

TAROT & TECH

Divesting from giants



Liane Décary-Chen

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Introduction

As systems grow, collapse, and regenerate, we move through them, migrating physically and digitally from one place to another. Online is where we go to fill whatever void is left unattended in the physical world. But unfortunately, the internet is slow to give us the radical paradigm shift we've been promised. Instead, we cycle between looking to the screen for connection and falling flat, drained by our devices, with few concrete points of tension to use as exit doors.

The accelerating mutation of tech will not save us. Neither will their frantic attempts at predicting our needs, no matter how far they cut past the bleeding edge. You might find yourself in a place

✦ of ease, supported by the giants, while also ✦ wanting something else. The comfort of the tech giants keeps us leashed: the speed of our daily lives runs on the tools and practices they've conditioned us to depend on.

There are roads out of living in this deficit, but we must build most of them ourselves. Being involved with this work has pushed me to rebuild my relationship with the digital realm. Like most deep cleans, things get messy before they start looking good. But, eventually, online social interactions feel more organic, intuitive, and healing. Slowly, the internet becomes a tool primarily for pleasure, building community, sharing knowledge, and co-creating.

This research quickly started leaking into all aspects of my life, leaving me sometimes incapacitated as I try to unwire. To find my way back I decided to use the cards of the tarot to create a map of this journey. I'm hoping that this guide can be a helpful template for other travelers wishing to sail to better digital lands.

Feel free to move through this zine in your own way and to interpret its various parts as you like.

Chapter 1

Looking at the sky

◆ In this chapter, we will consider the potential benefits, as well as the difficulties, entailed in divesting from tech giants.

World Building

To refuse is not enough: we must also create. As artists, technologists, technicians, and knowledge holders, it is our responsibility to make our hopes for bright futures legible. We cannot let the tech elite's sci-fi dreams dictate tomorrow's technologies. It is imperative that we write, draw, dance, sing, and live towards joyful and healing futures.

Digital Gardening

Digital Gardening refers to a networked writing technique, here we explore it in a more general sense. Digital gardening is a storytelling tool that weaves the living and digital realms. It asks us to consider all system parts at once and examine what grows there. If the tech giants are malls and parking lots, where can we find food forests?

What digital substrate do we want to found our communities on? What heirloom seeds do we have to plant? How do we manage resources to ensure that our soil's nutrients are maintained and replenished? What do we grow to feed our bellies in the winter? Which weeds do we welcome? What insects have made homes in our crop?

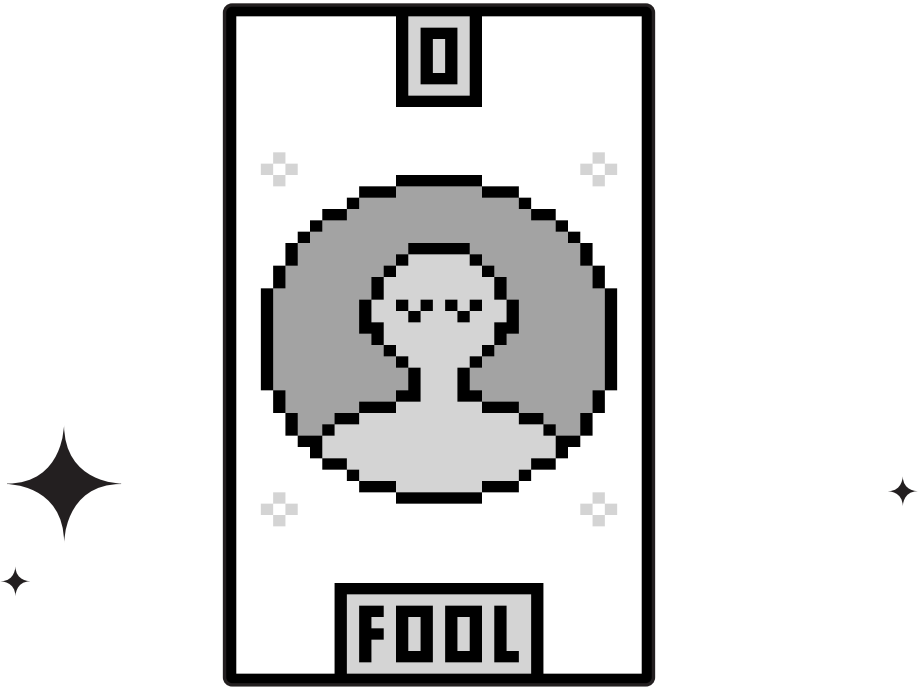


Perhaps we should look to the type of plant commonly derided as 'weeds'. Weeds replenish soil nutrients, bring up water from deep in the earth, offer homes to insects, food for microbes, and make medicine. They grow wild, carried by the wind or the strength of their roots, turning abandoned lots into wildflower gardens. Under the ground, mycorrhizal networks connect multifarious forms of plant life, allowing them to share resources. When things die and rot, mushrooms decompose them and turn them into material for new life. Nature knows how to organize systems to handle growth, death, chaos, randomness, and scarcity. How can our digital worlds evolve to reach a similar level of equilibrium?

