

The background of the cover is a detailed, sepia-toned illustration of a steampunk-style mechanical interior. It features a large, ornate clock face with Roman numerals in the upper center. Below the clock, there are various gears, pipes, and mechanical components. The overall aesthetic is intricate and industrial, with a warm, brownish-gold color palette.

MEMORISING THE LENORMAND CARDS

BY
PETER VODDEN

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This booklet presents a simple system that can help aspiring Lenormand card readers who want to quickly and easily memorise the names, numbers and sequence of the Lenormand cards, and also have a set of clues/pointers to the traditional interpretations of each card.

The system covers both the traditional 36-card Petit Lenormand, and my self-published Extended Lenormand of 52 cards.

The approach detailed here is my own - which is to say, that I developed and employed it myself when I began using the Lenormand deck.

I publish my method in case anyone else may find it useful.

INTRODUCTION

The system involves two techniques. The first involves a well-established memory aid commonly known as the method of loci or *Memory Palace*. It involves mapping the items of a list onto an imagined spatial landscape. In certain “rooms” in that space, we locate or ‘store’ the items to be remembered. We thereby establish a mental association between subsets of the items, and a named and unique part of the imaginary space. This exploits a useful connection between the spatial and verbal hemispheres of the brain. With practice, this technique can be employed to recall (at will) even a lengthy list of items in the correct sequence - by simply mentally re-walking a route through the space we have memorised.

The second technique is that of storytelling. A long sequence of ideas is much easier to recall if the items of the sequence are seen as connected into a linear narrative - a ‘story’. Many years ago, I encountered this approach in Alfred Douglas’ authoritative book *‘The Tarot, The Origins, Meaning, and Uses of the Cards’* first published by Penguin Books in 1972.

Douglas presented a view of the Tarot major trumps sequence as representing the stages of a kind of initiation, or an heroic journey which is a metaphor for what the analytical psychologist C.G. Jung called ‘individuation’ - the process by which an immature psyche develops into a more integrated and better functioning whole person.

For those familiar with the origins of the Lenormand deck, the ease with the Lenormand cards facilitate such a story should not come as a surprise. The Lenormand deck was based upon a parlour game involving a deck of 36 cards called ‘Das Spiel Der Hoffnung’ created by John Kaspar Hechtel.

I perceive Hetchel's Game of Hope as clearly influenced by the archetypal 'roll and move' style *Game Of Goose* - a track-based game of encounters and hazards which may have been in existence as far back as the late 15th Century.



The Game of Goose (courtesy Wikipedia)

In both Hoffnung and Goose, we can perhaps see the precursors of a swathe of Victorian/Edwardian board games created for children - games that were designed to be educational, and to impart specific facts or moral lessons centered around a theme of progress or betterment of one's station in life.

Thus my Lenormand Memory Palace system is a combination of the above approaches. Firstly, I will present a visual map of the Memory Palace, and then secondly I narrate the story whereby each segment of the storytelling fits into one of the "rooms" of the palace.

THE MEMORY PALACE

To create the palace, sort your Lenormand deck into its numbered sequence, then proceed to lay out the cards onto the table in the pattern described as follows. (Don't worry about the names of the rooms for now - all will become clear later.)

Creating the Memory Palace:

[Step 1] Deal cards 1 to 4 in a line - left to right - this is the *Entrance* room.

[Step 2] Then deal a group of 8 cards above the first, in two rows of 4, one above the other. The lower half comprises cards 5 to 8, the upper half cards 9 to 12. This is The *Garden*.

[Step 3] Above the Garden and slightly to the right, deal a row of 6 cards (numbers 13 to 18). This is the *Nursery*.

[Step 4] We now proceed back downwards - so below the Nursery and to the right, deal 6 cards (numbers 19 to 24). I like to lay these cards in a slightly upward reaching curve. This forms the *Outer Gallery*.

