered only by the transformation of death. But it is wise to remember that you entered this life alone and you will leave it alone. This awareness can bring a tender, poignant quality to your deepest relationships.



13 Companionship

Line 4

There are times in the life of every individual when it seems more important to be on a solitary path than to travel together with others. Both choices are equally valid, and there is no need for any antagonism or judgment when an individual decides to go it alone. No matter on what side of the coin you might find yourself – the one who is leaving, or the one who is being left – remember this.

Line 5

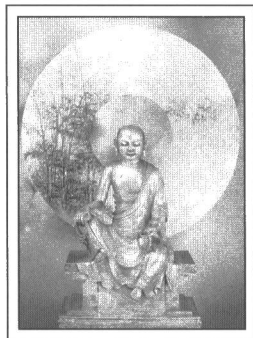
When relationships don't work out as you have hoped, it can cause much pain, but unlike other kinds of pain, this one is an experience that nearly everybody passes through at some time, or many times, in their lives. Don't hesitate to open up with friends and express your feelings. They will understand, and the sharing will help you to heal.

Top Line

Not every love affair has to be an earth-moving experience, and not every gathering has to have an agenda to change the world. Remember that life is a balance of earth and sky, laughter and tears, sacred and mundane. And take care that your life has a little lightness to balance the weight.



Prosperity 14



When fortune smiles on you, knowingly or unknowingly your vision and plans for achieving them are in harmony with the flow of Tao. Manifesting great visions always requires support from the whole, and a devoted team whose directives are in harmony with your own ideals. As long as you are grounded and regularly clear yourself of greed or egotism, others will come to your aid and great strides can be taken for the benefit of all. Wealth and abundance flow into our lives to the extent that we embrace challenges and adapt to changes. Any creative endeavor always has an element of risk in it, but by being totally present to whatever arises you will succeed. Success in any undertaking is never a given, it is earned, and the more creative you are in the process the more rewarding that success will be.

14 Prosperity

Don't hide your light under a bushel now; this is the moment to shine and to share magnanimously. You may appear to others as the personification of easy success, but this is only because they fail to see the self-discipline and focused hard work done by you and many others who have supported you to bring about the present circumstances. Without their contribution, wisdom, expertise, and continued support, this time of prosperity would have been greatly diminished. Their help deserves recognition and can continue to play a vital role in ensuring the success of your endeavors in the future.

Finding yourself in an enviable position can be challenging in a number of ways, not the least of which is your ability to stay centered and human. For example, you might previously have lived simply and generously, but find yourself becoming overwhelmed by increased responsibility and the need to strike a new balance. Or you may be surprised to find that you're becoming emotionally contracted, fearful that others will take advantage of you now. Miserliness is frozen energy that immobilizes the ability to create, and it is incapable of supporting life. Whatever your circumstances, it is wise to remember always that what appears to be yours today is in fact "on loan" from existence, and sooner or later will be reclaimed. We were all born naked and equal, possessing nothing. And when we leave this life we will take nothing with us; in the meantime receive prosperity with gratitude when it comes, and use its golden favors wisely.

Prosperity 14

The Changes

Bottom Line

This line was made for the familiar adage “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.” It might look like you have a whole coop full of future chickens, who in turn promise to deliver even more eggs. But there are some hungry foxes out there, and pretty soon word is likely to spread around the fox world that you’re keeping a feast in your barn. No need to be paranoid or greedy, but do be alert to the fact that some unexpected difficulties might lie ahead.

Line 2

It’s a rare intelligence that knows what to do with abundance when it comes your way, so that you can maximize the situation and make it work for you. Use the opportunity to be as creative as you know how to be, and don’t be timid about trying out new things you’ve never had the opportunity to do before.

Line 3

Knowing how to create wealth is a talent just as much as painting or composing music. And just as musicians and artists are rarely good businesspeople, so good businesspeople are rarely great artists. Sometimes the two types of talents can combine forces in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and that’s when something can happen that benefits the larger community. A music school, a free concert, a program for kids that encourages their creative expression, for example. Whatever side of the equation you find yourself on, now *is* a good time to join with others whose talents might be quite

14 Prosperity

different from yours, and make something happen that benefits a greater whole.

Line 4

Even if the coins are not jingling in your own private pockets, remember that existence is always generous enough to include you, too. Don’t squander the opportunity to pick and choose from the abundant resources that are available to you now just because you’re too busy envying somebody’s new tailor-made suit.

Line 5

It’s not always wise for parents to be best buddies with their children, and it’s not always a good idea for the boss to be out every night drinking beer with the crew. Somebody’s got to keep their eye on the bottom line and how it looks right now, and that somebody is you. If you’re having too much fun at the party to play the role right now, that’s fine, too, but you should appoint somebody else to look after it till you’re ready to change gears.

Top Line

On top of the world is where you’re sitting. And as long as you remember to keep everything in perspective, to be grateful for your undeserved good fortune, and to know that the work will also be there to tackle in the morning, you’ll be able to enjoy the view for quite some time to come.

Modesty 15



We live in a world that reveres extraordinariness. Sooner or later nearly everyone fantasizes about being admired for their brilliance, and the guarantee of happiness from gaining fame, fortune, and adoration because of it. Rarely do we come across anyone who is content to be simply ordinary. Craving anything new, exciting, or glamorous, we imagine how our lives could be different; worrying about how the world sees us or wondering whether the grass might be greener in the other fellow's garden keeps us discontented and preoccupied to the point of distraction.

Paradoxically, persons who live simply and who wholeheartedly focus

on attending to life in the moment already stand out from the crowd. Modest individuals aren't concerned with the doings of others; they simply get on with living their lives to the best of their ability. A modest approach now will ensure your success, perhaps surpassing those who are busy creating a reputation. Be willing to remain in the background, not calling attention to yourself or your efforts; the nature of your efforts will be respected once it comes to light.

Modesty is a virtue that is highly respected in leaders, because their moderation works toward the common good and can be counted upon regardless of circumstances. As a natural consequence of their balanced nature, moderate individuals have a healthy self-respect, taking care not only of others but of their own needs as well. Look within for clarity while remaining open to what is happening, and weigh all things in the balance before drawing conclusions. Even if that means



15 Modesty

going against prevailing opinion, follow the guidance of your intuitive knowing.

If you act immoderately by overextending yourself physically, mentally, or emotionally, exhaustion and complications are sure to result. Moderation is modesty in action that keeps things simple, enabling us to discern more easily when we are moving toward extremes and what to do about it. Simplicity creates spaciousness; whether we are clearing unnecessary clutter from a room or from our minds, the result is not only refreshing and expansive but a new perspective is gained as well.

Meditation will realign you to the intrinsic spaciousness within yourself, allowing you to become alert and attentive to the present moment as it unfolds. It restores inner equilibrium that has been lost by stress. Keeping your awareness in the present moment puts an end to struggle and provides you with room to respond creatively from moment to moment. It gently and subtly engenders nourishing qualities of self-acceptance and forgiveness, while diminishing negative habits like seeing yourself as a victim of circumstance. A good deal of humility, alertness, and patience is required for any transformation, and these qualities are nourished by meditation.

It takes maturity to understand that specialness invariably becomes a prison, and that equanimity is freedom from extremes. Taking responsibility for the choices you make can be the beginning of an overdue humbling process. Start where you are now, and correct any imbalances brought on by immoderate thoughts or behavior. Then you are in alignment with the modest quest for what is sincere and true in yourself.



Modesty 15

The Changes

Bottom Line

Carefully considering each step you take will create depth and steadiness in your actions and composure. That is all that is needed in order to be successful in whatever you take on now.

Line 2

Others recognize and are attracted to your modest nature. Your sincerity and integrity speak volumes. You are respected for who you are, and your gentle influence has positive and far-reaching effects.

Line 3

Your tenacity and care in attending to the smallest details has generated more than enough support to create something of real value. By working in harmony with the Tao, unconcerned with praise or recognition, you are setting the tone for achieving great success. It may come as a surprise to learn that you have become a source of inspiration to others.

Line 4

Remembering to consider the implications of what you say and do helps you to take responsibility, act with authority, and stay in touch with others and the requirements of the time. Moderation is about creating order and balance, and not about appearing self-effacing or weak.



15 Modesty

Line 5

Do not make the mistake of confusing modesty with overcompliance or passivity. Be watchful and act accordingly whenever you sense that correction is needed. By keeping your actions above reproach, practicing moderation, and avoiding any tendency toward egotism, you will have continued success.

Top Line

You are being asked, either by others or through your own intuition, to take matters in hand, which may require accepting a leadership role. To deny this by claiming unworthiness would be misplaced modesty and self-indulgence. The demands of the time are such that you must be clear and decisive in your own thinking, so take time to consider what is needed, then be 100 percent available for what must be done.

Rarely do all six changing lines in a hexagram bear favorable meanings. In the case of Modesty, they do. This clearly indicates that moderation in all things is highly regarded by the Oracle.



Enthusiasm 16

Enthusiasm manifests in all sorts of ways, but no matter what form it takes, it can hardly be ignored. To be enthused is to be electrified, turned on, zapped, lit up with an energy that is out of this world. Enthusiasm is generated by inspiration, and people so enthused can act as a bridge between the cosmic and the ordinary, the energies of receiving and giving moving through them in one continuous flow from the realm of the unmanifest into the world. To be in an illumined presence is an invitation to come and share in the beauty of their experience; one cannot help but feel moved by it.



The music of Mozart, the sculpture of Michelangelo, the poetry of Shakespeare or Rumi are examples of the human hand and heart being guided to create something immortal through a work of art, but just as valuable is the ability to enthuse or inspire others, enabling them to transcend their own limitations. On a grand scale, we see it in great leaders and humanitarians like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama. In the spiritual traditions, this luminosity is known as divine inspiration or enlightenment, and is found in the teachings of Buddha, Jesus, or Osho, to name but a few, whose transcendental wisdom and compassion continue to transform human lives way beyond their bodily lifetime.

We are all familiar with the gifted leaders in history who wasted their potential through arrogance and the ensuing extremes of behavior that ultimately brought disaster. Extraordinarily

16 Enthusiasm

talented individuals can easily fall prey to delusions of grandeur once they witness the effect their self-expression has on others. Fear of inadequacy can lead to an addiction to the adoration that power can bring, which in turn creates an ever-greater need to appear extraordinary. If you fall into this trap, however much you practice, develop your technique, or hone your skills, you will feel as if you are running on a treadmill, getting farther and farther from inspiration and ever closer to exhaustion – and mediocrity. Remember that any work produced from a state of depletion can never be luminous. Enthusiasm is sparked in others when they have been inspired, and inspiration can never be contrived. Unchecked perfectionism and a preoccupation with how others see us leaves little space for spontaneity – least of all the vibrant energy of enthusiasm. What is needed is the ability to maintain moderation and balance, which can only come with an in-tuned-ness to your surroundings, self-awareness, and withdrawing from struggling to create a certain effect.

This is an opportunity for you to realize your potential. Be inspired and be humbled by it. Do not, however, let enthusiasm get the better of you: certainly, you can have a direct influence on others now, but the real joy lies in sharing, not in creating a following. So go ahead – bang a drum, sing your song, let yourself go! Dance ecstatically, create that plan, realize your dream. Be swept through and through by the illuminating creative power of enthusiasm. Embrace this moment of self-expression and use it positively. It may bring you to your knees in gratitude.


Enthusiasm 16

The Changes

Bottom Line

Certain people find your enthusiasm overwhelming, and they are keeping you at a distance because of it. You would be wise to contain it now so that when the time is right it can be readily shared and well received.

Line 2

 Do not let other people's enthusiasm knock you off center. The challenge now is to remain solid as a rock, despite the heady distractions. If you maintain balance, without getting swept up in the excitement of the moment, you will see when it is appropriate to make an advance and when not to.



Line 3

To postpone making changes would be regrettable, whatever reasons you might find to do so. Be alert to the moment of opportunity and don't hesitate to wholeheartedly go for it when it comes.

Line 4


Others are enthusiastically drawn to you, supportive and genuinely inspired by your self-confidence and uniqueness. You are capable of creating something of real worth now because there is a gathering of strong individuals who will further your cause.

16 Enthusiasm

Line 5

The obstacles you face may be threatening every aspect of your life, including your physical health. This is a blessing in disguise, however, as you could become drained by over-enthusiasm and excitement. Take care to pace yourself and you will come through these difficulties.

Top Line

 You have allowed yourself to be enthusiastically swept away and have fallen into delusions of grandeur. Returning to reality may be something of a shock. Nevertheless, if you can accept the jolt and move with the changes that need to happen now, you will be made stronger and more realistic by this humbling, if not rocky, experience.



Following 17



The old I Ching texts counsel that in order to lead, one must know how to follow. There is an art to both; they depend upon one another to exist. Without followers, leaders would have no one to lead and would serve no purpose. Without leaders to look up to as teachers and guides, followers would be without role models for their highest aspirations. The best teachers are selflessly devoted not to what is being taught but to those under their tutelage. Ultimately their task is to catalyze understanding and self-awareness. The best leaders keep it always in mind that the ultimate goal is to finally set each follower firmly on his or her own individual course. This process can never conform to a set of uniform rules or guidelines; it must unfold naturally in order to meet the unique needs of the individual.

The problem is, of course, that this synchronicity between leaders and followers is extremely rare. More often we see leaders exploiting people for their own ends, and followers following someone because they are unwilling to take responsibility for their own lives. Gathering followers for the sake of expanding one's own personal power and influence is self-aggrandizement of the worst kind. It is parasitic to prey on others in order to fulfill one's own ambitions. Manipulating people in order to force their compliance creates an undercurrent of mistrust that eventually undermines any good intentions.

On the other side of the coin, it is vital to stretch beyond the known in order to grow and

17 Following

realize our fullest potential, and finding a good role model can often give us the courage we need to make the stretch. This has little to do with how old we are, as there is no set time in life when it is appropriate to seek a mentor. Experimenting with different philosophies and approaches is the only way to find out what works best for you. But in your quest for guidance, it is important to stay in touch with the voice of inner truth that intuitively senses when something or someone is sincerely working for the good of all, rather than from darker motives hidden behind a manipulative sales pitch. Follow your heart above all else.

It requires absolute honesty and sincere self-scrutiny to discern the difference between being swept up emotionally by one's own needs, and hearing the voice of sincere inner guidance. The former usually demands a good deal of enthusiasm to bolster courage. The latter, on the other hand, can feel like water rolling off a duck's back, or a kind of inevitability when everything seems to fit together like pieces in a puzzle, revealing a bigger and truer picture. The best way to know that you are following truth is to check out whether what you are doing provides a deep sense of meaning and purpose to life, however challenged you may feel at times.

Following 17

The Changes

Bottom Line

There are times to withdraw into your own inner silence to find the truth, and there are times when it is helpful to seek out the truths of others in order to broaden your own perspective. Now is the latter sort of time, when you can benefit from listening attentively and respectfully to viewpoints very different from your own. It doesn't mean you have to abandon your own principles – but the exchange will enrich your own understanding of the present circumstances.

Line 2

To follow the truth despite one's own preconceived ideas requires deep trust that can surrender whatever you might have up till now considered to be "mine." It means suspending judgments and persevering even though what you are asked to do might not make sense rationally. On the other hand, following must never be blind – it must be alert and sensitive, have depth and integrity; otherwise it represents little more than becoming a sheep.

Line 3

Following can mean joining another on the path toward yourself. Loved ones and friends can be disturbed by what they perceive as a preoccupation with something they don't understand. They can become angry or fearful at what seems to them to be your withdrawal from "the way things used to be." There will probably be points at which your principles and the choices you make will be

17 Following

challenged, but standing your ground will bring benefits far beyond any apparent losses you might face as a consequence.

Line 4

Maintaining too tight a hold over anyone is a transgression of their freedom. It denies them the opportunity to learn through experiencing the open book of life. If you find yourself getting inflexible, uptight, unable to bend with the changes, it's a sign that you have given your own set ideas preference over the pulsating requirements of life.

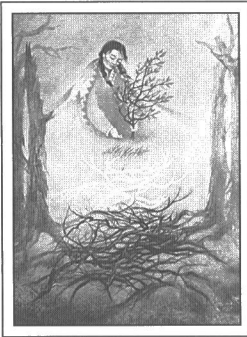
Line 5

If you're willing to settle for second-best, chances are you'll get it. If, on the other hand, you can allow yourself the possibility that even the most impossible dreams can come true, every step will take you closer to the realization of those dreams.

Top Line

Finding yourself in a leadership position can be daunting. If you truly deserve such a position, you will be aware that it carries with it responsibilities that can be burdensome if they are not managed in the right way. Remain unencumbered by personal motivations and attachment to outcomes and focus on doing whatever you can to bring others to the place where they can lead themselves.

Work on What Has Been Spoiled 18



If you put your dinner leftovers in the fridge where you don't see them for days on end, eventually they start to grow moldy and stink. The same thing happens with mistakes and difficulties that we refuse to deal with. We can pretend we don't know about them, or disguise them with the fragrance of other, more pleasant affairs. But all our mistakes and difficulties are learning opportunities – and when the “use by” date passes, the smell of decay has a way of intruding itself into every corner of the house. When that happens, it's time to face reality. Any further efforts to cover the decay with flowers or with rationalizations won't work. It's the moment of



truth when all efforts to avoid facing the facts must come to an end.

The first place to look is within yourself, without denial or embellishment, to see what part you have played in creating the current degeneration. It is of utmost importance that you take the time and care to identify any unhealthy habits in your own thinking that have contributed to the downward spiral, because unless this work is done first, nothing else can change. By correcting any tendencies to make assumptions, postpone things, or pretend indifference, you begin to restore the balance. From the center point of your own being, a ripple effect radiates outward and the gradual process of healing can begin.

Finding the way to correct spoiled circumstances will require patience and tolerance of your own and others' inadequacies and limitations. If the negligence of others has contributed some part to

18 Work on What Has Been Spoiled

the corruption, it is wise to avoid head-on confrontations. Their lessons are theirs to learn, in their own ways. The message of the hexagram of Work on What Has Been Spoiled is primarily directed to the one who receives it, and the message is to do the inner work needed to prevent a recurrence of the situation in the future.

If, after careful consideration of the detached and contemplative kind, it is clear that what's needed is to take a break from the whole affair, then it should not be out of anger or vindictiveness. Instead, see it as restorative time for cleaning up your own act. By sincerely attending to cleaning up your own affairs and attitudes you will be facilitating a restoration of balance on a larger scale and setting a positive example for others.

The tragedy of ecological disasters brought on by human negligence is something we have all witnessed in the media, or even firsthand. Most of us weren't directly involved in the creation of these crises. But we all participate in gross, irresponsible thinking or doing at some time or another. Our internal attitudes set the tone of our reality. We create oil slicks in our relationships and toxic spills within our own minds. We dump mental garbage on loved ones, friends, and neighbors. We allow our emotional fires to run rampant, destroying all that comes in their path.

Begin the work of cleaning up and restoring balance in your own small self first. Give it your total love and attention. Be forgiving and absolutely diligent. You and the world will be better for it.



Work on What Has Been Spoiled 18

The Changes

Bottom Line

Sometimes the source of corruption is engrained so deeply in one's characteristic ways of doing things that the work of change feels like uprooting one's very identity. If this is your situation, it is an extraordinary opportunity. Any changes that you are able to make will benefit you in ways you cannot even imagine right now.

Line 2

It often happens that when we want to avoid facing something painful, we can draw loved ones and friends into the conspiracy. If you have participated in such a scheme, remember that their help has likely been given sincerely, even if not wisely in the end. As you begin to face up to reality and do your part to repair the damage that has been done, be respectful of the feelings of others and take care not to blame them for anything that was, after all, initiated by you.

Line 3

When circumstances have reached such a critical point that any attempt you can make in the direction of correcting the wrongs is a step in the right direction, don't be afraid to take it! The sooner the better, because until this much needed clean-up has happened there can be no new beginnings.



18 Work on What Has Been Spoiled

Line 4

It is disturbing to feel you've let someone down – or to admit mistakes, or that your best clearly isn't good enough. Pretending everything is fine when it isn't doesn't work. Manipulation through flattery, or coercion through threats, are no-win techniques that will just keep the situation stuck. When the moment comes to own up to your shortcomings and take responsibility, it can seem like the end of the world – but it's not.

Line 5

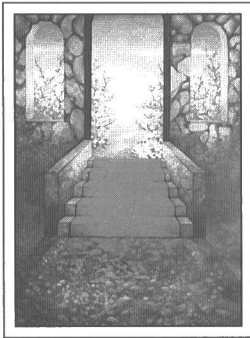
It is essential to admit to yourself first that healing is needed, then commit wholeheartedly to restoring the balance without delay. Once this process has begun everything begins to shift. The external effects may not be obvious for some time, but within your own mind something will have already begun to relax.

Top Line

Beware of the tendency to congratulate yourself for having known it all along, or actually being in a position now to say "I told you so." It might be true, but your energy is better spent on tending your own garden and enjoying your own flowers, grateful that it will be easier to smell the roses now that the garbage dump down the road is being cleaned up.



Approach 19



When the last frost of winter has melted and the scent of spring is in the air, we can practically hear nature's sigh of relief. The pungent scent of earth in our nostrils quickens the spirit of joy in our own hearts, as days grow longer and warm the sleeping seeds underground into life. And the thrill of reawakening life is felt as keenly in the city as in the countryside. The stripped-down, no-nonsense pace that people have adopted to navigate the cold pavement gives way to a burgeoning expansiveness of loose stride, windows open to reveal bright colors in flowerpots, and smiles blossoming more readily on the faces of passersby.

In town and country alike, the earliest days of spring are made sweeter by a long and patient wait. And Nature has been patient, too, through the months of silent hibernation, and then through the infinitely slow unfolding of life beneath the earth's surface as it prepares for its cyclic debut. When the time comes for Mother Nature to show her fresh green and new-bud colors, the effect is intoxicating and uplifting. It's no wonder that spring is universally identified with young lovers, hopeful new beginnings, generosity, and happiness.

In the unfolding affairs of a human life there will be many springs, and they are not just those defined by the calendar. The hexagram of Approach points to such a climate of new life awakening, and the signs of transformation are visible everywhere. The opportunities that present themselves to you now are all in the direction of expansion, abundance, and growth. It might start with

19 Approach

a new business opportunity, a flowering love affair, or simply a sense of well-being that spreads upward from your inner depths. But whatever the species of flower that emerges first at this time, it is, like its counterpart in nature, likely to herald an ever-growing abundance of flowers to follow.

What must be remembered in times of Approach is that the expansiveness of the moment cannot last forever, and the challenge is to actively support the new climate with your total energy and full attention. It might be tempting to just spread out the beach towel on the lawn, close your eyes, and bask in the warmth of the sun. But if you squander the good fortune that's coming your way on an extended holiday, you will have missed the chance to gather resources and build up reserves that could sustain you through harder times. In a similar vein, it's prudent not to get so carried away by the thrill of sighting the first robin that you miss the whole chorus of songbirds to come.

The best gardeners welcome spring with joy and exuberance – and match its abundance with an abundance of diligent preparation and energetic labor. It's time to be a good gardener now, so that by the time autumn comes, the harvest will nourish and sustain you through the winter that will follow as surely as this spring has come.

Approach 19

The Changes

Bottom Line

Redoubling any efforts that you make with the intention of increasing the harmony in your relationships and supporting the work of others is a wise use of the present conditions. The opportunities that are coming your way right now flourish even more when they are supported by a strong and mutually supportive group.

Line 2

The best gardeners nourish their land not just with all the right textbook ingredients but with an extra measure of love and care. In that way they learn to read the subtle signs of nature, and nature returns the favor by sustaining them even through less favorable times. The best way to stay in tune with forces larger and more mysterious than your limited understanding is to stay in touch with your own love and trust.

Line 3

Every farmer knows that if he neglects to hoe his fields he will render useless all the work he has put into planting, as weeds take over and claim the nourishment and water that is needed for the crops to thrive. It is the same in the inner world, and the work of hoeing on this level is to take time for meditation and self-reflection, clearing away any negative thoughts or destructive habits that deplete your energy and disrupt the delicate balance of living in harmony with the Tao.



19 Approach

Line 4

It is necessary to be gentle but firm with yourself in times of abundance. Like a kid with a pocket full of coins in the candy store, it might be tempting to gorge on sweets until all you've got to show for it is a bellyache and empty pockets. The wise child uses these times to better advantage by looking for a place to invest the jingle where it's more likely to lead to the realization of a heartfelt dream.

Line 5

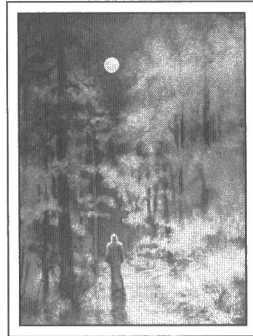
If you are in a position of leadership or authority, a time of Approach offers a unique opportunity to share your abundance with others. This might take the form of initiating a new project and empowering others to grow into taking responsibility for executing it. Or the current situation might offer the special joy of passing on the benefits of your own experience to a truly receptive audience. The unexpected bonus is that to share is always to make space for receiving even more.

Top Line

Tremendous resources are available in so many aspects of your life now. It's wise to consider all the possibilities and to devote your efforts and skills to manifesting the ones that inspire you so that everyone benefits. Your generosity of spirit will be your most valuable asset in these times, and the more you allow it free rein, paradoxically, the more grateful you will feel to all those who receive what you have to offer.



Contemplation 20



An enlightened perspective doesn't differentiate between the self and the whole of existence. There are no lines of separation. The approach is one of "I am all that I perceive; all that is, resides in me."

This is a time for reflecting upon life, retreating from activity and involvement with the busy mind, and experiencing the profound nature of cool detachment.

Retreating into the silence and majesty of nature fills the cup of being to overflowing, lightens the mind, and brings serenity to the heart. The wise know that there is a time for everything, including time for contemplation.

They accept things naturally, as they are, without feeling the need to make improvements. Humbled by the awesome luminosity and perfection of is-ness that is Tao, they approach these times of solitude with reverence.

As long as we are living life by speeding over the surface, we never have a chance to visit the depths. Often we move from one event to another without taking time to reflect on the influence each of those events has on our lives. In doing so, we cheat ourselves of the enrichment of experience that comes from taking the time to pause from our daily activities and take stock. Changes are not always obvious; they can move silently like hidden streams from deep within the being. We miss so much when we are estranged from silence.

It is far too easy, when we are busy and preoccupied, to take life for granted and forget that it

20 Contemplation

is a gift. The willingness to participate silently in nature's rhythmic unfolding and to receive her revelations will realign you to wonder. Contemplative observation will strengthen and center you. Once you have learned the knack of discerning wisdom that can see through any darkness, it is finally possible to be at home with who you are, wherever you are. You no longer feel like an outsider to life, as though you are waiting for something to happen or someone to invite you into the play.

Now is the time to contemplate the inner realms of your being, to become familiar with the landscape of yourself, to recognize what your truths are today and nourish them. Let go of any past patterns of behavior and activity that no longer have relevance. You might be surprised to discover that profound shifts have been taking place in your consciousness while you were busy making other plans. This time of contemplation is like the gap between the in-breath and the out-breath, a precious interval that sustains the very flow and vitality of life.

A contemplative space can be facilitated by meditating on a symbol, a work of art or music, your own heartbeat, the sound of silence. Experiencing an atmosphere of contemplation does not necessarily mean venturing into nature but it surely helps. Be like the full moon now, silent and serene. Reflect the world but remain at a distance from it. You will taste a very different quality once you perceive yourself, your life, and all of nature as complete and whole and intimately conjoined.

Contemplation 20

The Changes

Bottom Line

The way to know whether what you are doing is contemplation or just “thinking about” is to look at what insights you have gained from it. Thinking about something might lead you to a more detailed understanding of a particular event, but contemplation leads you to understanding how this event is related to the larger pattern of your life, and ultimately of life as such. If you’ve been just thinking about contemplating something lately, it might be time to try the real thing.

Line 2

We all start out in life by thinking that we are the center of the universe, and soon progress to thinking, “Everybody is just like me.” In a sense, both observations are true. But to experience the reality of this truth, as opposed to the childish fantasy of it, means that you have to have spent a lot of time outside the confines of your own private world. Make sure you know the difference before you reach any conclusions about your understanding of the people and events that surround you.

Line 3

Meditation, self-reflection, and detached observation provide the experience of being at home at the center of oneself. From there, you can begin to observe objectively the effects of your actions on the world around you. If you don’t like what you see, take it as a signal to spend more time in being at home.



20 Contemplation

Line 4

Unless you can allow yourself periods of stillness and time for reflection, all your activity will become increasingly frantic until, finally, you are simply forced to stop in exhaustion. There’s no need. The best way to benefit from your day-to-day experiences is to take advantage of times of contemplation to reflect on them, thereby deepening your conscious understanding.

