

HI'IAKA AND THE FOOL'S JOURNEY

by Jeni Bethell

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Mythology and Tarot work well together. The Major Arcana of the Tarot can be viewed as a pictorial representation of our journey through life and the various archetypal characters and experiences we will inevitably encounter along the way. The imaginative power of story allows us to identify more personally with these characters and experiences, thereby deepening our understandings of archetypes.

Traditional meanings of The Fool Tarot card describe the innocent, even naïve, part of our being that is open to new experiences and opportunities, carrying minimal baggage from the past which might impede any journey in life. The fearless Fool's energy gives us a sense of adventure, a preparedness to take a chance, to leap into the unknown.

Mythologically speaking, The Fool equates to the hero/ine as s/he is called to venture forth on a new quest. There are countless examples of male characters, heroes – like Parsifal in Celtic, and Dionysis in Greek mythology – who exemplify The Fool archetype. These mythic Fools demonstrate a certain openness to life and a spontaneity, even impulsiveness that defies procrastination, seeking movement, action, adventure.

It is much more difficult to find examples of female characters, heroines, who reflect The Fool archetype. Yet it's good for women, like men, to have such personalities of their own gender with whom they may more easily identify. And The Fool certainly doesn't *need* to be represented by a male. It is not a 'masculine' archetype per se. It really precedes the duality process. It is like a driving force buried deep within us all that encourages us to make spur-of-the-moment decisions and take sometimes quite radical action that actually defies both masculine logic and feminine passivity.

The Hawaiian goddess, Hi'iaka, does present us with a wonderful female depiction of The Fool archetype. Hi'iaka was the youngest and favourite sister of the great volcano goddess, Pele. Both were daughters of the creator god, Kane. Pele is the principal deity of Hawaiian mythology, worshipped both as 'creator of the land', and as 'eater of land' - something she was given to doing from time to time when in a temper!

Our story begins on the big island, Hawaii, where Pele and her 'family' resided. One day, Pele fell into a deep sleep and, as she slept her soul travelled to the far distant island of Kauai where she espied a handsome young chief named Lohiau. She took the form of a beautiful maiden, wooed him and they made passionate love for three days and nights. When Pele was finally and reluctantly awakened from sleep she yearned for Lohiau and called for a volunteer to bring him to her.

But this would be a long and arduous journey for which none of her entourage of sisters, gods and demigods were prepared to volunteer - except the young Hi'iaka. Hi'iaka was beautiful, young, innocent, and fun-loving. Until this time she had spent her days surfing, dancing the hula and tending her beloved lehua trees with her friend, the nature spirit, Hopoe. Hi'iaka didn't stop to carefully assess the potential dangers the journey might entail, or contemplate the odds for and against success; she

volunteered spontaneously, out of love for, and loyalty to her elder sister, Pele. It was in fact Hi'iaka's other siblings who insisted she ask to be given the gift of spiritual power, called mana, for the journey. Because, at that time, the Hawaiian islands were filled with mo'o - dangerous, violent, evil spirits, who could present in many forms.

Yet like the Tarot Fool, Hi'iaka was not without a certain amount of innate wisdom. She was well aware of Pele's jealous, volatile nature. So she did seek assurance that Pele would not destroy her sacred lehua groves and her friend, Hopoe while she was away. For her part, Pele warned Hi'aka not kiss, fondle, or caress Lohiau on the return journey, but also promised that *"when you have brought our lover here, for five nights and five days he shall be mine; after that, the taboo shall be off and he shall be yours" (!)* (Emerson)

Traditionally, The Fool's companion is a dog, representing the Fool's instinctual side. Hi'iaka instead took with her a female companion who performed a similar role. Wahine-oma-o was in Hi'iaka's service throughout the journey – ever loyal, sometimes brave and, on occasions, offering Hi'iaka wise counsel.

Hanaker-Zondak suggests that *'it is the Fool that provides the stimulus, but then (it) disappears, leaving you to proceed with other instruments at your disposal'*, acquiring *'knowledge through experience of all sorts, both agreeable and disagreeable.'* And, like The Fool's journey through the Major Arcana, once Hi'iaka had begun her quest, she drew on most, if not all, of the Tarot's archetypal characters, and confronted many of the archetypal experiences - both positive and negative – depicted in the cards.

It was indeed a long and perilous journey – trekking and boating from island to island, confronting and overcoming many evil spirits, sometimes almost impenetrable landscape and, on occasions, inhospitable locals upon whom Hi'iaka and her party were dependant for food, shelter and boat transportation. She may certainly have been given some assistance from the gods through the power of mana, but she had many natural attributes that proved equally valuable on the journey, particularly her powers of premonition and foresight. These frequently warned her of impending danger, enabled her to suss out deceptions and, as she neared her destination, told her that Lohiau was in fact dead. (It seems that his demise was the result of a romantic liaison he had - in the meantime - conducted with two beautiful women who turned out to be mo'o in disguise!)

Hi'iaka's magic skills enabled her to revive Lohiau. They were used to perform many other miraculous deeds during the journey, the return part of which involved fewer threats from evil spirits since she had disposed of so many on the way. But the environment remained wild and hostile. In addition, Hi'iaka had to restrain herself from succumbing to Lohiau's sexual advances and also deal with his wandering eyes that even dared to gaze lustfully on the handmaiden, Wahine-oma-o! Hi'iaka may have been falling in love with Lohiau but, with the purity of The Fool's energy, she was not about to break her promise to her sister. (In this brief retelling of the tale, Hi'iaka may seem 'foolish' falling in love with a seeming philanderer. In the full version of the story, however, we see Lohiau's character develop over time till he is a worthy suitor.)

