I. Introduction

The world of sortilege (divination by lots) and its more modern emanation of cartomancy (divination by playing cards or special card-decks) is very ancient and very wide. Though the deservedly famous and very old system of Tarot is usually the first association people make with the divinatory science of cartomancy, there are other traditional cartomantic devices. None are more compelling to me—nor as aesthetically pleasing—as the younger, but every bit as potent system of cartomancy that falls under the name and heading of "Madam Lenormand."

Lenormand cards, and the divinatory practices that have sprung up around them, instantly summon to mind the glories and occult artistry of the Victorian Era. The mystery of these simple-seeming little cards (and they are often smaller in size than Tarot cards) is compelling, because many can sense that, just below the surface, an entire "alphabet" of deep associations and ideas flows strongly, just waiting to penetrate the levels of a seer's awareness and bring forth spirit-world contact. In my own practice utilizing these cards—and I am a collector of the decks, vintage and otherwise, also—some of the clearest messages I've received from divining familiars and other spirit-persons that I desired communication with have been through the agency of these cards.

The traditional Lenormand deck numbers 36 cards, each inscribed with a simple symbol of an easily-recognizable thing, such as a tree, or a key, or a house. The method itself, playing off these quaint but layered images, offers a simpler, more intuitive alternative to methods of Tarot.
cartomancy that are heavily invested in or "crossed pollinated" by other occult sciences such as numerology, cabala, or the like.

As I have written in unpublished works, and as adepts of cartomorphic systems already know, even Tarot doesn't achieve its highest value and accuracy until a person learns to engage the *images* before and beyond the "associations" that come with each card, or the rote meanings attached to each card. So, Tarot divination can be (and for true accuracy, *must* be) every bit as intuitive, in its own way, as Lenormand divination.

However, I find that the Lenormand method is still distinctly different from Tarot in other ways, too. To begin with, though people have attempted to layer astrological information and other meanings into Lenormand divination, it's always a secondary consideration to the simplicity of the card images. Lenormand is the ultimate "picture to intuition" system, which speaks to people's souls and deep minds directly, without any need for complex metaphysical considerations or books of theory. Also, the aesthetics of Lenormand are different; the symbol-images used are of a more universal kind.

Naturally, you'll find that Lenormand cards have, over time, achieved "standardized meanings"- but as I will demonstrate, those meanings are only one particular axis of meaning and message when it comes to "what the cards say" in a reading- and not always the most important source for the meaning of the reading.

It helps to think of a Lenormand deck as a collection of 36 paintings from a gallery in the spirit-world. When you perform a legitimate method of divination with them, the objective source of your divinatory message has an opportunity to select certain of those paintings and arrange them before you- lead your soul on a tour of the gallery, and point out a few paintings- which encapsulate the message you are intended to receive. It's important to think this way, and to ask yourself, when you see the images, what the divining spirit that is sending them to you is trying to say. The oracular power of real cartomancy is engaged in this way.

II. A Short History of the Lenormand Deck and Mademoiselle Lenormand

"Mlle Lenormand, the most celebrated of our modern fortune-tellers, was unacquainted with the science of Tarot, or knew it only by derivation from Etteilla, whose explanations are shadows cast upon a background of light. She knew neither high Magic nor the Kabalah, but her head was filled with ill-digested erudition, and she was intuitive by instinct, which deceived her rarely. The works she left behind her are Legitimst tomfoolery, ornamented with classical quotations; but her oracles, inspired by the presence and magnetism of those who consulted her, were often astounding. She was a woman in whom extravagance of imagination and mental rambling were substituted for the natural affections of her sex; she lived and died a virgin, like the ancient
druidesses of the isle of Sayne. Had Nature endowed her with beauty, she might have played easily at a remoter epoch the part of a Melusine or a Velléda."

-Eliphas Levi

Cartomancy came into vogue during the 18th century, in France. Students of Tarot already know the names of the "greats", such as Etteilla, who laid down the basic esoteric writings during this time that underpins so much of Tarot divination these days.

The "Sibilla of the Salons," Marie Anne Adelaide Lenormand, was born in 1772 and is today celebrated as a foremost luminary of the golden age of cartomancy. She is considered by some to be the "greatest cartomancer of all time", but rumor and legendry can lead to such exorbitant claims with ease.

I have no doubt that she was good, perhaps even great; but the fact of the matter is that she never actually used the cards we call "Lenormand cards" today. Her divinations were done via ordinary playing cards, and we know little or nothing of what methods she used. As you can see from the above quote by Levi, nasty through it was, she was talented and probably naturally clairvoyant.

Lenormand was from Alençon, a town in Normandy, and she was orphaned at the age of 5. She wore out the rest of her education in a convent school, before going to Paris in 1786. In her career as a fortune-teller/diviner, she claimed to be a confidant and card-reader for famous leaders of the French Revolution, such as Marat, Robespierre, and St.-Just. She also numbered among her clients great figures such as Napoleon, Empress Josephine, and Tsar Alexander I. All in all, she was active as a fortune teller for over 40 years.

Around 1814, she began publishing books- quite a lot of books- some of which were met with great scorn and controversy. She did something around this time to get on the wrong side of the law, causing her to spend some time in prison- some say for fortune telling (which could still be prosecuted as a crime) and others for preaching against the revolution and its "reign of terror."

She died in Paris in 1843 and is buried in the Père Lachaise Cemetery. She left behind an enormous fortune upon her death, which was (presumably) inherited by her nephew, who was in the army at the time. She had no children, and indeed, seemed to be phobic of children; that, and she was described by more than one source as extremely unattractive.

Two years after Lenormand died (1845), a publisher called Grimaud put out a deck of 54 cards called "Le Grand Jeu de Mlle Lenormand." It was a pretty opulent product, a deck stacked with astrological and alchemical imagery, geomantic imagery, images from Greek mythology, star-charts, cabalistic symbols, playing card symbols, and flowers.