Digital gardening is an anchor point in the struggle against extractive and exploitative colonial logic and fantasies. Digital gardening helps us find exit strategies from capitalism and growth strategies for our digital future. It allows the transfer of ancestral knowledge into unexplored digital territory. It asks us to slow down, work at our own scale, and re-integrate the cycles of the living world. Growth and transformation are inevitable and cannot be controlled. We can only offer light, water, and a structure to hold onto.

0. *The Fool:*

Starting the journey

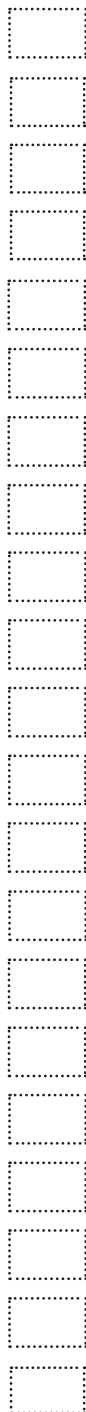
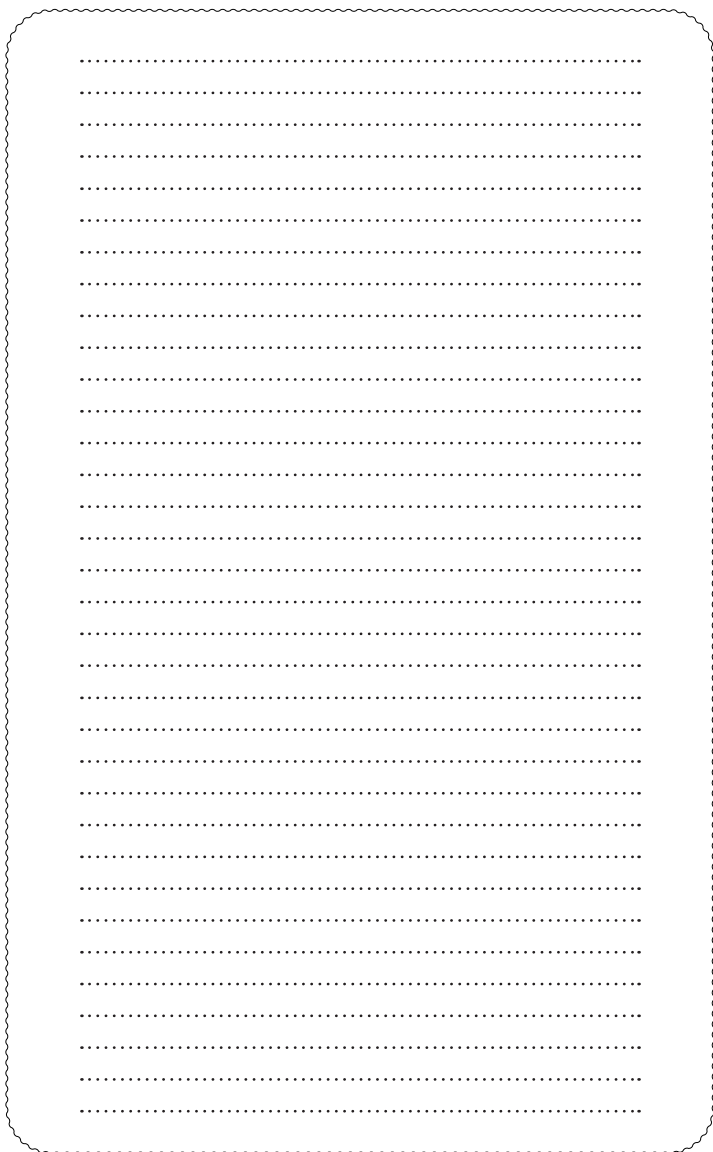


The fool is carried by the number 0, representing the circle of life, the seed, and the earth. This card highlights the infinite potential in every one of us. The fool is full of joy and curiosity, but also ignorant of the path that lies ahead. This is where we are located, right now. We are excited to start a journey that will lead us towards a bright digital future, but we don't quite grasp what steps will take us there.

If you want, you can stay here, take as much time as you wish. Each card will be paired with a writing prompt; here is your first one. Go ahead when you're ready. You can also read through without doing the exercises.