[Step 5] Immediately below that, lay out the next 6 cards (numbers 25 to 30). Again, I like to lay these out in an inverted curve - rather like a reflection of the line above. This forms the *Inner Gallery*.

[Step 6] Then, lay out the last 6 cards of the Petit Lenormand (numbers 31 to 36) below in a straight line, forming the *Courtyard*.

[Step 7] You can stop there if you wish - but if you have acquired my Extended Lenormand deck with the extra 16 cards included, then we continue as follows:

[Step 8] Leaving a space, below the Entrance lay out 5 cards in a line (numbers 37 to 41). This is the *Study*.

[Step 9] Below that and to the right, lay out cards 42 to 47 - the *Steps*.

[Step 10] Then above and to the right of the Steps (just below the Courtyard), lay out the final 5 cards numbered 48 to 52. This forms the *Balcony*.

You should now have the room layout of the Memory Palace, with the cards in sub-groups comprising 4, 8, 6, 6, 6, 6, cards - optionally followed by 5,6,5, in the pattern shown in *Figure 1*.

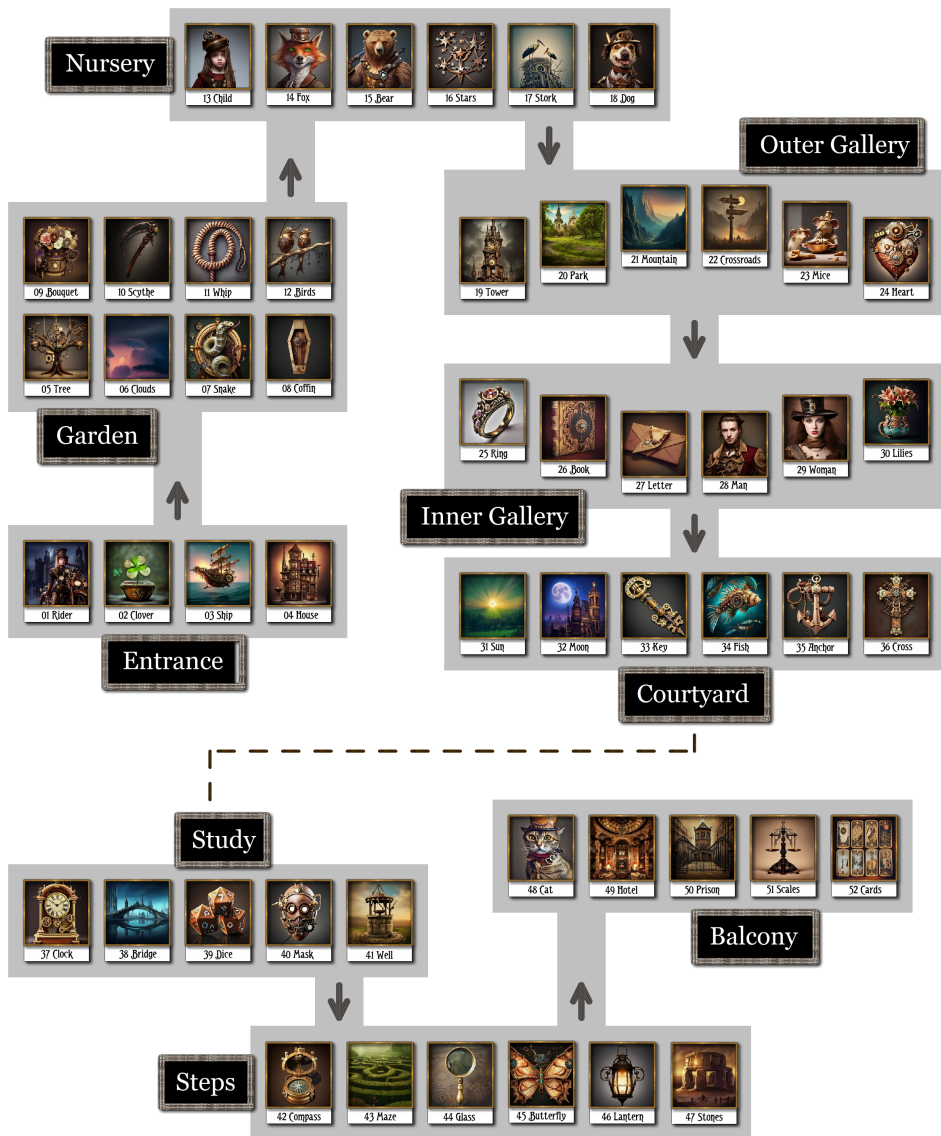


Figure 1 – The Lenormand Memory Palace

It helps to imagine corridors connecting the rooms. I placed arrows on the image to reinforce the notion of walking a route through the rooms.

It may be useful to leave your cards on the table (or perhaps obtain a print *Figure 1*) - because looking at the map of the palace whilst learning the story helps to locate each subset of cards into the appropriate space in the layout.