Grimaud said that a secret student of Lenormand had given him the descriptions for this deck, but there's no way to know if that was true at all. But the advent of the Le Grand Jeu de Mlle Lenormand established the trail of "Lenormand Cards" or the idea that there were fortune telling
cards associated with Mlle Lenormand. To discover the origin of the 36 cards that now bear her name, we have to jump back in time a bit.

Quite a few years before Lenormand died, a German man named Johann Kaspar Hechtel died- in 1799. Hechtel was a German businessman/entrepreneur, the owner of a brass factory in Nuremberg, and a non-fiction writer and designer of parlor games. True to the times, like most successful men, he was a renaissance man- he also contributed to essays on high-level subjects like physics.

In 1799, the year Hechtel died, "Das Spiel der Hoffnung"- "The Game of Hope", was published- it was a card game that Hechtel had designed, with 36 cards. This game was still being advertised in 1820, and its 36 cards are the clear source of the modern Lenormand deck: Lenormand decks have the same card numbering, symbols, and playing card correspondences as the cards in Hechtel's "Game of Hope."

So no one disputes it- the 36 cards of Hechtel's card game became the Lenormand deck of today. At some point, through a process I don't think anyone really understands, Hechtel's images and associations gained the name "Lenormand", and a divinatory function. The first Lenormand decks of this kind were published in Germany, by 1850. If you want to see the original "Game of Hope" cards, the British Museum has several decks that were donated to it by Lady Charlotte Schreiber.

By the late Victorian era- the era so famous for its gilded yet shadowy "occult" overtones- Lenormand cards had been used for nearly 50 years as a divinatory parlor game, but also used by serious (and private) occultists for whom the simplicity of the images and the various divinatory methods connected to them were doubtlessly appealing.

III. Playing Card Images, Poems, and Pictures

Lenormand decks are countless. I didn't realize how many there were until launching myself into the field of the collector. Over time, certain deck-makers have chosen to include or take away certain features from the cards. The one thing that is standard in all decks is the sequence of 36 specific images which are numbered, beginning with card 1, the image of a Horseman or a man on horseback, and ending with card 36, the image of a Cross.

Some decks have a small traditional playing card face inserted onto them. The first card, the horseman (for example) is associated with the nine of hearts. Some decks exclude this feature. This feature can certainly be used to add details to readings (something I will talk about later) and can be used to perform a reading type that comes dangerously close to the "holy grail" of cartomancy, which is the ability to gain a "yes/no" answer with some degree of accuracy. I don't suggest people seek "yes/no" answers from any divination system, but it certainly comes up.
Not all decks have the playing card inserts. The deck used to illustrate this treatise does, but my favorite Lenormand deck does not. So, it is not strictly necessary. Other decks have very clever poems inserted on each card, a cryptic, short, often well-rhymed little poem that details some of the image's meaning. I love these poems; but like the card inserts, they are not necessary.

All a true Lenormand divination needs is the 36 images. For this treatise, I have used (by way of illustration) one of the most common Lenormand decks available- the "French Cartomancy" deck (still available, as far as I know) published by Lo Scarabeo, with a divinatory manual by Laura Tuan. The images used in this deck (and thus in this essay) are from the "Cartes Lenormand" published by H.P. Gibson & Sons Ltd, in the 1920's. These cards were originally printed in Germany by B. Dondorf. Some call this the "Dondorf Deck"- and I still consider it to be, in some way, the "baseline" Lenormand deck. That might have something to do with it being the first I ever owned, but also to its relative ubiquity in the world of Lenormand.

Other decks I strongly suggest people obtain, if they want to seriously engage the Lenormand divinatory system, are the reprints done by "Sevenstars" (Tarot By Seven, online) of the vintage Madam Morrow Lenormand (a favorite of mine!) and Seven's Vintage German deck. Both are superb, and she offers her German deck with any selection of features you want (card inserts, poems, or just images) and a large selection of amazing card backs for your deck.

The Austrian "Piatnik" Lenormand deck is also excellent, and extremely inexpensive- I believe I picked up one online for 7 dollars. By far one of the most impressive, luminous, and beautiful decks I own is the German "Lenormand Wahrsagekarten mit astrologischen symbolen"- it too, is relatively inexpensive and very gorgeous. The famous "Blue Owl Lenormand" is a tiny but traditional and wonderful deck with the best "poems", hands down, integrated into the cards. It too, is inexpensive and readily available.

IV. Preliminaries to the Use of Lenormand Cards

When you first obtain a Lenormand deck, just look at it. Don't read about it, or try to build associations with the cards just yet; simply use your eyes and gaze at the images, in the order they came. Then, shuffle the deck and look at them in the new randomized order. This time of familiarizing oneself with the cards can go on for a few days.

The images on the cards are simple, and they are meant to be- they speak at a fundamental and simple level to the deeper regions of a person, and allow oracular familiar spirits or powers to create clear and intuitive messages.

You will notice that you have different reactions to the different images. Some will stand out to you; some will already be keyed to events, memories, and meanings that are personal to you. That time you kissed a guy you loved under a tree (the card that has an image of a Tree)... a time
you went boating on a vacation (the Ship)... a funeral you attended (the Coffin) and so forth. It may be that your association runs deeper- many modern neopagan folk can see "the World Tree" in the Tree card, or have deep religious feelings for the Moon card. Christian people may see the Serpent card and think of the devil or the Serpent of Eden. Try to separate your knowledge of Tarot meanings and associations from these cards, as much as you can. This deck and method gives you a chance to clear your mind of that, and enter into a simpler and more intuitive space. These are not Tarot cards, and have no relation to Tarot in the ordinary sense.