Line 5

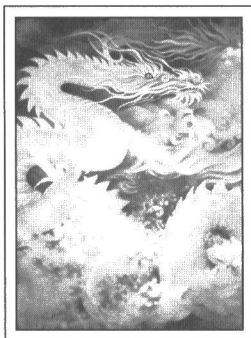
The future always unfolds out of the present moment. If you really want to know what’s going to happen “then,” start by paying attention to what is happening “now.”

Top Line

Some people seem blessed with a natural ability to step aside from their own self-interests and look at what is most beneficial for the whole. If you have this ability, now is the time to use it. Even if there is no specific action to be taken at the moment, just your very clarity of vision will be contagious.



Biting Through 21



The hexagram of Biting Through points to a time when it is imperative to take swift and decisive action to redefine and reform your approach. The harmonious unfolding of your life has become blocked and the responsibility is yours to correct the imbalance. Once it becomes obvious that something isn't right, getting to the crux of the matter promptly should be your top priority.

Whether it is an inner attitude or an outer circumstance that needs your attention, put aside all anxiety and hesitation about doing what needs to be done. Summon all the clarity of vision you can muster to look into the

root causes of the problem, and resolve to confront it with honesty and emotional detachment. Emotional investments can cloud our ability to see clearly, and can interfere with the awareness that is needed to act in accordance with the Tao. At this time it is only by facing the truth and being willing to take responsibility for the consequences that you can move forward.

Although both are painful, there is a huge difference between the deft slice of a surgeon's scalpel and the hesitant cut made by a layman with a pocketknife. The present times require a surgeon's focus and skill. Totality of commitment, clarity of intention, and an appreciation of the consequences if the job is left incomplete are essential. Unless the "biting through" is decisive and total, the root cause of distress will not be fully exposed. And if the root cause is not exposed and corrected, the trauma will resurface later on, when it will be far more difficult to deal with.

21 Biting Through

If you find yourself in the midst of inner turbulence or anxiety brought on by the need for decisive action, it is important to remember to stick with the facts. Beware of any tendency to leap to conclusions, or to indulge in fantasies of doom and gloom. Devote your full attention to the task in front of you, step by step, as it presents itself each moment. Maintaining your awareness will help you to gather your intent and will support the single-pointed focus that the current situation demands. Self-assurance and determination are key to implement changes as thoroughly and painlessly as possible.

Radical reforms can mean that relationships must change, people must move on, penalties must be imposed. All changes should be made fearlessly, with sensitivity, and without giving any energy to emotions like anger, revenge, or pity. Simple and unsentimental justice administered fairly and directly can be tremendously healing. Loving farewells, even if they are painful, can help a person to go on his or her way with greater understanding. Your job is to act in a way that is beyond reproach, honorable, accurate, and appropriate. This is as important in bringing balance to your own inner attitudes as it is in dealing with the attitudes and actions of others.

Biting Through 21

The Changes

Bottom Line

Everyday alertness is its own reward, because it makes it possible to see when you've gone off course in good time to trim your sails and head in the right direction without getting lost altogether. Keep your head up and your nose to the wind, and you'll be fine.

Line 2



Justice is not really justice if it arises out of partiality or discrimination. Expecting preferential treatment, or imparting it to others, is fundamentally immature and irresponsible. Every child thinks he's the center of the universe and claims the right to arrange it according to his own will. It's an attitude that is cute in babies, but not at all appropriate in adults. Real maturity goes together with accountability.



Line 3

Sometimes we can see very clearly what needs to be done, but either we don't have the authority to make it happen or can't get the support we need from others to follow through. But there is an inner dimension to every situation, and there is a value in making an attempt to do what's needed, even against all odds. Don't hesitate to go it alone, if your own awareness and clarity are telling you something must be done. The inner strength you will gain from this is just as important as changing the outer circumstances.

21 Biting Through

Line 4

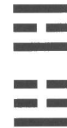
Sometimes taking responsibility for putting things right, especially in very difficult circumstances, can feel so overwhelming that all we want to do is pull the covers up and pray the whole thing will go away. But when we succumb to fear or panic we can lose sight of what's real and what is imaginary. Turn your attention instead to understanding the nature of any obstacles or antagonism to what you propose to do, remain clear about where you're going, and be determined to get there.

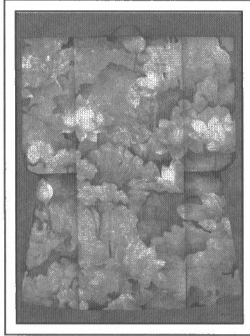
Line 5

It is likely that what is being exposed is a funky inner attitude that, like a rotten apple, is affecting every other apple in the barrel. Your ability to act with clarity has been impeded by postponing what you already know needs to be done. Correcting this inner attitude restores balance and harmony.

Top Line

People don't always wander off the path by mistake. Sometimes they do it on purpose, convinced that east is west, confusion is clarity, and down is up. Locked in their own reality, they perceive anybody who tries to show them a map and point them in the right direction as an enemy. No need to go there – when it's truly impossible to “bite through” on either an inner or outer level, all you'll gain by persevering is a chipped tooth.





Ancient cultures throughout the world revered those who were exceptionally gifted or beautiful as manifestations of God's grace on earth – a link between the divine creator and humankind. Today we call such people “stars,” but what we really revere is their celebrity and fame rather than their individual qualities. To be a true star, however, is to radiate well-being and an attitude that says “I feel at home with myself and with the world.” Everyone, in this sense, has the potential for stardom; it is our birthright, regardless of our physical appearance, social standing, abilities, or the whims of fashion.



Despite what the cult of stardom would have us believe, real beauty and the grace that surrounds it is never contrived. It is a luminosity that emanates from within, ephemeral and ageless, a natural glow that arises from living a balanced life. Like the lotus blossom that appears above the muddiest of waters, the lifelong challenge we face is to transform the dark and the difficult into light, fragrance, and, ultimately, the flower of consciousness.

Beauty and our perception of it manifests in myriad ways. For a scientist, it might appear as a flash of clarity when one of the mysteries of the universe reveals its hidden design. For a painter, it could be in the interplay of shifting color or light and shadow in the landscape. A composer might hear music in the night sky or in sunlit waters. The creative impulse in us springs from those moments of grace when all the divergent elements of life seem to harmonize perfectly; when,

everywhere we look, we perceive the brilliance and mystery of a masterwork that transcends the knowable. Our expressions of creativity are essentially a homage to the Tao.

Awareness of beauty is inextricably bound with a sense of impermanence. Everywhere in nature beauty is born, fades, and returns again to beget beauty, in a continuous, creative unfoldment. We create many problems for ourselves by wanting to demystify and possess beauty and grace, to reproduce an essentially ephemeral experience and make it permanent. When all efforts fail, as they inevitably must, we become stuck in an impossible longing to re-create what was lost through some contrivance of our own. If we can manage to withdraw from this desire to grasp and possess, the experience of grace becomes a source of inner nourishment that deepens our aesthetic pleasure and joy in life.



Learn simply to greet beauty when it comes, to reflect upon it and become one with it, with no demands or expectations. Contemplate beauty and allow it to infuse your life; you will be beautified by it, and an aesthetic sense will naturally arise in you. Recognize that beauty is fleeting; meditate on the transitoriness of all things, which will kindle in you the desire to be aware in every moment and to give life's beauty some form of expression. This moment is an invitation to shine and to give of your best, graciously and wholeheartedly. Let your model be Mother Nature, whose elegance and generosity knows no bounds, and whose capacity to beautify is never less than perfect. The beauty of nature is love.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Kick off your shoes and dance; it's food for your soul – especially if it is out of gratitude for being alive. Grace is an outpouring of love, an expression of beauty and wonder. No need to be anything other than just who you are, or to do anything but what you enjoy the most.

Line 2

Take care not to get so dazzled by the beauty of the container that you neglect the contents within. Whether in your relations with others or your relationship to yourself, it is time to turn your attention to the source of this beautiful moment – and all beautiful moments – and to nourish that source in ways both large and small.

Line 3

When everything is so perfect, it can be tempting just to sit down in the hope that the moment will thereby be frozen in time and last forever. No such luck – life is energy, energy needs movement, and movement means change. Celebrate that, too, and it's more likely that the next moment will bring beauties of its own.

Line 4

The more you are willing to enter into the wonder of “I don't know what's going to happen,”



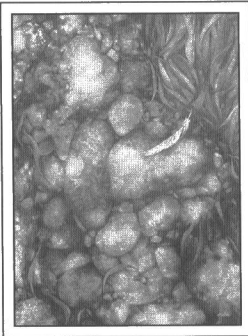
Line 5

It is not necessary for a creation to be great, or even for it to be seen by anyone else. The basic requirement is to open up to playfulness, experimenting like a child. The world is full of possibilities now, so drop any tendency to play “judge” with yourself or those around you. Judgment causes contraction and crushes joy. Innocence delights in self-expression and is willing to risk appearing goofy or making a mess.

Top Line

It's always enriching to look with fresh eyes at the infinite play of color, form, texture, and sound that is everywhere around you. Sometimes the profusion seems chaotic, and that's fine! Let your eyes and hands and ears respond. Grace moves with what is, not with ideas about what should be. And “what is” can often be the simplest, most unpretentious and heartfelt thing.

Splitting Apart 23



The hexagram of Splitting Apart means that something in your life is at an end. Without endings there would be no possibility of a fresh beginning to bring new life, for everything is cyclically restored by letting go of the old. We love the colors of spring, summer, and autumn, but once winter sets in and the trees are stripped bare, it is harder to appreciate their stark beauty. Just as winter is the season of naked, unadorned truth, so, too, the time of splitting apart forces change upon us by exposing the cold facts – heartache, disappointment, death, decay – that are seldom seen as beautiful. If you are dealing with separation or deterioration, you are in a vulnerable place, pushed by external forces too momentous to be denied. On some level you are facing the inevitability of death and you need to let go.

Instead of seeing things that are naturally in opposition, such as light and dark, as simply two sides of one coin, we tend to place positive and negative values on them; hence we see sadness as a threat to happiness, death as the defeat of life, and so on. The dualistic mind keeps us caught in a mental game of Ping-Pong, fearful and at cross-purposes with Nature, in denial of wholeness and continuity, and of the restorative cycle of death and rebirth that is the rhythmic heartbeat of life.

Our bodies are in a constant cycle of death and regeneration at the cellular level, yet when we face this process in our daily lives, it can seem excruciating. Nature in her dispassionate wisdom



23 Splitting Apart

does whatever is needed to continue her ongoing rhythm. Yet if it were up to us, we would cling to everything and everyone we ever loved, forever. Even though we learn that holding on is a source of pain, we desperately resist letting go.

When the “due date” on a product is past, we don’t hesitate to toss it out. But if it is a relationship, our health, or a job that is at issue, we experience shock, rage, or fearfulness at being caught lacking, naked, and vulnerable. Nothing is more distressing to the ego or threatening to inner equilibrium than being exposed as weak or disadvantaged.

Under the circumstances, the only choice is to let nature run its course. Put all your energy toward facilitating the process. Be very firm with yourself, avoid self-pity, and get ready to move on. Whatever is being put to rest now needs to be. Although things are deteriorating, you need not collapse with them; instead, appreciate the transformative power of this time. “Let go so that you may be restored” is the dynamic of Splitting Apart. Withdraw now from any thoughts, situations, or people that are obstructing the process of letting go, and surrender to it.

If the time for splitting apart has arrived, it is unavoidable. By accepting and working with it, we naturally grow in maturity. As you recognize and integrate the fundamental reality of death and decay in your life, the spectrum becomes whole, and you become wiser. This experience, however painful it may be right now, is an invitation to respect all of life’s colors, not just your favorites. When impermanence is accepted as an integral part of living, you are in tune with the Tao.



Splitting Apart 23

The Changes

Bottom Line

It is unclear who or what is undermining your efforts now, but you must be very careful as you proceed. Once the negative influence is exposed, you can deal with it in the light of day; in the meantime, keep your cards close to your chest, your eyes wide open, and your lips sealed.

Line 2

You are feeling more and more isolated, yet those who are close are unable or unwilling to be supportive. Don't act out of fear or neediness; it is far wiser to adjust to loneliness than to surround yourself with inferior choices. Refrain from doubting or negative thinking; stay neutral and suspend inner judgments, as they simply add more weight to an already cumbersome situation.

Line 3

Breakdowns are an opportunity for you to learn how to deal with restoring, repairing, and even improving what is falling apart. You're learning a whole new level of self-sufficiency, and you will be able to draw on this knowledge long after the present situation is over.



23 Splitting Apart

Line 4

When the curtain comes down, the show is over. There is nothing to be done now but accept the finality of this time.

Line 5

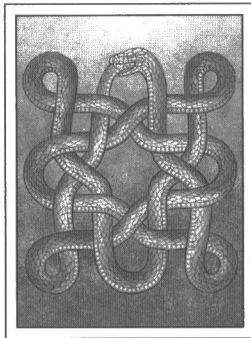
The tide is turning and resolution appears possible. Stay alert and open-minded. A neutral approach will require patience but is very likely to be successful.

Top Line

For everything there is a season. Now that the time of splitting apart is reaching completion, you are much the stronger for it. When negativity has nothing left to feed upon, it destroys itself, making room for new opportunities to take root.



The Turning Point 24



Nature moves in a continuously unfolding cycle of seasons, and there is no point at which its motion entirely stops. Nevertheless, we can sense a kind of pause that happens on the cusp of these cyclical changes. At the winter solstice, for example, when the period of rest and darkness reaches its zenith and the season of activity and light begins to return, it is as if the whole of nature holds its breath for a moment. A subtle shift takes place that is only perceptible to those who have refined and expanded their own sensitivities to include that which can never be captured as a fixed moment in time.

Although the snow may still blanket the ground, there is a quickening happening beneath the earth's surface that is felt in the core of all living things. Later the first visible signs of renewing life will be apparent everywhere. But those fragile first buds cannot be hastened, no matter how much we might long for spring. No one seriously considers interfering with this natural cycle – even when we're fed up with lying low, we trust that inevitably spring will again be reborn in its own time. However, in the shifting seasons of our personal lives we are often far too preoccupied and have far too many investments to keep an overview. These preoccupations can blind us to the perfection of nature and thus we can become impatient and fail to honor its timing.

It is good to remember that no time of darkness lasts forever, either in the cosmos or in your immediate surroundings. It might feel like forever if a crisis or difficulty appears to have brought



24 The Turning Point

all your efforts to a standstill – perhaps even including any effort on your part to change your circumstances. But there are times when coming to a standstill is precisely what is needed in order to prepare for a change to come. Once the turning point arrives, the movement toward renewed movement and vitality will begin to accelerate, no matter how imperceptible it might be to you now. There is a loosening up, a “melting away” that is just beginning and this process will gradually allow you to make full use of any energy you may have been storing up in more stagnant times.

When you have a physical illness you know that you need to slow down, withdraw, and rest in order for a full recuperation to take place. Any ideas you might have about “bouncing back” energetically from adversity stem from a misunderstanding of what is really needed. When there has been a period of inaction, coming to a turning point means that what was depleted will now be replenished, and what was frozen will melt away. But this happens naturally, without your “doing” and without your interference. Once life's juices have begun to flow again, your strength will increase naturally, your outlook will become brighter, and you will be clearer about the next steps you need to take. Relaxation and trust are the inner attitudes that will bring the deepest understanding, which is that all is moving flawlessly, just as it should. Take care of yourself and the “basics” in very simple ways – it's the best thing you can do during the major transition that is about to take place.



The Turning Point 24

The Changes

Bottom Line

Your inner equilibrium will be nourished best now by paying close attention to what your intuition is telling you. When in doubt, listen to the body first – it has no “ideas” that might lead you astray.

Line 2

It's important now to spend your “social time” with those who support your sense of inner harmony, self-acceptance, and receptivity. When you have a choice, it will likely be more beneficial now to choose the gentle and calm in preference to the wild and reckless.

Line 3

The mind lives in the duality of “either/or,” not in the wholeness of unfolding change. If you seem to be stuck in “what if” mode – fretting over the path not taken, imagining that the other alternative would have been better – it's a good indication that the mind is running your show. Slip out of the theater and go jogging, swimming, dancing, for a long walk in the woods – anything physical to get your energy out of your head and into your body. Otherwise you're in danger of driving yourself nuts and maybe taking a few other people along for the ride.

Line 4

The time for making a fresh start can be like coming home after a long, exhausting journey. It does not require effort, only a willingness to stay open and receptive to the flow of energy that is



24 The Turning Point

beginning to build up from within. Contemplating the cyclic patterns that recur throughout your life and in a wider sense throughout all of nature puts you in touch with the rhythms of the increase and decrease that echo infinitely throughout time and space. Allow these rhythms to take you into the next phase of your life, without worrying if others will follow.

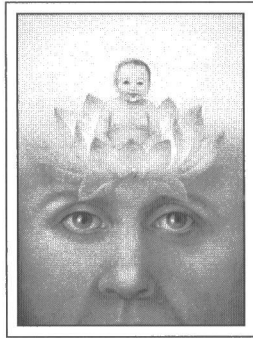
Line 5

Being fully present this moment, and each moment as it comes, creates an inner spaciousness where everything moves a little slower, with more grace. You might be aware that there is no urgency to go anywhere or do anything, but take care that this easiness does not fall back into complacency. The new growth cycle that is coming needs your alertness as well as your relaxation, your intelligence alongside your intuition.

Top Line

There are few things more painful, or more counterproductive, than to feel stuck in a situation of frustration and defeat. But sometimes we can get so habituated to hopelessness that we can miss the signals that circumstances are loosening up and getting ready to change. Make sure you don't miss the first signs of a thaw in the long-frozen landscape. Remember that one hard winter doesn't make an ice age – unless you keep insisting that it's too cold to go outside.





Innocence in an adult is not the same thing as gullibility or naïveté; rather, it is a quality that comes with maturity and arises out of a lifetime's experience that trusting in the heart for guidance always proves to be the best way to deal with life's ups and downs. Innocence is the ability to pay attention to the inner voice of intuition and to spontaneously respond to life unfolding in the now. An innocent person doesn't attempt to be an all-knowing authority, and has no interest in carrying the weight of knowledge learned from other sources. He or she learns by living each moment to the fullest and is enthusiastic and inspired by even the most

ordinary occurrences. One who is innocent has the refreshing, childlike quality that emanates from unaffected simplicity, unconcerned by the need to prove anything. It is a wholesome quality, not childish or needy. It is to be content with being for the sake of simply being, complete in itself. Babies and very young children radiate this quality – everything is new to them, and they are continually fascinated and in wonder. They have not yet been programmed to have preferences, be fixated on ideals, or strive to achieve goals. And while it might be necessary to develop some armor to deal with the world, the problem is that by the time we have outgrown the need to protect ourselves we have lost touch with this innocent quality and don't know how to go back and retrieve it.

Because of our training and education, the mind can be militantly forceful in trying to convince the innocent self that it is far too vulnerable to withstand the trials and tribulations of life. If you

allow yourself to succumb to that belief, then it becomes necessary to strategize how to protect investments, elevate your status in relation to others, or make "improvements" to your persona. Plotting your moves through life based on these fears and investments of the ego denies you the ability to respond spontaneously to the new, and curbs your freedom to move without the burdens of past successes or failures.

If you find yourself rationalizing your behavior, trying to cover your tracks in order to save face, it is time to renew your acquaintance with your innocent self. Only by trusting life, being open and available to it, can you ever taste delight. And being delighted simply means joyfully experiencing the unexpected. Now is the time to approach each situation as it comes, and be responsive to even the most subtle influences – not out of the need to manipulate but out of sheer vitality, enthusiasm, and sensitivity. If your innocence has been taken advantage of, the mature response is the resilient, bounce-back quality that is only ever strengthened by adversity. Mistakes made out of innocence are natural and are the building blocks of wisdom to come. There is no point in regretting mistakes; it will only feed the defensive armor of the ego.

Above all, remember that life is a moment-to-moment flowering, not some problem to be solved. When you live in the here and now there is nothing to defend. Everywhere you look there is an opportunity for wonder; all that is required is that you look through the innocent eyes of a child.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Relaxing into the flowing quality of change will support your ability to respond spontaneously and with the right timing. You can trust in your heart to see you through these times, and the heart is always on the side of the spontaneous and real.

Line 2

You are being given an opportunity to play a vital part in the now as it unfolds. Unburdened by motivations and plans for the future, you will feel light and spontaneous in whatever you participate in. This experience of deep connectedness to the whole is awe-inspiring.

Line 3

For many people the idea of living spontaneously can be threatening to careful constructs that are designed to handle every problem that faces them from the cradle to the grave. The innocent person recognizes that it is natural to try to construct defenses against chaos and disorder, and it is just as natural that the scaffolding should collapse from time to time. Don't allow yourself to be shaken from what you know to be true, and you just might learn from the experience how to construct a better scaffold.

Line 4

Human life has become a commodity that needs to be safeguarded against any possibility that



the unexpected will happen. This attitude has been deeply conditioned into all of us by the collective mind. Remember that it has nothing to do with your basic, innocent nature. Don't feel ashamed to be awkward or uncertain among people who seem to know what they are doing. The most important thing is that you stay close to your own truth and follow the dictates of your own heart.

Line 5

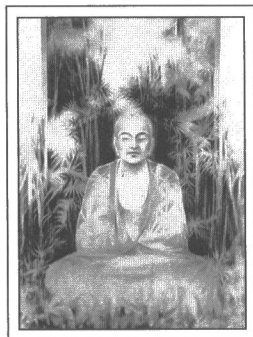
Life is a gradual flowering that unfolds the unique potential of every being, and unfailingly supports that uniqueness in realizing its divine nature. In the East the realization of divine nature is called enlightenment. It is the return to innocence after a fall from grace; it is to be twice born—once as Gautama, then as Buddha, once as Jesus then as Christ. The return to innocence is the birthright of every human that has ever been and will ever be nurtured by life on this earth. Trust that this inner unfolding will take you through the present times, and let nature take its course.

Top Line

We can never be innocent when we're comparing ourselves to others. The mind compares out of its need to always be occupied and be the king of the castle. It rationalizes that without proper tactics it can't win at the game of life. Better to do nothing right now than to lend any energy to a competitive or chaotic situation. There's no advantage in allowing yourself to get caught up in a stampeding crowd, even if you could manage to stay on your feet and avoid getting trampled.



The Taming Power of the Great 26



The taming influence here is the ability to remain aware while being “tested” by circumstance. How able are you to hold firm to your ideals and maintain your integrity in the face of challenges that threaten to break down your resolve?

It is the time when life is urging you to grow beyond the security of what you have, till now, considered to be some of your most substantial achievements. Now comes the disquieting moment of having your investments in the status quo exposed. Once you begin to “sweat the small stuff” it’s likely that you are clinging like crazy to something or someone and have started

to think that person, place, or thing is part of the definition of who you are.

The present time is one that reveals truth as it really is in the moment, and this may be quite different from what you have believed was the case. Whatever is valid in the now remains, and anything else becomes increasingly hard to hold on to. This revelation is most often an internal one – it may seem to be prompted by outer circumstances, but in reality it is the inner being that has brought itself into realignment with the Tao, thereby momentarily enlightening you. By letting go of delusions and illusions you not only gain clarity but become lighter, less burdened by ideas and beliefs that are no longer relevant.

It requires inner fortitude to not succumb to the nagging voices of a freaked-out or unhappy mind. It’s a little like training a wild animal that keeps running off whenever you are inattentive



26 The Taming Power of the Great

even for a split second. You must continually bring back your thoughts to neutral ground, unbiased and uninvested in particular outcomes.

Transcending your own mental boundaries can feel like swimming naked and alone in a dark unfamiliar place. The mind tends to become fixed and inflexible, and it never likes to appear “untogether.” Trusting in the flowing nature of life, is perceived as the biggest threat because the mind often wrongfully interprets vulnerability as inadequacy. When existence is coaxing you to stretch beyond the limitations of habit, it is easy to feel exhausted or threatened. But the exhaustion comes from fighting against the change, not from the change itself. And defending yourself against a threat is all the more tiring if the threat exists mostly in your own imagination. Bending with changes needs alertness and an open mind.

Be aware of a tendency to make molehills into mountains so that you get to be heroic and clever while demonstrating the ability to leap tall trouble in a single bound. Don’t be misled in this way, lest you deprive yourself of the opportunity to reap the real benefits of facing the actual life challenges at hand. The only way to deal with the challenges you are facing is not through histrionics but with awareness, inner composure, and integrity.



The Taming Power of the Great 26

The Changes

Bottom Line

By being alert to childish superhero fantasies when they start to arise, it's possible to shift gears before the drama begins. Once you've set the stage for the first act, it's harder to rewrite the script.

Line 2

It is wise to learn the knack of effortless effort that keeps moving with rather than against the current. It might not appear so valiant and brave, but it will conserve energy that you are going to need later. The present circumstances require absolute honesty with yourself about your limitations. Don't try to compensate by putting on airs to appear other than who you are.

Line 3

When the "great" is taming us through experience, it is absolutely appropriate to feel humbled. By recognizing and admitting your limitations, vulnerability, and need for guidance, the dross of the superficial personality will be burned away and your true nature is renewed to shine forth in all its simplicity and humanness.

Line 4

The more you are willing to stay open to others and remain receptive and flexible, not just during "good times" but through all of life's seasons, the more you will mature and grow into your true self.



26 The Taming Power of the Great

There is no time better than now for appreciating the regenerative dynamics of Tao. They are flawlessly designed for all to realize their fullest potential.

Line 5

Nature, in all her wisdom and compassion, eternally strengthens all her creatures by challenging them, redefining the status quo by breaking it down, and restoring the balance by nurturing the new that is born from the chaos. Meditation is the wisdom key that unlocks the door of understanding, enabling you to drop your resistance to change and say yes to life. It will sharpen your ability to distinguish truth from fantasy and identify the hidden gold in difficult circumstances that transform such circumstances into food for the soul.

Top Line

However challenging the situation may feel at the moment, go forward in spite of any doubts that might be nagging at the back of your mind. Know that you must be ready to receive what you are being given, and welcome the opportunity to stretch yourself beyond the familiar and the known. In the process, you will discover much about yourself that you might not have been aware of before, and it will serve as a reminder that the process of growth and expansion is a never-ending journey.



The Corners of the Mouth 27



Health and well-being mean more than just freedom from disease; they are a radiant manifestation of balance in body, mind, and spirit. When the body/mind is balanced, our capacity for spontaneity, joy, and peace is increased. We eat food to nourish our bodies, but every level of our being requires nourishment, which it takes from the sources available to it. Your quality of life reflects how you are nourished, how you nourish others, and the way you function in the world.

Impressions – sensory, emotional, intellectual – are the food of the mind. We receive a barrage of impressions from television, computers, music,

movies, books, and magazines, and often end up carrying too much “weight” in our heads. Simplify your life by eliminating anything that does not promote wholesomeness. You may be surprised to find that as you clean up your act you also start feeling better. Gradually eliminating whatever is no longer relevant – stuff, habits, relationships, or points of view – amounts to trimming the fat off your lifestyle. Consider what it would be like to live with the people and things that help you to feel good about yourself. Then consider the extent to which you are willing to go to make that a reality.

If you haven’t paid much attention to your health, this is the time to begin. In attending to the body’s real needs, it is important to bring some awareness to what, where, and how you eat. If you frequently eat in a hurry or “graze” at an open fridge, then you can be certain that you are also

27 The Corners of the Mouth

feeding your stress level. Carefully choosing foods that are natural and wholesome and eating with intention sends a message to your entire being that it’s worth nourishing. Maintaining good health also means exercising. Physical exercise vitalizes the heart and circulatory system and enhances our general sense of well-being. It clears cobwebs from an overfull mind by rerouting excess energy from the head into the body.

Nourishment of the heart calls for healthy relationships in your life. Relationships require sensitivity to their subtle nuances, and should not be taken for granted. Habitual patterns of relating lead to indifference, lack of enthusiasm, or a can’t-be-bothered attitude that slowly but surely creates heartache. Nourish your relationships carefully, so that they may provide you and others with emotional sustenance. Finally, how do you nourish yourself spiritually? Rest and relaxation put us back in touch with ourselves and nature. Make a conscious choice to tune out external distractions and turn your full attention inward. By sitting silently, relaxed and comfortable, simply observing your breath and your thoughts, you can cleanse your mind of tensions that deplete well-being. When a thought arises that grips your attention, relax your breath, let the tension go and return to neutrality. This is the simplest form of meditation, and it works. There are many different techniques to facilitate self-awareness, some very energetic, others more passive, and it’s wise to experiment to find the way that feels right for you. Practicing a consciousness raising technique with regularity clears the mind, calms the emotions, and will enhance your ability to feel supported by the flow of change that is Tao.