On the return trip Hi'iaka felt a growing sense of foreboding that Pele had broken her pledge. And, as our heroine gained a vantage point close to home, her eyes sadly confirmed the destruction of her sacred lehuas and of her dear friend, Hopoe. Hi'iaka's journey had taken two months to complete. During that time Pele had become increasingly jealous and suspicious that Hi'iaka had succumbed to Lohiau and was perhaps not even going to deliver him at all. In a fit of rage and out of a desire for revenge, Pele had performed these destructive and heartless acts.

Until this point in the story Hi'iaka had demonstrated a strong commitment to family, to tradition, to social mores and social etiquette, dealing harshly with those who displayed any lack of respect for the gods, especially for her sister, Pele. Yet The Fool's energy is never inherently conventional; far from it. As Hamaker-Zondag puts it, *'The Fool may think it advisable to send you on some escapade that lands you in trouble; but, through this experience, you reach the point of departure for further progress.'*

And so it was with Hi'iaka. She was completely - and justifiably - devastated and enraged by Pele's actions. She immediately resolved to take Lohiau as her lover, but to do so right in front of Pele's eyes, despite the perils associated with such a course of action. As the couple reached the crest of Pele's crater, Hi'iaka drew Lohiau to her in a passionate embrace. Of course Pele's wrath was instantly unleashed and knew no bounds. Lohiau was lost under a torrent of molten lava. Hi'iaka, however, remained physically untouched (either because her deity status prevented it, or because it was Lohiau whom Pele blamed for the couple's seeming indiscretion).

Of Hi'iaka's reaction to Lohiau's demise, it is said that *'a swarm of emotions buzzed in the chambers of her mind - of love, of self-destruction, of revenge. In an agony of indecision she strode this way and that, wringing her hands and wailing in a strictly human fashion'*. Then she knew she just had to find him! Accessing divine power, she began to tear up the strata of the land. When she reached the tenth stratum, she intended to break it up also *'and thus open the flood-gates of the great deep and submerge Pele and her whole domain in a flood of waters.'* (Emerson) This would have been the ruin of all things.

Hi'iaka had already acted too hastily perhaps on one occasion, and this had led to the loss of her beloved. Now, at this crucial point in the story, she could well have fallen still further into the negative side of The Fool archetype - which occurs when our desire to act or react in the moment is just too rash and will inevitably have far-reaching negative implications not only for ourselves but for others. It was then that the voice of Wahine-oma-o came to her, delivering the words of Kane who now felt he must intervene. Wahine-oma-o pleaded with Hi'aka to go with her before Pele and try there to gain some restitution. Fortunately Hi'iaka opted to contain her 'foolish' urges. She reluctantly, though proudly, agreed to meet with Pele.

Pele learnt that Hi'iaka had never in fact broken her pledge to Pele until after the elder sister had broken hers to Hi'iaka. Yet the volcano goddess seemed to lack any real sense of remorse for the physical and emotional devastation she had wreaked on both land and people, let alone on her supposedly favourite little sister. In fact Pele was somewhat disinterested in the whole discussion, for she was now preoccupied with a new dalliance, a handsome new would-be lover.

What followed exemplifies Hamaker-Zondag's observations of The Fool archetype, as not being concerned '*with the question of whether or not this development fits in with our culture or society*' but only with making things occur '*that will benefit our psychic development and produce a feeling of wholeness.*' Hi'iaka's sense of outrage towards her sister and ruler, Pele, touched every fibre of her being and stirred such indignation that the younger sibling knew she could never again take her former place as a member of Pele's court. She realised that Hawaii, the largest island of the group, was not big enough to hold them both. She would have to leave this island, Pele's realm, forever. Of all the islands, Kauai was the one farthest away; and it was also the land of her beloved Lohiau's birth. So once again Hi'iaka set forth on a journey to Kauai, though this time under very different circumstances.

In the meantime – and unbeknown to Hi'iaka - Kane-milo-hai, an older brother of the quarrelling sisters, managed to capture the distracted spirit of Lohiau. He returned it to its stony body and then used his magical power to restore the body and reintroduce Lohiau's soul into it.

Many moons later, and seemingly by chance - though surely thanks to the intervention of the God of Destiny - Hi'iaka and the twice physically reborn Lohiau again beheld each other, this time across a crowded room. They fell into an embrace touched with both passion and relief. One may reasonably assume that, re-united at last, the couple continued the journey together to Kauai where Lohiau, with his partner, Hi'iaka, was warmly welcomed back to his chiefdom, there to live 'happily ever after'.

When The Fool occurs in a Tarot spread, '*its position shows where far-reaching developments can occur; sometimes it means the imminent start of a whole new life.*' (Hamaker-Zondag) For all of us, once we leap into the void and take The Fool's journey, one thing can lead to another; one journey leading on to another. Hopefully, on each new Fool's journey '*innocence and emptiness (are) united with wisdom*' (Pollack) gained on the previous quest. And so it was for our heroine, who had been inwardly transformed by her first testing outer journey. She was still pure of spirit, brave and fearless; but now not so naïve and with greater knowledge and understandings about herself, about others and about life in general.

Hi'iaka's ultimate union with her beloved Lohiau can be viewed as a metaphor for the inner balance and union, the sacred marriage, she had achieved between her own masculine and feminine parts. She had become a wiser, more mature and more whole individual – which, in the final analysis, is the purpose of The Fool's journey.

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