

The background of the entire image is a collage of three faces, likely of the same person, rendered in different shades of blue and green. The faces are layered and slightly offset from each other, creating a sense of depth and complexity. The top face is looking slightly to the right, the middle face is looking forward, and the bottom face is looking slightly to the left. The overall aesthetic is artistic and moody.

# QUANTUM

# GIRL

# THEORY

# ERIN KATE

# RYAN

BOOK  
CLUB  
KIT

*A Novel*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Erin Kate Ryan defines Quantum Girl Theory this way: “A missing girl, by virtue of having endless possible lives, is more real than a non-missing girl, who gets only one life, at most.” How do you interpret this?
2. Mary has strong opinions about the families of the missing girls she seeks. “The family members may not have made these girls go missing, but their refusal to seek, their inability to find them, was a betrayal,” she thinks. Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. How do themes of race and class play out in the novel? How do you see these same themes or issues—like missing girls of color not getting the media attention a missing white girl does—in our culture today? How, if at all, does Mary reckon with her own racism?
4. Mary feels that her Sight is a punishment. “How could it be anything else?” she thinks. “If there were any other way to live her life, she would stop this. Everything was simply a choice between flavors of pain.” Do you see these abilities as a punishment? Why or why not?
5. If you had Mary’s Sight, would you use it as she does? What toll do you think it would take on you, whether you used it or not?
6. Which version of Paula Jean Welden did you identify with the most? Which path did you find the most compelling? Which would you have wanted to read more about? Discuss.
7. What characteristics do each of the missing Paulas share? How are they different?
8. Wise’s watch figures into most of the girls’ stories. What does the watch symbolize? What does it mean to each version of Paula?
9. In each possible life, Paula has a different name—whether she’s adopted a new nickname or changed her name through marriage or to avoid discovery. To what extent does changing one’s name help change an entire identity?
10. Mary’s experiences have caused her to see the potential for evil in nearly every person she encounters. Do you think this is a helpful or harmful lens through which to view the world? Explain your reasoning.
11. In the novel, photographs are used to show who the missing girls were or to show who a woman was in the past—but we are constantly reminded that photos hide as much as they show. “There was nothing about her true self that would have appeared in her parents’ photo albums,” Mary thinks. What did you make of this? How does it relate to the way people use photo-sharing social media platforms like Instagram today?
12. How does the novel play with and subvert female stereotypes and archetypes?



# HOW TO READ TAROT

## INTRO TO TAROT

*“Mary laid out a simple past-present-future formation. Three figures. Three knights: Swords, ambitions. Wands, a rush forward. The knight of cups, the Polly card: the calm figure on the white horse, wine goblet easy in his hand.”*

Here’s a brief introduction to the art of tarot, the three-card-spread formation Mary uses, and the cards she pulls in this reading.

The information and card interpretations below are adapted from Yoshi Yoshitani’s *Tarot of the Divine: A Deck and Guidebook Inspired by Deities, Folklore, and Fairy Tales from Around the World: Tarot Cards*.

## HOW TO READ TAROT

Each card in a tarot deck has a particular meaning, but the reader’s intuition is possibly the most valuable part of a reading. While this book provides suggested interpretations for each card, the personal connections you make with the imagery and stories are just as important.

**The Major Arcana** represents what is often called the “Fool’s Journey,” with each card representing an archetype or obstacle met on the universal path toward understanding. Cards 1 through 21 represent a hero’s odyssey from naive child to self-actualized adult. Card 0, the Fool, represents the hero themselves. Collectively, these cards are considered powerful, life-focusing cards. Many tarot readers will limit their readings to these 22 cards.

**The Minor Arcana** is made up of 56 cards divided into four suits. These cards represent smaller moments on the Fool’s Journey. They can best be understood by exploring the intersection of their suit and numerical meanings, found below.

## THREE-CARD SPREAD

Three-card spreads are versatile and layered. When seeking situational insight, the cards may represent the past, present, and future or the states of your mind, body, and spirit. When faced with a specific choice, three cards may represent option one, option two, and what needs to be considered to choose between them.

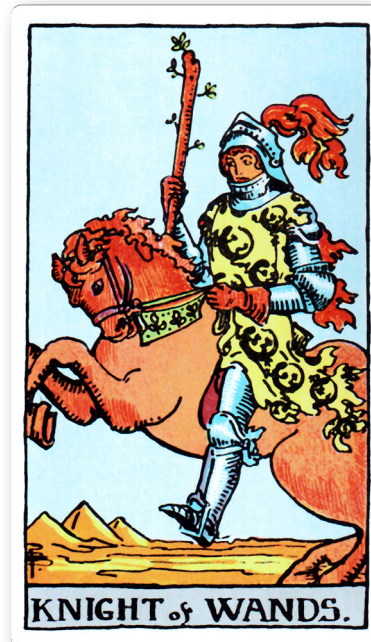
When experiencing communication difficulties, three cards may represent what you want, what another person may want, and where the conversation is heading.