Try to keep the cards on you as much as possible for the first few days, and don't let others touch them over-much. Make that bond of sympathetic connection with the physical cards and get as much of "you in there" as you can, through touching and looking. Sleep with them near you or under your pillow. Find a tasteful pouch or bag or box to keep them in.

The simplicity and beauty of the images is something that is a constant source of joy and appreciation for me. As you will see, somehow, Hechtel's images all tap into repeated and rather universal life-experiences that bind all human beings together, from any time or place.

V. Preliminaries to Cartomancy and Divination Broadly Considered

Cartomancy, in common with all legitimate forms of divination, is only accomplished with the help of spirit-persons that exist outside of oneself. In a sense, all real divination is oracle. For those of you who have established and maintain pacts with Familiar spirits who aid in divination, the method of reading below is accomplished by doing whatever those pacted Familiars expect you to do, to obtain consciousness of your connection with them and to receive from them their messages.

For those who do not have such a pact with such a being, divination must necessarily come from the "Follower" spirit that follows one through life, and guides and protects one from the unconscious and unseen dimension of their life. This "personal Fate", as it were, is an entity that every adult who survived childhood can be sure of having, even if they have not consciously identified it, or met it, or entered into any sort of conscious relationship with it.

Whether we know it or not, we are accompanied through life by an unseen being, entity or non-human person whose task is to come with us through birth, mediate to us throughout our lives the various patterns and judgments of Fate, and at the end of our lives, guide us into the condition of the dead and perhaps beyond. In this capacity, they also protect (as much as they are able) and act as one of the chief sources of our intuitions and certain dreams- particularly dreams warning us of dire circumstances or dangers to come.

This being is first and foremost a being that anyone who makes effort towards authentic divination can engage, even if you have not before now achieved any awareness of them. Some
modern ceremonial magicians may be referring to this being when they say "Holy Guardian Angel" - but Fetch, Follower, Guide, Guardian, and many other such names sum up the reality better.

The only human beings alive who do _not_ have the protections and patronage of a Fetch-Follower are the extremely wicked, for tradition tells us that the Fetch will abandon such persons, leaving that person to fend for themselves (and become prey to other powers, and usually become a lost soul at death.) I will charitably assume that my readership here does not contain such a person as this. Considering how harmful and terrible a person has to be to become bereft of the Follower, it's a safe assumption.

All divination is an attempt to gain insights into situations - insights that give us access to the interior, ordinarily unseen aspects of situations, as a method of knowing more about where the situation came from, what it really is or how far it really extends, and likely where it's going. Most people consider divination to be a matter of only discovering "the shape of things to come", but this is not true. The most valuable aspect of divination is the extent to which a divinatory practice can offer people advice on how to best deal with hard situations in the here and now.

This is likely the most common sort of "question" anyone should be posing to an oracle or to the source of insight sought through a divinatory operation: "Can you advise me on how to proceed within this situation, or clarify what I need to be clarified to make the best choices or plot the wisest course forward?" It is these sorts of questions that the counsel of the Follower Spirit- or of reliable Divining Familiars- can help us most with. Of course, any question is technically "allowed", so ask whatever you like; but the best piece of divinatory advice I can give is to never ask "yes or no" questions.

Ask clarifying questions, ask "what will become of this present situation x.x. if nothing changes" or "if I commit to this course of action x.x., what will be the outcome?" or the like. "What is the nature of the relationship between me and x.?" is another question that can be asked, particularly if you wish to see if you've managed to create a potent relationship with a spirit- something sorcerers attempt to do often enough. But you may wish to see what the nature of your relationship truly is with another human person, too. You can divine about how other people feel about various things; you have no need to ask about how _you_ feel about anything. This is something you should already know- which I will mention next.

Divination in general has several unbreakable "rules"- just a few, but when one commits to a divination practice of any seriousness, that person must also commit to never breaking these rules, for these restrictions actually endow the practice (and the practitioner) with a high degree of dignity. First, you must never ask for the answer to a question that you already know the answer to. Secondly, you must never ask the same question twice- the only time it is permissible to ask the same question is when several days or weeks have passed, and in that time, fundamental or important changes have occurred in the situation that you were asking about the
first time. Thirdly, you must *never* ask for the answer to a question that you don't genuinely want to know. To break any of these rules is to risk your ability to divine at all in the future—fair warning is given here.

Before you attempt any act of divination, it may be wise to take some simple purification and protective measures. I don't think it's absolutely necessary in some life or death way, but it is true that the Unseen world is full of a lot of spirit-persons, not all of whom are helpful or desirable. If you are a professional sorcerer who maintains pacts with Divination-granting Familiars, chances are, they would not allow for "interference" during your reading. If you are not, and are attempting to gain the attention and guidance of your Follower, there is always a slight- just a slight- chance that an "Other" can interfere with the subtle process of card selection, for mischievous or malicious ends.

To remove the chances of this occurring, you can burn white sage at the place of divination (always works) or you can sprinkle a few teaspoons worth of an infusion of hyssop around the area you are reading in, and anoint your face and hands with it. You can put a bowl of rue at the area of divination; you can sprinkle an infusion of birch bark on the area and anoint your face with it (though that isn't strictly speaking highly protective- oak would be better for protection) or you can put symbols that are very holy and protective to you in the area.

You can sprinkle some Florida Water there too; that works quite strongly, in my experience. Striking the table with a hazel rod before divining there or having hazel twigs present is strongly protective. Holy water from catholic or orthodox churches may suit others more- though for the life of me, I can't see why a person that ideologically committed to a church would be involving themselves with this in the first place- but all of this really comes down to eliminating only a slight possibility of danger anyway. Being physically clean, comfortable, and mentally relaxed and focused is the most important thing.

Try to do your divinations by candle light, firelight, or natural light of some sort. That atmosphere (within which most divinations from human history were done) is more conducive to this process.