Prompt:

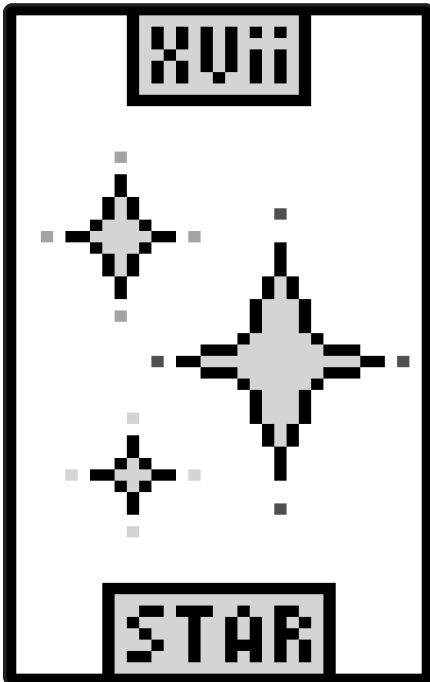
How do you feel about this journey? What is something about your current digital realms that makes you feel grounded, happy, and connected?



17. *The Star:*

Imagining a bright future

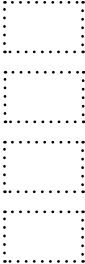
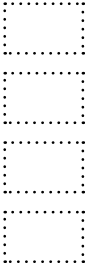
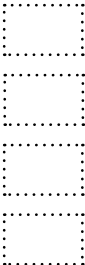
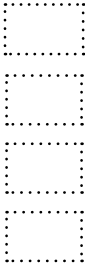
Draw your north star here.



The fool looks up to the sky and sees the star far in the distance. Its shine tells us that moving towards and beyond liberation is possible. The star is free, open, and generous with its light. Make sure you keep it in sight: it is your goal post. Call up a picture in your mind of a lush digital garden, fruits abundant, rivers flowing strong and gentle. To imagine the future is to build it slowly.

Prompt:

Under the star is your future digital garden. In it, you will feel safe, nourished, and powerful. Describe your relationship to technology in this world. What does it do for you, and what does it ask in return?



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17

18

19

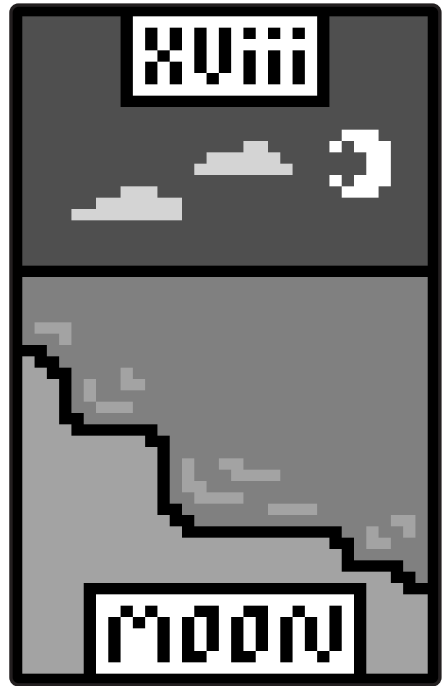
18. The Moon: Feeling fear

The Moon moves the deep waters. It acts on instincts, gives courage in the face of dismay, and brings light to the dark and unknown.

✦ In my opinion, one of the main reasons people don't move away from tech giants is that the process forces you to confront complex patterns of fear, oppression, anxiety, and addiction. It is comfortable to give in to the peace and stillness of the status quo. The moon asks you to confront the undercurrents pulling on you, and recognize the cycles you are embedded in. It offers its slow guidance of waxing and waning as you embark on an unknown journey.

Prompt:

✦ How does fear show up in your use of technology? Can you name some specific ways in which patterns of addiction manifest themselves in your use of technology?



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Chapter 2:

Looking at the Tower

◆ In this chapter, we will be taking a step back to pause and reflect on the challenges of divesting from tech giants.

Against progress

◆ The bleeding edge of technology is violent, especially considering that technological innovation is largely shaped and funded by the military-industrial complex. Progress asks for more speed, more power, and more streamlining. We produce too much, consume too much, and discard everything. This way of living cannot go on forever; infinite acceleration has to end somewhere. Even the digital has material impacts: power has to be generated, hardware has to be manufactured, minerals have to be mined, and labor has to be extracted. We become drained and overstimulated by technology, only to have technology further imposed upon us, now presented as the solution to overwork and fatigue. This creates a toxic system of dependence. Is it possible that what we already have is enough?