Free Downloads Available:

- *The Lenormand Memory Palace* (single PNG image, resolution suitable for printing up to A2 Poster size):
- *The Lenormand Memory Palace* (PDF file 4 x A4 sections - for home printing and assembly into an A2 Poster):
- *Free Printable Lenormand Cards* A4 Sheets (PDF):
- *The Lenormand Companion* (PDF):

For downloads and more information, please visit my project page at:

<https://petervodden.blog/portfolio/free-printable-lenormand-cards>

THE LENORMAND MEMORY PALACE STORY

The story describes a journey undertaken by ‘Everyman’ - an unnamed (and ungendered) protagonist who embarks upon an epic quest to find the path to self-improvement - to a better relationship with others, and with life in general.

Along the way, Everyman encounters challenges and insights, hazards and revelations. Each stage in the allegorical journey takes place in one of the identified and named rooms in the memory palace, and relates to a subset of the Lenormand cards in the correct numbered sequence.

The Entrance (or “Prelude”, cards 01 to 04)

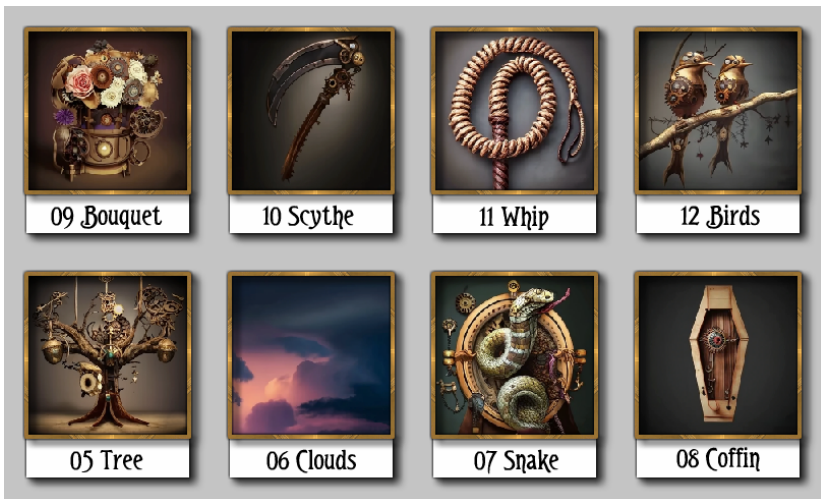


Card 01 the Rider presents Everyman initially in the form of their immature self (Gilgamesh / Adam / Atman / The Tarot Fool) - at a time of new things arriving rapidly, of new knowledge - of seeking a fresh start.

The act of seeking anything is founded upon hope, and this is embodied in the symbolism of **Card 02 the Clover**. For the seeker, the Clover symbolises the optimism of the young, inexperienced mind.