**VI. Posing Questions and Selecting Cards**

When the time has come to read with the Lenormand cards, one should try to do it in a space that is relatively clean and clear, and comfortable. One should have quiet, and no undue emotional distractions (unless you are reading about a distressing situation, in which case, that may not be something you can help.) If the distress is too great, you may have to have another read for you.
The first step to "posing a question" lies in reaching the source of the oracle or divination. Again, if you have a sorcerous pact with a Divining Familiar, you already have your own method of reaching them. Do it. If you do not, you must first focus on the situation you want to read about. Visualize the situation's many aspects: the actors in the situation, the places it involves, the things it involves, what you fear about the situation, what you hope for the situation, what confuses you about the situation. This is done silently, almost meditatively. You have to fill yourself with these images and impressions, and let yourself walk through the garden of your mind, looking at these things, feeling the impact of these things.

Then, from the center of this meditation, the question should be "incubated" and emerge- that thing you need to know the most, want to know the most, the clarity you need the most. This is the "seed" that you state your question from, or request clarification or guidance about.

While you are doing this "question creating meditation", this exploration of the deep dimensions of your troubling issue or whatever the issue may be, you should also focus on letting yourself feel your body, your whole body. Enter as much as you can into the full sensory experience that you are having. "Sink" a little into your body, even into the chair or down a few inches into the floor. "Go deep"- the source of your divination is in a deep place, interior to you, even if it is an objectively existing entity. Do all this simply, without trying overly hard. Just go with it. Too much effort will actually block the process, so be simple and just find that "middle way" between too much effort, and not enough.

When you have incubated your question, say it out loud. Make that question a "thing of this world" with the wind of your breath, and "say it" over the cards. Say it into the cards if you want-hold them close to your mouth and speak the words and the wind of your breath into the side of the cards.

Now you are ready to randomize the cards and allow the source of your divination to "use your hands and mind" and give you your reading.

To randomize the cards, deal out seven cards face down in front of you. The number seven has important connections to divination, but important nuances beyond even that. Suffice to say, it is a very uncanny number among numbers. Three is *coming to be*; Four is *stability*, what became. Three plus four is Seven; the number of emergence/change and persistence, dynamism and stability, two things that are naturally opposites to one another, yet held together, blended together in Seven. Contradiction, paradox, seen and unseen, all together.

With seven cards face down in front of you, having stated your incubated question out loud, now, you must "forget what your hands are doing" and simply start laying card after card down, onto one of the seven cards before you, without thinking about it. Just deal out the cards, one at a time, onto any of the seven cards before you. Keep doing this till all the cards are gone from your hand. You will end up with seven "piles" before you. Pick up the piles- but don't think about it. Just grab them and stack them together in any way.
Remember- always remember- *there is no wrong way*. You only make a "mistake" in this phase by thinking about it too much. Deal out the cards without thinking about it, just let your hands go "automatic." Pick up the seven stacks again without thinking which one to grab first, which to grab next- and put them together in your hands without thinking about it, until you have the whole deck again. Then, quickly cut the deck. Slide your thumb down the side of the cards and stop anywhere. It won't be wrong. Cut right there.

Put the deck down, all still face down of course. Push the cards towards the right, fanning them out before you.

Now, pause for a moment, clear your head, and with your left hand, just take any three cards from the deck and put them, one at a time, face down before you- the first on the left, the next one in the middle, and the last on the right. Then, pick three more, and put them face down below those first three cards, just the same. *You can't pick wrong.* You have to believe that, accept that.

The reason you can't pick wrong is because if you did this properly, *you aren't picking.* You are letting your hands and mind be moved by the Divining Familiar/Follower (or both)- they are, below the level of your awareness, causing subtle changes and influences to act on your nervous system and mind, inspiring your hand to move where it did, your brain to pick which place it put a certain card, where it cut, and which you selected from the fanned out cards.

So, your duty is to let it happen without thinking about it. Then you are ready to interpret your six cards.

**VII. Card Interpretation**

The "top" three cards that are face-down before you are your actual reading- the cards of This world. This is your primary "message" line. The three cards below them represent the Unseen world, and the subtle, intangible but real impact it has on the top three, the cards of the tangible.

My method of Lenormand divination has three layers. Meanings and messages will emerge from these six cards you "gained" from the Unseen- and chiefly from the top three- but there are three "steps" or layers that you have to go through to draw those meanings or messages out. They are as follows:

1. The Narrative (the myth, or the pure story)

2. The Narrative with influences from the Unseen

3. The Standard Meanings
Turn the top three cards over. Leave the bottom three hidden. Begin with your narrative. Look at the three cards- just look. You are not seeking "card meanings"- you are firstly seeking a story. The cards will tell a story, which I call the narrative. This first layer of reading requires your imagination, and is arguably the most fun and most important of any of the steps or layers.

The three images that you see now, moving from left to right, are icons from a story, paintings from the Spirit World Gallery- paintings telling a story. So, utilize your imagination and tell a story. If you trust the source of your divination, your story will turn out just as it should; they knew, deeply enough, what you would probably think or imagine when they selected these three images to put in front of you.

Although I don't have the images for this particular example, let us say your top three cards were (from left to right) card 28, the Man or the Gentleman, card 33, the Key, and card 5, the Tree. A simple story or narrative could go like this:

"A man sits on the veranda of his house, his mind restless. He decides to go for a walk. While walking through a field of swaying reeds and grasses, he spies something glinting in the sunlight. He goes to investigate, and discovers an ornate key lying amid the grasses. He picks it up, marveling over it, and continues his walk. He comes to a great tree, and notices that a rough wooden door is set into the trunk of the tree. He walks up and tries his key in its lock, and the lock opens- and so does the door. He stoops down and walks within..."