Feel free to create your own spreads; just be certain your intentions are clear before you pull and place your cards.



# HOW TO READ TAROT

## MARY'S CARDS

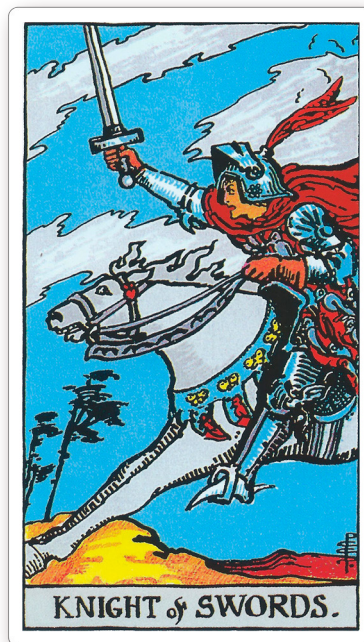


### **Knight of Wands:**

Represents a fearless fighter, eager to charge into battle, especially if it means defending love.

UPRIGHT: adventure, passion, a rebel, a flirt, a hot temper

REVERSED: arrogance, jealousy, abuse, recklessness, a braggart

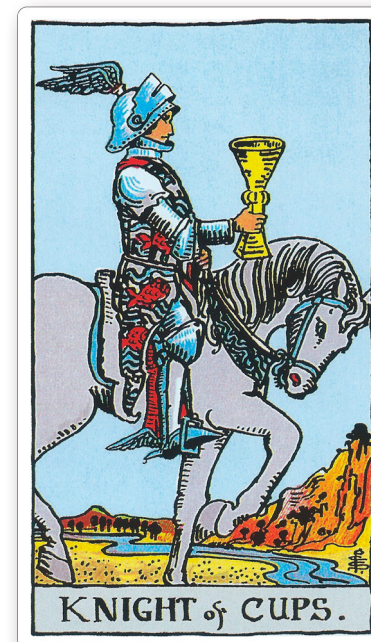


### **Knight of Swords:**

A strong and assertive warrior, unafraid of leaping into battle and employing unconventional techniques to win—rebellious, loyal, and a fierce champion.

UPRIGHT: intellect, bravery, confidence, being action-oriented

REVERSED: rudeness, bullying, an inferiority complex, passivity



### **Knight of Cups:**

A messenger, kind and gentle while also holding fast to core beliefs.

UPRIGHT: chivalry, affection, invitations, taking action, meaningful gifts

REVERSED: heartbreak, infidelity, lack of diplomacy, moodiness, pettiness



## HOW TO READ COFFEE GROUNDS

**TASSEOGRAPHY** is the centuries-old practice of reading or interpreting the patterns of tea leaves or coffee grounds to derive deeper meanings. The most widely practiced traditional Turkish coffee cup reading is called fal, which translates to “fortunes.”

Here are some common symbols and meanings you might see in grounds:

- |                                     |                              |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Ring: marriage, new love         | 7. Raven/Crow: bad news      | 13. Fish: career achievement      |
| 2. Broken ring: divorce, breakup    | 8. Mountain: obstacles       | 14. Nest: pregnancy               |
| 3. Square: happy marriage, new home | 9. Heart: love               | 15. Angel: protection, good news  |
| 4. Flag: danger at home or business | 10. Full moon: love          | 16. Devil: danger, bad news       |
| 5. Knife: breakup with a friend     | 11. Flower: happiness        | 17. Dog: true friendship          |
| 6. Bird: good news                  | 12. Volcano: loss of control | 18. Cat: argument, bad friendship |

Source: [eater.com/2015/11/13/9707472/turkish-coffee-reading](https://eater.com/2015/11/13/9707472/turkish-coffee-reading)

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## USING CINNAMON FOR DIVINATION

Mary keeps a cinnamon stick in her sweater pocket—she smells it to coax out the Sight without nosebleeds. (She can also use nutmeg, which causes headaches, or yarrow, which makes her sneeze.)

Here's how to use cinnamon to aid in your own clairvoyance, from the website **Moody Moons**:

“Boil cinnamon by itself or with other divination-friendly herbs (like mugwort, lavender, or mint) and drink it as a tea to promote clairvoyance/insight. Alternatively, you can sprinkle this infusion around your ritual space to clear negativity and make the area ready for reading tarot or another system of divination.”