The next two cards are like the overture before a grand performance. Rider/Everyman is embarking upon a journey (**Card 03 the Ship**). In this metaphorical context it represents the journey taken by an immature psyche into the world at large - one that will eventually lead back to the security and safety of home (**Card 04 the House**) - but it will be a home which has changed, as rediscovered by a person who has also changed. On a different level also represented is the greater Journey, which is the story told by the cards themselves.

The Garden (or “Paradise Lost”, cards 05 to 12)



From the Entrance we walk into the Garden. Here, a sequence of 8 cards encapsulates some core aspects of some of the very earliest stories that were written down by humans. Parts of these stories, from around 2100 BCE onwards, wound their way out of Mesopotamia, ending up in various versions; some much altered or distorted, some relatively unchanged - in works such as the Rig Veda (around 1500 BCE) and in the Hebrew Torah (around 1200 BCE).

Such stories usually involve people (or perhaps demi-gods?) who are healthy, safe and secure in a paradise-like garden (**Card 5 the Tree**). Things begin to go wrong when the protagonists lose their focus and become tempted and/or confused. There is usually the eating of a plant, or a fruit connected with knowledge, immortality, sex & death - and there is a duplicitous snake who steals away innocence and/or the secret of immortality. A common thread is that the depicted 'fall' is triggered by the distraction of material things, and forgetfulness of our higher nature. Both confusion and hidden mysteries are symbolised in **Card 6 the Clouds**.

The plant would have provided a return to eternal life for Gilgamesh - had **Card 7 the Snake** not stolen it.

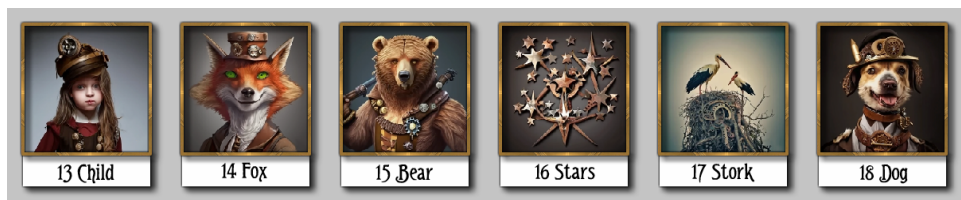
A tree in the Vedic Scriptures provides the fruit which so distracts Jiva that she falls away into material birth, ageing and death (**Card 8 the Coffin**).

Card 9 the Bouquet is the complementary side to card 8 - for without death, how can we appreciate love, beauty and the gift of life? Coffin/Bouquet together symbolise a dualism - revealed as a consequence of the 'fall' - namely, that eternal bliss cannot be living - for it is stagnation. Pain and pleasure, despair and delight are - in this view - two necessary sides of the same coin.

Card 10 the Scythe therefore represents a sudden severance from a previous state of grace, which then triggers the arguments and discords between individuals that are indicated by **Card 11 the Whip**

Card 12 the Birds rounds out the Garden sequence by reminding Everyman that these are the two birds of the Rig Veda and the Mundaka Upanishad - and that the story of the 'fall' was not intended to be taken *literally* - it is an allegory relating to how the part of us that reacts to sensual pleasure in material things provides a false message - a kind of gossip or chatter which ends up distracting us from aspiring to something higher, beyond mere gratification of the senses.

The Nursery (or “The Parade of the Animals”, cards 13 to 18)



So, having explained the origin of our split nature as a metaphorical 'fall' from some ideal, we are ready to begin the great Journey. The problem is that Everyman is still possessed of a fundamental naiveté, and quite unprepared for the world at large.

Proceeding into the Nursery, we see the child-mind (**Card 13 the Child**) beginning to relate to the world beyond the protections of the House, by means of a series of 'lessons' taught by a parade of amusing animal characters, each with their own part to play in the child's education.

First, they meet the wily and cunning **Card 14 the Fox** - who presents both a hard lesson in life and a conundrum. He is an opportunist who kills viciously - but in doing so brings food to the pups, and plays with them to teach them essential survival skills. Being open to seeing situations from different perspectives is going to be invaluable in the trials to come.