I'll stop there, because the point is made- a simple story emerged. If the cards used in this example (Man, Key, Tree) strike you as "too easy", then I will reverse them just to prove that a story can always be found in the images. With the imagination open to the guidance of the Unseen, any story is possible, and the one you need to think up will get thought up. Trust yourself. Here's a possible story from the reverse of the card order above:

"The people of the village had long been in awe of the great forest that bordered their lands- and most in awe of the great tree at the forest-center. They brought it gifts, and over many hundreds of years, they were blessed with plenty by the forces of growth and life. Their families (think family trees) were large and healthy. One day, a woman went out to give a prayer to the tree, when she saw a gold key hanging from one of the thin twigs at the end of one of its great branches. She took it, and immediately, from behind the tree, stepped a man, a well-dressed but strange looking man. He was the spirit of the tree. He said to her "this is the key to my house..."

I do believe the point here is made. Let a narrative emerge. If these examples sound especially like "fairy tales" to you, then good! They should. The essence of legitimate Fayerie-Tales came, in all truth, from extraordinary contacts with, or inspirations from, the Unseen world. Your stories don't have to be whimsical or even overly fantastical- just don't try too hard. Keep it simple, like the cards, but let the imagination speak.
Whether or not you realize it at first, your emerging narrative _will_ reveal things to you that will answer your question or give you surprising clarity on the situation that was the subject of the divination. Really look at the cards. See how the images connect to one another, how they look at one another, how they relate, how they conflict or clash, how they come together. Let that guide your story.

The story doesn't have to be long, and it doesn't have to end well. It can be tragic- as you will see. It can have neither tragedy nor safety nor anything else of the kind involved; it can seem to be, at first, quite a simple or boring story. But let it be, let it emerge. _They don't have to all be profound_- don't try too hard with them. And try not to let wishful thinking about the situation at hand guide your thoughts. Let the story come about on its own strength.

Now, when you have accomplished this first stage, you can move on to layer two: the Narrative or Story with influences from the Unseen world. Turn over the bottom three cards. These three cards now modify the top three. They somehow affect or reveal some inner aspect of the top three cards. When I give my full-length example readings below, you will see how this works.

For now, it is enough to say that the bottom three cards add details into the message of the top cards. They can modify your story, in other words. Even when you do take these cards and modify what the top cards meant in your initial story, that initial story must still be thought of as a thing on its own, just as you told it before stage two. Take what message you got from your story at the first telling, and put it aside as one of the emergent bodies of information from this method. Then, at the second stage, let the bottom three cards add some interior meanings.

And Last, in the third step or layer, you "read" the top three cards using their standard meanings. The last part of this treatise will be a list of all the Lenormand cards, along with their standard general meanings, and a further two entries for each card, representing its first message and its second message.

If one of the three cards on the top of your reading has a positive card below it, its message is the first message. If it has a negative card below it, its message is the second message.

In this third and last stage of this reading method, the bottom cards can tell you whether or not the standardized meaning of the card above them will be slanted positive or negative. Negative cards can make the standardized meaning grow dark; positive cards make it stay just what it is. Again, be patient here, because I am about to give generous sample readings that will make all of this perfectly clear to you.

**There are Nine cards in the Lenormand deck that are considered "negative."** They are, as follows:

Card 6: Clouds

Card 7: Snake or Serpent
Card 8: Coffin
Card 10: Scythe
Card 11: Whip
Card 14: Fox
Card 15: Bear
Card 21: Mountain
Card 23: Mice

So learn to "mark" these cards out in your mind as the "negative signifiers." Memorize them as such. You must look for their appearance in the three bottom cards of any reading to see if they alter the meanings of cards above them.

VIII: Sample Readings

The best way to learn a method is see it performed. Here are some sample readings that show how all three "stages" of the method are applied. After these examples are given, the final section of this treatise will have the list of Lenormand cards and their traditional meanings, and the pair of messages that each card can give (depending on whether or not the card below it is positive or negative.) When I talk about the meanings of the cards in these examples, just roll with it- you will see, in section nine, where I got those meanings from.

Example One: The Very Troubled Man

A man comes to me and says his situation is very bad and hopeless, and he just wants guidance getting through it. He isn't forthcoming on many details. Alternatively, you may be the person, reading for yourself, who is in a bad situation, feeling hopeless, and needing guidance. In that case, you would be quite forthcoming with the details, as you'd know them all intimately. Incubate a question from them.

The Reading (top, seen): Card 6, Clouds; Card 20, Garden; Card 31, Sun.

Bottom, Unseen: Card 5, Tree; Card 33, Key; Card 2, Clover.
Step One: The Narrative

"Troubled by the clouds and rain, the traveler walked heavily and slowly through the mud and across the difficult land. Before him, in the distance, he saw a wondrous sight- a garden, with strange and beautiful statuary, and people milling about inside, talking and enjoying themselves. He went inside, and find himself enthralled and engaged by the people in the beautiful garden. He looked up, after a long time of carousing and speaking with much joy, to see a bright sun streaming from behind the clouds. He hadn't even noticed the rain while in the company of the people in the garden. Now, the light filled everything, warmed everything."

Step Two: The Narrative with influences from the Unseen World- this stage adds interior details.

The clouds represent difficulties, obscurities, an inability to see clearly. They are doubts and confusions. Within them, though hidden, is the tree- a symbol of health, growth, the passage of time, and family. Perhaps your problem, your confusions, your lack of clarity deals with one of
those themes? Is it a family problem that you are suffering from? A problem related to aging, or of something that has gone on for a long time? (if you are reading for yourself, you would know what the tree "meant" in relation to the clouds- you wouldn't have to ask. If you see that the "hidden" card adds a detail that is in line with your situation, it is a sign of affirmation that the reading is strong and accurate.) The traveler in the narrative might have been walking under the burden of disharmony in his family.

The garden is a place where people come together; it represents meetings, social life, gatherings, people coming together to speak or engage. The key is below your garden- and the key, in every reading, points to something very, very important- the "key" to solving your problem, finding your way, lies in others, in communicating with others, meeting someone, finding allies, becoming social, reaching out. The ladies in the garden give the traveler a key that is a charm against his family's bad fortune.