The Corners of the Mouth 27

The Changes

Bottom Line

Envy what someone else has will keep you feeling deficient, even starved. Forget about what is on your neighbor's plate and focus on how to provide for yourself.

Line 2

Taking care of your precious self is healthy self-interest. Expecting others to provide for you is irresponsible, immature, and selfish.

Line 3

Although it appears satisfying, the company you keep or your lifestyle itself is really not nourishing you. On a fundamental level, you're half-starved. To continue in this fashion will deplete you to the point of collapse, in which case you will have no choice but to clean up your act. Forewarned is fore-armed.

Line 4

Do not hesitate to ask for whatever help you need. Then you can provide for others in ways far beyond your present capacity.

27 The Corners of the Mouth

Line 5

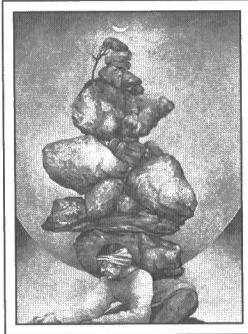
Your heart is in the right place but you lack the resources to provide what is needed. Seek out someone who has the energy, wisdom, or expertise that you lack, and work together.

Top Line

Pacing yourself is vitally important now, as you have responsibilities that are very challenging on many levels. Nevertheless, you are capable of handling it all by maintaining well-being from within.



Excess 28



The old I Ching texts regarding this hexagram use the analogy of a ridgepole that is so overloaded it sags to the breaking point. The overload can be too much of a good thing or, on the other hand, exhaustion from too much “doing.” Whether the pressure is coming from outside or from within, Excess can make you feel like a beast of burden. This is the moment to begin eliminating stress, and to understand how it got there in the first place. Undoubtedly, somewhere along the way you have chosen to ignore your own limitations. Waking up to the reality now can be disturbing. Up to this point you might have adopted a grin-and-bear-it attitude. But now, like it or not, the situation needs to be changed.

It is possible that the stress has come from getting caught up in the drive for more and more. Whatever that “more” may be, it is now becoming apparent that it is a no-win pursuit. When we’re out of touch with the real needs of the natural self, the mind comes in and takes charge. Its insatiable appetites – for fame, money, sex, or power – demand to be satisfied, no matter the cost to body and soul. This mind-set is responsible, on a larger scale, for the ecological devastation that is, in fact, a manifestation of stress on a grand scale.

To relieve stress on any level, the best place to begin is to come back to yourself and take responsibility for how you think and how you act. There is nothing positive about obsessive behavior, and it invariably blinds us to our simple and natural needs. If you can step back and take an

28 Excess

objective look, it might be obvious that more is not always better. If you have been following the desires of the mind at the expense of the body and soul, nature often comes to the rescue by presenting you with just the kind of “breaking point” that brings so much tension, exhaustion, and frustration that you will have to either stop on your own while there is still time, or else go down in flames.

The key to learning the lessons that lie within a situation of Excess is to look in the mirror with unwavering honesty. There is no need for confessions, blame, or shame – and by not attempting to save face, the artificial façade crumbles and all that is extraneous falls away. After all, the weight of all that greed for “more” can get pretty heavy. Once it’s no longer calling the shots, everything will begin to feel lighter, more flexible, and more spontaneous.

Life becomes more energy-efficient when we are in touch with our own natural rhythms and needs. Whether you call it meditation, reflection, or contemplation, it’s vital to take the time to be alone to see and feel what is true for you in the here and now. It’s also healthy periodically to ask yourself questions like: What are my real intentions as a partner . . . as a coworker . . . as a human being? Am I functioning like a robot, or from my truth? Am I living in accord with the laws of nature? Every time we reconsider where we’re really coming from in our lives we realign with truth. In the nature of things, that realignment diminishes stress and in an incremental way helps alleviate the weight of the world.

Excess 28

The Changes

Bottom Line

Sometimes a breaking point comes because of an accumulation of a number of small actions or decisions rather than one overwhelming or obsessive passion. If you can look deeply into the details of how you've been spending your time and energy lately, it might reveal a larger pattern that was not apparent to you before.

Line 2

The company we keep can support our naturalness and relaxation, or it can work against it. Of course the responsibility for any sense of overload is ultimately yours, but perhaps it's time to take a look at your social calendar. Make sure it has space not just for those who can serve your ambitions, but also for the friends or family members who love you just the way you are.

Line 3

Waking up from a nightmare is much easier than waking up from a sweet dream. But even if the dream is sweet, that doesn't change the fact that the person dreaming it is asleep. You can keep on dreaming as long as you like, but don't complain if an earthquake comes along and tosses you out of bed onto the hard floor.



28 Excess

Line 4

The current situation has the potential to teach you some profound lessons about how you get trapped in cycles of feeling stressed out and overwhelmed. Both the lessons and the teacher are to be found within, so take time to listen to your own voice right now. It has an unusually clear and strong message for you.

Line 5

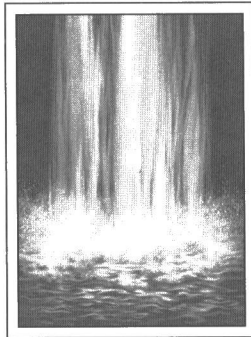
Castles in the air may be beautiful to look at, but they are very difficult to live in. It's time to tend to the nuts and bolts of the earthbound home that sustains and nourishes your day-to-day life. Even the most inspired visionaries need a solid foundation to support the soaring towers of the imagination.

Top Line

Sometimes we get overloaded because we have taken on too much of the new without being willing to let go of the old. Have a look and see if you are carrying something from the past that, however precious it once was, might no longer be in your best interest to carry. If it's not, see if you can find the strength to let it go.



The Abysmal 29



The Abysmal represents danger. No matter what direction you turn there seems to be some difficulty, and it's often too dark to make out just what that difficulty is. Matters are made worse by a persistently increasing deluge of problems that result in your belief that life is unfairly dumping on you. It can feel a bit like being pommelled by an unending torrent with no let up in sight. There is nothing abstract about the danger, and it's not just a drama or imagination. But the very nature of this time is that you will feel uncommonly uncertain about how to deal with whatever it is. So all the right ingredients are in place to generate fear, confusion,

and panic.

But whatever circumstances have come together to contribute to the current situation, it is of critical importance not to let your emotions take over. Panic has a way of feeding more panic, confusion has a way of creating more confusion, and all this together can create a vortex that throws you right away from the very center where you need to be standing in order to cope with the situation at hand.

In fact, times of danger always carry the potential to reveal the inner resources and courage that form the foundations of a life well and truly lived. It is courage that allows us to go beyond our learned and habitual modes of behavior and tap into the qualities that transcend the boundaries of the known and familiar. Thankfully we don't often find ourselves in dangers that are not of our

29 The Abysmal

own making, but when they do arise it is wise to remember the extraordinary opportunities that they bring.

It is time to assume the "way of the warrior." Until the danger is past, devote yourself to dealing only with what is essential. Giving in to the temptation either to run away or to run blindly into battle without first being centered will only make matters worse and prolong the pain and confusion. Fear, when we are able to observe it dispassionately, is a powerful energy that can be used in the service of focus and centering. The skillful warrior is able to harness this energy to bring sharpness to all his senses and decisiveness to all his actions. Thus he is able to respond in the moment to what each moment brings.

If the way of the warrior seems too harsh for your sensibilities, then try the way of the cat. Aware and alert, with a subtle certainty that is able to be utterly still and patient while waiting for the right moment, and then springing to life with perfect timing.

But whatever the way, it is the crystal clarity of awareness that will enable you to cut through all the distractions and go straight to the core of the danger. Gradually you will come to see that whether the dangers are internal or external, the best course is to continually return to a place in the center that is not swayed by emotions or prejudices. By weighing all things in the balance, you can develop an impartial and open-minded attitude that will persevere through anything.

The Changes

Bottom Line

It's possible that this particular encounter with danger might be a washout before it has even begun. Take a look to see if you have ignored any signs leading up to the present situation that might have alerted you to what was coming. Sometimes the mind, when it has strong investments in its own desires, prefers numbness to being alert. If you find this is the case, it's not too late to take a distance and watch what's happening as a result, learning from it what you can.



Line 2

The dramatic gesture is not always the most effective one. Sometimes the best way to surmount a danger is to take small, careful steps, one at a time. It might seem ponderous if you're the impatient type, but slow and deliberate progress is much more satisfying than banging your head against the wall, even if you could manage to do it with panache.



Line 3

Even when the fear is harnessed and the panic dispelled, there are times when the terrain ahead is still shrouded in a mist not of your own making. If this is the case, best to trust and wait for the sun to come out and clear the air before proceeding.

Line 4

A good measure of self-observation during times of danger helps to bring about the inner clarity that is essential to deal with all the elements that are operating in the environment. Otherwise, you risk becoming distracted by subjective emotions, preconceived ideas, or concern with how you appear to others; hence you fail to see the objective reality.

Line 5

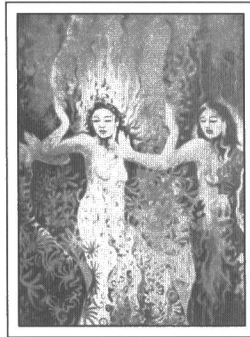
When you've been up to your neck in a flash flood without knowing how to swim, and somehow mastered the panic and pulled yourself onto the safety of a protruding rock, it's OK to congratulate yourself. It is not, however, a time to stand up on the rock with a megaphone and declare yourself master of the world. The water will recede soon, and you will have embarrassed yourself with the pretense. So smile at the temptation, and move on.

Top Line

One of the mind's favorite activities is to set up a nonstop series of dramatic twists and turns in every effort to divert the energy away from turning in and taking responsibility for actions that have not been effective in dissolving our problems. Every step out of turmoil begins from within. If you haven't been there lately, it's time for a visit.



The Clinging 30



The message here is to consider the qualities of fire and its dual nature: on the one hand it provides warmth and illumination that disperses darkness, revealing the hidden, and on the other hand it is capable of ruthless destruction. It defines, brings clarity, is brilliant and beautiful, and can be utterly enchanting or alternatively can be all consuming, difficult, and voracious in its appetites.

The climate usually associated with fire is bright, hot, and passionate. Yet in some instances it can be experienced as cool and passionately dispassionate. It is dangerous in its apparent ability to mesmerize while it is consuming, to the point where the consumed is eliminated, devoured by its own attraction like the moth in the flame. And just like that hypnotized moth, we humans will even put our lives at stake to participate, even briefly, in a moment of glory. If passion is strong enough we will fight aggressively to defend our beliefs in spite of the havoc those beliefs might unleash.

To harness the powerful transformative quality of fire requires maturity, and maturity doesn't happen overnight; it develops at a slow and deliberate pace, sometimes requiring that we get burned in the process. A fiery temperament prefers to leap now and deal with the consequences later, and it is simply childish to blame fate for what you attract when your actions are ruled by impulsiveness. Passionately surrendering one's own cautious instincts can be in the service of anything – a person, place, object, or point of view and is bound to be transformative in some form or other.

30 The Clinging

Surrendering to an all-consuming passion virtually guarantees we'll emerge from the experience irrevocably changed from how we entered it. Once a longing is powerful enough, and it seems impossible to withdraw, we've already taken the first steps into the fire. What's more, even if we could we wouldn't turn back.

In some instances, to deny a fascination can be deeply troubling. Blinded by "the light" of what seems to be our destiny, we can rush headlong into danger, driven by an inexplicable longing, only to wake up dazed and distraught later on. But with awareness, such experiences can be recognized as invaluable in that they help to clarify our acts and motivations. Awareness makes it possible to appreciate, not simply to endure, the processes of regeneration.

If you feel as though you're standing in fire now, respect its capacity to cleanse and purify as it burns off whatever has become extraneous and burdensome in your life. This will help you to appreciate what is happening rather than resist it. Remember, too, that life is not out to destroy you, but is working continuously to support your growth and, ultimately, your self-realization.

Once this time has passed, you will have a new respect and appreciation for the uncomplicated and simple things of life. Ultimately it all boils down to your inner perspective, whether you become bitter and burned out by an experience, or take it in stride and appreciate how it has helped you to grow, revitalizing your life in the process.

The Clinging 30

The Changes

Bottom Line

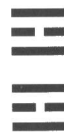
It is just in those moments that you're tempted to throw all caution to the wind that you need to be extra alert and willing to take responsibility for your choices. The moment when a tumultuous situation is beginning to unfold can sometimes be the best time to take a step back and watch to see where it is going before you leap in with both feet. Beware of the temptation to see what is facing you as your "destiny." That's often just a costume for what is actually your "temptation," and the test could very well be your ability to turn aside before it gets too hot for you to handle.

Line 2

The problem you face is that the satisfaction of one desire has this annoying tendency to feed the demand for the fulfillment of yet another. After plenty of disappointments and frustration, the realization eventually dawns that you can never be nourished by ignoring the whispered truth of the inner voice that says, "Enough."

Line 3

Honoring the path of truth may sound like an impossible ideal, as distant as the far horizon. But in real time, it is only as far as the next step. Opening to the guidance that emanates from how you are feeling in the here and now is all you need to do right now. When you adhere to the inner guidance of the heart you can easily learn from mistakes and you are less likely to be thrown off balance by external influences.



30 The Clinging

Line 4

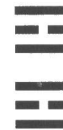
The moth beating against the window in an effort to reach the lighted candle inside the house does nothing but exhaust himself. Better to devote your attention to increasing your awareness and self-remembrance. The glass between you and that flame might be trying to protect you from harm. But you won't know that until you can manage to settle down and gather your wits about you.

Line 5

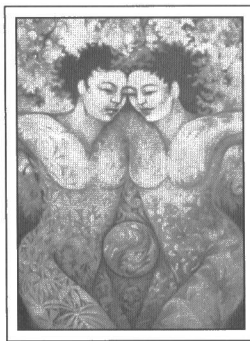
When what you have known is burned to ashes, it can cause tremendous sorrow at first. But in your grief, don't forget the forest always sprouts new growth after a fire, and the scorched meadow will bring even more flowers in the coming spring.

Top Line

You may find yourself now in the position of being the only one who can perceive the nourishing and revitalizing potential in what seems to others to be an unhappy situation. Be gentle with those around you, and with yourself – your willingness to accept the changes with grace and forgiveness will inspire others to do the same.



Influence 31



Mutual attraction is stimulating. It is a magnetic, deeply energizing dynamic between two people that can be profoundly enriching or, on the other hand, simply an acting-out of compulsiveness and the need for self-gratification. The critical difference lies in whether or not there is genuine mutual respect.

Keeping things in perspective when the emotional climate is heating up is only possible when some balance is maintained through taking periodic breaks that allows both parties to step back from the intensity. This capacity to keep a distance enables trust to develop, and creates space for the

natural rhythms between people to evolve. In the early stages of a strong mutual attraction, it is more than challenging to pull back and cool down, especially when everything inside you is driven by passion. But in any event the passage of time will surely turn down that heat, and being able to consider the relationship in the light of less obvious passions enables you to anticipate this natural process. In this way even at the outset, a passionate relationship is given a far better chance to mature and ripen rather than burn out from intensity and go stale and flat.

The power of attraction has been exploited in the media ad nauseam, and we are constantly assaulted by the use of sensual and sexual imagery to sell everything from candy to cars, fashionable attitudes, ideologies. During the course of any given day we're subjected to hundreds of such images, each carrying messages both subliminal and overt. It's difficult to tell if we're becoming

31 Influence

desensitized to the subtleties of natural attraction. There is a danger once our desire for meaningful relationships becomes distorted by a preference for flawless fantasies over human reality.

In the presence of genuine affection, everything seems to “click” without effort and there's a willingness to work with all kinds of drawbacks that in less attractive circumstances might be reasons to not go any further. Experiencing natural magnetism is a living lesson of the universal laws of yin and yang. Spontaneous, one-on-one exchanges between complementary and unique individuals is the expression, on human terms, of that interchanging between the “active” yang principle and the “receptive” yin principle. This free-flowing dance of energy creates a natural high where the outlook seems rosier, the impossible is possible, and the ordinary becomes extraordinary. It is nature with a capital N, it's the birds and the bees, and it's intrinsically juicy.

Natural magnetism is not defined by appearances; it need not be between a man and a woman, but can be shared between any two people. It often defies the rational and practical. Be it a friendship, partnership, or marriage, both members should be willing to openly share and trust in the sanctity of the bond, lest it simply collapse under the weight of disillusionment. To continue, there must be plenty of mutual support and nonpossessiveness and respect. A balanced relationship is not a dependency but an interdependence. It should feel more like an ongoing “happening” than something static and “safe.”

The Changes

Bottom Line

Should the occasion for pleasure arise, you might be tempted to compromise your integrity and fake sentiments that you don't feel. Whether it is lust masquerading as love, or insecurity driving you to overcompensate, it is easy to become so involved in your personal movies that there is little room left for anything real. Remember that gratified pleasure alone is not enough to establish an enduring and meaningful bond. If this one is important to you, you will need to give it a little more time to ripen.



Line 2



When an attraction is particularly strong and compelling, it has an almost hypnotic power. It takes a special quality of alertness to not fall into a deep sleep of wish-fulfilling fantasies. If you're feeling particularly dreamy these days, consider pinching yourself from time to time, if for no other reason than to remind yourself that you're still here.

Line 3

Often, problems that surface later in a relationship are those which first appear as "all or nothing" quick fixes. Once our emotions color our investments in a specific outcome, we unbalance the ecology of relating and deny nature the opportunity to take its course. Plotting and manipulating to make sure you get what you want creates mistrust, and ultimately takes you further and further away from unity.



Line 4

Partnerships that succeed are founded in mutual respect and maintaining healthy, honest, and open communication. Both individuals are responsive to the changing needs of the other. If lovingly handled, a relationship can be savored like a fine wine that ripens with age, its subtle flavor getting better with time. As with any living thing, there is no way to predict how long a relationship will last; therefore it is foolish to take it for granted. When the qualities of honor and joy are present in the relating, however, it grows closer to poetry than prose. Do your part, and see what happens.



Line 5

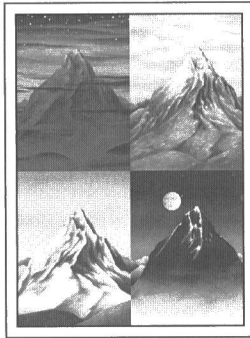
The beginning can sometimes be pretty rocky before the real relationship dance begins. Learning each other's moves takes patience, forgiveness, and a sense of humor. Everyone seems to want intimacy, love, and happiness, but when faced with challenges, awkwardness, and vulnerability, many aren't willing to undertake the moment-to-moment maintenance that every relationship requires. Be realistic with yourself about your own motivations, and act accordingly.

Top Line

The language of intimacy is shared by lovers, poets, and mystics. Its song is sung in an infinite number of ways. Sometimes in a fine high falsetto, sometimes in a bluesie moan, and sometimes it's nothing more and nothing less than the sound of silence. If a relationship is grounded in sharing, self-respect, and respect for the other, it can endure all kinds of challenges.



Duration 32



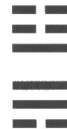
The essence of a mountain is stability, a deep and abiding quality that withstands the tests of time. It is the solidity of rock and the stabilizing function of earth, and it is unequivocally itself. For any relationship to endure, it must reflect the qualities of a mountain. As above, so below.

In human life, stability manifests as a firm footing in the here and now that takes each step with deliberate intention and doesn't get sidetracked by seeking shortcuts. It arises when you believe in yourself and in your endeavors and focus totally on the task at hand. The spirit of Duration holds the vision – rain or shine, feast or famine – so you remain steadily on course and can

adjust to constant change without compromising your integrity.

Growth requires putting down roots, and that means making a wholehearted commitment. Otherwise, your efforts may be unable to sustain hard times, with a disappointing, short-lived affair as the result. Going deep can take you to great heights – from the horizontal into the vertical plane of experience and beyond the familiar – into a 360-degree perspective. From this vantage point, life expands into a multicolored landscape full of possibilities, and the mundane is revealed as a miracle.

The willingness to persevere, come what may, is a maturity that can only be born of experience. It is never achieved by pushing, coercing, or imitating, nor can it be given or taught. Maturity develops from the inside out, over time, inconspicuously, and is more dependent on awareness than age. It is the ability to learn from your mistakes and observations of life, and the willingness to let go



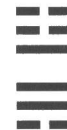
32 Duration

when the time is ripe. It is a deep and silent knowing that remains unswayed by emotionalism or popular opinion.

Without an earthy, pragmatic approach toward attaining a successful outcome, unforeseen events can undermine your efforts or relationships. A firm orientation in the present reduces the likelihood of panic once the winds of change begin to howl. It helps you remain aloof from the tendency to identify with the emotional roller coaster of peak-and-valley experiences. Regular maintenance and sticking to a routine support your stability by restoring balance and providing relief from pressures brought on by an overtaxed mind or an overextended lifestyle, refreshing your capacity for insight and overview.

By unemotionally observing outer events as you would changes in the weather, and making any adjustments required by the moment, it is possible to proceed without major setbacks. Whether you find yourself in a high-pressure zone, a dry spell, or a perfectly cloudless sky-blue day makes little difference. The silent center within you provides a groundedness that has seen it all and thus can remain calm and present. Then you can bend without a loss of integrity and firm without becoming stubborn or brittle.

It is understandable that the ancient I Ching saw the ability to endure through the highs and lows of life as the right foundation for marriage or contractual agreements. A marriage rooted in a supporting balance that enhances each partner's capacities would most likely strengthen the greater good of the community, and therefore the world. Harmonious relationships are like mountains – they are a testimony to a dignity and inner strength that remain unwavering in the face of hardship or adversity.



Duration 32

The Changes

Bottom Line

You're expecting too much too fast, cutting possibilities off before they even take root. This approach is nothing less than a dead end. Slow down and be realistic about the time it takes for things to grow naturally.

Line 2

This is an exceptional moment for great achievements, but everything depends on your sensitivity to the timing. If you can correctly gauge when to advance and when to withdraw, there will be accelerated progress. Now, try that again – one step forward, one step back . . .

Line 3

Well-being comes only from within. Propping up your life with artificial supports isn't going to create it. The bottom line is: you're too easily rocked by external influences, and the only way to change that is to begin turning your attention inward . . . it's called meditation.

Line 4

Try as you might to bring about a successful outcome, if you're barking up the wrong tree in the first place, it won't ever happen. Sniff around elsewhere and see where things might be more promising.



32 Duration

Line 5

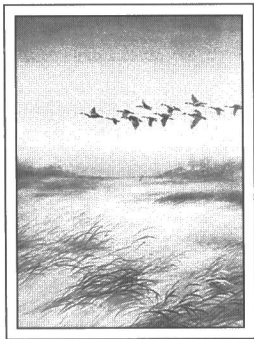
If you are comfortable with a course of action that is subtle, yielding, and supportive of others, there will be success. But if enthusiastically flexing your muscles and going for it is your way, then stick to it. The emphasis here is not on the particular approach but on choosing a course of action that fits you and staying with it.

Top Line

Succumbing to continued restlessness undermines your credibility. Although you're always on the go, a lack of commitment to details keeps tripping you up. Persisting in this way will simply expose the fact that you're not ready to take on greater responsibilities.



Retreat 33



Geese intuitively know before the seasons change that the time for retreat is imminent. They have a built-in understanding that they must depart once the days get shorter, or they will invite danger. Their migratory movements are a symbol for the time of transition just before the onset of winter.

In human life, a considered departure is a sign of intelligence when it is in response to insurmountable odds. Whenever you have a deep intuitive sense that it would be unwise to remain any longer in a situation, or in a relationship, pay attention to it. The intuitive self knows when periods of

transition are approaching, but in the noise and bustle of everyday life it is easy to miss the subtle whispers of that inner knowing. This is the moment to become reacquainted with its guidance.

The way to discern the right timing for withdrawal is by careful observation and sensitivity to the shifting currents within oneself, in others, and in the environment. To sense in advance when the time for retreat is approaching, and act to on it, is empowering and is in sync with the Tao. This kind of foreknowledge does not arise out of worry or cogitating over a problem. It is felt in the belly rather than seen, heard, or reasoned. It opens the way to make the necessary preparations for bringing closure to a situation with grace and dignity.

The type of withdrawal implied here is very different from a fight-or-flight reaction that is only interested in defending or protecting itself. In this case, retreat is an act of strength, not of weakness.



33 Retreat

When it becomes clear that the surrounding atmosphere has become chilly, and what once supported growth and expansion is no longer available to you, consider all your options – but not for too long. Avoid any tendency to intellectualize, and watch out for the circular fretfulness of a mind that won't budge until it figures things out.

Let go is another form of retreat. Letting go releases the grip of overidentification with something, someone, or some concept that might have been useful or even precious once, but now needs to be put behind you. Attempting to cling to it is contrary to the Tao, and as a result would certainly be troublesome. Letting go makes it possible to energetically move on. The choice of migrating geese to fly south is not really a choice. It is common sense to submit to the changing seasons in pursuit of a more accommodating climate – especially when the alternative would be dangerous. Only humans are so foolish as to ignore the signs, preferring to hold fast even to that which is likely to make them suffer.

Retreating into nature is restorative by providing the space for contemplation and realignment with your subtle inner rhythms, and meditation is a form of retreat that can happen without ever going anywhere. Withdrawing from the day's busyness by turning your attention inward makes it easier to dispassionately evaluate the outer signs of change, enables you to make right choices, and renews a sense of well-being.

Once you know that the time for retreat has arrived, don't hesitate to spread your wings and, with the wind at your back, move toward the new.



Retreat 33

The Changes

Bottom Line

Flapping about and creating a drama isn't going to change the fact that your timing was off. The only thing you can do is be more aware the next time a new opportunity arises. Better to step off the dance floor as unobtrusively as possible and sit this one out.

Line 2

Anchor yourself to that which you truly believe in, and no matter how rough it gets, keep that flame alive within you. The time of hardship will end. When it does, you will emerge stronger and more than capable of succeeding in whatever you take on.

Line 3

Yes, it is disturbing to be held back when you know it's time to go. But stay focused on the going, not on the frustration. Better to realign your thinking by incorporating the cause for delay than to not proceed at all.

Line 4

Wondering, worrying, analyzing, and rationalizing are all ways of avoiding the inevitable fact that soon you will simply have to move on. Leaving well enough alone and getting on with life is a

33 Retreat

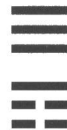
positive and potent act that frees up all the previously stuck energy. If living in accord with "the will of heaven" is the intention, then clinging to the past is the last thing you should be interested in.

Line 5

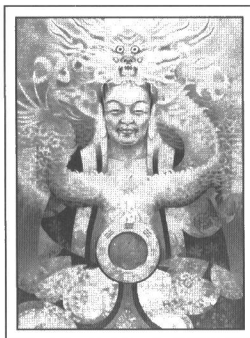
Take your cues from the facts, not the fictions; it will save you from an extended emotional funk. The mind is always happy to postpone dealing with reality as long as it can by keeping you mesmerized and occupied elsewhere. Retreating from this kind of thinking can be as simple as withdrawing your attention from it in a friendly but firm way.

Top Line

Exhilarated and with a positive outlook, you can proceed with a light heart. The time is right and so are you. Progress will be smooth.



Great Power 34



Greatness is expansive and has the power to positively or negatively affect all that is touched by it. In our solar system it is the sun; in our bodies it is the gut or lower belly that in Japanese martial arts is known as the hara, and in the Chinese martial arts, and medical and meditative practices as dantien. It is the reservoir of power from which all life energy emanates and to which it all returns.

In human terms it appears as a powerful nature that has the capacity to influence others on a grand scale. The form that influence takes depends primarily on one's strength of character, centering, and willingness to take responsibility. Unless these qualities are rooted in the being, there is a tendency for power to become distorted as belligerence, dogmatism, or some other form of gross egotism. As is obvious to anyone who watches politics and world affairs, just because a person is in a powerful position does not necessarily mean that he or she is great. To become worthy of admiration or reverence requires passing through many tests of character that may not be obvious from the outside. These tests might be repeated throughout a lifetime, and become increasingly intense as the individual grows more aware of subtler, deeper levels of the unconscious that craves and distorts power toward narrow and egotistical ends.

Your self-respect, character, and dignity are being put through an endurance test. It can mean there might be some intense grappling with inner demons like greed, narcissism, and pride, to name



34 Great Power

just a few. You might have to make hard choices, knowing that any decisions you make now will have far-reaching consequences not only for yourself but for others as well. Or, you may have to be very strong and hold your ground when everything within and around you is disintegrating. Don't be tempted by flattery or sure-cure inducements that come with a price tag attached; it would be a regrettable compromise to do so.

It is wise now to avoid extremes of any kind, particularly if you are in a powerful position. Weigh all things in the balance before reaching conclusions. The effect your decisions will have on others should not be ignored or taken lightly.