Next we meet **Card 15 the Bear**. He is seen to be strong and powerful, able to bend the world to his will by the exercising of his great might. But it becomes clear that with power comes the capacity to abuse it - to dominate others unjustly. Thus the Bear teaches the child to understand that the optimal path involves nurturing power - but exercising it justly, and only when necessary. There will also be powerful people in the world who do not exercise restraint, and become autocratic and cruel.

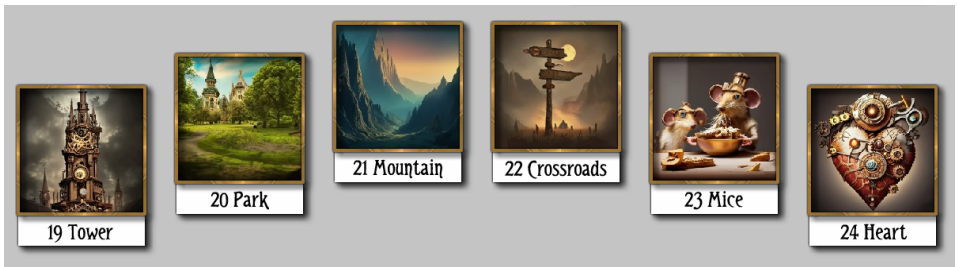
These lessons come as a shock to the Child, who has as yet only known the safety of the House, and the immediate comfort provided by an adult who wipes away the tears and offers unshakeable reassurance. Yet somehow, our child-like Everyman finds the confidence to continue. Looking up at **Card 16 the Stars**, they are filled with hope and wonder, and reinforced by an urge to 'soldier on' with increased resolve.

Card 17 the Stork is the next animal to be encountered. From this beautiful and graceful bird, Everyman learns of a universe that is composed of cycles, the endless rotation of day and night, of the seasons and the years, and of the Stork returning each cycle to the same nesting place in order to replenish the world with new life.

Completing the parade of the animals we have **Card 18 the Dog**, who represents the importance of the faithful friend - the one who will never judge us, never desert us; who will comfort and protect us in our time of direst need. But we must also be careful not to nurture an obsessive, slavish follower who lacks their own life and motivations.

Thus armed with greater awareness of the world at large and its moral complexities, our Everyman is emboldened to go out and meet life full on. We walk on, into the Outer Gallery...

The Outer Gallery (or, “The World” cards 19 to 24)



The Outer Gallery describes a series of challenges relating to the external world, the first being found in **Card 19 the Tower**. This card represents establishment in all its guises, but especially institutional authority as wielded by governments, corporations, and powerful individuals. It is foolish to tilt at these enormous windmills, and yet if we do not attempt to reign in their occasional excesses, then how is a balance to be maintained?

One of the chains that can hold us back is the fear of the disapproval of our peers. **Card 20 the Park** symbolises our innate fear of being exposed in public, of being challenged, and unable to present our case with conviction. Despite these fears, it is sometimes really important to simply ‘get out there’.

With a rather grim inevitability, we encounter **Card 21 the Mountain**, representing the material obstacles that fate places in our path - both small and large. You may attack the mountain directly, or you may devise some cunning plan to find a way around it - but face it you must. Some hazards cannot be ignored.

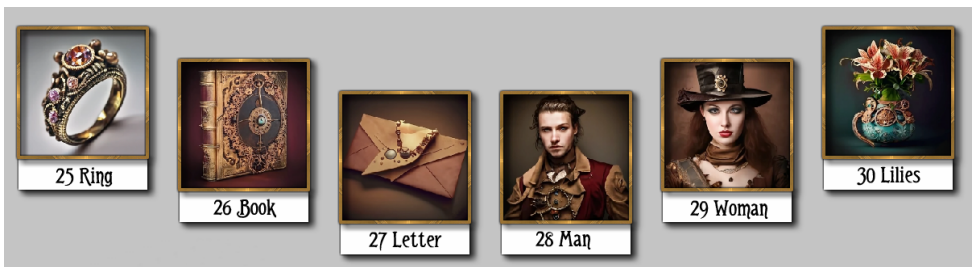
And so to **Card 22 the Crossroads**. Sooner or later, life will present critical choices - decisions that must be made wisely, because there is no going back, no second chance. You must choose - and commit to a course of action.