Last we see the sun- such a positive outcome! Such success, accomplishment, luck. If, that is, you realize what the garden and its interior "key" mean, and actualize what it says. Inside the hidden dimension of the sun, the clover- a card of more luck and positive outcomes, and twists of fate that contain opportunities. But clovers need the sun to grow- and this clover is below the sun. If you gain the actualization of the garden and its key, you will not only see the sun of happiness dawn, but it will make the growth of something else very desirable rise up below it. The traveler sees the sun cause a huge field of clovers to blossom before him. He knows his luck is about to change for the better.

Step Three: The Standard Meanings

Position One: **Card 6, Clouds**: Confusion, uncertainty, complications, bad weather, fear, hazy reasoning, doubt.

Because the card below this is not a negative card, Card 6 gives the first of the two messages it can give: "The dilemmas that you face now are not long lasting; they can be solved, resolved, or overcome."

Position Two: **Card 20, Garden**: Public, meetings, groups/gathering, social life, networking, parties, society.

Card below is positive, so the first message is used: "Something begins. Something is created. An affair or relationship begins."

Position Three: **Card 31, Sun**: Success, summer, accomplishment, enlightenment, charisma, luck, vitality, energy.

Card below is positive, so the first message is used: "Problems are solved."
I sincerely hope that after this first example, you are able to see now the enormous potential in this system, and the enormous and generous amount of information that these cards can "give"-Starting with the most intuitive layer (the narrative) and going to the most intellectual layer (the standard meanings)-these readings are ordinarily highly focused and informative, with many emerging layers. Take all the meanings from all three layers, and from that, find the totality of the message. At any rate, onto example two.

**Example Two: A Very Troubled Relationship**

You have no idea what to do. You've put a lot of time and effort into your relationship, but the longer things go on, the more doomed it seems. What will come of this situation if nothing changes?

Top, Seen: Card 7, Serpent; Card 8, Coffin; Card 3, Ship

Bottom, Unseen: Card 4, House; Card 26, Diary or Book; Card 11: Whip
Step One: The Narrative

"While on a journey, a man grows very tired. He sees another man walking towards him, a beggar or homeless man of some sort, but wearing a strange green coat. He talks to the beggar, who says "There on this roadside is a good place to rest. I rest there often when I am tired." So, the traveler lies down to sleep, and is awakened by a terrible pain- a snake has bitten him and slithers away. He gets up and tries to find help, but to no avail- he dies of the snake bite. He finds himself on a shoreline, where the ship that carries souls to the next world awaits him. He boards, to discover that the captain of the ship is wearing the same green coat of the beggar. His head is that of a serpent. "It was I who appeared to you on the road" the serpent says. "I am the captain of this vessel, and we could not depart until one more soul was among us."

Step Two: Narrative with Influences

The serpent is a bad card of deceit and trouble. Below it is a house- representing the life you lead at home, the place where you need stability the most. This problem is domestic (a relationship issue) and menaced by the serpent. The man on the journey was trying to reach the safety of home.

The coffin spells the death of your relationship, a sudden end, or a bad end. Within its hidden dimension is the diary or book- the place where memories and records of the past are kept. What has gone before is leading to the doom of this relationship. The man died regretful of the things from the past he was ashamed of or wished he could change, the regrets of the past.

The boat means transition- a movement from one place to another, whether at will, or against one's will. Below it, the whip is an instrument of pain. This transition will be painful. The man on the soul-boat went, as so many others, to the next life with much fear and trepidation.

Step Three: Standard Meanings

Position One: Card 7, Serpent: Deception, cheating, betrayal, manipulation, seduction, rival, problems.

The card below is positive, so the first message for the Serpent card is used: "A betrayal awaits."

Position Two: Card 8, Coffin: Ending, transformation, illness, death, painful ending, negative event.

Card below is positive, so first message is used: "Health risks are a possibility; dissension and arguments arise."
Position Three: **Card 3, Ship**: Travel, business, transition, commerce, journey, distance, anticipation.

Card below is negative, so second message is used: "You must move or depart, but not happily or willingly. You may be obligated to relocate or put out effort."

**Example Three: Spirit, What is Between us Now?**

This is a personal example from my own life. A while back, I went off into the wilderness to obtain a large stone. I can't go into the deep reasons for it; it is enough to say that the spirit of this stone was one that I knew I'd be relocating into my house, and that I wanted it to be on good terms with me. I gave many offerings to many powers in the obtaining of the stone, and put out much effort, but when all was done, I wanted to do a divination to be sure that the spirit of the stone was happy with me personally, and with the situation I had moved it into. So I divined. Here is what I got:

Top: Card 5, Tree; Card 19, Tower; Card 25, Ring

Bottom: Card 28, Man; Card 9, Bouquet; Card 35: Anchor
Step One: Narrative:

It was clear to me what the top three cards were saying. Sometimes, as with this time, the message is just that clear. "I once dwelled in the wilderness (tree card) but now, I have been brought to civilization, to a building, separate from my old estate (tower) and here, I join in relationship to another (ring).

For step two, I saw the man under the tree (a man in the hidden dimension) as the person of the spirit of the stone. The bouquet under the tower showed that the building or home that the stone had been brought into was a happy situation for the stone-person, as well as for me- and the ring, a sign of relationship, was in this case a stable, good relationship, because the anchor "below it" shows stability.

Step Three: Standard meanings

Position One, Card 5, Tree: Health, growth, steady passage of time, family.

Card below is positive, so first message is used: "Here is a relative, a son, daughter, or friend that is trustworthy."

Position Two, Card 19, Tower: Protection, rules/authority, the past, separation, loneliness, isolation.