Finally, remember that the higher your profile, the more likely you are to become the focus of other people's envy and discontent; unfortunately, it goes with the territory. A sense of decorum and self-restraint is essential when you are the center of attention, although it is not always easy. Don't compromise your integrity by becoming petty or small-minded because of someone else's negativity. You have much to offer and can set wheels in motion that will be great for everyone, so stay on course.



Great Power 34

The Changes

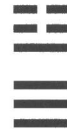
Bottom Line

Climbing over others to “reach the top” is a negligent use of power. You might have what it takes to get your way right now, but it is likely that exercising that influence would turn out badly in the end, so prepare the ground and let that be enough for the present.

Line 2



You may feel life is giving you the green light for rapid advancement, and it's as though you're plugged in to megawatts of energy, but do not, in your enthusiasm, start running roughshod over others. Exercising some restraint will help you to prevent carelessness, thereby avoiding unpleasant consequences later on.



Line 3

It is all too easy to begin believing that just because you're in a position of influence you have the right to impose your opinions on others. This is dangerous territory to enter; no one appreciates being made to feel inferior or told they're in the wrong.

Line 4

Receiving an existential go-ahead is a tremendous boost of energy. Enjoy the power and

34 Great Power

influence you have now, but stay mindful that to use it most wisely often means using it most quietly. This is a great time for expanding your self-awareness by letting go of unconscious habits whenever they crop up. This will strengthen your capacity to deal with adversity accurately and efficiently, without a loss to your dignity or your energy.

Line 5

It is time to change the script now – you're no longer the underdog! So stop barking and baring your teeth at shadows, and start shaking the hands of the folks who are offering them to you.

Top Line

You can't effectively go forward or back, and spinning your wheels in frustration will take you nowhere fast. Making a difference in the present dynamic means starting with work on yourself; only then is it possible to proceed.



Progress 35

There is an old saying: "in the bright light of day all things become known." Circumstances are accelerating toward that illuminated zenith now; the outlook is brighter and all signs point toward an increasingly more rapid progression of events.

It is also true that the brightening light of day represents expanded awareness that is revelatory and exposing. It increases the likelihood of careful scrutiny of our actions and attitudes in many dimensions of life. Anything that once was unknown, unclear, or undercover may now be brought to light. If what has been developing is greater maturity and an increasing spirit of harmony, then there will be no need for concern or guilt in the exposure. When we are sincere and resolute in our approach to life, taking no one for granted, then finding oneself in the spotlight is a not a cause for alarm. Rather, you can observe life more keenly and even sudden turns of events are appreciated as part of the natural progression of things, and are accepted as such. If, on the other hand, you have been working behind the scenes to embellish your own reputation or enhance your position at the expense of others, all the manipulations that have gone into such efforts are, under the present circumstances, likely to be exposed.

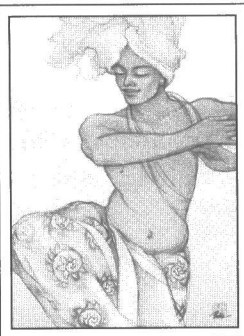
The ego enjoys letting it be known how hard it has worked to finally achieve a much deserved and probably long overdue moment of recognition. And once it has been sated by the applause, it is often all too ready to start slacking off. An irresponsible or self-involved attitude is driven

35 Progress

primarily by the need to impress others with achievements. This is a kind of narcissistic condition that only ever feels okay when others acknowledge its "specialness." But indulging this tendency has the unfortunate side effect of diminishing what could otherwise have been a peak moment of opportunity, simply because you're so involved in patting your own back that you lose your sense of timing. Recognizing the timeliness of things requires a single-pointed attentiveness in order to discern the subtle signs of change that support your next move.

Working in accordance with the time will sharpen your attention and your ability to sidestep the inconsequential. It is wiser to put your energy into increased alertness as soon as a cycle begins to peak. Otherwise there is a danger that when the opportunity for progress is at its height, you will be snoozing under a shady tree, lulled to sleep by the assumption that you've already done enough and now it's time for a nap.

Being alert now to the subtle nuances of what is happening around you will help you to stay self-contained and energetically supported by the steadily increasing wave of progress that characterizes this time. The positive effects of your endeavors will be naturally and effortlessly multiplied for one and all. Taking care of the business at hand helps you to keep your feet on the ground in spite of your being in the limelight. This is not to say that the sweetness of the moment should not be savored. There is no full stop in the journey of life; rather, the journey itself is the goal.



The Changes

Bottom line

Maintaining attentiveness, clear-headedness, and personal integrity should be the focus of your attention now. It may feel as though others are restricting your progress, or lack confidence in your abilities. But the best way to deal with it is to stay centered and positive. Turn your attention to what needs to be done, and do it to the best that you can. In time, the obstacles you are facing will begin to dissolve.



Line 2

When you relax your grip, your hand will open. When you open your hand, you might find that it is filled with something even better than what you thought you wanted.



Line 3

Progress is not always best accomplished by individual pilgrims. Sometimes it takes being part of a group to reach the place where you intend to go. If you're naturally a loner, consider joining with others now and seeing how far it takes you. If you're naturally a team player, it's your time to shine.

Line 4

It would be foolish to withhold your energy now in an attempt to manipulate events. And it

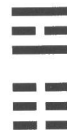
would be equally foolish to roll over and be used by others in service of their own questionable motives. Progress is not always a good thing, and the means don't always justify the ends. If something in the air smells fishy, it is wise to move to higher ground to better see exactly what all the stink is about, and then you can decide if it's worth going there.

Line 5

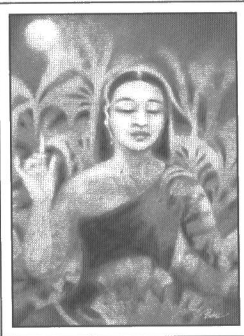
The sun rises throughout the morning, increasing its bright and life-affirmative quality; upon reaching its zenith at midday, it naturally moves into descent and the gradual darkening of the light ensues. As it is above, so it is below. This is how all life works. Don't fall into the trap of looking for some way to improve upon it by hurrying the natural progression along. Everything is absolutely perfect as it is.

Top Line

Use this time for focused work, and, rather than becoming exhausted, you will find that your energy will increase. If you give 100 percent, and at the same time stay relaxed and easy about whether you're successful or not, you can gain an uncommon satisfaction of a job well done. In this way it is possible to ride the cresting wave and not get personally invested in your progress.



Darkening of the Light 36



Many myths and traditions teach us to equate light with “good” and dark with “bad.” Approaching life from a rounder and more holistic point of view observes the two as irrevocably joined – sustaining, relieving, and complementing one another. Just as daylight begins to fade after the sun has reached its zenith, everything in life must have a cooling down, contracting, darkening period in order to rest and be refreshed. Nothing could live if it were always day. The same laws apply for human beings: we would burn out very quickly if our energy was going full throttle, 24 hours a day. Ask anyone who suffers from insomnia how dread-



ful it is to not be able to tune out, turn off, and rest. There is a shut-down time for everything. The dark element that is becoming more pervasive now implies that it's time to withdraw. In fact, it would be irresponsible to start anything new until the dark period is past. Getting involved in stimulating or consuming activity would be counterproductive and out of tune with the Tao. All signs point toward your becoming more self-contained, less outgoing, and in general keeping out of sight (of others) and out of mind (your own). It may be that a dark element has been influencing conditions for some time unbeknownst to you. Now that it has become apparent you may well feel caught out, exposed, and vulnerable. When the once clear-cut and obvious becomes foggy and uncertain, it becomes necessary to slow down in order to get your bearings and acclimatize yourself to the unfamiliar surroundings.

36 Darkening of the Light

Here the focus is on using the “down time” creatively for self-development and working on your potential for remaining centered and true to your ideals however dark and stressful any external forces might seem. Using this time intelligently will increase your ability to not collapse or throw in the towel of defeat by interpreting difficulties as absolute endings.

It can be demeaning and frustrating to be ignored as though you don't exist, especially when you are making every effort to enhance the conditions around you. If all your attempts to make a contribution are consistently met with indifference, you are likely to be feeling extremely vulnerable and can easily succumb to anger or retaliation. Another distressing scenario is to have your presence be upsetting for someone else to the point where the “gap” keeps widening, tension mounts, and the surrounding atmosphere becomes hostile. Once any of the above happens it is critical to pull the plug by withdrawing in order to gain insight into any bitterness or vindictiveness that's been smoldering beneath the surface. It's a perfect time to deal with your own garbage before complaining about someone else's.

Acting hastily by pushing to restore the balance now will only prolong the time of difficulty, and disengagement should not be seen as shameful or as a sign of failure but as the necessary, intelligent course to take. Under the circumstances, withdrawal is a positive move that points you in the right direction. It will create some much needed space and time to gain a better overview.



Darkening of the Light 36

The Changes

Bottom Line

In order to get back in touch with your truth, meditate on any areas of negativity that have begun to surface. Do not beat yourself up over the past; rather, be ready to let go of it. Taking personal responsibility begins with self-acceptance and forgiveness, and is a big step toward restoring equilibrium for yourself and with others.

Line 2



Sometimes the best thing that can happen is to get knocked for a loop. If such a shock has happened lately, pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and use the energy of all that adrenaline to move on, maybe a bit battered but certainly wiser for it.



Line 3

When you come face-to-face with the person who is playing the “prince of darkness” in the present drama, the strength of your own light may come as a surprise. Proceed with caution, however; you might have blinded the rascal with your brilliance for now, but his eyes are likely to adjust in time and he’ll be looking for you – so watch your back!

36 Darkening of the Light

Line 4

Owls are often equated with wisdom because they can see clearly in the dark. Sometimes the wisest thing to do when faced with overwhelming darkness is to fly away. If you can see clearly that this is what you need to do, don’t hesitate any longer to take off.

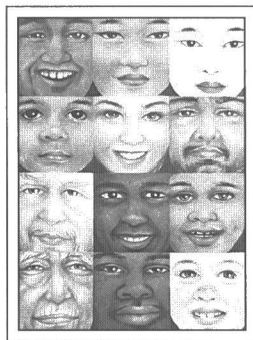
Line 5

Contemplate the moon: its radiance is light reflected. It functions like a mirror without identifying with darkness or with light. Its presence is a reminder of the beauty of neutrality – resting comfortably in the middle. Avoid getting caught up with extremes. Remaining aloof and detached is what is called for now.

Top Line

Whatever you’ve been enduring has already reached a crescendo. Be grateful that the darkest hour always heralds the dawn, and it doesn’t get darker than this, so lay low and wait. Relief is just below the horizon.





We are all members of one human family. Faced with constant threats to their survival, our ancestors – black, red, yellow, and white – developed family and tribal bonds. Clans, tribes, nations have fought one another down the ages to protect themselves and further their bloodlines, customs, and beliefs. Now, as a species, we have finally reached a threshold: we can no longer afford to base our relationships on factionalism and noncooperation. If we remain entrenched within our collective inheritance of aggression, fear, and separation, we will bring to a standstill life as we know it.

We have the intelligence to learn from our shared past and create a better world for our children to inherit. Each of us carries the seeds of that future buried deep within our hearts and in our dreams. Lasting change can be made, but only through our collective commitment to clear up the mistakes of the past. This process requires not only tolerance of our differences but a genuine willingness to work with them. Initially these are shaky, challenging steps to take, but they are made easier when we focus on our commonality rather than our dissimilarity. The effort is more than worth it, for the leap in consciousness that will occur when we leave the negative legacy of history behind will transfigure the entire earth and all that lives on it.

Taking responsibility for playing your part well means making a conscious choice to increase

your awareness; only then can you avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Listen to others and be respectful of differences but stay alert to any factionalism, comparison, or segregation. Shift the attention toward creating and strengthening mutual support, rather than rehashing old, worn-out patterns of perception and reaction. If you live by what you say, you will be respected for it. And the integrity of your actions will speak for itself.

Cross-culturally, a variety of predictions have stated that the dawn of a new age would arrive near the onset of the twenty-first century. That critical juncture is now. Crossing the threshold into the new means leaving behind our deeply ingrained fearfulness of others, and of Nature in general. The best place to start is at home, with your own familial relationships. It is virtually impossible to separate the attitudes we have toward our family members, friends, and neighbors from the way we approach society in general. The power plays we indulge in at home, behind closed doors, are no different from those that cause division among the nations of our world. Fully realizing that our longings, hopes, and dreams are a universally shared bond is a giant step in the direction of healing ourselves.

By starting right where you are you can profoundly effect positive change by eliminating your own tendencies toward creating separation, seeking control, or manipulating others. It is high time to let go of the belief that creating pain and discord improves our lives or makes us safer. Creating a difference, now, begins with you.

The Family 37

The Changes

Bottom Line

Just as there is a need for form and structure within a blood family, so, too, there must be form and structure to create cohesiveness within any group or society. When each individual shares in the responsibilities, all can benefit from the success. Unless everyone understands at the outset what is required of them, however, chaos will reign.

Line 2

Take care to stay with the work that is right in front of you. If you stick with it, you and everyone else will benefit. But if you become distracted or try to push matters along, you'll create trouble for all, especially yourself.

Line 3

A lax attitude at home or at work is creating an undercurrent of permissiveness, creating the opportunity for certain individuals to take more and more for granted. It's essential to take a firm stand now or matters will soon spin out of control. Be sharp and clear and decisive; if your method is overly forceful, it might wound others, but even that is preferable to ignoring the problem and everyone suffering for it later.



37 The Family

Line 4

Enjoy times of plenty, but don't forget to maintain the fundamentals that created the abundance in the first place. It's a good idea to create healthy habits for the maintenance of well-being while times are sweet; this will enable you to maintain centeredness when the going gets tougher.

Line 5

Others look to you for guidance and support, and respect you for your natural warmth and strength of character. A growing atmosphere of trust and well-being is being nourished by your care, but it's important to remember your own needs as well.

Top Line

At the end of the day, it's the guy at the top who is held accountable for the successes or failures of the group. If you faithfully walk your talk without compromising your truth or your vision, others will be supportive and there will be progress.



Opposition 38



Opposition can be a profound learning experience when it leads to the understanding that differences do not have to create breakdowns. In fact, all apparently opposing forces highlight the unique qualities, the strengths as well as the weaknesses of each other. We commonly define sadness as opposite to joy, dark in opposition to light, death against life. But from a broader perspective these qualities are two sides of the same coin, dual aspects of wholeness. In fact, each serves the other, adds spice to life, and creates a beauty that far exceeds the limitations set by rigid thinking.

It is said that for everything there is a season, a time, and space for every purpose and person under heaven. All that *is*, plays an integral part in the big picture of existence. Each being, blade of grass, mountain or star, is individual, unique, and independent yet somehow mysteriously interrelated to everything else. Only the human mind creates the illusion of estrangement and opposition.

When we find ourselves in a state of mind contrary to the opinions of another, both parties need to back away from the argument to gain a broader perspective. This cools down the heat of defensiveness and creates space enough for each person to begin to understand the other's point of view. Head-butting is not just exhausting – it creates all kinds of headaches and unnecessary complications. Cutting off from someone because they're different, or because you don't agree

38 Opposition

with their opinion, simply shuts the door of cooperation that could provide insight and result in a breakthrough. Once you label a person as "impossible" you're cheating everyone, especially yourself. Excluding the difficult is never a solution, because it prevents any real understanding of the challenges to be faced, and simply prolongs the discord.

The intelligent approach to opposition is to first define a neutral ground, and then come together on it. It may be difficult to do so, but if you persevere, it will be more than worth the effort, and can bring unexpected benefits.

No matter how intolerable the situation may be, nothing is impossible once all parties are genuinely willing to give peace a chance. Difficulties in communication can always be overcome if there is a sincere desire to accomplish harmony. It might take time to restore balance, but trusting that it is possible and working toward that goal will ultimately deepen and strengthen the bonds between you. If differences can be aired in an atmosphere of respect, where each individual has plenty of space to express his or her thoughts and grievances without fear of judgment or retaliation, it's an improved situation for everyone.

Finally, not taking yourself or your opinions so seriously will help to dispel your own hard line thinking and at the same time creates more space for trust. A little humor helps, too, because it lightens up the heaviness of an atmosphere created by skepticism and withholding.

Opposition 38

The Changes

Bottom Line

One of the most puzzling manifestations of opposition arises when elements that naturally harmonize with one another have somehow become estranged. Whether this estrangement has come about because of a misunderstanding or because of external forces beyond your control, avoid the temptation to try to force a happy reunion. The better course is to trust in the wisdom of nature, knowing that that which really belongs together will reunite in its own time.

Line 2

Times of opposition sometimes bring unexpected opportunities to discover new harmonies. It's a bit like an improvisational jam session that begins in dissonance and somehow magically clicks into a truly inspired and spontaneous concert. Count yourself lucky in this one, and enjoy your role in the new band.

Line 3

If you're in a position where another is holding back information or energy, or is being aggressive, don't waste your own energy in a confrontation that will only make matters worse. Rather, take time to consider what the source of your disappointment is, what future ideals you've become invested in, and relax your grip. Letting go means returning to a space of neutrality within yourself with an attitude that is willing to see what is possible without investment in particular outcomes.

38 Opposition

Line 4

Remember the old adage "Where there's a will, there's a way." It's not just a saying, it is a truth. Everybody is unique, yet paradoxically we are all the same. Celebrating our differences brings harmony into everyone's life.

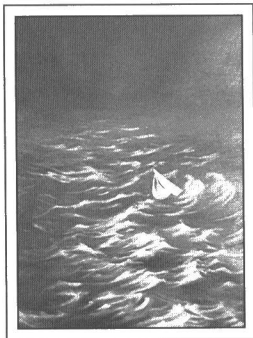
Line 5

Avoid using seduction or any other form of manipulation to coerce others to take sides. To play that game is to get caught up in politics. It diminishes your own integrity and ultimately creates mistrust.

Top Line

Stubbornly fostering an attitude that proclaims there's "no way" the relationship can work exposes the fact that somewhere in your thinking there is a hidden fear that perceives coming together as threatening. It's a good idea to clarify within your own mind what it is you're afraid of losing. Once you've got that straight, the situation will improve naturally.

Obstacles 39



The media presents countless images of a flawless, streamlined life that never sweats the small stuff. It's the glamour of the movers and shakers – a façade that sends the message that it's all under control, that those who have made it can do whatever they want, whenever they want. They have enough clout to gain entry anywhere, anytime. They are never questioned, never frustrated or disappointed.

The reality is that we never meet such modern-day myths on the streets where we live. There are no guarantees in life – we humans do not have ultimate control over its unfolding lessons and ups and downs. No matter what

our achievements may be, each and every one of us can be faced at any time with obstructions that appear insurmountable and seem to prevent all progress.

Unfortunate events that occur completely out of the blue can be devastating to your sense of security. Suddenly you find that the crisis demands your whole attention at a time when it is difficult enough just to keep your head above water. If the deteriorating conditions persist you can begin to panic at the prospect of a severe setback that might have long-term consequences, or even be impossible to overcome. But once you succumb to panic, then helplessness and confusion are sure to follow with a stranglehold on clear thinking that promptly sends all your efforts to keep it together straight down the drain. Struggling against what is happening will just compound your frustration as all your strategies seem to lead nowhere or, worse, increase your difficulties.

39 Obstacles

You can bemoan the unfairness of fate, but all that really does is indulge the victim mentality, which further weakens you by draining your potential for empowered action. To work creatively with what the present circumstances are bringing, you must heed your gut intuition, and bypass anything that threatens to divert you from its guidance.

Honestly ask yourself if you have become too fixated on progress at the expense of harmony with others, and your own inner balance. When things reach such a state, the whole point is that you have missed the point . . . that whatever you're clinging to is the very thing you're meant to let go of. As soon as you begin to relax the viselike grip of fear and stop struggling to keep it all together, the situation will start to feel less overwhelming.

The big picture is dispassionate; it is never fixed, it is an ongoing, balancing dynamic that works to reduce excess and fill emptiness. Tuning in to that “bigger picture” is essential now. Choose to keep your energy moving, even though just at this moment it might not make sense to you, rather than to roll over belly-up in defeat. Work with what arises in the moment, in the best way you can; if you're willing to persevere by rolling with the current, rather than resisting it, you will not only survive but you will succeed. By taking responsibility for the choices you make, the apparently insurmountable can be conquered.

The Changes

Bottom Line

If you haven't yet measured the height and width of that big boulder in your path, don't be too quick to unpack your hiking boots and climbing gear. Better to take a look around and see if there are any alternative trails you might have missed. Even if scaling the boulder is the only option, it's probably not a bad idea to sit down by the side of the road and have a little snack first to build up your strength.



Line 2

Navigating your way through the darkness requires heightened alertness and sensitivity that makes it possible to "see" through all the senses. The fear that is caused by uncertainty, however, can interfere with the very sharpness of the senses that is needed. If your goal is larger than merely serving your own individual interests, you can proceed even in the darkest night without fear. You will be supported in many visible and invisible ways.



Line 3

Abandoning all your everyday routines in order to deal with difficulties and obstructions can have the unintended consequence of leaving others around you off balance and feeling threatened. Slow down, come back to your center, and look for a middle way out of the present impasse.



Line 4

Don't be afraid to expose your vulnerability and seek whatever guidance may help you strengthen your intuitive sense of what is needed. Trying times happen to every living thing. To be alive means to be vulnerable. Misfortune can be strengthening and empowering; it all depends on your perspective. Your awareness can become much sharper under challenging circumstances, and your capacity to deal with obstacles can be strengthened by the knowledge that you have support from others.



Line 5

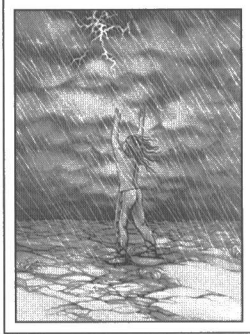
To live in uncertainty is to live in tune with what is. To live in uncertainty is to live in trust. To squeeze every drop from all of life's experiences, not just the sweet but the bitter, too, means you are continuously nurtured by the Great Mother.

Top Line

When you are faced with obstacles, it makes little difference whether they are due to a change in someone's emotional climate, the sociopolitical climate, or global climate change. All difficulties are reminders that no matter how hard we work to secure our place in the world, the possibility exists that we can suffer a loss or opposition from any number of sources. You can't escape the reality; you can only adjust your inner response to the outer circumstances.



Deliverance 40



The time of Deliverance is captured best in the image of a thunderstorm. As in nature, when there has been a long dry spell, and thunderheads are gathering on the horizon, the time for deliverance is at hand. Before a storm breaks, the accumulation of energy and tension can build to a point where it feels almost unbearable. Then, the sudden release of pent-up energy in lightning and thunder delivers the earth from the oppressive conditions in the gusts of wind and cooling rain.

Awareness and grounding are especially needed at a time like this, lest you get swept off your feet by your own overwhelming sense of relief and



euphoria. The small, ordinary things of life still need careful and ongoing attention – and taking care of business is the best preventative medicine to ward off the let-down that can often follow such a high.

That's not to say it's inappropriate to rejoice or feel unburdened now – rather, enjoy and keep your feet on the ground. When a thunderstorm has passed, there is an uncommon freshness and sense of renewal in the air . . . and there is often a fair amount of debris on the ground that needs sorting through and cleaning up. It is vital now to identify and clear away any destructive thoughts or actions that might have created the heavy atmosphere that lead up to the storm. Taking time for reflection will strengthen your ability to learn from your actions and help you gain the clarity not to repeat the same mistakes in the future. No matter what the sources of past tensions, it is

40 Deliverance

now possible to observe them with less passion and greater equanimity. And it is from this detached perspective that you can best understand what steps you need to take to move forward.

A word of caution: “detachment” is cool, free from emotional storms and drama, but it is not cold and unfeeling. In the aftermath of all the storms and interplay of energies in life, it is always important to maintain a spirit of open-heartedness and compassion. Forgiveness is a healing force, and it is just as important to forgive ourselves as it is to forgive others. In fact, the two often go together. By letting go of the past and its turmoil, you will clear the ground for the lessons of Deliverance to take firm root in the soil and grow into a deeper and more profound liberation of the spirit.



If any hurts or misunderstandings remain unaddressed in the current situation, it's time to acknowledge them, do whatever is possible to heal the wounds or clear up the misunderstandings, and move on. There is a window of opportunity now to move quickly and decisively into a new order of things, and this is best accomplished with heartfelt gratitude for all the lessons learned.

The Changes

Bottom Line

One of the ways that nature uses a thunderstorm is to clear away the dead branches to make room for the new to grow. If you are one of those tender young branches who has been struggling to find space to establish yourself on the tree, now is your moment!

Line 2



The aftermath of a particularly wild storm can either bring out the best or the worst in people as everybody scrambles to find their bearings. The wise will keep their wits about them in the knowledge that once all the excitement has passed, a newly washed and luminous landscape will reveal exactly where everybody stands. Make sure you are hanging out in a place where you're going to be happy to be seen.



Line 3

One of the heady side effects of deliverance from restrictive conditions is that it is easy to get carried away by the sudden sense of liberation. But this is probably not the best moment to launch any grandiose new schemes, nor is it wise to let your head outgrow your hat. Ultimately the art to learn is how to watch the pendulum swings of life, not to get caught up in the thrill of the ride.

Line 4

In reviewing all the factors that created the need for Deliverance in the first place, it's important

not to take anything for granted. Sometimes what imprisons us is exactly what we cling to for security, whether it is a work environment, a set of comforting routines, or a group of old friends. Make sure that you are not trying to hold on to anything that has the potential to grow into a familiar old prison before you can even begin to spread your wings and fly into the new.

Line 5



It might be comforting to think that somebody else can liberate us, but the truth of the matter is that each of us holds the key to deliverance in our own hands. When outside circumstances combine to remind you of your inner freedom, it is both a gift and a provocation. If you expect the door to open magically by itself, you're living in a fantasy. You're going to have to put that key in the lock and turn it, and then push the door open using your own strength.

Top Line

Like the flash of lightning in a dark night, Deliverance can sometimes bring just a brief moment of illumination. If you're busy looking at the light show in the sky, you'll miss the opportunity to look around you and take note of the contours of a landscape that has previously been hidden. You'll need to stay present and be alert in order to get all the information you need so that you'll know where to go once the moment has passed.



Decrease 41

The Tao decreases and increases as it is needed, impersonally, and on a grand scale. There are times when letting go seems devastating, the end of the world; however, it doesn't always have to be so, and it might help to remember that less is sometimes more.

The whole of nature is an ebb and flow – the tides, the seasons, the very breathing of all living creatures. We appreciate some aspects of nature's letting go, but we run into trouble when the same dynamic is at play in our own lives.

The word *decrease* is generally equated with something bad – diminishing returns, less money, less love, less influence, less security, and so on. But this one-sided perspective doesn't take into account the quality of decrease that is an essential part of the dynamic of growth. It is the part that curbs excess, trims the fat, facilitates the restoration of balance – and brings us to our knees, where we must find the inner resources to grow into a fuller realization of our potential.

The message of Decrease implies the need to cut back, to acknowledge the importance – and the adequacy – of the bare essentials. While it is a pleasure to accumulate and comfortable to have more than you really need, once the comfort zone has grown excessive it becomes burdensome. Getting too cozy creates stagnation and defeats the drive to get out and explore new territories – just as too much good cooking can make you fat, if you don't energetically work it off. Always having everything you need right at your fingertips can create complacency, or downright laziness.

41 Decrease

Decrease marks the time for simplifying your life. And the very process of cutting back and paring things down to the essentials – whether it's on an emotional level, in material possessions, or a sheer extravagance of pleasurable occasions – brings you right where you need to be in order to remain in sync with the changing climate of the times.

Put aside any worries you might have about making what might appear to be sacrifices now by remembering that periods of decrease can awaken your resourcefulness and sharpen your sensitivity to the world around you. It's an opportunity to find out that life can be just as rich and meaningful without the ribbons and bows, just as pleasurable without all the little indulgences you might have grown accustomed to. The lesson to be learned now is how to willingly cut back on activities or thought patterns that are draining your energy or otherwise taking more of your attention than you can afford. If life proceeds to facilitate this process by forcing you to cut back even more, turn your attention to making the most of what you have rather than focusing on what is being taken away, or what's happening for the guy next to you. It is an invitation to contemplate the bigger picture of your life and sort out the essential from the nonessential. If you can learn to pass through times of decrease without fretting and trying to hold on, you will come to understand the benefits that simpler times always bring. Like a good spring cleaning, letting go can freshen your outlook, create more room to grow, and unburden your heart.

Decrease 41

The Changes

Bottom Line

The balance of increase and decrease is at play in our lives every day, on every level. Nothing really disappears – even matter cannot be destroyed – it is only redistributed. Stay alert to keep the balance in your daily life now whether you are in a position to give or receive. It is neither the time for excessive hoarding nor excessive generosity.