Card 23 the Mice is a peculiar but significant card, because its place here is to remind us that not every challenge, not every danger or potential catastrophe is signalled beforehand, nor clearly identified. Some disasters creep up on us slowly - small changes that occur in tiny increments, slowly and quietly eating away at our foundations. Beware the mice in the pantry!

Finally, an important question is posed by **Card 24 the Heart**. What does it mean to empathise with others who are not me? If I dismiss the non-essential differences between us, then I perceive that the external appearance, actions and utterances of others are (by and large) very much like my own. Does this imply that those others are in - some sense - simply a slightly different version of me? And does that thought lead inevitably to an instinctive *altruism* - to the conclusion that I should treat all other people in the way in which I myself would wish to be treated?

Having successfully navigated the material world, Everyman now proceeds to the Inner Gallery:

The Inner Gallery (or “The Mind”, cards 25 to 30)



The next set of cards represents the emotional and cerebral challenges that Everyman must face up to, if they are to develop and grow into a mature entity. This card sequence covers various aspects relevant to our mental and emotional wellbeing.

Obviously, if we place value on our relationships with others, and gain benefit from such things, then at some point we are likely to contemplate forming deeper bonds - speculating perhaps that entering a contract, or even swearing an oath, might bring even greater rewards. **Card 25 the Ring** has in many cultures been used to symbolise both a private and a public expression of a deeper commitment.

The mind allows us to experience emotions and feelings, but it is also a tool for learning. Hence, we encounter **Card 26 the Book**. Learning from personal experience is all well and good, but - as a species we have spent centuries building a vast global library of manuals, guides, essays and studies on every subject accessible to our fertile imaginations. The library also encompasses all the works from writers of fiction, the output of artists and musicians, poets and philosophers. One should not underestimate the value of book-learning.

Card 27 the Letter now offers Everyman a crucial insight, namely, that it is through experience and *communication* that we grow and mature. The kind of communication hinted at in this metaphorical journey is the 'internal dialogue' - whereby we attempt to bring the adversarial aspects of our split mind into some form of harmony.

The dual nature that was created by the 'fall' must be reconciled, and so now is revealed the deeper meaning of **Card 28 the Man** and **Card 29 the Woman**. The truth is that we all have inside of us both a female and a male aspect - Jiva & Atman, Eve & Adam. The material/sensual and the serene/eternal.

Understanding this and bringing these two forces into balance brings about the inner peace that is symbolised by **Card 30 the Lilies**.

Emerging somewhat wiser from their period of self-reflection in the Inner Gallery, Everyman now proceeds to the Courtyard:

The Courtyard (or “Individuation”, cards 31 to 36)



The successful reconciliation of our split mind and its core mental turmoil forms a critical milestone in the Journey. Everyman emerges from the process into the bright sunlight - energised and revitalised in **Card 31 the Sun**.

Thus armed and armoured, they now feel confident to undertake the final hurdle, the most perilous challenge of all, which is to undertake that ‘dark night of the soul’ - the facing of our inner demons, as represented by **Card 32 the Moon**. It is a dangerous path, and not everyone venturing into their own subconscious emerges unscathed. But by harnessing their creativity and intuition, and bolstered by all that they have learned thus far on the journey, Everyman manages to defeat their base fears and dark desires, and in doing so finds **Card 33 the Key**.