Card below is positive, so first message is used: "There is lucid, clear sight here: objective seeing, ease at analysis, and possibly separation."

Position Three, Card 25, Ring: Relationships, union, commitment, proposal, agreement, contract.

Card below is positive, so first message is used: "Here is a soon-to-be union, a solid relationship, a beneficial contract."

* * *

By now, you surely understand the method. If, for some reason, you wish to seek "yes or no" answers from the cards (and what a waste of the richness of this system it is) you can do so only if your deck has the playing card faces integrated into the cards. Select six cards as described above, but turn them all face-up. None of the standard Lenormand card images matter for this method, only the playing card faces.

Look immediately to see if black kings, queens, or jacks outnumber red kings, queens, and jacks. If they do, the answer is no. If they do not, the answer is yes. If they are equal in number to one another (one black jack and one red queen) they cancel. In the event that they cancel, or if there are no face cards at all, count how many spades or clubs appear, versus how many hearts or
diamonds appear. The higher number wins, and if the dark suits win, the answer is no (or "looks bad") and if the red suits win, the answer is yes (or "looks good.")

Look at the sample readings I gave. Sample one, under this analysis is "No" or "Looks bad"- a lone black jack appears. Sample two's spread is again, no- two black face cards beat the lone red one. In sample three, the answer is again "no" because of the lone queen of spades- but had she been gone, and replaced by a six of hearts, the answer would still be no because red's numerical cards would total 14, and black's numerical cards would total 16. I wouldn't stake that much faith in this particular system, and I'd only use it rarely, if at all.

If red and black number cards ever both total up to the same, there is no answer, positive or negative. The cards refuse to answer yes or no. Obviously, if all the cards are red, the answer is yes or "looks good" and if they are all black, it's no.

IX: Standard Meanings of Lenormand Cards, and the Messages

If you have read all of the above, I need do nothing more than give you the different standard card meanings now, along with the two messages the cards contain- you already know how to determine which message to use, along with many other insights into how these cards work together to tell stories and give messages. My best to you in all your divinatory endeavors.

CARD 1: HORSEMAN or RIDER

General Meanings: News, comings and goings, new person or situation, stranger, visitor, rapid movement.

First Message: Good news arrives from a visitor or a man.

Second Message: Someone succeeds, but at great cost to you.

CARD 2: CLOVER

General Meanings: Luck, hope, gamble, positive outcomes, twist of fate, opportunity.

First Message: You will have success in anything attempted.

Second Message: An opportunity is lost due to neglecting something important, or lazy inaction.

CARD 3: SHIP
General Meanings: Travel, business, commerce, journey, distance, anticipation.

First Message: A great holiday, or a pleasant and chosen journey.

Second Message: You must move or depart, but not happily or willingly. You may be obligated to relocate or put out effort.

CARD 4: HOUSE

General Meanings: Home, family, living space, domestic affairs, real estate, property.

First Message: Harmony is with the couple or family, there is wealth and plenty, or an inheritance.

Second Message: Problems divide the family or couple; the home is dreary.

CARD 5: TREE

General Meanings: Health, growth, steady passage of time, family.

First Message: Here is a relative, a son, daughter, or friend that is trustworthy.

Second Message: Hardships must be faced, sacrifices made, possibly to retain one's property or family harmony.

CARD 6: CLOUDS

General Meanings: Confusion, uncertainty, complications, bad weather, fear, hazy reasoning, doubt.

First Message: The dilemmas that you face now are not long lasting; they can be solved, resolved, or overcome.

Second Message: Something unexpected will bring about a serious problem.

CARD 7: SNAKE or SERPENT

General Meanings: Deception, cheating, betrayal, manipulation, seduction, rival, problems.

First Message: A betrayal awaits.
Second Message: People say what they do not mean. Nothing can be decided with certainty. There is jealousy with reason, and if you offer trust, it will not be repaid well.

CARD 8: COFFIN

General Meanings: Ending, transformation, illness, death, painful ending, negative event.
First Message: Health risks are a possibility; dissension and arguments arise.
Second Message: Money is lost, or a heart is broken- there will be sentimental let-downs.

CARD 9: BOUQUET

General Meanings: Happiness, beauty, gift, joy, invitation, surprise, generous gift, pleasure.
First Message: A gift is given, peace reigns, something improves, there is healing.
Second Message: No stability is here; there is fierce rivalry, injuries done and received.

CARD 10: SCYTHE

General Meanings: Warning, fast decision, cuts, pain, accidents, sudden endings, surgery, separation, sharp words.
First Message: There will be a break up or a breaking apart, a loss of certainty.
Second Message: Something unexpectedly or suddenly ends.

CARD 11: WHIP

General Meanings: Arguments, discussions, separation, abuse, physical activity, passion, punishment, conflict, turmoil.
First Message: Nothing can be understood or agreed upon, and the attempt to talk it out is useless.
Second Message: Someone will be stabbed in the back; legal questions will not be answered quickly nor necessarily to your favor.
CARD 12: BIRDS
General Meanings: Verbal communication, negotiations, gossip, siblings, hectic times, older couple or couples generally.
First Message: A detailed analysis or investigation opens up new perspectives.
Second Message: Here is an unreliable fortune or a misfortune, or a difficult solution that is called for.

CARD 13: CHILD
General Meanings: Youth, innocence, new beginnings, student, beginner, small things, children.
First Message: There is happiness with friends; a successful effort, or a happy but brief relationship.
Second Message: There is great emotional disappointment, the loss of trust or innocence.

CARD 14: FOX
General Meanings: Unconventional things, resourcefulness, small job, cunning, trickery, con man or clever trickster, fraud, cleverness, lies, deceit.
First Message: Have sharp, cunning vigilance. There are underhanded actions and hidden intentions about.
Second Message: Indiscretions abound, revealed secrets emerge, and enemies are ready to attack.