Line 2

Once we've been stripped of whatever it is that must be taken away, we are vulnerable, laid bare. It may be that you need help or support from others, and there is no shame in this. Mysteriously, only after you have experienced the necessity of letting go are you able to be empathetic to the plight of others and to sincerely give from the heart.

Line 3

Being confronted with the reality that it's time to withdraw from certain activities is directly related to how much of your identity you have invested in them. A time of decrease can seem to come upon us in an instant, like the bursting bubble of a stock market crash. The upset shifts everybody's focus – and it can bring out the best in people by forcing them to recognize and appreciate what they have.



41 Decrease

Line 4

Focus totally on the task at hand, whatever it is, even if it seems as “useless” as counting grains of rice. It's your choice, ultimately, how to view the prospect of making do with less. Far from being a cause for despair, it can be seen as a cleansing that streamlines your life from the inside out. It's your call.

Line 5

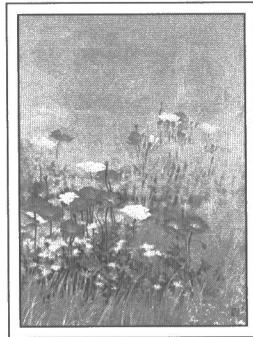
You might be wondering why everybody else seems to be suffering so much from the need to simplify and cut back, while you find the same circumstances to be refreshingly in tune with your own inner rhythms. If so, celebrate your good fortune and do what you can to help others look at the rainbows rather than fixate on the clouds.

Top Line

Decrease is a little like going on a diet. The earliest days can be a torture, overwhelmed by thoughts of all the goodies you can't have. Everyone else's plate looks mouthwatering, and your own seems so bland. Comparison is a hellish, nasty habit of the ego that continuously needs to evaluate how it's doing in relation to others. There is absolutely no point to the exercise, and indulging it will only make you feel bad.



Increase 42



Increase all that is good and true. Increase all that is nourishing and uplifting within yourself and for others. In a time of golden opportunity, anything less than abundantly sharing falls way too short of the mark. It has been said in so many ways, and is worth saying again here and now, that giving is far sweeter than receiving.

Today it seems to be increasingly rare to hear of acts of sincere and open generosity that have been undertaken without expectation of reward or recognition. Those delicious, random acts of kindness are not something we usually read about in the papers. Seldom are they ever mentioned on

TV. Instead, we are more likely to hear of those who have amassed fortunes and used that wealth to expand their buying power.

Nevertheless, when we do hear of some act of inexplicable generosity and caring, we pause, we are moved, and our lives somehow seem benefited by it. It doesn't make sense that some goodness that happens on the other side of the world should touch our own hearts, but it does. It seems to be a cosmic law that kindness freely given has a potential for expanding exponentially. It seems to go a long way toward healing ourselves and our planet.

Generosity is a simple affair, and the true benefits are primarily experienced within. They are revealed when spirit is unbounded, not constrained by greed or small-mindedness. Then giving becomes receiving, expanding and enriching our hearts. It's tragic to be shrunken and contracted;

42 Increase

it's magic to experience inner richness and to spread it around without reservation. So much more is available when we come from a place of "plus" rather than "minus."

Take a walk somewhere in nature during the fullness of spring, preferably in a place teeming with flowers. Consider how all that richness, that beauty and grandeur, is made available for all to enjoy whether they deserve it or not. Nature doesn't hold back; she's never miserly. Her times of increase are times that benefit all life, not just a chosen few. She is the ultimate benefactress. She grows flowers at our feet, brings rain to quench our thirst and songbirds to delight our ears, and paints the sky with so many stars we're not able to count them. We humans reap the rewards of that abundance when we function from a willingness to share.

The time of Increase is a time to look to Nature for guidance, to learn from that abundant and generous source. Following in her footsteps, you will come to understand compassion, to experience serenity, and discover your own unlimited capacity to nurture yourself and others. By really taking her lessons to heart, you can't help but be inspired to become the best you can be, and in turn to support others to grow to the fullest realization of their potential.

The Changes

Bottom Line

When you find fortune smiling on you and all your undertakings seem easier, it's the perfect time to reach out and give support to others. Once your own burdens are lessened, you can in turn ease the way for someone else.

Line 2

As your field of influence expands, your actions can go a long way toward setting wholesome precedents for others. It is appropriate and intelligent to suffuse all that you do with gratitude for the support you have been given from so many directions. Let the increase proliferate. All kinds of projects can flourish in leaps and bounds now, but be sure not to neglect the everyday simplicities of life as you embrace the opportunities that open to you now.

Line 3

Sometimes harm happens to good people, and in the very process of the happening it becomes beneficial. If good fortune has come your way from circumstances that might otherwise be considered harmful, it's important to stay centered and sensitive to the feelings of those around you. In this way, you'll avoid misunderstandings or suspicion on the part of those who do not understand the apparent paradox.



Line 4

What could be better than going for the real gold in the knowledge that in your own small way you've helped to make the world a better place? Once in a while, each of us is called upon to serve as a mediator between the fortunate and the less fortunate, to facilitate the sharing of increase for the ultimate benefit of all. Don't be afraid to take the risks inherent in this position; it would not have come your way if you weren't suited for it.

Line 5

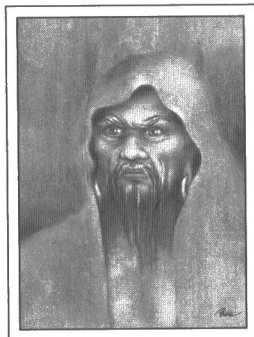
Sometimes the best thing to do when somebody says "Thank you" is to say "You're welcome." Ever notice how all those protestations of "Oh, really, it was nothing" tend to just draw more attention to the person being thanked? If attention is not what you are looking for, watch that you don't make too much fuss about not wanting it.

Top Line

Timing is important in times of Increase, as it is important in all situations. Be aware not to offer more than you will actually be able to deliver. That's the surest way to turn a happy opportunity for sharing into a burdensome duty, and grateful anticipation into disappointment.



Resoluteness 43



However many rivers you have already crossed, a time will arrive when your tenacity and inner resolve are again put to the test. Such moments can be terribly disheartening and exhausting, and they threaten to destroy your sense of progress. You may feel as if you are in a confrontation with a brick wall, as the hurdles that seemed insignificant before appear insurmountable now. The tension is exacerbated by weakened resolve and the fear of making foolish decisions that could undermine what has been accomplished.

When you find yourself in a crisis where everything seems at the point of breakdown, avoid reacting aggressively, getting defensive, or trying to combat the problems head-on. Like being caught in quicksand, the more you struggle, the more you'll be sucked in. Surviving difficult challenges depends upon your ability to stay centered, focused, and as calm as possible. Reacting emotionally to a crisis will only compound the difficulties. Be firm, yet flexible, and work steadily to resolve the situation. It may take a good deal more time and energy than you expected, but adopting a nondogmatic approach and keeping things in perspective is the solution now.

Trying to restore harmony and at the same time avoid extremes of attitude or behavior can feel like taming wild animals that are running in every direction at once. Nevertheless, what is really at issue is more subtle than you think. Can you remain uncompromisingly focused on your goal? Take time to examine what has been motivating you, and weed out any half-truths or grandiose

43 Resoluteness

and egoistic ideas you may have been harboring. Looking for the quickest way out of a bad situation isn't necessarily going to help, and may actually divert you from the step-by-step work of taking responsibility for your actions. Any halfheartedness on your part will weaken your credibility and eventually create mistrust in others. Feigning aloofness, making a show of strength, or any other face-saving ploys aren't going to help, either; you'll just look foolish and will still have to deal with the real challenges.

Be as creative as possible and stay very alert while plotting a course through this minefield of difficulties. Only by deeply trusting in yourself and the power of intuitive guidance can you find a resolution. Even if you disagree with what others have to say, do not react or argue, but stay open and hear them out. When a breakthrough seems imminent, remember to remain alert. The real moment of resolution will become apparent in due course; it cannot be forced. Resoluteness requires cool detachment, patience, and unwavering purpose. Being flexible enough to move with the changes without compromising your vision is the key to success.

The image of Bodhidharma, the sage who carried the teachings of Buddha from India across the Himalayas to China, portrays the uncompromising integrity and absolute focus that is possible when we are deeply rooted in our truth. Thanks to Bodhidharma's tenacity and strength of character, he finally reached his goal, and Buddhism took hold and spread throughout the East. This is resoluteness – the unwavering quality that makes it possible to endure all kinds of mental and physical hardships, external pressures or emotional intrigues, whenever they arise on your path.

Resoluteness 43

The Changes

Bottom Line

Stop and reconsider what is really required of you before attempting to take on anything more. You either overestimated your capacity or underestimated what would be needed, and now must cut back your involvement considerably. Pushing ahead will only create further problems.

Line 2

You may feel you're constantly rushing around putting out fires and thus cannot afford to rest, even for a moment – that you must stay absolutely alert. If you can let up a bit but become aware of self-defeating patterns in your character, and are willing to deal with external difficulties, you'll find that not only can you handle whatever arises, but you may become quite skillful at coping with adversity.

Line 3

Between a rock and a hard place, you are faced with difficult decisions. Although others have distorted ideas regarding your position, you must stay true to what you know to be right even if it feels as though you are utterly alone in the choices you make.

43 Resoluteness

Line 4

Stubbornly pushing forward will not only give you a headache, but you'll lose support. The present stalemate can be resolved only by letting go of your ironclad attachment to a particular approach and opening up to the suggestions of others.

Line 5

You are continually confronted by difficulties that threaten to drain away your energy and resolve. Nevertheless, going straight to the roots of each problem and uncompromisingly dealing with it in the best way possible is all you can do. Only in this way will you remain above reproach.

Top Line

Just when it appears you've achieved a victory and can relax, you must be the most alert. The fact is that out of unawareness, negative influences buried within yourself or in others can undermine and thus defeat all that has been created up to now. This would be an unfortunate loss.

The Attraction of Opposites 44



Mutual attraction is an indication of compatibility but does not necessarily guarantee it. Inexplicably, attraction can disappear as easily as it appeared, leaving both parties wondering “what was that all about?” When two people are genuinely attracted, the ideal would be to approach each other from positions of equality and independence, ready and willing to meet on equal ground. When the pull of attraction is accompanied by enough patience to let things develop naturally, true friendship can result. And whatever else is going on, in this type of atmosphere any commitments made are based on respect for each partner’s uniqueness and independence. Such a relationship emphasizes maintaining balance and supporting each other’s conscious evolution, rather than excess, over-emotionalism, and unconscious behavior.

We all know about the enticing nature of what’s been forbidden, and the not-so-attractive outcome after going there. Temptation may start innocently as curiosity or flirtation, but it can become an irresistible force when a desire is on the verge of being realized. And when the enticement is strong enough and self-awareness ignored, we can rapidly fall into a state of eager self-delusion, unable to stay in touch with reality, rationalizing every word and gesture to justify our actions. Acting out of passion alone considerably increases the chances of disillusionment and regret later on.

As soon as the magnetic pull of temptation succumbs to a sense of urgency, at least one of the partners has become heavily invested in a particular outcome. The easy atmosphere that would

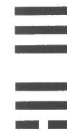


44 The Attraction of Opposites

engender trust is then replaced by pressure and coercive tactics that undermine it and ultimately weaken the relationship itself. Once you resort to manipulative seduction you’ve compromised your own self-respect and the integrity of the other. However inconsequential seduction may appear initially, once the magic evaporates you’re not only left with a bitter taste, but must deal with the demands for a resolution. Needless to say, the return to normalcy and a firm foundation can be traumatic and a long, drawn-out affair when we deny the part we’ve played in any deception, place blame elsewhere, and avoid taking responsibility for our naïveté or impulsiveness.

A powerful attraction deserves to be acknowledged, but from a cooler, uninvested perspective. Take time to consider your evolving feelings regarding the other. Where there is balance there is unity and progress, but to become affiliated with a person of weak character out of your own unawareness would be a pity.

Spiritual traditions acknowledge in a variety of ways the central importance of learning to unite wisdom and passion, the head and heart. The sacred art of Tibetan Buddhism, for example, depicts the literal coupling of deities, representing the perfectly balanced, ecstatic union of two equally powerful energies. This image can serve as a reminder of the power of conscious consummation.



The Attraction of Opposites 44

The Changes

Bottom Line

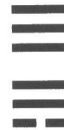
Be alert to anything that might be undermining well-being. Every time your mind sweeps you up in extremes, take note and nip it in the bud. Otherwise, out of unawareness regarding the power of your own thoughts, you could easily dally in little intrigues that would soon become big dramas.

Line 2

Negative thinking is like a virus; it needs to be checked when it first appears so that it doesn't spread. You must be very diligent to clear your mind of inner complaints and judgments. At the same time, avoid becoming influenced by someone else's unhealthy attitude.

Line 3

You've become preoccupied, and the direction you're attracted to is prompting hesitation and uncertainty. The situation is uncomfortable, but if you press forward, you are choosing to resist the natural support of Tao. It is best to become clear within your own mind before making any moves.



44 The Attraction of Opposites

Line 4

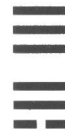
You may be feeling bugged by others, but your intolerance is a reflection of your own small-mindedness. To shut others out by judging them as insignificant, inappropriate, or intolerable would be like shooting yourself in the leg. You may well need their support later on, so practice tolerance and forgiveness.

Line 5

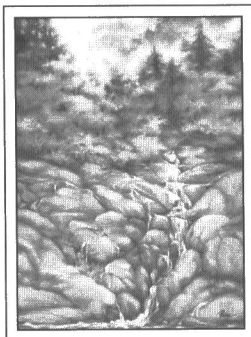
Truth doesn't need advertising or proof. Continue with what you know to be right, and don't get sidetracked by attempting to impress others with your efforts or your views.

Top Line

You're damned if you do and damned if you don't – this is one of those times when you will be judged unfavorably whatever you do. It would go against your grain to postpone now because of others' opinions, so make a decision and stick to it; once you do you won't look back.



Gathering Together 45



Water travels for hundreds of miles, sometimes beginning as a tiny stream, disappearing beneath the soil, eventually resurfacing. In time the rivulets become rivers, strengthened by the journey of merging with others. The mightiest river is formed in this way, and finally it carves its course through stone over millennia in its unstoppable journey to reach the sea. The process is essentially the same on a human scale. Joining with others, creatively resolving all kinds of challenges, being patient with differences and persevering through hard times makes reaching the goal not only possible but even more rewarding.

The real treasure, however, lies not in reaching conclusions but in the day-to-day journey itself. The value of Gathering Together is only revealed over time, once the process of mutual commitment has intensified and the respect for the shared capacity of the group is in place. In this incidental way, without exhaustive effort, the strength and maturity of each individual grows as a by-product of merging with others.

Social groups of any kind are like living cells in that they are formed around a nucleus or a common denominator that links the individual parts. In the world of technology the phenomenon of the Internet joins the lives of thousands who share common objectives or interests, creating a global community. On a more intimate scale, it might be an individual, an ideology, a practice, or project that brings people together and strengthens the sense of community. In

45 Gathering Together

ideal circumstances harmoniousness is not restricted or duty bound; rather, it is refreshment for body, mind, and spirit.

In every life there are moments when we realize that independently we can only go so far, but by joining with others we can go the distance and become a force to be reckoned with. The time of Gathering Together is one where you are called upon to give of yourself out of a genuine willingness to support the whole, without fostering selfish motives or a hidden agenda. If you sense problems brewing that could undermine the stability of the group, be alert and ready to deal with them. Don't shirk responsibility by hiding your head in the sand. It won't work. The time is now for your total participation. Support group harmony with sensitivity in whatever way you can.

Although you might not have intended to stand out from the crowd, you may find that for the present, as the group requires it, you're functioning in a role of authority. If so, you may need to be very flexible and perform various roles that you would never have expected. Leaders must be mediators and clarifiers of the group's real objectives, providers of form and direction, maintainers of overview, and the general all-round handyman who keeps the gears greased and the wheels in motion. The support you can give with your strong yet humble, heartfelt leadership improves conditions for everyone.

Gathering Together 45

The Changes

Bottom Line

It is wise to be clear with yourself what is prompting your involvement with a group, and the direction that involvement is taking. Take the time to realign with your intuition before coming to a decision. Few things are more painful than prolonged indecision, and the resolution of the dilemma lies within your own self.

Line 2

Trust in your innate capacity to creatively endure under all kinds of adversity. Remembering that will help when sharing in the responsibilities of a group becomes quite a stretch. You may be surprised to find you're a source of strength for others during shaky times.

Line 3

Remember that glitches are part of every process of growing, and that growth is very much what is happening for you and everyone else involved. It's through the rough patches that our true colors are exposed and our commitment deepened. They can also highlight where fine-tuning is needed. If you're confused or ambivalent about your role, find somebody whom you trust and talk it through.

Line 4

A live social interaction is a dynamic quality born out of each individual's contribution. You might feel as though your life is on hold for the moment as you tend to the needs of the community or



45 Gathering Together

group. But this is only temporary. Once you have contributed your unique talents to laying the foundations for the success of this particular gathering, a balance will be restored in your own individual affairs as well.

Line 5

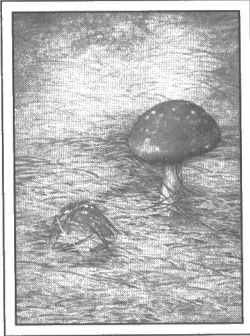
Ideally, leaders would only be necessary for providing good counsel, helping to keep communications flowing, preventing stagnation, and functioning as spokespeople when needed. Then leaders would gracefully withdraw, like a stream becoming invisible but still providing nourishment from a deeper, less obvious place. Only if you are willing to make a graceful exit when the time comes is it appropriate for you to take center stage now.

Line 6

Extending yourself toward others, feeling in sync with them, and being received by them is an enriching heartwarming experience. Moments of celebration, feasting, making music, singing, sitting in silence – all contribute to strengthening the unity and aliveness of a collective experience. There is nothing as revitalizing to a sense of well-being and purpose as wholehearted participation with others.



Pushing Upward 46



There is nothing standing in the way of your progress now. A great deal of preparation and change has coalesced to bring about this propitious time. Whatever is needed to support your best interests can be accessed easily now. Support may come from a variety of sources, and what you need will be made available with very little effort on your part.

Now you can appreciate all those past struggles that have been an essential part of your journey up to now, that have served you well by strengthening your determination to hold fast and carry on. This empowered inner sense is essential to achieving true success. The possibility of realizing a long-cherished dream is finally becoming a reality.

It is timely to ask for help from those who are in a position to guide you. They will be more than willing to lend an ear and offer sound advice. Don't get distracted by emotional euphoria that might fill your head at odd moments. Keep your feet firmly planted on the ground and attend to the business of being ordinary. The progress that has brought this time about can continue unabated if you are willing and able to stay in tune with events as they occur, without getting ahead of yourself.

An extraordinary timing has been at work in the events that have transpired to create the current situation. In retrospect it will become clear that many things you never planned or expected were instruments of a grand design that has brought you to the present circumstance. Keep your vision wide, be willing to hear what others have to say, and be supportive when others come to you

46 Pushing Upward

for guidance. Drop any hesitations or doubts that might threaten to hold you back; they will be out of sync with the present reality. Indulging in doubtful thinking or postponing what needs to be done would send a message that you're not ready or willing to receive what is being given to you. When others sense your reluctance they are apt to withdraw – doubts have a tendency to become infectious.

This is the moment to reach for the stars. Be courageous and anchor yourself in the rich soil of goodwill that supports you, and accept your good fortune with gratitude. You can, in your own style, make a difference not only for yourself but for the world you live in. Take care to maintain a balance within yourself, in your activities, and in your relations with others. Otherwise the present surge of enthusiasm might degenerate into a workaholic addiction. This would create an unfortunate imbalance, and if it happens, it needs to be addressed as soon as it is recognized. No need to push the river – it's already moving swiftly and you can enjoy the ride. The flowering that is happening now is well deserved, and congratulations are in order. Now get back to work!

Pushing Upward 46

The Changes

Bottom Line

In the atmosphere of advancement that characterizes the time of Pushing Upward, everybody is benefited no matter what their place in the natural order of things. The smallest sprout is encouraged to flower as much as the mightiest tree. Don't fall into the habit of looking around and comparing yourself with others. Just step onto the dance floor and you'll find plenty of partners ready to enjoy the party with you.



Line 2

You've been carrying a treasure that might have gone unrecognized up till now, either because of your own modesty or because others have been looking for more obvious talents. Now you might find yourself suddenly appreciated for qualities that you didn't know you had – or knew, but have long taken for granted. It might throw you a little off balance at first, but what a pleasant surprise! Don't make a fuss about it, even when others might be making a fuss over you. All that's needed is that you keep on being who you are.

Line 3

Now it is so easy to make great strides in the direction you have so long wanted to go that you might be in danger of undermining the process with a lack of humbleness. Or, you might begin to suspect that it's all too good to be true, and undermine your confidence with your own skepticism. Best is to stay watchful and centered in yourself, and proceed with a combination of enthusiasm and caution.



46 Pushing Upward

A flexible attitude will allow you to step lightly around any unexpected obstacles that might arise.

Line 4

You might feel like you've just been picked up by a big, friendly wave and delivered right to your destination. If that's how you're feeling, it's likely to be true! Remember, though, that although your skills and talents played an important part, in a very real sense your good fortune is not entirely your own doing. Stay in touch with gratefulness and receptivity as you slip off your surfboard and step onto the shore.

Line 5

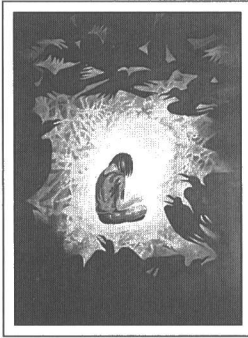
It's one thing to be setting a foundation, as it requires a good deal of cooperation from many others. But even when we work to capacity we may not necessarily have our dreams realized right away. The realization of your most heartfelt vision requires a little more effort to come in tune with the changes that have brought you to this point. Once that tuning is achieved, it will be clear sailing.

Top Line

Take care not to get so carried away by the momentum of the times that you get caught in Pushing Upward just for the sake of being taller than everybody else. This would be a little like blowing out all the candles on your birthday cake and getting your wish, but being so ungrateful and greedy that you declare an end to the party and begin to eat the whole cake on your own. You've missed the point somewhere – and if your belly isn't already hurting, it soon will be.



Oppression 47



Just as nature unfolds in cycles of contraction and expansion, so does the journey of being human. Times of oppression can feel like being confined in a dark cell without windows or even a door. And at times like these it is particularly important to hold fast to the light within. It is with the help of that light that you can find the strength to pass through oppressive circumstances without unnecessary and ineffective struggle. And it is with the help of that light that you can also prevent yourself from falling into despair and hopelessness.

Difficult circumstances are life's way of provoking a leap from one level of consciousness to another. Although hard times can make you feel like life is out to get you, it is not the case. On the contrary, existence is never inimical, but it does provide us with restrictions that can, if we can receive them and work with them, help to strengthen the inner qualities that we need in order to keep growing and expanding.

In order to thrive and reach maturity, we must find the strength and inner determination to keep on growing until we can rise above the dark and difficult. In the process we learn to be flexible as needed, and to take advantage of opportunities for expansion when they arise.

Whatever the oppressive circumstances that might be facing you now, remember that hidden within the darkness there is light. The Taoist pictogram known as the yin/yang symbol represents this intimate interplay of light and darkness, expansion and contraction, activity and rest, all

47 Oppression

essential to life and growth. Contemplating this symbol reveals the teaching that the essential dynamic of life is change, and that all apparent opposites are irrevocably linked. Each is supporting the other, and each is evolving into the other. The dark yin quality and the light yang quality coexist in perfect balance, each reaching the fullness of its potential. In the center of the dark ground lies a small seed of light, and within the light space is a seed of darkness. Thus enwrapped in one another, the black receptive "female" and the white active "male" spiral outward from the center to form the circle that represents the perfection of the whole. It is a dynamic and harmonious interplay of opposites, affecting and constantly renewing all.

Any situation you face, in relationships or in work, in the inner world of feelings or the outer world of mundane affairs, can be approached from a life-affirmative or a life-negative standpoint. And it is the life-affirmative approach that embraces the whole rather than drawing lines that divide good from evil, darkness from light. The yin/yang symbol is a reminder that every darkness has its dawn, and every dawn contains the seed of darkness. Truly understanding this, not just intellectually but at the very core of one's being, is what we call wisdom.

Oppression 47

The Changes

Bottom Line

When the first attempt to overcome adversity fails, you can respond in two ways. One is to figure out a different approach, and the other is to get discouraged and give up. Giving up might seem easier, but it can lead to a pattern of defeatism that is difficult to break out of. There are times to give in to whatever life brings, but times of oppression don't fit that category. Take a deep breath, or a little nap if you think it will help, and as soon as you can pull yourself together, go for the light.

Line 2

Take a deeper look at the environment around you and within you to see if you have tunneled yourself into a routine that has become a little too claustrophobic. Even driving in cruise control for hundreds of miles in the fast lane can get oppressive after a while. You must have some destination in mind, yes? It's a good time to pull over and check the map.

Line 3

The feeling of entering a second childhood can be full of wonder and innocence. But a second adolescence can drag a person into all kinds of theatrics and temper tantrums. If you find yourself complaining and feeling sorry for yourself more than challenged and full of life, perhaps you've entered the wrong time capsule by mistake. It might be prudent to reset your watch so that you can keep that appointment with adulthood.

47 Oppression

Line 4

Taking some time for quiet contemplation always helps to regain a broader perspective, and makes it easy to be more discerning when making choices. The exercise of strength in times of oppression is not always obvious or impressive – but whatever form it takes, that strength is always nourished by renewing your acquaintance with the silent center that endures through all ups and downs.

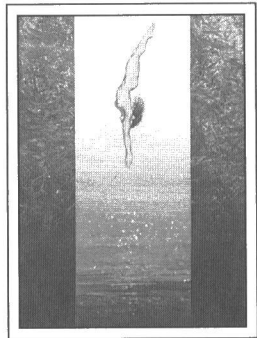
Line 5

Sometimes circumstances are such that the best you can hope for is to stay centered and reasonably sane until something, somewhere, lets you out of its grip. Now might be one of those times. Be watchful of the tendency to feel martyred, exhausted, nagged to death, or otherwise beyond coping. Pay special attention to that little seed of light in the darkness until the gestalt begins to shift.

Top Line

The target now is to regain your inner balance, and the key is to drop any tendency to carry the past into the future. It is pointless to resolve henceforth to conquer life's challenges so that they never happen again. Quiet contemplation, meditation, and nonjudgmental consideration of all the factors that have been in play will increase your understanding.

The Well 48



The well symbolizes the place within each of us that is a deep and ever-present source of renewal, its serene depths uncorrupted by the personality. It is the source from which intuitive knowledge springs. Wisdom is drawn out of its depths, from the darkness of the unconscious into the light of understanding. In order to receive the refreshing benefits of the well, you must dive deep, turning your attention inward and bypassing external influences. Approaching the heart of wisdom requires humility: you must go naked, carrying no props for the ego, wearing no masks of persona; unencumbered by the weight of fears or doubts, you can plunge in.

Your manner of approaching the well is critical to what you will bring up. If you are denied sustenance, it is because of your attitude, for only with deep sincerity and receptivity can you partake of its timeless wisdom. To approach casually or halfheartedly is like attempting to draw water up in a cracked or broken bucket: it may be possible to gather a few drops, but your longing can never be quenched. The well is truth. Drinking from it takes time and patience and your full attention.

The journey toward self-knowledge requires that we willingly enter the darkness of uncertainty. Becoming more aware has its own timing, profound in its perfection, that has nothing to do with our personal preferences.

Impatiently pushing for answers or seeking to hurry things along in the quest for knowledge invariably leads to dead ends. Nevertheless, all the apparent mistakes and wrong turns are an

48 The Well

essential part of each person's unique process and cannot be avoided. Insight only ever comes from totally living your own experience and being guided by your own heart.

Sometimes, in the quest for truth, a rare opportunity occurs when we meet an individual whose deep wisdom touches our own being to the very core. The experience of their compassion and understanding can profoundly affect the course of our lives. In their presence, serenity, grace, and wisdom seem to be reflected back to us, as though we are gazing into a mirror and seeing the face of our ultimate potential. Their outpouring of wisdom seems effortless and inexhaustible: however much we partake of it, the wellspring of grace never seems to run dry.