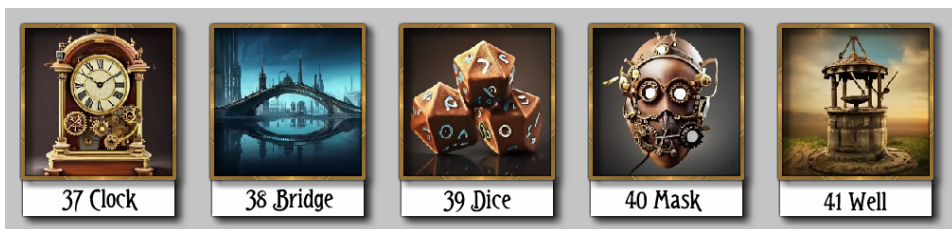
What the Key reveals is that the wealth and resource traditionally symbolised by **Card 34 the Fish** can also be seen as not about the material world, but a reference to the even more valuable treasure that is gained when a psyche has come to terms with itself, and exists in harmony with its own nature. This is the kind of secure mental foundation that is signified by **Card 35 the Anchor**.

The successful completion of all the preceding challenges is what has enabled the Child to mature into a whole person, able to face the world with both equanimity and confidence, and equipped to carry all of the many burdens that the twists and turns of life may bring - as represented by **Card 36 the Cross**.

Here the story of Everyman's Journey concludes in the original Petit Lenormand.

But the extended Lenormand must of course provide a postscript to the tale - and indeed it does:

The Study (or "The Great Work", cards 37 to 41)



No matter how capable Everyman has become at facing the everyday world, time passes (**Card 37 the Clock**), and eventually our hero turns their attention to philosophical matters. Part of our human nature is that we are possessed of an insatiable curiosity, and it is hard to look up at a starlit night sky without wondering about the universe and our place in it.

Card 38 the Bridge offers a tantalising glimpse of an exciting possibility. It is the very same idea that so fascinated the early alchemists and astrologers - the notion that somehow, what happens out there reflects, and is reflected by, what happens down here; that the frighteningly large and the incredibly small are somehow related by rules, patterns and structures that we could possibly understand - if only we could connect them.

However, attempting such an 'Opus Majus' is a gamble not without its risks (**Card 39 the Dice**). Recorded history is peppered with tales (real or imagined) in which would-be philosophers have ventured into such realms and, after devoting a lifetime, have returned with nothing but sand; or worse, even lacking some part of their sanity.

But our hero is like Neo in the film 'The Matrix' - harboring an inescapable feeling that the world we think we know is not what it seems, that there is some kind of facade (**Card 40 the Mask**) that obscures the truth. So our emboldened Everyman feels compelled to take the plunge - to dive into Lewis Carroll's rabbit hole and see how far it goes. The going may be hard, but perhaps answers may be found in the depths of **Card 41 the Well**.

The Steps (or "The Grail Quest", cards 42 to 47)



As in all the epic stories, our hero must acquire some sort of guide to protect themselves (**Card 42 the Compass**). It may be an ideology, a friend, or perhaps just some kind of touchstone or talisman - but it is a thing that will help to keep them on the right path, for without such, they would surely become distracted and lost in **Card 43 the Maze**.

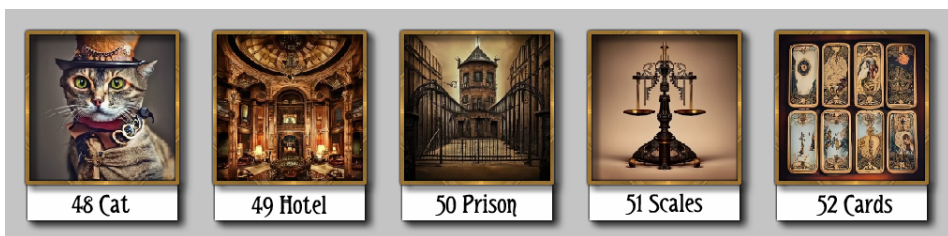
Card 44 the Glass has two different symbolic meanings. In one sense, we have the magnifying glass - a tool such as a telescope or microscope by which to delve deeper and more intensely into observations of the material world.