CARD 15: BEAR
General meanings: Personal finances, boss, strength, power, confrontation, sometimes protective.
First Message: There is a personality clash, and a need for others to help bring things together.
Second Message: Hasty words and actions bring harm; there are painful conflicts and disputes.

CARD 16: STAR or STARS
General Meanings: Dreams, wishes, hopes, intuition, encouragement, moving forward.
First Message: There are good and encouraging results or welcome flirtations;

Second Message: Here is resignation, giving up, serious but still surmountable obstacles, or much waste.

**CARD 17: STORK**

General Meanings: Change, movement, relocation, transformation, fertility.

First Message: There may be conception, pregnancy, or birth; perhaps a meeting with relatives.

Second Message: Here, people wait for nothing; they will not have what they desire now. A project will be disrupted, and no decision made soon.

**CARD 18: DOG**

General Meanings: Friend, loyalty, friendship, life companion, partner, reliable friend.

First Message: There is a lasting friendship here that can be trusted. It will support all.

First Message: Here is loneliness, solitude, self-pity, or indecision.

**CARD 19: TOWER**

General Meanings: Protection, rules/authority, the past, separation, loneliness, isolation.

First Message: There is lucid, clear sight here: objective seeing, ease at analysis, and possibly separation.

Second Message: There is a truth here that isn't being accepted. It will lead to danger.

**CARD 20: GARDEN**

General Meanings: Public, meetings, groups/gathering, social life, networking, parties, society.

First Message: Something begins. Something is created. An affair or relationship begins.

Second Message: Happiness is stolen, overshadowed, or delayed. There are secrets to keep.
CARD 21: MOUNTAIN

General Meanings: Obstacles, delays, problems, challenges, difficult, heavy weight.

First Message: There is a desire to reveal or come out with something, dangerous or one-sided ambition, an ending, or an initiation.

Second Message: This obstacle cannot be overcome. Effort is wasted on it.

CARD 22: ROAD or CROSSROADS

General Meanings: Decisions, choices, alternatives, directions, turning point, efforts towards goals.

First Message: Here, a clear and deciding choice is made. Something begins.

Second Message: There is hesitation here, perhaps an unwise compromise, a moral failing.

CARD 23: MICE

General Meanings: Stress, loss, anxiety, theft, damage. Eats things away (diminishing.)

First Message: Business will become complicated or difficult, mistakes will be made, and false friends are here.

Second Message: Lies and deceit are here, and the loss of something by theft, or a bad investment.

CARD 24: HEART

General Meanings: Love, passion, romance, generosity, care/nurturance.

First Message: Here is great love, real happiness in a family or couple, and wishes realized.

Second Message: Nothing but instability is here, and pain for a family or couple, and problems within one's profession.

CARD 25: RING

General Meanings: Relationships, union, commitment, proposal, agreement, contract.
First Message: Here is a soon-to-be union, a solid relationship, a beneficial contract.
Second Message: There is indecision here, or a broken relationship, contract, or union.

**CARD 26: BOOK**

General Meanings: Secret, diary, hidden (occult) knowledge, memories, education/knowledge, expertise, study, research.

First Message: Here are intimate things, secret and pleasant memories.
Second Message: Only melancholy here, regrets and bitter remorse.

**CARD 27: LETTER**

General Meanings: Message, document, writing, records, written communication.

First Message: Here is important news, or a notice of importance.
Second Message: No message comes, or if one does, it is unimportant.

**CARD 28: MAN or GENTLEMAN**

General Meanings: Boyfriend, husband, partner, brother, father, son, or perhaps the person asking a question to the oracle, if male.

First Message: Here is a much-loved man, a trustworthy friend, or a reliable professional.
Second Message: There is a disquiet, doubts or dissatisfaction.

**CARD 29: WOMAN**

General Meanings: Girlfriend, partner, wife, sister, mother, daughter, or perhaps the person asking a question to the oracle, if female.

First Message: Here is a much-loved woman, a sincere friend, or a powerful ally.
Second Message: Here is a selfish woman or person, a conceited, untrustworthy, rival or hostile person.
**CARD 30: LILY**

General Meanings: Family, older man, sex, winter, calm, wisdom, maturity, peace, retirement.

First Message: There is a need for explanation of feelings; there is chosen or enforced chastity.

Second Message: The situation is sterile; there is loneliness, or a fear of being tied to someone. Someone attempts escape.

**CARD 31: SUN**

General Meanings: Success, summer, accomplishment, enlightenment, charisma, luck, vitality, energy.

First Message: Problems are solved.

Second Message: Here is a great waste of effort, and a decrease in enthusiasm or optimism.

**CARD 32: MOON**

General Meanings: Emotions, creativity, evening, intuition, romance.

First Message: These dreams can be realized. Here are premonitions or revelations.

Second Message: Beware these illusions- there is distorted imagination here, and broken dreams.

**CARD 33: KEY**

General Meanings: Important thing, what's needed, necessary, something unlocked or revealed, answers, destiny, the touch of the Unseen.

First Message: Your solution near at hand. Here is useful knowledge.

Second Message: Here are closed and locked doors, quite a bitter disappointment, a problem for which there is no solution available to you.

**CARD 34: FISH**

General Meanings: Business, commerce, money/wealth, success.

First Message: There will be victory or success if you act quickly.
Second Message: There is nervousness, fear, or illness.

CARD 35: ANCHOR

General Meanings: Stability, reaching a goal, settling down, reliable, long-term, stuck, perseverance.

First Message: Have reasonable hope; your efforts will be effective over time.

Second Message: All hope is in vain. Unsatisfactory results are coming.

CARD 36: CROSS

General Meanings: Pain, burden, destiny, fate, suffering, religion, sacrifice, faith, touch of the Unseen.

First Message: You will have good protection and success.

Second Message: A positive cycle or time is coming to an end. Legal defeat is here, too.