Ultimately, however, this passage with another must take us back to the heart of our own consciousness, for the final steps toward the recognition of truth can only be taken alone. We gradually come to realize that understanding surfaces from within our own self and cannot ever be supplied by another. We are blessed to be lovingly guided on the path by a spiritual teacher or wise friend, but they can never walk our walk for us. It is a little like finally riding a bike without guardwheels – at first it's pretty shaky, but gradually we get the hang of it and then never turn back.

To drink from the source of clarity within the depths of the self is to know the taste of Tao. It is available to all those who thirst and are willing to dive into the core of being to be nourished. Once you have tasted from the clear waters of consciousness, you will return to it often. It is the source that sustains and refreshes, eternally flowing like a clear spring through the whole of existence.

The Well 48

The Changes

Bottom Line

You can no longer afford to avoid the work of self-reflection; to continue doing so would be a waste of your potential.

Line 2

The work now is to clarify your own wellspring so that you will have something of value to offer others. Unless you can create time for self-reflection and integration there will be an undercurrent of unhappiness and discontent that stems from a lack of self-worth. This would undermine all that you say and diminish all that you do. What a pity!

Line 3

Your worth is being bypassed, and that is a shame – if others recognized what you have to offer it would benefit everyone, including you. Unfortunately, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink, and however disappointing it may be, it is better to move on than to dry up from lack of circulation; eventually your contribution will be valued, but don't wait around for it.



48 The Well

Line 4

There is a need for restructuring and reprioritizing, so hang up a TEMPORARILY OUT OF SERVICE sign and get to work.

Line 5

You have much to offer others. Give freely of your wisdom and compassion; it is meant to be shared.

Top Line

You are an inexhaustible source of guidance for others and the more they seek you out, the better you feel. Your availability and natural wisdom nourishes them and simultaneously enriches your own heart.



Revolution 49



The time of revolution is a time of breakthrough, when – often in spite of our own desires – the old drops away and is replaced by the new. No snake ever resists shedding its skin, however uncomfortable the experience may be. But we humans have a tendency to resist transformative change by failing to appreciate it as a renewing and essential quality of life.

If wherever you turn the outlook appears shrunken, dry, and limiting, it's probably because life is urgently trying to tell you something. It's obvious that you wouldn't consider walking in the shoes you wore as a child,

because the pain would be excruciating and drastically limit your movement. But on the more subtle, psychological level, we all tend to overlook the warning signs when a change is overdue. Remembering the discomfort of those tight little shoes will enable you to gain some insight into the real choices you are facing now. The most important choice is whether you go willingly with the strong transforming current that is active now, or whether you expend energy resisting it and go down kicking and screaming. Either way there are going to be big changes. Revolution emphasizes taking a quantum leap, whether you think you're ready or not, and remaining bound to what you've outgrown will become increasingly difficult and restrictive until finally you are brought to a standstill because of it.

Growth is not an easy process: it's risky, and sometimes frightening, but with courage and

49 Revolution

fortitude we become stronger, more supple, and hopefully more aware. Releasing your grip on whatever you're clinging to, whether it's an identity, a relationship, a place, or a thing, may seem impossible at first. But once you feel the truth of it, all the way to your bones, letting go becomes easier, and can even be exhilarating. The taste of the freedom you will have when you disengage from habitual behavior patterns will stimulate new behavior and new attitudes. What you once perceived to be a breakdown will begin to look like a breakthrough.

In mythology the process of inner revolution is represented by the life, death, and rebirth of the Phoenix, a magnificent bird that cyclically rises from the ashes of its previous self. Becoming attuned to the qualities of the Phoenix means learning to live without guarantees and to appreciate the ebbing and flowing cycles of life. Although it might seem more like whitewater rafting than drifting lazily in your canoe right now, it is important not to get distracted and lose perspective. Drop worrying about how to "get it right." What is needed is trust that the surging current of change will take you to where you really need to be. There's no point in attempting to predict outcomes because the scope of this revolution is far greater than what can be seen at this time.

Create as much space as possible in your life now to make room for the new. Become a witness to the mind's preoccupation with past and future, and consistently return to the present. What is happening is nothing less than a 180-degree turn, a quantum leap. It is tremendously empowering, as it firmly roots you in the here and now. And your life will take on an altogether different quality once the dust settles.

Revolution 49

The Changes

Bottom Line

Inner and outer revolution expands our horizons by removing the blinkers that previously kept us on a certain track but are no longer appropriate. There is a time and place for everything, and adjusting your eyes to the new perspective is the first step before proceeding.

Line 2



Accepting greater responsibility for the choices you make now doesn't necessarily imply things will get more difficult. Conflict arises because the mind interprets change as threatening or bad. Rather than approaching the present circumstances with a feeling that "it's like pulling teeth," think of it as a thorough spring-cleaning. It will be easy for you to find helpers, and the way is wide open.



Line 3

Believe it or not, you're going to get through this. A certain amount of awkwardness and discomfort is inevitable during transformation of any kind. Living in a space that is under renovation always requires watchfulness and the understanding that chaos is part of the process. Accepting that at any moment you may need to make toast on the radiator or sleep in the closet will help to keep the whole process moving forward.

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Line 4

It usually takes the mind a while to catch up to the reality of change. Initially it will fight it tooth and nail. Remember that supporting change is a totally different approach from just enduring it, and that bitching and moaning simply prolongs the discomfort. Staying flexible and working with, not against, whatever is happening will shed light on inner strengths that may have previously been dormant or undeveloped.

Line 5

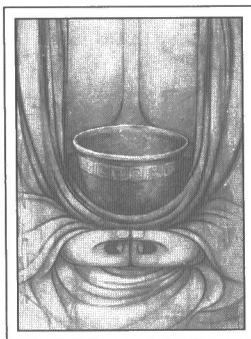
You may be surprised to find that there is a broad support for changes you have been striving to implement for a long time. So don't suddenly become immobilized. It has been said, "When the time is right the road is wide," and your time has come.

Top Line

Times of change can make us feel pretty shaky and any offers of assistance can be tremendously supportive not only in dealing with the external chaos but internally, on a psychological level. You've come a long way, now give your full attention to stabilizing the new; it will need care and attention if it is to flourish.



The Cauldron 50



The Cauldron represents a bringing forth, from the depths of your being, an expression of your own vision and creativity. You are now ready to give birth to a dream that has been developing within you for some time. The moment is ripe to make a meaningful contribution, and your essential self has already begun to prepare you for the next step.

Within itself, your unique nature carries all you need to succeed – and your commitment is such that you will achieve the best possible results without compromising the integrity of your work or of your own being.

When life reveals the path ahead, it is testifying to the timeliness of our creative vision and its potential to benefit others. The first whisperings of that “Go ahead!” may appear from within or in unexpected ways – as dreams, an insight sparked by a glimpse of something, or words overheard in a passing conversation. This existential green light is the culmination of a long gestation period that required patient perseverance on your part. Not only has it been a test of character, it has also reflected the depth of your own self-worth. We become integrated and mature by watching, waiting, and trusting that all these insights and impressions will be added to the cauldron and will, one day, be fully “cooked.” Trusting from your core that there is perfection in the timing of all things keeps the cauldron simmering nicely – and as time passes its fragrance begins to permeate every aspect of your life.

Learning to relax with life’s give and take, without imposing limits or calculating gains and losses,

50 The Cauldron

creates wisdom, compassion, and the ability to discern what is appropriate in even the most difficult circumstances. This sharpened awareness works in harmony with an intuitive knowing that immediately senses the correct means of approach, and who to approach when help is needed.

The Cauldron is wisdom that purifies the false, superfluous, and superficial, and shifts the emphasis from the mundane to the higher values that help us live in peaceful harmony with nature and each other. By defining and refining, The Cauldron increases our capacity for clarity by illuminating our virtues. Wisdom is luminous. When we live creatively in self-awareness and self-mastery, the resulting luminosity, merely by its presence, effortlessly exposes ignorance and darkness of all kinds.

Perceiving life as an invitation that only awaits your participation triggers a subtle dismantling of rigid thinking patterns that have created insecurity and fear of change. You are at a crossroads now. The path may not be visible, but you sense and welcome the first signs of the deep shift that is taking place. There may be a greater sense of freedom in your words and actions, and in how you relate with others.

Finally, you can appreciate the unique individual you are. Offering that uniqueness to others is the way to return something, in gratitude, to Existence. The more you give, the more you will continue to be rejuvenated. Your life can become your art, your prayer, your meditation. In its wisdom and abundance, Tao gently guides us to follow its course, and when we do so, it gives back a thousandfold.

The Cauldron 50

The Changes

Bottom Line

Put your restricted thinking aside and stay open to receive from others. Much can happen if you're flexible and willing to embrace their guidance.

Line 2

You have accomplished much, and now the quality of your achievement and its positive reception by others have put you in the limelight. Don't be afraid of the abundance that is coming your way; it is well deserved. Unfortunately, the harsh criticism and envy of others goes with this new territory. Don't get sidetracked by that; when there's poo on your shoe, wipe it off and continue on your way.

Line 3

You are bursting at the seams to share with others, but they don't seem to hear you or receive from you. Your concern that the gifts you are offering will be wasted has created heartache in you, but you really can take refuge in your own joy. Slowly the tide will turn, and others will begin to perceive your integrity and worth. Be patient, and stay gentle with yourself and others.



50 The Cauldron

Line 4

Your "yes" should have been a graceful "no." As a result, troubles are increasing. You weren't ready to step up to the plate, and neither were your teammates – and everyone's efforts were less than wholehearted. No excuses can alter these unfortunate facts.

Line 5

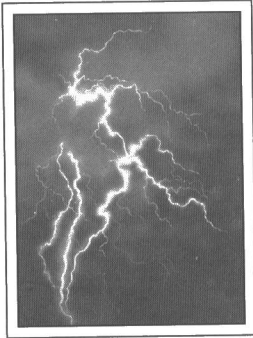
Stay in touch with your inner truth, and welcome offers of support from others. But be wary of their enthusiasm and flattery; such a heady atmosphere could swell you up to balloon proportions pretty fast. Remain centered, humble, gracious, and alert and you won't end up self-righteously steering everyone off course.

Top Line

You and the Tao are in utter accord. All that you set out to accomplish now will be highly successful. This is the direct outcome of the blessings of this time. Relax and allow the tide to carry you anywhere you need to go.



The Arousing 51



A sudden and unexpected electrical storm can set off all kinds of reflexive alarms, sending us into a brief heart-pounding shock. This is particularly true if we've been so preoccupied with our own affairs that we've missed the gathering clouds and buildup of energy that precedes the earsplitting first crack of lightning.

It makes little difference whether the onslaught is on a psychological or physical level, when you are taken completely unawares it is natural to be thrust into a momentary gap of sheer animal panic. But after the initial, hair-raising thunderclaps, you can begin to feel the release of tension in the atmosphere. Soon you will be able to resume even the most absorbing of

tasks without fear. Later on, you might even joke about how foolish it was to be so frightened. It was just a storm, after all, and it blew over as quickly as it came.

Any external jolts you have received lately are just wake-up calls from the big, existential alarm clock. It's pointless to try to roll over and fall back to sleep, or to try to belittle the impact by pretending the shocks haven't happened and trying to carry on with the status quo. The only way to deal with the turmoil is to look, with uncompromising honesty, at the fears that might have been provoked by the lightning and thunder. The Arousing is a time when everything is briefly illuminated with a brilliance that throws all into sharp focus. It is a time when you can learn a great deal about yourself, not to mention about those around you. But in order to reap the most

51 The Arousing

benefit from the circumstances, you've got to keep your eyes wide open, stay alert, and avoid the temptation to run for cover. Only then, with the help of the increased clarity the situation affords you, are you able to face the reality head-on.

It might become obvious that much of what once provided a sense of stability in your life can no longer hold up to the stress of cataclysmic change. In retrospect you may see that cracks had begun to appear much earlier, but for one reason or another they were overlooked or ignored. The current shake-up, whether you like it or not, might be powerful enough to shatter whatever you've been depending on for support.

Shocking experiences are generally something we try to avoid. Nobody wants to deal with shattered illusions, and even less to deal with having to clean up the wreckage. But although such times of crisis might force us to recognize our weaknesses, they also bring to the surface strengths that we might not have known we had. To fight the manifestations of the crisis and the opportunities for change that they bring is to turn away from a tremendous opportunity for growth. To trust and let the situation unfold as it will can be exhilarating and ultimately revelatory. Imagine surfing the crest of an enormous tidal wave – surviving the experience is bound to be humbling and thrilling all at once. Don't miss the chance to take the ride of your life into a more vulnerable, awe-inspired, and sensitive experience of reality.

The Arousing 51

The Changes

Bottom Line

If your heart is still pounding from the fright, the first thing to do is to stop running! The protective roof of your certainties might have been blown off, leaving you feeling open and exposed. But the worst will soon be over as you become acclimatized to your new nakedness.

Line 2

⚡ Receiving a “Zen stick” as it cracks through unconscious behaviors and stagnant situations actually can leave you more flexible and expansive, more embracing of life and all it brings. Events that bring us to our knees increase the opportunity to touch an inner calm that is profound, unshaken, and detached. It might take time for you to recover your poise and pick up the broken crockery around you, but once you get the mess cleaned up you’ll begin to appreciate the gift hidden inside what might now seem like a disaster.

Line 3

An experience of calm follows every storm; however, it’s wise not to roll over just at this moment and go back to sleep. In an earthquake the initial impact is a terrible jolt, but an even stronger tremor may follow that finishes off the job started by the first. Better to drop the idea of keeping “it” together. Instead, loosen up and get ready to roll with the next wave.



51 The Arousing

Line 4

Just as the forging of a blade requires repeated heating, hammering, and tempering in cold water, so we, too, are honed by existence. If you can accept the process, your capacity for resilience and endurance under stress will grow.

Line 5

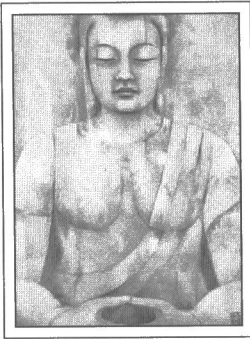
⚡ The positive results of shock can be many. It can increase your capacity to look honestly at yourself, and to deal with any attitudes and behaviors that have become too slack or presumed too much. In this way you grow more alert and intolerant of sleepy habits that keep you dozing until the next alarm. The purpose of the alarm bells is to provoke change. To the extent that you answer the calls when they come and respond creatively, you won’t be startled off your center.

Top Line

When it seems as though you’re being pounded at every turn and everything around you is in chaos, all your idealism disintegrates, leaving only the essentials in place. A considered retreat might be in order while you turn your attention to nourishing yourself and taking care of the essentials. Whatever is left standing after the upheaval deserves to be given a chance, and it is likely that some of what remains will come as a pleasant surprise.



Keeping Still 52



In many traditions a mountain symbolizes the stillness of Buddha nature. Serene and detached, rising above the bustle of mundane affairs, it remains unaffected by the passage of time and the strife of the marketplace. A mountain setting offers the perfect environment for meditation. When we simply sit, relax the body, and keep the spine upright, closing our eyes and shifting our attention from the outer to the inner, we are in tune with the stillness of mountains. From this centered place it is possible to rise above the mind's busyness and gain a detached overview. It's like looking from the vantage point of a lofty peak into the valley of the mind, distant from its preoccupations and thereby able to observe it with objectivity.

Meditation is a point of rest and a process of renewal from the inside out. It means calling a halt to being driven by compulsion. For thousands of years people all over the world have practiced meditation and have been renewed by its benefits.

In the midst of the everyday activities of the marketplace, there are times when you need to withdraw from thinking and rest into being. Without this periodic withdrawal, it is easy to become overly identified with one's position and place in the hubbub of worldly affairs and begin to call it "me." Unfortunately, once you start to believe that life revolves only around serving the demands of this "me," the real treasures of your being are lost. "Me" believes that life's meaning lies in doing – and if you follow the dictates of that belief you are taken on a long and frustrating

52 Keeping Still

journey to achieve something that in the end only takes you away from your own truth.

The central point of meditation is to observe whatever is bubbling up in the mind and let it go. When thoughts are happy or fascinating in some way, the tendency of the mind is to grasp hold of them, or to adjust its vision of reality to reinforce them. On the other hand, when thoughts are disturbing or painful, the mind works to get rid of them forcefully by suppressing them, or busies itself trying to assign blame to some external force. So whether your thoughts are happy or sad, the mind wants to engage them in some way, to work out strategies to direct them according to its own preferences.

Meditation is a way of stepping out of the mind, putting aside preferential thinking that distracts you from living in accordance with the Tao. It is only from the inner mountaintop perspective that you can realize that the real treasure you seek has always been within your reach. Once you are back in touch with this essential treasure, then it is easy to withdraw from any difficulties that might have been overriding your attention.

Meditation should not be a serious, hard-to-manage affair; rather, it is as natural as breathing, and as awakening as fresh mountain air.

The Changes

Bottom Line

It is the right moment for you to gain an overview in order to see what is needed. Your serene nature can have a positive influence on your surroundings now.

Line 2

All harm done in this world is born from the harm we do to ourselves through unconsciousness, immaturity, and irresponsibility. Imagine what this world would be like if every day for a period of time everyone simply sat down, relaxed, and withdrew their identity with “me.” All the divisions that arise out of greed and need would melt away like frost in the morning sun. If you find that you’ve set something in motion that you can’t control now, take the hint. A little more everyday silence in your life could be in order.

Line 3

Because of a long history of misunderstandings about what meditation really is, it is easy to fall into the delusion that a forced stillness is the same as one that is relaxed and natural. They might look similar to the untrained eye, but they are not. Anything you lock up in a cage will just come back to bite you as soon as you let your guard down. If you can’t sit still, then run and keep on running until you drop from exhaustion. It will be better for you than tying yourself to a meditation bench with repressive and unnatural force.



Line 4

Believing in “me” keeps our lives locked up in tight little compartments that are intended to protect that “me” from harm, and it is easy to become victims of our own fearfulness and mistrust. Life is a gift, and it has been given to you in abundance. Once you recognize this, everything that now seems difficult will be easy.

Line 5

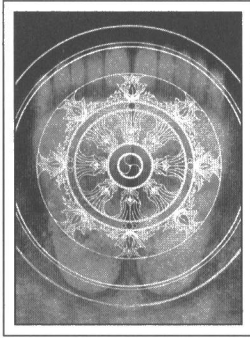
Meditation is not just sitting on a hilltop away from others; it is also speaking and acting from inner stillness. Watch your words and your actions now as carefully as you would watch your feet as you walk across a narrow platform over an abyss. Not with tension, but with care. When you get it right, you’ll feel the resonance within your every word and gesture.

Top Line

Once you have known that you are not a victim of circumstance but only of your own thoughts, the entire landscape begins to shift. It’s as though there is more time and spaciousness, and life can be experienced as the extraordinary generosity that it is. As you begin to reflect this generosity within, even in the smallest gestures you radiate a quality of the divine.



Development 53



There is an old saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. It is completed a step at a time, too, and it takes both feet to complete the journey.

To progress toward a common goal with another requires essentially the same unity of purpose and direction as it does to walk across a room. Creating a wholesome and alive relationship involves two equal but separate parts uniting, and out of that unity the living entity of their relationship is born. The working dynamics of a relationship can be understood more clearly if you look into how your body works. Consider what hap-

pens when you walk: to progress from here to there, your legs and feet alternately support and release, one after another, without thought or deliberate effort. This repetitive movement is not a bother or a bore because it's a "no-mind" action and it gets you where you want to go. So it is in strong partnerships – they seem to develop and strengthen when there is balance and a natural rapport between the two individuals. Without cooperation, respect, mutual attraction, and shared vision, it is likely that you'll stumble when the going gets rough.

When two people come together, no matter how strong the initial attraction, there's no way to predict if a sustainable harmony will develop. Only after they've "walked the walk" together for a while does a relationship develop its own rhythm. It always takes time to learn the ways of another; the progress of that learning is like a spontaneously unfolding dance that must be given the space

53 Development

to develop in synchronicity if it is going to be supportive to both of the individuals involved. There's no getting around the fact that for a harmonious dance to develop there must be patience, flexibility, and above all sensitive in-tuned-ness.

Whatever your chosen direction is, whether with another or alone, it's wise in times of Development to keep your attention in the present moment and avoid dreaming about the future. The more you can stay with what is, the less likely it is that you will be thrown off balance by the unexpected. Stumbling, however, inevitably comes with any learning process. Keep your cool in spite of delays or setbacks. There are times when you might be tempted to throw up your hands in disgust and bellow "I quit!" – but storming off the dance floor and slamming the door behind you will cut off a vital learning experience before you get into the swing of it, and the biggest loser will be you. Opportunities for developing wisdom usually come through accepting challenges in spite of discomfort or even embarrassment, not by looking for shortcuts or seeking distractions from the task at hand.

Here's how it doesn't work: you can hang a sign on the door that says "out of town," not answer the phone, change your look, or move to a different country. But you can't hide from truth. Life's lessons are all about your willingness to look truth straight in the eye and feel supported rather than fearful of it.

Development 53

The Changes

Bottom Line

If you keep stepping on your partner's feet every time you get on the dance floor, don't be surprised if he or she offers to give you a few lessons. You can, if you insist, feel offended and stalk off the floor to cover your embarrassment. But it might be more fun to accept the offer – and the lasting gratitude of your partner's toes will come as a bonus!

Line 2

It is wise to develop the knack of keeping in step with the changing rhythm of the times, and it should now become easier to add to your repertoire and develop even more grace of movement. From this space of confidence and ease, you can freely share what you have learned with even more people and spread the richness around.

Line 3

If you find yourself wanting to push things along because progress seems too slow, stop and take a breather. Pushing the river to be other than what it is will not benefit anyone, least of all you and those you care about. Consider the possibility that hindrances arise for a reason, and that the present lesson might not be about achieving goals but about learning to pace yourself. Redirect any energy that wants to move into goal-oriented aggression toward becoming more self-aware.



53 Development

Line 4

You might be called upon to tap dance one minute, waltz the next, and climb into your tutu for a chorus number after that. You can see it as stressful and chaotic, or as a madcap adventure to enjoy. The circumstances are likely to remain as they are for a while, so how you embrace them is totally up to you.

Line 5

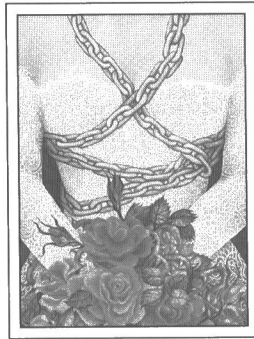
Stick with the tried and true. Maintaining unwavering constancy, and taking careful steps, one at a time, are the means by which you can realize your fondest dreams. Even if you have to walk among strangers, it's the journey that's important now and not the names and family histories of your fellow travelers. A little farther down the road the landscape will become more familiar.

Top Line

When your inner development reaches a certain stage of maturity, you find that others are attracted to you and might even try to express their attraction by following your example. Don't be embarrassed by it, and don't let it go to your head either. Real humbleness is compassionate to others no matter where they are on the path.



The Marrying Maiden 54



Waking up to the realization that there is a fatal flaw in what you thought was going to be a perfect situation can be quite a shock. The disturbing news that the Marrying Maiden* brings is about inequality, subordination, or somehow unconsciously allowing oneself to be put into an inferior position in relation to others. This might have arisen out of your desire for a certain position, or from failing to respect yourself and your own capabilities to the extent that you have compromised your own truth. Perhaps you have wanted to believe things about yourself that deep in your heart you knew were not true, and have allowed yourself to be manipulated through flattery or unrealistic promises.

Dealing with the feeling of having been used, or understanding that you have compromised what is truly important to you, requires absolute honesty with yourself. Whatever the circumstances might have been in the beginning of the present cycle, finding out that you've become a pawn in someone else's game is such a rude awakening that it's impossible to ignore it or brush it aside.

One of the most painful aspects of facing the truth is that you risk finding out that you have sold yourself short by entering into agreements that in no way reflect what you really want or need, and it seems either difficult or impossible now to get out of them. If this is the case, it is crucial to reflect unemotionally on how you have cooperated in the seduction and what was motivating your consent. It means asking some pretty straightforward questions of yourself. Have you ignored

54 The Marrying Maiden

the whisperings of your own intuitive feelings in favor of the desires of the mind for prestige or position, or because you just wanted to be liked? If so, then you have to take responsibility, at least in part, for how your own desires have contributed to the current situation. Succumbing to seduction means that you have given more importance to the superficial and the imagined than you have given to the deep and the real. This choice almost always creates a subtle wound in the being that may not immediately be noticeable. Inevitably, though, the injury will make itself felt.

Whenever we have compromised our authenticity and truth, the first symptom is usually a feeling of emptiness within. Each of us at one time or another has been pulled off center by longings for love, security, or recognition. We live in a world that encourages and rewards cleverness and pretense, and pays homage to the latest trends in its hunger for the new. But to live in make-believe is to remain immature, and those who insist on living in a fantasy gradually lose touch with who they really are.

The only way through the pain of being compromised is to allow yourself to feel it, and to take responsibility for your part in it. This is the first essential step toward release and a renewal of self-respect.

* The term Marrying Maiden is a metaphor. Chinese custom accepted that a man could take an additional "wife" for his pleasure. She had no real status in the household, and her position was contingent upon her usefulness to her husband.

The Marrying Maiden 54

The Changes

Bottom Line

It is wise in any situation to be alert to what exactly it is that you are getting yourself into before you sign your name on the dotted line. It might make sense in the overall scheme of things to put yourself at someone else's disposal, but only if your inner sense tells you that you will truly benefit from the experience. Remember, a person who is really worthy of such trust will never exploit you, and will use every opportunity to encourage you to continue to grow and mature to the point that you can stand on your own.

Line 2

It is helpful to remember that sorrow can be a turning point that shifts your focus toward respecting yourself, rather than hoping that respect will be given to you by others. It takes courage to follow your own path, especially when it flies in the face of convention. Nevertheless, anything short of walking that path is a denial of your right to grow into your own individual uniqueness.

Line 3

Peace of mind can only really ever be realized when you are able to fulfill the potential you came into the world to express. A desire for things to be different from how they are is often an indication of how far you have strayed from that potential. Consult the inner map of your heart before you take another step.

54 The Marrying Maiden

Line 4

Making mistakes is inevitable; it is how we learn and grow stronger. Avoid feeding any negative habits that only serve to cover your wounded pride, and don't be tempted to blame others for your present circumstances. If you don't know what to do next, the best thing to do is to wait.

Line 5

It can be embarrassing to take responsibility for having been taken for a ride, but that was you standing out there on the highway with your thumb out, wasn't it? The silver lining to the cloud that might be hanging over you now is that you've grown not only older but wiser because of the experience. Don't squander the lesson by carrying any residual embarrassment or defensiveness into the future.

Top Line

What is past is gone forever, and even if you could bring it back it would not restore your sense of well-being in the here and now. No matter how great the temptation may be to act impulsively or seek quick fixes to your distress, it would only prolong the pain of dealing with the issues at hand. If you've been keeping up a false front, it's time to let it fall. Only the real can encounter the reality, and the encounter is overdue.



Times of abundance are a sign that life is at a peak, and all seems right with the world. It is the greatest opportunity to provide for and support others, to be expansive, celebrate, and express gratitude. The experience is not necessarily dependent upon bank balances, although it often accompanies an upturn in the healthy, wealthy, and wise side of things. But fundamentally, the feeling of abundance comes from within; it's when your inner landscape is rich and fertile, so full to the point of overflow that you are glad to give because you have so much. There is a smile on your lips and it's great to be alive.

Abundance is the sweet time of reaping the rewards of work done well; it is the harvest that gathers up all that has been sown and then spreads it out bountifully. The traditional I Ching compares it to the sun at its zenith – invigorating, enriching, and illuminating all that it touches. The nature of existence itself is exuberantly prolific. We get zillions of stars, never just a handful. Impossible combinations of color and form, textures and tunes, all for the viewing, tasting, touching, listening. Abundance makes its entrance gradually, after lean times or periods of contraction, and once the first blush of ripeness appears, the promise of plentiful profusion is not far off. Stay mindful to not expect abundance to last indefinitely, and to not squander its rewards. Farmers aptly refer to it as “Make hay while the sun shines.”

There are all kinds of abundance, including one that is independent of externals that is only

known by tapping in to the inexhaustible source of riches within your own being. It enables us to be hearty and warm with a “yes” to supporting others yet maintains a centered self-respect that withdraws whenever it is needed, in order to be restored by silence, in nature, and in aloneness. A sense of well-being is the ultimate richness, and it starts where you are; it requires responsiveness to the unfolding moment whatever the moment is offering, and it begins with being abundantly loving of yourself. Abundantly honoring your own being supports wholesomeness, self-respect, and a sense of self-worth. And it flowers into a charismatic luminosity that is independent of decorations and possessions.