But just when they feel that something profound will arise from this reductionist analysis, Everyman is suddenly, and quite shockingly, presented with their own reflection (via that other sense of the word 'glass' - a mirror). Everyman realises that *consciousness* is in fact the deepest puzzle; that one cannot understand the phenomenon of experienced reality without also understanding what it is that is trying to do the understanding.

As a consequence of this disturbing revelation, Everyman realises that dualism itself is a distraction, and in order to progress, it is in fact they themselves that must change - *'There is no spoon!'*. This necessary metamorphosis - a simultaneous death and rebirth in a new form - is symbolised in **Card 45 the Butterfly**.

Now armed with a different kind of clarity of thought (**Card 46 the Lantern**), our hero is prompted to pause for a while, temporarily setting aside atomic science in order to try to learn from the ancients (**Card 47 the Stones**); to try to adopt modes of thinking that existed before the Greek philosophers taught us to believe that everything is no more than the sum of its parts.

The Balcony (or “Answers”, cards 48 - 52)



Card 48 the Cat thus represents a new stage of personal growth and mental development that Everyman has now gained. Their mind and their thinking has evolved to be cautiously and quietly confident, and yet capable of performing great leaps of astonishing speed and agility when necessary.

And here - within sight of the ultimate goal - lies the greatest danger of all, represented by **Card 49 the Hotel**. That feeling of respite from troubles can be so seductive that our hero may relax into its siren call, its comforting embrace, and hence fall from the way. It will take all of their inner strength and courage to reject *self* as being the flimsy mirage that it really is, and hence to proceed on the true path.

Forging ahead in pursuit of the grail, Everyman finally breaks free - as the mask falls away, and the comfortable Hotel surrounding them is revealed to be **Card 50 the Prison**.

Everyman now uncovers the ultimate revelation - namely, that in approaching the mysteries with a fundamentally dualist mindset - by holding to the incorrect belief that they themselves and the external universe were distinct and separate things - they have inadvertently imprisoned their own mind within a cage of their own making.

Our hero finally arrives at the resolution so fervently desired; a mind healed and unified, and a proper mental balance established (**Card 51 the Scales**).

And so ultimately to **Card 52 the Cards**. Everyman is both astonished and delighted to find that the answer was in the cards all along.

The dragon Ourobouros was eating its own tail - the Journey is in fact a wheel within a wheel, a fractal infinity of thought, a glorious and endless path that both continues forever, and also brings them right home to where they began.

IN PRACTICE

To practice the system, it is only necessary to devote some time occasionally to sitting quietly, and re-telling yourself the story as, in your *mind's eye* you traverse the rooms of the memory palace.

In your mind, picture the map of the palace with the location of each room, and the connecting corridors. Then begin your 'journey' by entering each room in the appropriate order:

Entrance, Garden, Nursery
Outer Gallery, Inner Gallery, Courtyard
Study, Steps, Balcony

When you enter a room, recall in your mind visually the line of images that are in there (you may wish to imagine them as pictures hanging on a wall). Then proceed to focus on each image in turn, left-to-right along the line. Recite the number and name of the card represented, at the same time relating to yourself the aspect of the story connected with that image. When you are happy that you have recalled sufficient information for each card in the room, then imagine yourself walking on into the next room – and repeat the same process.

After a few times of practising in this way, you will find that the 'location' of any card comes to mind very easily, and you will be able to dip into the memory palace as and when needed to retrieve a clue or pointer as to the meaning of a card.

So for example, during a reading, you turn up card 12 the Birds.

You recall that Birds is the final card of the Garden, when Everyman is discovering that the *literal* story of Adam & Eve is actually a distraction, a gossip or chatter that diverts attention from what should properly be the focus.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Memorising the Lenormand Cards is entirely own invention.

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Peter Vodden 2025