You always have the choice to stay small or to think abundant. One path leads you grumbling down the same-old same-old; the other makes the most of the now, appreciating this moment as all, as golden, as a gift. Each of us is continuously challenged by life to create abundance from a rich soil of possibilities, and even when we refuse the invitation, we're still given more.


Partaking of the abundance that is Tao means spreading your wings, opening your windows, unlocking your heart and your thinking. It is only possible from an attitude of receptivity. If you're shut down inside, no matter what you've got, it's never going to be enough or bring you joy and peace of mind. Whenever your perspective shifts even for a moment from “slim pickin's” mode, life becomes an opportunity for renewal, and then you can have some cake and eat it, too.

The Changes

Bottom Line

There is an aura of great good fortune around someone who genuinely experiences the pleasure of their own company. If you find such a person in your life now, enjoy the sunshine of their presence. If you are such a person, be grateful for the opportunity to share.

Line 2

 The only way to ever really know and experience a sense of well-being is to take responsibility for both the subtle and overt messages you're sending out into life. Waiting for it to arrive in the mail, or to happen once you win the lottery, is taking the risk of waiting your life away. Your future is in your hands, heart, and thoughts now. Be bountiful with yourself; nobody else can be responsible for your joy.

Line 3

Abundance comes in all shapes and colors, and its energies can sometimes bring about a kind of Doppler effect of past blunders and unconscious behaviors. In other words, there can even be an abundance of stupidity from time to time. There's no point in getting agitated or frustrated about it. Try to find the cosmic comedy in it, and wait it out. Remember that all peaks are complemented by valleys, including this one.

Line 4

Don't let unexpected surprises throw you off balance. The fact that you've suddenly stumbled across just what you need, despite the fact that you weren't even looking for it, is exactly what existence must have wanted for you now. No need to be suspicious of it; it really is a gift. Nor is there any point in trying to figure out what you might have done to get yourself into this charmed situation so that you can do it again. Gifts like these, given unconditionally and freely, work under a different set of laws that are more like mysteries than rules.

Line 5

Give of your goodness, and provide what you can to help make this world a better place. The more you share what you have, the more enriched your life will be. You will find an uncommon receptivity to what you have to offer now.

Top Line

When mind is busy achieving and attaining, there is no time to experience yourself in the abundant spaciousness of the here and now. Stop fixating on what you want or what you're lacking. As long as your focus is on what's next or what could be, you've lost touch with the abundance of what you really have.

The Wanderer 56



Traveling means changes, and changes mean vulnerability. When breaking new ground, no matter how prepared you may be, sometimes you won't have a clue where you are or what is happening. Life on the road brings up all kinds of challenges you would never have to face in the safety of familiar surroundings. And unfamiliarity is threatening to the personality that needs to know where it stands. When we feel lost or out of place, we sometimes overcompensate to create an impression of keeping it all together, often with the unfortunate result of appearing downright foolish. Coping with unfamiliarity increases the need to be alert, assume nothing, and take care of yourself. Respect local customs. Remember "When in Rome do as the Romans"? Whatever may have worked at home does not necessarily hold up elsewhere. Be ready and willing to ask questions, listen attentively, be courteous, and stay flexible.

No one appreciates being judged as inferior, and once it happens it creates wounds. The unhappy result of this kind of insensitivity can be that support once given is quickly withdrawn. Be wary of any temptation to condemn anyone or anything because it is different from what you know. Whether judgments are spoken or formed only in thought, to indulge in them will create problems sooner or later. This childish habit is a by-product of insecurity, which puts the unfamiliar down in order to feel superior. It seldom has anything to do with anyone but ourselves. You never know when you may need help from the very person you've condemned. As a newcomer, it is wise



56 The Wanderer

to create a respectful and friendly atmosphere by being sincere and unpretentious.

Sometimes life simply defies the best-laid plans; under such circumstances, all you can do is be as sensitive and as conscious as possible in the choices you make. If you are the new person in town, you may become the object of curiosity and gossip, but even if that's uncomfortable, don't put on airs to be other than who you are. Sincerity, respect for yourself and others, and a straightforward demeanor go a long way toward paving the way for sound relations. A sense of humor helps, too, for nothing puts people on common ground better than a good laugh, especially when it's shared in a comfortable, informal atmosphere.

Avoid challenging the established order, but if your space is transgressed, speak up about it. Being forthright about your own boundaries is as essential as respecting others'. No need to condemn, however; once you've expressed yourself, drop the issue.

Life is a journey, and in that sense, we are all wanderers. We grow as we go, and it makes little difference whether that going was far or near. Finally it is our attitude toward each step taken, not the number of miles racked up, that determines the quality of our existential reality. Seasoned travelers know how to adapt and keep their needs to a minimum. It is wise to remember when you find yourself a stranger in a strange land that less is more: keep your lifestyle uncomplicated – that goes for your state of mind as well as your luggage.




The Changes

Bottom Line

Be careful not to become petty or trivial now, because what you're putting out sets the stage for what you'll get back. Aggression will attract resistance; reverting to foolishness or impropriety appears obnoxious and invokes condemnation.

Line 2

 Keeping your lifestyle simple and self-contained will attract respect. Although you're an outsider, you will be provided for and may unexpectedly receive expressions of support and admiration from another.



Line 3

Your truculent behavior is creating havoc wherever you go. By sticking your nose in other people's affairs, you've become an unwanted guest. You're judging others as foolish, but you're the one that most fits that description, and you can ill afford to be tossed out on your ear with no one to turn to. Got the message?



Line 4

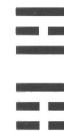
You may have succeeded in creating much around you, but you haven't been able to bury the underlying sense of having no real roots. It may look to others like you are in an enviable position, but because you don't feel truly at home, you're always guarded and uncomfortable. How sad.

Line 5

As a stranger in a strange land, you stand a much better chance of fitting in if you study the locals. This will help you relax, and others will feel more comfortable, too. Then you can ease into feeling right at home.

Top Line

Reckless, insensitive behavior is like playing with fire. To proceed this way is to court disaster. It would be a pity to lose something of real value due to foolishness. Tune in to others now and be willing to adapt to them rather than impose.



The Gentle 57



There are times when only a gentle approach will do. By progressing slowly, silently, and steadily it often happens that the most lasting effects are achieved. In nature the effects of The Gentle can be seen in the wind making patterns in sand dunes, or in flowing water that sculpts the raw edges of rocks. The force of wind and water is transparent. It is the power of rhythms that invisibly but insistently effect change. It can manifest as the “faith that moves mountains” and miraculously heals. It is the power of love that transforms darkness into light. It is prayer.

Just as wind penetrates and disperses the most dense cloud cover, so, too, the subtle, penetrating quality of understanding makes it possible to see through the temporal into the eternity of truth. Gentleness is nonviolent; it is the middle way that disperses confusion and disorder and reveals the vast sky of clarity. In order to support its consistent efforts, The Gentle remains in the background, happy to be doing its thing without drawing attention to itself – or possible interference. It’s the way of least resistance that is active and modest at the same time. Gentleness is flexible and free, not burdened by the maintenance cost of keeping a high profile.

Sending out a press release about any decisions you might make now would be self-defeating and jeopardize the long-term possibilities inherent in your current situation. To strive to make your presence felt in an obvious way would be to create a stumbling block out of your own notoriety. This is not the time to make sweeping changes or to announce future plans. The focus instead

57 The Gentle

should be on adaptability, as you tune in to the subtle and shifting currents of change. Stay alert. In this way it will be possible to act assertively and decisively when and if the right time arises.

Meanwhile it’s best to keep a steady pace in all that you do, creating positive and supportive routines that can be done without involving the mind too much. Practicing any form of meditation keeps the mind clear and flexible, and makes it easier to keep an overview. In order to see the bigger picture you must periodically create some distance between yourself and the forest; only then is it possible to see the trees and where you stand in relation to them. Rather than getting lost in details or worrying about making progress, hold the vision and be willing to wait. Being patient and surrounding yourself with a sense of spaciousness are prerequisites to perceiving the meandering course of Tao that will bring the right conclusions to your efforts in the right time.

Be uncompromising in clearing away any mental debris that might be creating doubt or, at the other extreme, the kind of overconfidence that can sabotage the subtle but deep progress that has already been made. Staying on the path of least resistance will be the most intelligent approach to the current circumstances.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Gentleness does not mean being indecisive or lazy. The Grand Canyon wasn't created in a day, nor was its beauty sculpted by a dozen different streams crisscrossing themselves at random. Know what you want to accomplish and keep working toward it.

Line 2

One difficulty with a gentle approach to overcoming obstacles is that stronger forces can easily interfere or cancel out your efforts. The most troublesome of these forces, however, generally lie within our own minds in the form of hidden agendas or doubts. Make sure your focus is clear and single-pointed first. Then you'll be able to see and respond quickly to any outer force that might be trying to undermine your efforts.

Line 3

Some people project a gentle façade because it looks more appealing than the unattractive mind games it masks. Make sure that your own outer demeanor is consistent with your inner intent, and these characters won't even risk exposing themselves by trying to draw you into a conversation. You will save yourself a lot of aggravation and wasted time.

Line 4

We tend to believe that only by making an effort does anything ever get done. The exercise now is to experiment with effortless effort, which conserves energy by working from within rather than



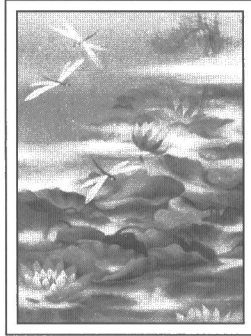
fixating on the outcomes. Remove any obstacles that stand in the way of your clarity, including thoughts that compromise your integrity and doubts that drain energy from your ability to manifest your heartfelt intentions. You have the power now even to confront adverse conditions directly, but you must be clear-eyed and confident of your purpose first.

Line 5

Don't be discouraged by any initial opposition you might have encountered. The very nature of The Gentle is that it perseveres steadily and over time; so if dramatic victory has eluded you thus far, you must be on the right track!

Top Line

In more forceful and energetic times, it is perfectly appropriate to take the time and energy to consider all possible consequences of your actions before unleashing your considerable power to change the course of events. In the present circumstances, however, any tendency you might have to conduct elaborate inquiries into possible scenarios will be counterproductive. You're in danger of being left with only your comprehensive understanding of the details – long after the time for action has come and gone.



When your cup is overflowing, why try to contain it? Feel free to feel good and to spread the goodwill around. There is great pleasure to be had now by sharing your good feelings and supporting others. This is an opportunity to magnify a winning situation; there is support for whatever you hope to accomplish and your positivity can have a strengthening, vitalizing influence on others. So don't limit your vision or withhold your expressions of goodwill, as this is the time for realizing your long-held dreams. Miracles really are possible when you let your heart and imagination flow freely. The way is open to move toward achieving some-

thing of real value in your life.

Joy is powerful; it transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. It also heightens the feeling of being alive, and the more you share it, the more it enriches your surroundings. It is in the music of laughter, and in the pleasure of touching and being touched by the beauty and sweetness of life. Freely respond to the tune by sharing your delight with everyone around you, even with the moon and stars.

The infectious quality of laughter can transform even the gloomiest situation. Laughter is restorative and clears the air by rejuvenating vital energy so that it can flow again. It nourishes body, mind, and spirit, and creates a lighthearted bond between people. Breakthroughs and fresh insights arise much more readily in a relaxed, open atmosphere where freedom of expression is respected.

Opening in trust is more than enough to stimulate joy: a spirit of trust promotes camaraderie and equality. To communicate openly and listen willingly to the expressions of others sets an uplifting tone – we always feel liberated when our contribution is acknowledged. Hear what those around you have to say; leave room for their individual idiosyncrasies, as well as your own. Avoid trying to manipulate the proceedings by forcing your opinions on others.

Don't be intimidated by joyousness. It is not something to be embarrassed about, so allow it to suffuse every fiber of your being. It is transforming by being uplifting and can soften even the hardest heart. The more joy is circulated, the stronger its fragrance becomes.

Joyousness is not naïveté; it is the outward expression of a free spirit, of innocence and purity, of the inner smile. Because joyousness bubbles up from within, it is not dependent on external circumstances, nor does it need recognition or gratification. The fragrance of delight subtly permeates all that comes in contact with it, and as the old song says, "When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you!" Life is inviting you to stimulate and inspire, to spread the goodness. Under these auspicious circumstances, you can't help but do so.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Joy that is nourished from within liberates the heart. You can experience it as sweet serenity and harmony with others.

Line 2

You can soar above the cloudy skies of likes and dislikes and experience oneness with existence; your heart is not tempted by anything that would cause remorse. Sorrow and regret are left far behind.

Line 3

What may look good on the horizon should be appreciated from a distance only, as it is insubstantial and lacks depth. The extent to which you are pulled exposes your lack of inner stability. To approach now would be to indulge in empty pleasure that is bound to bring regret later on.

Line 4

Your indecisiveness regarding where to find happiness and fulfillment has caused you to look outward when you should be looking in. Ask yourself what creates peace and helps sustain you through the shifting climates of change. Whatever it is, do not settle for less. Once clarity is restored to your thinking, joyousness returns to your heart.

Line 5

Discerning wisdom knows from the head, heart, and gut when something or someone is “off.” Be alert, sensitive, and unwavering in following what you know to be the truth. If you are firmly grounded in yourself, you cannot be taken advantage of.

Top Line

If the joy you experience is dependent on worldly pleasures, recognition, or gratification, it is as insubstantial as a leaf in the wind. You have become a victim of circumstance rather than a master of your own fate, and as a result you repeatedly find yourself swept along by the latest trends, the newest people or philosophies. By being uncompromisingly truthful with yourself, you can restore clarity within, which will have a ripple effect on your circumstances.

Dispersion 59



The time of dispersion is a subtle but potent influence that works toward wholeness. It has the capacity to melt, scatter, or dislodge whatever obstacles and rigidities have been hindering unity. When communication breaks down between people, their relationships suffer. In the same way, there can be a communication breakdown within the self, when we have compartmentalized and denied our own feelings or thoughts. Withdrawal and alienation are the result, whether the symptoms manifest within ourselves, in our work, or in our relationships with others. In the most profound sense, the opportunity presented by a time of dispersion is

to reunite us with spirit, reawakening our capacity to experience wonder and igniting our desire to express the inexpressible.

Dissolving any rigidity that has been in place for some time will require a lot of patience and tact. It makes little difference whether the symptoms lie within your own thinking, or have been generated by external circumstances. The effect is the same: you have become cut off from your own natural flow, and as a result disharmony has grown in your relationship to your work, your partner, or your own nature. Becoming aware that there are snags in the communication flow is the first step toward restoring that lost harmony. You must also have a sincere willingness to persevere toward reconciliation, however long it takes.

Be aware that the process of dissolving rigidity benefits from warmth – but not a blow torch!

59 Dispersion

No matter how intolerable the situation may have become, applying too much pressure will have the opposite effect from what you desire and will only provoke defensiveness and resistance. Your first task is to back away from the tangle to gain some perspective on what it will take to untie the knots. If you find yourself in a pattern of reacting and placing blame, immediately pull the plug on it.

Returning to openness and trust means being strong enough to withdraw from anything that perpetuates the status quo. Indulging in temper tantrums and threats will only make things worse. Real strength is possible only when we trust that unity can be restored through gentleness. A sincere attempt to understand the other's feelings – or your own, for that matter – can disperse all kinds of emotional logjams and melt the hardest heart. Once you have found your sincere intention and devotion to the task within, and can express it through a relaxed and sympathetic outer demeanor, it can be surprising how easily negative attitudes and behaviors melt away.

It is pointless to attempt reunification while any of the parties are still suffering from emotional chaos. It's a little like trying to hit a bull's-eye from the other side of a busy freeway – blindfolded. You could stand there forever shooting arrows and never even get close to the mark. But this is the kind of childish nonsense that the ego often proposes when it is scrambling to appear on top of the situation and save face. Forget the face, and allow yourself to simply be equal to the situation rather than on top of it.

The Changes

Bottom Line

The best time to overcome any tendencies toward division and separation is right at the beginning, when they first appear. Luckily, your vision is clearing just in time. Without too much effort, and with a sincere intention to restore balance, you can gently steer the course of events toward harmony rather than discord.

Line 2

Once it has become obvious that the atmosphere is polluted, the first thing to do is to let in some fresh air. In human terms that fresh air is innocence – and the best place to look for it first is within yourself. Every division that we experience starts first within a single individual. And every reunification can start there, too. Look to yourself for any attitudes you might be harboring that actually contribute to suspicion, alienation, and discord, and let them go.

Line 3

Now might be a good time to experiment with putting your own agenda to one side and taking a fresh look at what's best for the overall milieu in which you work and live. This might seem like a call to altruism, but in fact it's not – you will be the first to benefit from any selfless efforts you might make to bring people together.



Line 4

Sometimes people can get so fixed into an us-and-them attitude that even the most casual conversation turns into a tennis match. If you can see that this is what is happening now, chances are you're the best person to call off the game and remind everybody what good sportsmanship is all about. This might not be through direct confrontation, but more likely through an act of persuading all the players to join a new game that everybody can appreciate and support.

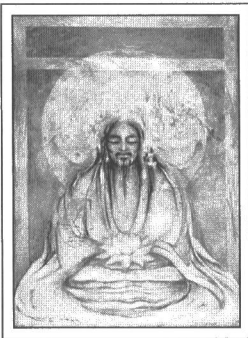
Line 5

If you are completely at a loss as to what to do about an inner or outer war of competing factions, it might be time to retreat to the mountaintop where the air is fresh and you can clear your head. When you come back down, your readiness to embrace a new reality is likely to be contagious.

Top Line

It's not always wise to stride into the middle of a street brawl and try to break it up. Have a close look at whether the participants are armed and dangerous before you attempt such a thing. If they are, the better part of wisdom might be to withdraw from the scene and persuade all innocent bystanders to do the same.





Nature imposes limits on all things, causing energy to build up from within. In fact, without limitations it is impossible to maximize our potential. When we understand, accept, and apply limitations it can be very effective in bringing about a transformation. Water unchecked has a tendency to spread and lose itself into the ground. When it is restrained by a dam it becomes a tremendous source of energy.

For humans, limitations can often be experienced as frustrating. But without the limits imposed on us by life, by our teachers, or by certain disciplines and practices, we would never grow. Limitations can be

immensely productive and strengthening if you can work with them rather than fight against them. A harness can feel like a restraint or a support – it depends on you.

It will be helpful at this time to remember that “practice makes perfect” – and even if we accept that attaining perfection is an impossibility, most of us still strive toward it. It is through the process of striving that you will mature, not by actually attaining the object of your striving. And when discipline is willingly taken on, self-imposed rather than endured because of external pressure or coercion, it will nourish your growth and deepen your maturity.

It’s also useful to remember that becoming really good at anything requires practice and repeated effort. Developing a finely honed technique – or a finely tuned awareness and sensitivity – can take many years of discipline. Once the technique is mastered, it must in turn eventually be transcended

if the growth and change is to continue. Gathering knowledge and building expertise are, at one stage, goals. At another stage this same knowledge and expertise become limitations. And along the way, a good deal of knowledge will be forgotten, but what remains will be well and truly your own.

There are meditation practices that require simply sitting, relaxed, and observing the breath for hours on a daily basis. It sounds so mindless – a “no-brainer” – which is precisely the goal such techniques are intended to achieve. However, attaining a state of serenity and equipoise in spite of a mosquito on the nose – or in the mind, for that matter – can take years, even lifetimes of discipline. And once it is attained, then what? There must begin a new set of challenges for growth to continue, and these challenges are often those that bring the meditator back from the extraordinary refinement of retreat into the ordinary world of daily life.

Just as testing your own serenity in the chaos of the marketplace exposes the depth of your self-discipline, so does the manner in which you respond to the limitations that arise in the natural cycles of the Tao. Few things are more indicative of understanding, or more revealing of what has been deeply assimilated and absorbed into your being in more relaxed and expansive times.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Try as you might to avoid the frustration and humiliation of growing pains, there is nothing you can do about any inner or outer hurdles you might have to face right now. It is in the nature of things that all of us must continually be faced with opportunities to grow beyond the comfort and safety of the known. And even though it is nearly always untimely in our personal calendar of preferences, it is precisely this personal calendar that needs to be updated and refreshed from time to time.

Line 2

Even in times of limitation there are always opportunities to step lightly over a crack in the sidewalk and carry on walking. Don't miss the moment by perceiving the crack as a treacherous abyss and holding yourself back. That would be a misunderstanding of the nature of the times, which is to accept the constraints that are given to you – not to create unnecessary ones out of fear.

Line 3

When you've had so much fun the night before that you wake up in the morning with a headache, you can either blame it on your party-animal pals, or learn something about yourself from the experience. If you make the right choice in dealing with any hangover you might be feeling now, you will decrease your chances of repeating the same headache twice.

Line 4

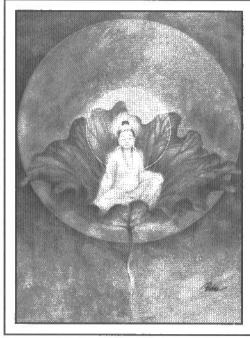
The natural limitations that promote growth can only benefit you if you incorporate them into your everyday life. Take note of any nagging complaints that might be whispering in your ear, acknowledge them, and carry on. Don't try to push them away; that will only make them nag you more. This is the time to turn a deaf ear.

Line 5

Be gentle and forgiving of your own transgressions. And if you are in a position where you must impose discipline on others, by far the most effective way to do it is to demonstrate its benefits by personal example.

Top Line

Don't forget that even limitations must be limited. You might have noticed that people who torture their bodies in the name of spiritual self-discipline end up looking not very spiritual at all, but just emaciated and in pain. Or that people who have chosen a diet that forbids them to eat anything they enjoy end up constantly preoccupied with food. There's a fine line between setting limits and imposing deprivation. Don't fall into the trap of mistaking one for the other.



Truth is not found by adopting certain beliefs or by social conditioning. It is the silent voice of the heart that responds to what is with detached clarity, untainted by emotionalism, that is always available, but very often ignored. It is experienced as intuitive knowing that sees through the problems, blocks, and barriers conjured up by becoming overly fixated on achieving and attaining. It needs no support or approval. Whenever we are humble enough to respect the integrity of the inner voice and heed its guidance, the effect is a transformative one.

The inner voice is the voice of your own consciousness that is serene and spacious, and never distorts. It is founded on the recognition that love is your essential reality, and that the denial of love is the source of all illusion, pain, and suffering. It is the cool flame of awareness that eternally guards your birthright . . . the experience of inner peace.

Remembering that your perceptions and interpretations are colored by your state of mind not only sheds a different light on what you call reality, but will assist you in taking greater responsibility for your thoughts and actions. That state of mind can be a shifting and transitory thing, and when it is, it is not truth. Truth is eternal and unchanging; it never grows old; it transcends the limitations of time and space. The preoccupations and worries of the ordinary mind are nearly always in support of the ego and its illusions. In other words, your thoughts, in part, create your experience. Heaven and hell are both seeds in the mind, just waiting for you to think them into being.

If you're interested in inner truth more than holding on to any belief about truth, it's wise to remember that ego is the ultimate trickster. It will do anything to keep you engrossed in its fictions as long as you're willing to play the game. However, once you've really had enough, and begin questioning what lies behind the apparent reality of your life, you've entered totally new territory – in spiritual terms it is known as being “on the path.” Walking the path is a lifetime journey that leads you within, toward aligning with inner truth.

We humans become teased by the same longings, hopes, and fears and are intimately joined as brothers and sisters regardless of our skin color, spiritual affiliations, or land we live on. We intrinsically share the same potential for realization. We are one, and so is truth. The inner truth of each being survives despite our ignorance, endures beyond our occasional acts of selfish immaturity, and sustains us whether we ever recognize it or not. Acknowledging that, and being moved by the reflection of truth in others, is liberating.

The experience of inner truth, ultimately, is in your attitude. It is not as a point of debate but a deep knowing that is part of your fundament. If it is a source of doubt, you have missed it entirely.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Don't assume that just any inner voice you might be hearing is really your own. Most of us have a whole crowd of voices inside us, from parents to teachers, coworkers, and friends. To hear your own inner voice needs a finely tuned ear and the willingness to discard even apparently good advice if it does not arise directly from your own experience. Undertake the task as if your life depended on it. In a spiritual sense, it does.

Line 2

To live a life of truth is to live in trust, intuitively knowing that the path is made apparent for each step when the time is right. Trusting in the miracle of love can free you from fear, and in turn liberate those around you as well. Your life is truly blessed right now. Treasure the moment and allow the treasure to spread to others by way of your open hand.

Line 3

When you look outside yourself for direction, approval, or affirmation, you set yourself up to be confused at best, or even at war with what you know to be true. Do you think those people in the audience at live television shows really mean it when they applaud and cheer in response to the cue cards? It's time to close your eyes to all external cues and look for what makes you applaud and

cheer from the inside out. It's not too late to rescue yourself from being dragged by the nose through all your ups and downs – unless, of course, that really is your idea of entertainment.

Line 4

Sometimes the insight you gain from getting in touch with your inner truth might lead you in directions you had not anticipated. If it is a course of action that expands your horizons and offers opportunities for greater understanding, follow it.

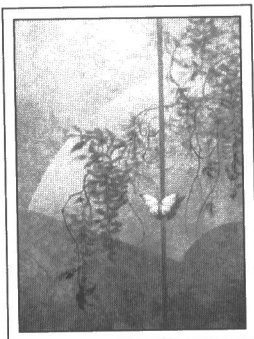
Line 5

Like a mirror, you are able simply to reflect what is, without passing judgment or distorting the images with preconceived ideas about how things should be.

Top Line

Wandering around in the past or projecting dreams into the future is the surest way to escape from the now. It might be time to remind yourself that the only real journey is from here to here. Turn your attention to where your feet are, and do your best to stay connected to them.

Small Is Beautiful 62



Anything you take on right now should be handled as though it were a butterfly's wings. This delicate time requires a realistic consideration of both your limitations and capacities, so that you can be honest about what you can and can't do. Be conscientious, but be true to yourself first.

The Tao continually restores equilibrium by relieving excess. You've become maxed out in some area of your life, however, and it's time to slow down and get back in touch with yourself. You can't afford to project an in-demand, cruising-in-the-fast-lane image; that would tip the scales to

the point of collapse.

We tend to believe that busy and bright is good, silent and subtle is boring. That ideal can keep us flooring the gas pedal even when the tank is empty and we're running on fumes; then we lurch to a full stop and wonder what happened. At the first sign that you need to simplify, ease off and cut back; any other course is irresponsible and will compound problems for everyone.

Relaxing the breath is one way to come back home to your center again. If you find that you're holding your breath, perhaps out of unconscious anxiety, notice what you're thinking, then relax your breath and let go of the thoughts. This lessens the grip of the fixated mind and relaxes the body, too. Whatever you're doing – working, shopping, driving, brushing your teeth – check in with your breath whenever you remember. No need to judge; there is no success or failure here.

62 Small Is Beautiful

The whole point is to watch, take note, and relax. You'll see how this lightens the tendency to get preoccupied, overly emotional, serious.

We tend to fight our need to slow down, perhaps believing we will miss something or be overlooked or unacknowledged. Appreciating the need to retreat takes maturity and the capacity to see that going with the flow of nature, not against it, is our highest priority. It's shocking to the driven ego to realize that changes are being forced against its will; it blames cruel fate for pulling the plug on its plans. Yet indulging in that childish attitude will keep you continually tense and threatened by the unexpected. This is the time to experiment with practicing patience and to learn to trust that life provides without your having to struggle to make it all happen. But this doesn't mean dropping the ball on your responsibilities. Whatever you might have brushed aside as insignificant or a nuisance should not be overlooked now. Consider everything with equanimity. Pay attention to right timing and be ready to constantly adjust, even if it means withdrawing.

Make peace with vulnerability by incorporating the remembrance of life's transitory nature into all that you do. Thousands of years ago, the Chinese sage Lao-Tzu wrote, "Practice not doing, and everything will fall into place." Sounds so easy, yet without humility it's impossible. Respecting how delicate and precious this life is engenders humbleness and the willingness to live in accordance with the way of Tao.

The Changes

Bottom Line

Stay with the tried and true. If that fails to bring results, it's not because the traditional doesn't cut it, it's because you just weren't ready to take on all that was being asked of you.

Line 2

To a certain extent, your hands are tied. Even under the present challenging circumstances, with sensitivity and a positive outlook, all will work out. You may find the results exceed your expectations.

Line 3

You have seriously overextended yourself. Continuing in this driven manner would be disastrous. Better to back off than risk a head-on collision.

Line 4

The situation calls for absolute awareness. Take every precaution to not ruffle feathers. Pressing on in spite of this warning would not only be foolish, but you'd wind up in a real mess. Forewarned is forearmed. Sit tight and keep a low profile.

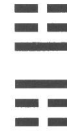


Line 5

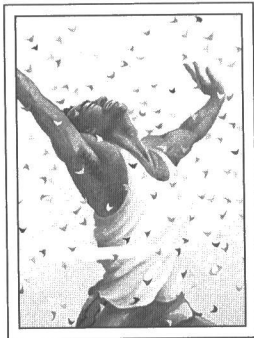
You can't go much further without support from others, but not just anyone will do. So take the time to center yourself, still your mind, and balance any extremes that might be throwing you out of whack. By tending to these basics, you stand a good chance of attracting the expertise, understanding, and depth of character you need in others now.

Top Line

Icarus attempted to fly to the sun with wings made of wax. When he got too close, they melted – bye-bye, Icarus. Now replace the name “Icarus” with your own. 'Nuff said.



Completion 63



Enjoy the sweetness of the moment, for it is the culmination of a long journey. Peak experiences are like brilliant lights appearing on the vast panorama of our lives. We strive, train, and aim for them; our ideals, hopes, and dreams are projected onto them. When a high point is finally reached, a different landscape of possibilities has already begun to appear. It is naive to believe that achieving a goal means it's then possible to kick back and relax, or that from now on life will remain perfect forever. The reality is, in fact, that once you reach the top you most assuredly begin some form of descent. Without the valley there could be no peaks; life

would be flat and predictable.

Whatever you have worked so hard to achieve is now within reach. Things might still need a little fine-tuning, but essentially the moment of triumph is at hand. It is important to not slip into any old habits of carelessness or inattention. Take care of all the maintenance requirements and attend to any last details. Your totality of commitment is what will determine the depth and breadth of your success.

True satisfaction is available in every aspect of the journey through life. It is far more beneficial in such moments to build on your successes by harnessing your energy and containing it rather than throwing it away on the excuse that you need a break or, on the other side of the coin, getting carried away by over-enthusiasm. Although the pressure may seem to be off now, at any

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moment circumstances can take an unexpected turn. Remain alert to any signs of change. Avoid indulging the ego's need to project itself as superior or heroic. Be aware of any tendencies toward pretentiousness, taking on the role of benevolent monarch, or otherwise playing a role designed to demonstrate superiority over others.

Breakthroughs are part of a continuum; they can occur in both small and great ways. When you have achieved any kind of peak, it is wisest to direct your energies toward returning to middle ground in a relaxed and natural way. Attaining the heights always challenges our mental and physical limits, if for no other reason than the fact that increased exposure means increased vulnerability. If you slack off now, before you have fully comprehended all the implications of your position, the situation can degenerate and what seemed glorious can begin to distort and break down. It would be a pity to have come so far only to realize you've created a nightmare. You must be very diligent while savoring the perfection of this time to not become drunk on it, because out of unconsciousness you can easily stumble into snares set by greedy others.

Prepare yourself to resume the day-to-day, step-by-step work of doing ordinary things, in the best way that you can. There is no milestone on the road at which perfection is finally reached. The experience of perfection is a revelation. It is a realization that perfection is contained within every moment, regardless of whether the moment appears grand and cosmic or inconsequential and mundane.

Completion 63

The Changes

Bottom Line

When the pressure is on, it can be tempting to bail out just at the most critical moment. Don't do it! You've got this far by holding firm to your vision, and it would be a kind of inner betrayal of your own Self to jump out of the fire just before you are fully cooked. Even if things seem a bit out of control, take a deep breath and remember that the events that are happening now are the fruits of what you set in motion earlier.



Line 2



When you find yourself standing at the top of the hill, it shouldn't come as a big surprise that everybody around can see you. Even if you're standing naked and exposed, or battered and exhausted, it's best to think of these things as proud battle scars – they are, in fact. You've got nothing to hide; no reason to offer apologies. If you're feeling a little embarrassed nonetheless, take comfort in knowing that things will return to normal, soon.

Line 3

When you've set your sights very high it can challenge every fiber of your being, to reach the peak. The best mountain climbers know how important it is to enlist the services of the best guides. Find sturdy helpers who know how to navigate difficult terrain, and you'll get where you want to go.



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Line 4

Surprisingly, the most ordinary experiences can provide us with luminous insight. When, for example, you are able to dispassionately witness the subtle nuances of dark and light, that shift within your own thoughts, it is possible to taste a peak, in the form of insight that restores a sense of inner harmony and well-being.

Line 5

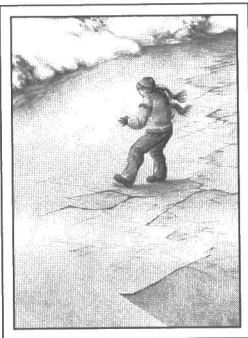
To rest on the laurels of any experience only puts you back to sleep, and soon you'll be snoring away in unawareness. Old habits die hard, and the oldest and deepest of all is the habitual drive of ego to assert itself, above all else. Watch out for delusions of grandeur, now, and if you should fall prey to some old tricks of the mind, return to earth. Simple, everyday acts have the power to consolidate and strengthen any success.

Top Line

Keep your eye on the prize, but remember, the true prize awaits your realization that living fully here and now is the ultimate reward. Life gets complicated when we delude ourselves that we are separate, and somehow "special." There is only movement and change . . . all that is, continues to evolve in a very special way.



Before Completion 64



You may feel as though you're walking on thin ice, and even though the end is in sight the risks are beginning to feel riskier. Your situation is tenuous, and an unnerving sense of uncertainty has crept into what previously seemed like a clear go-ahead. To make matters worse, you may feel utterly spent and exhausted, as though you're running on empty. Yet it's imperative you continue now in spite of weariness and doubt. You must stay focused on the needs of the moment, and distance yourself from any thoughts or people that threaten your inner stability by undermining your tenacity. There could be unexpected challenges that delay progress,

and it may begin to feel that as soon as you've managed to put one fire out another springs up somewhere else needing your immediate attention. Although there is no rest for the weary, you must be fully present to deal with these challenges, so it's important that when they arise you aren't tied up or preoccupied elsewhere. Be cautious and persevering now.

You may have recently awakened to the fact that there are no guarantees in life, and that sometimes, no matter how much energy and care you put into something, for one reason or another it cannot be brought to fruition. It can be a tough lesson to learn that attaining what you set out to accomplish takes more than your own blood, sweat, and tears; if it isn't supported by right timing it isn't going to happen. Questioning the nature of frustrating setbacks that send you back to square one and the disappointment at the unfair twists of fate can serve a positive purpose by increasing

64 Before Completion

your awareness of the changeable nature of life. It can sharpen your insight into the bigger picture, making you more grounded and realistic.

It may be that after a certain point you've begun to lose track of your original intention. Don't freeze up out of indecisiveness regarding how to proceed: you can ill afford to indulge in too much wondering and wobbling. There could be adjustments to be made that may have escaped your attention in easier times; however, once you get an overview and can see the lay of the land, you will discover the resources needed to complete your task.

When any undertaking reaches a point of near completion, it is natural that there is a moment of wavering. So don't be frightened off track by the wobblers! This is how nature works. Just remember to be gentle with yourself during this shaky time.

If you should discover that the direction you're taking seems to be leading you further from the goal, abandon it. Carrying on despite signals that urge a change in plans would be foolish. Be ready to alter your approach, and be creative in your thinking. Do not act simply because you're being pressured by others, or driven by your own impatience. A firm footing is needed before you take the next step. A cautious approach that nevertheless shows resoluteness and grounding in spite of difficulties is what is needed now. Some may be impatient with your apparent lack of progress, but there are others who will respect the choices you've made.

Before Completion 64

The Changes

Bottom Line

When things are so unclear and confusing that you don't know what to do next, it is better to do nothing than to throw something together out of desperation. If you're still in the dark, bide your time until the dawn comes.

Line 2



Your self-restraint and perseverance are being put to the test. If your motivation has been for personal gain, success will be nothing more than a momentary high, leaving you hungry for the next chance to be a hero. On the other hand, your original intention may have long since faded, having been replaced by the understanding that the journey itself is the goal. Use this time to bring the fullness of your attention to all that you undertake, and even in failure you will be triumphant.



Line 3

It happens from time to time that just before bringing a project or dream to fruition, we realize it isn't going to happen. Stick by what you know to be true even if it means starting over. Denying the facts, devising shortcuts, or taking unnecessary risks are not solutions; they will only create a temporary illusion of relief.

64 Before Completion

Line 4

The more fundamental the differences are that you must overcome, the more important it is to be true to yourself. Make sure you take plenty of space to withdraw when you need it, in order to align yourself and your motivations to the highest ideals. Your strongest ally in the present circumstances is your inner truth.

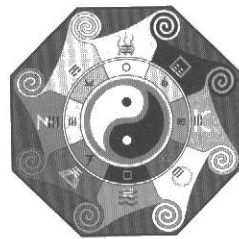
Line 5

If you find yourself in a leadership position, it is because you have earned it. If you can keep your feet on the ground while you reach toward the stars, great things can be accomplished, and will be enthusiastically supported by others.

Top Line

Sometimes the only thing that remains to be done Before Completion is to throw a party and celebrate what you've done! Enjoy, sing, dance, and play, but not to the point of unconsciousness. Every ending is the doorway to a new beginning, and you want to be alert and fresh when it happens.





*The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace;
and the brook would lose its song if we removed the rocks.*

OSHO

Card Layouts

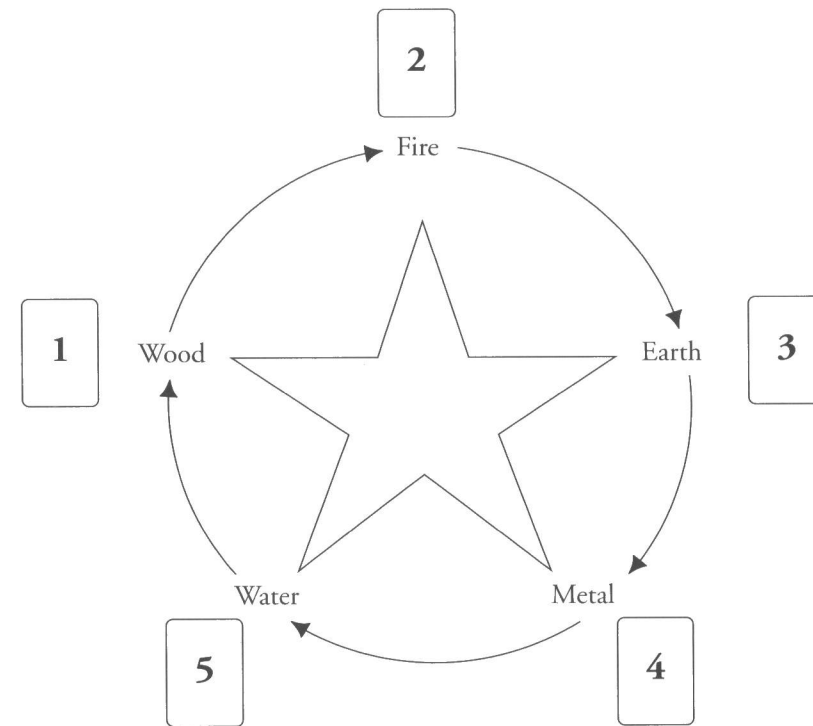
These card spreads are designed to deepen insights into specific human issues. The more relaxed and open-minded you are, the more readily you will receive the guidance needed to help you along your way. Experiment with some of the spreads offered here: the experience may well be a revelation.

The Five Elements Spread

This five-card spread reflects areas of balance or imbalance in each of the five elements for which cards have been drawn. The reading offers insights into the questioner's personal cosmic evolution in the here and now.

1. Shuffle the cards, taking your time. Empty your mind of preoccupying thoughts and then maintain that inner quiet and objectivity. When you finish shuffling, place the deck, facedown, in front of you. Cut the deck into five piles. Beginning with position #1, representing the element wood, follow the above diagram and, proceeding in a clockwise order, place the five piles at the five points of a star-shaped configuration. Keep the cards facedown until all five piles are in position.
2. Starting with position #1, turn over the top card of each pile, moving clockwise around the star until all five piles have the top card facing upwards.

Card Layouts



Card Layouts

Position #1 Wood

Position #1 illustrates what is enhancing or hindering your capacity to visualize goals, and the ability to create plans for achieving them. This is the faculty that gives birth to an idea and sets the wheels of progress in motion. It also depicts the fears that can abort that process of giving birth by holding you back from expanding and from reaching out to realize your dreams. In nature, this is represented as the season of spring, as the time of fresh beginnings, new vision, and vitality. Position #1 also symbolizes daybreak and the quality of new shoots of wood pushing upwards toward the sun.

Position #2 Fire

Position #2 symbolizes the illuminating, dynamic qualities of fire. This position stands for the personality and how you influence the world in which you live in. It focuses on the capacity to feel passionate, creative, and inspired – and has to do with your ability to inspire others, to enlighten and bring clarity to the chaotic, the uncertain, the embryonic. This position denotes the energy of devotion, of giving yourself fully to the realization of something. It is also concerned with self-respect or with what is blocking it. This is the position of high noon, of summer, of creative expression, enthusiasm, and totality.

Card Layouts

Position #3 Earth

Grounding is the focus of the card in position #3. This is the connection you have with the earth and the world you inhabit. It represents the interrelatedness of things and your relationships with others. It is the capacity for compassion and understanding, the ability to listen, to absorb, to be patient. Earth is the symbol for yin, for the receptive, nurturing principle, and this position highlights your openness to receive and assimilate what life is bringing you in the here and now. Conversely, it can point to what may be shutting you down, creating a bad taste in your mouth, or hindering you from feeling nourished in your relationships. This position signifies harmony or disharmony with life, and what may be standing in the way of open communication with others. It represents the seasonal transition points, the spring and autumn equinoxes, the summer and winter solstices, and the afternoon.

Position #4 Metal

Position #4 addresses the qualities of the element metal – the ability to focus on self-discipline and transcend limitation by harnessing energies from within. It is about tempering, and about being tempered by circumstance. It is also about meditation, reflection, and prayer and the capacity to detach from emotional intrigues and live by your principles. This position points toward intuition

Card Layouts

and your openness to receiving guidance from within. It is the capacity or incapacity to organize, to integrate, to bring structure and form. This position symbolizes whatever can create imbalance, depression, melancholy, or lifelessness, and relates to how you cope with slowing down, with defining and refining aspects of your life. It is the season of autumn, the evening, the time for contemplation, introspection, and acquiring an overview.

Position #5 Water

Position #5 indicates the subconscious and the subtleties that influence your emotional expression. This card points toward the deep undercurrents that affect your ability to trust and feel supported by life – or, on the other hand, what may be dampening that trust. It can expose what is making you feel stuck or set in your ways, or whatever strengthens your ability to go with the flow by maintaining flexibility and a resilient inner attitude. This card position reveals what is creating immobility, what has brought you to a standstill, or what is making you feel inwardly heavy and despondent. This card can highlight deeply buried attitudes that contribute to your acting out of fear rather than out of a space of personal empowerment. It can also bring to the surface hidden dynamics that support stress, anxiety, and confusion. This position symbolizes the season of winter, the darkness of night, and the depth of being.

Card Layouts

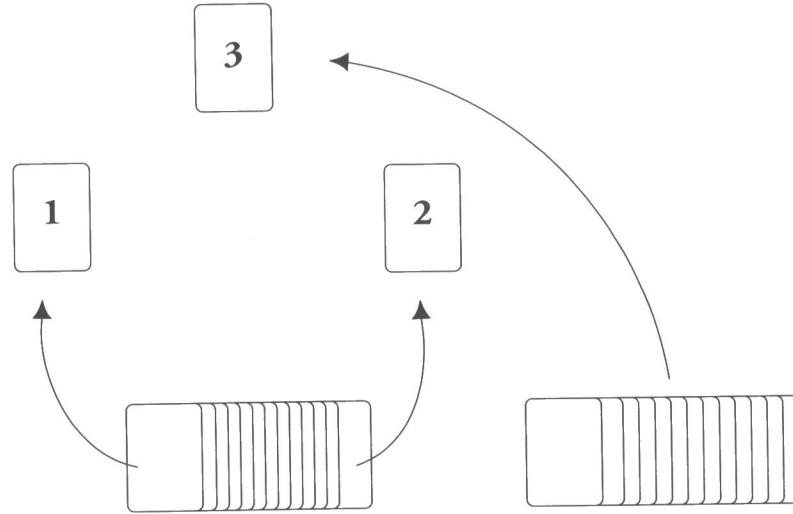
The Pearl of Wisdom

The Pearl of Wisdom is one card drawn at the dawn of the new day. This card is a way to “tune in” to internal or external influences that may impact you throughout the day. Take a few moments to hold the deck in both hands before spreading the cards and selecting one. Contemplating the illustration may well be all that is needed to gain insights, but you can look up the related text in the accompanying book if you feel further input is required. There is no need to consult the changes when using the single-card Pearl of Wisdom method.

Before going to bed, you can again reflect on the illustration and reconsider the card’s message in light of the day’s events. Your understanding can be deepened through dreams and from revelations that arise from the subconscious when you are at rest. It can also be helpful in increasing self-awareness to keep a diary of your Pearl of Wisdom insights.



Yin/Yang Balancing and Harmonizing Spread



1. Shuffle the cards thoroughly and cut the deck into three piles. Select one pile to work with and set the remaining cards aside. Take the top card from the selected pile and place it facedown in front of you.

Card Layouts

2. Take the bottom card from the pile. Place it facedown, to the right of the first card you drew.
3. Spread the remaining cards from the selected pile facedown. With your left hand, choose one card. Place this card facedown above the two cards previously drawn.
4. Turn the cards over in the order in which you drew them. Consider each card in relation to the position in which it was drawn.

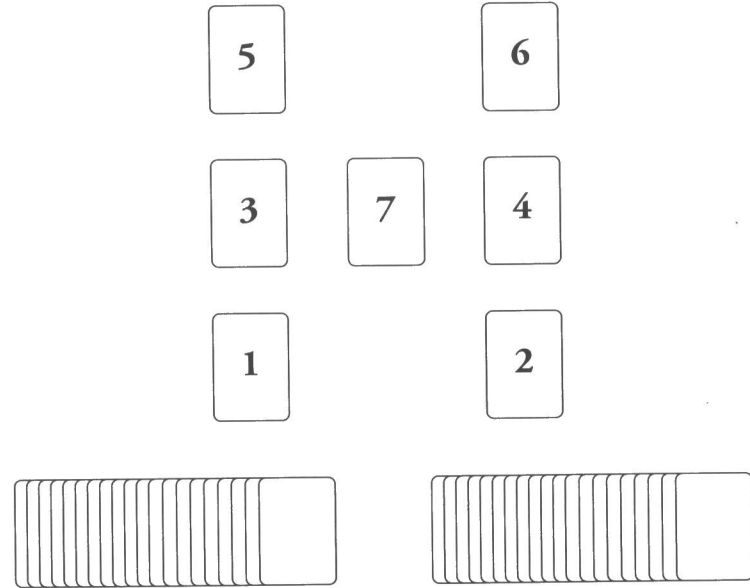
Card #1 – Represents yin, the passive, receptive quality. It expresses hidden or subconscious attributes that are affecting the overall harmony, either within yourself or in your relations with another. This card can shed light on supportive or unsupportive modes of behavior of which you may have previously been unaware.

Card #2 – Represents yang, the active, creative quality. It expresses the external influences impacting balance and harmony.

Card #3 – Represents the “insight” of the reading, and is the key to furthering or reestablishing balance. This card’s message can be helpful in deepening understanding, creating harmonious relations with another, or enhancing self-awareness.

Card Layouts

The Alchemy of Relating Spread



Card Layouts

1. Write down the relationship issue to be addressed in the reading.
2. Keep the issue in mind as you shuffle the cards.
3. With your left hand, cut the deck into two piles. The left pile represents you; the right pile, the other person.
4. Spread the cards from the left-hand pile and draw one, placing it facedown in front of you. This is position #1. Now, spread the cards from the right-hand pile and select one, placing it to the right of the first card drawn. This card is in position #2.
5. Select another card from the left-hand spread and place it above the card in position #1. This is card #3. Select a card from the right-hand spread, placing it above card #2. This is card #4. Repeat this process once more, placing card #5 above #3, and card #6 above #4.
6. Collect the remaining cards into one pile. Reshuffle them while keeping in mind your request for insights into the chemistry of your connection. Spread the cards, facedown. Select one card with your left hand and place it in position #7.
7. Turn the cards over in the order in which they were drawn. Leave card #7 facedown.

Card Layouts

To gain insights into the influences that currently affect the inner and outer alchemy of your relationship, refer to the meaning associated with the position of each card. For a deeper understanding, consult the Tao Oracle book for an explanatory text relating to each card.

Cards #1 and #2 – These positions represent the “ground” upon which each of you stands and indicate the factors influencing the roots or foundations of this groundedness. These cards also reveal where, at present, each partner is coming from. In addition, they not only expose strengths and the firmness of the relationship’s anchoring, but also what may undermine this security in either or both of you.

Cards #3 and #4 – These cards depict the emotional climate. They focus on the dynamic that supports harmony within each of you, and on the challenges each partner faces in assuming greater responsibility to clear up discord or unblock communication. These cards are in the heart position and, as such, can uncover areas of vulnerability and lack of trust. They can also shed light on emotional wounds, and on the hidden fears and habits we have developed to camouflage them.

Cards #5 and #6 – These cards focus on the state of mind, on the perceptions, the longings, the hopes and fears of each partner – and your attitudes toward them. This position can be the

Card Layouts

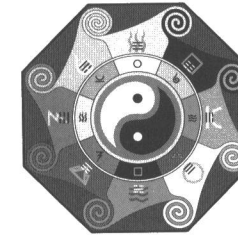
catalyst for a breakthrough in your thinking. It can help you acquire a new perspective by supporting you in approaching the relationship more openly and without being defensive. Being open to receiving the guidance offered here can help both of you view your connection through fresh eyes.

Card #7 – Turn this card over. It is the insight card and represents the alchemy of your conjoined qualities as reflected in the here and now. Read the relevant text in the Tao Oracle book.

About the Author

Ma Deva Padma, Susan Bernard Morgan-Ostapkowicz, has been painting, illustrating, and exhibiting for over 30 years. Her professional career began in Boston, Massachusetts, as an illustrator at *Boston After Dark* magazine, and art director for the Cambridge Phoenix and Environmental Graphics Group, Inc. She worked directly with Oscar Ichazo to produce meditation Yantra paintings for the Arica Institute in New York and, for many years, was artist in residence at the Osho ashram in Pune, India. Her art has been shown in New Delhi, Bombay, and Pune (India); in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taipei; in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide (Australia); in San Francisco, New York, and Boston (USA); and in London (UK). Her paintings can be seen in the Buddhist Museum in Sydney and at Kazari Gallery in Melbourne. She also created the 79 original paintings and commentaries featured in the popular Osho Zen Tarot.

Padma lives with Ashika, Marek Ostapkowicz. She paints and he sculpts in stone at their Embrace of Heaven and Earth Studio in Woodend, Australia. They also spend part of each year in Vancouver, Canada, and in Fairfax, California. Their works grace private and public collections the world over. Information on art from the *Tao Oracle* can be found on the World Wide Web at www.taoracle.com.



Books on the Way of Tao:

Creativity

Osho
St. Martin's Press
New York

Meditations on Tao

Osho
Audio Renaissance
New York

365 Tao

Deng Ming-Dao
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Everyday Tao

Deng Ming-Dao
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Suggested Reading

Chronicles of Tao

Deng Ming-Dao
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Tao Te Ching: The Book of The Way

Lao-Tzu
Translated by Stephen Mitchell
Kylie Cathie Limited
London

Taoism: The Road to Immortality

John Blofeld
Shambhala Publications
Boston, Massachusetts

Ta Chuan, the Great Treatise

Stephen Karcher, Ph.D.
St. Martin's Press
New York

Suggested Reading

Taoism: Way Beyond Seeking

(the edited transcripts)
Alan Watts
Thorsons
London

The Book of Lieh-Tzu:

A Classic of Tao
Translated by A. C. Graham
Columbia University Press
New York

The Secret of the Golden Flower

Thomas Cleary
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

The Philosophy of the I Ching

Carol K. Anthony
Anthony Publishing Company
Stowe, Massachusetts

Books on Meditation, and for Self-Reflection:

Osho Zen Tarot

Osho, Ma Deva Padma
St. Martin's Press
New York

The Book of Secrets

Osho
St. Martin's Press
New York

Love, Freedom and Aloneness

Osho
St. Martin's Press
New York

Meditation: The First and Last Freedom

Osho
St. Martin's Press
New York

Suggested Reading

Maturity

Osho
St. Martin's Press, New York

Courage

Osho
St. Martin's Press, New York

Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism

Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche
Shambhala Publications
Boston, Massachusetts

Peace Is Every Step

Thich Nhat Hanh
Bantam, New York

A Simple Path

The Dalai Lama
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Start Where You Are,

A Guide to Compassionate Living
Pema Chodron
Shambhala Publications
Boston, Massachusetts

The Seat of the Soul

Gary Zukav
Simon & Schuster
New York

Anatomy of Spirit,

The Seven Stages of Power and Healing
Caroline Myss, Ph.D.
Crown Publishers
New York

In Search of the Miraculous:

Fragments of an Unknown Teaching
P. D. Ouspensky
Penguin Arkana, New York

Suggested Reading

When Things Fall Apart,

Heart Advice for Difficult Times
Pema Chodron
Shambhala Publications
Boston, Massachusetts

A Path with Heart

Jack Kornfeld
Random House
London

After the Ecstasy, the Laundry:

How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path
Jack Kornfeld
Random House, London

Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers

Thich Nhat Hanh
Rider
London

Return to Love

Marianne Williamson
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Ageless Body, Timeless Mind:

The Quantum Alternative to Growing Old
Deepak Chopra
Harmony Books
New York

A New Science of Life

Rupert Sheldrake
J. P. Tarcher
Los Angeles

Where Does the World Come From?

Shantam Dheeraj, J.R. Murley
Edizioni Naropa
Rome

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Translated from Chinese by Richard Wilhelm
and into English by Cary F. Baynes
Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey

A Guide to the I Ching
Carol K. Anthony
Anthony Publishing Company
Stowe, Massachusetts

The Philosophy of the I Ching
Carol K. Anthony
Anthony Publishing Company
Stowe, Massachusetts

How to Use the I Ching
Stephen Karcher, Ph.D.
Element Books Ltd
Dorset, UK

The I Ching of the Goddess
Barbara G. Walker
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

The Numerology of the I Ching
Master Alfred Huang
Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont

365 Tao
Deng Ming-Dao
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

Everyday Tao
Deng Ming-Dao
HarperCollins Publishers
New York

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Using Ancient Wisdom*
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Rex Lassalle Publisher
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Translated by Stephen Mitchell
Kylie Cathie Ltd., London

*An Illustrated Encyclopaedia
of Traditional Symbols*
J. C. Cooper
Thames and Hudson, London

The Everyday I Ching
Sarah Dening
St. Martin's Press, New York

A Cup of Tea
Osho
Rebel Publishing, India

Tao: The Golden Gate, Vol. 1
Osho
Rebel Publishing, India

I Ching
A New Interpretation for Modern Times
Sam Reiffler
Bantam Books, New York

The Gods of Change
Howard Sasportas
Penguin Arkana, New York

Symbols Upper Lower								
	☰☯	☳⚡	☵≈	☶⚙	☱☐	☲6	☴☵	☷☺
☰☯	1	34	5	26	11	9	14	43
☳⚡	25	51	3	27	24	42	21	17
☵≈	6	40	29	4	7	59	64	47
☶⚙	33	62	39	52	15	53	56	31
☱☐	12	16	8	23	2	20	35	45
☲6	44	32	48	18	46	57	50	28
☴☵	13	55	63	22	36	37	30	49
☷☺	10	54	60	41	19	61	38	58

The Tao Oracle Chart

*V*ast indeed is the Ultimate Tao,
 Spontaneously itself, apparently without acting,
 End of all ages and beginning of all ages,
 Existing before Earth and existing before Heaven,
 Silently embracing the whole of time, continuing uninterrupted through all eons,
 In the East it taught Father Confucius
 In the West it converted the Buddha, the "Golden man"
 Taken as pattern by a hundred kings,
 Transmitted by generations of sages, it is the ancestor of all doctrines,
 The mystery beyond all mysteries...

MING ROCK INSCRIPTION

Dated 1556

Symbols Upper ▸ Lower ▾								
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☰ ○	1	34	5	26	11	9	14	43
☳ ⚡	25	51	3	27	24	42	21	17
☵ ≈	6	40	29	4	7	59	64	47
☶ ⚙	33	62	39	52	15	53	56	31
☱ □	12	16	8	23	2	20	35	45
☲ ☯	44	32	48	18	46	57	50	28
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