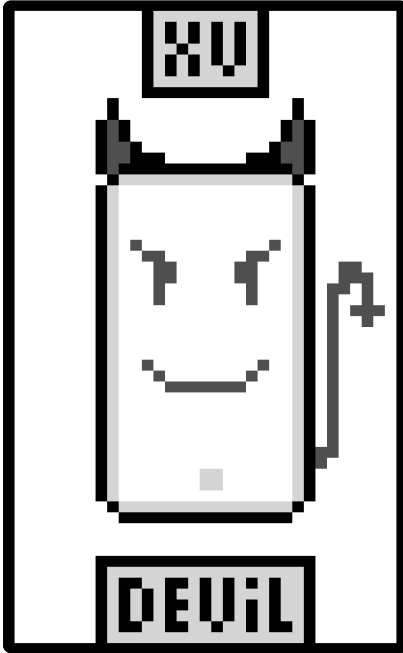
Degrowth

Growth is not synonymous with success and can often lead to failure; consider, for example, resource exhaustion. What if technology didn't have to run at 100% capacity for 100% of the time? What if it followed natural cycles of wake and rest? Degrowth asks us to slow down and live according to the planet's capacity. Digitally, it might suggest a return to elements of the early internet like home pages, impermanent content, and a slower pace of media. Among other things, DIY and low-tech ethics could bring back the messy and organic nature of humanness while keeping accessibility in mind. We do not always need better, faster, and stronger solutions. Maybe the solution to Instagram isn't a better Instagram; it could be the reinvigoration of media such as paper newsletters.



15. Devil & 16. Tower:

What are we refusing?



Right before reaching the stars, the moon, and the sun, there stands a tower that obscures the sky. At its foot stands the Devil guarding it. He is sharp and resourceful; what he cannot see, he guesses; what he cannot control, he takes. To complete your journey, you will have to confront him and let the tower fall.

Prompt:

What contaminants need to be filtered out of your digital water source? What illness can you help your garden recover from? You can write generally or pinpoint specific apps, sites, accounts, trends, content, etc.

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Vertical navigation bar with a solid black square at the top, followed by 18 dotted squares, and a solid black square at the bottom.

15

16

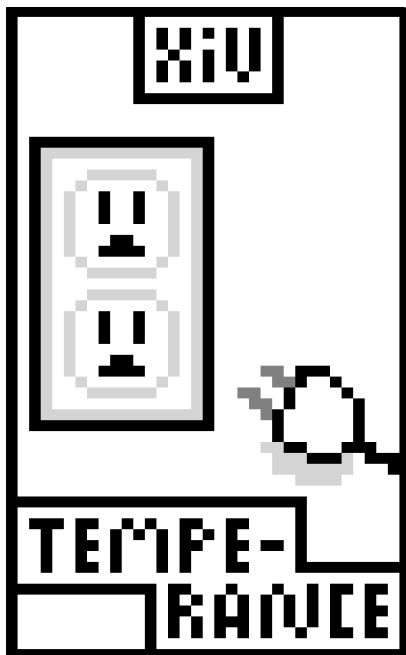
14. Temperance:

Welcoming slowness

Thankfully, before running into the Devil, you meet **Temperance**. Temperance has walked a long way to get here and understands the complexity of your situation. It can handle duality and knows how to use the resources at hand.

Prompt:

Consider your usage of technology. In which ways can you feel yourself rushing towards the bleeding edge? On the contrary,



where can you feel the pull towards slowness? What would your ideal speed be?

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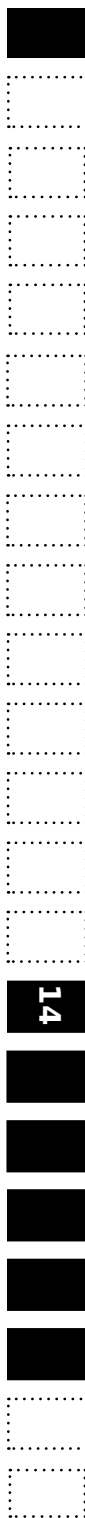
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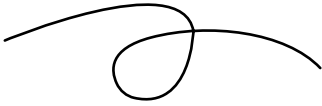
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12. Hanged Man & 13. Death:

New perspectives and paradigms

These two cards call upon us to pause, change our perspectives, let go of old patterns and accept profound change. Former ways of operating need to be released to open the way for new possibilities and transformation. As you are suspended between worlds, remember that you are not alone and that the path to renewal is not linear.



Prompt:

Pick one of these three questions to answer



1. What are examples of success that do not require expansion?

◆ 2. Are there instances of technological failure that are beneficial to you?

3. In which ways are you ready to grieve capitalism?



A large rounded rectangular box containing 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines and a central diamond symbol.



Decorative vertical bar on the right side of the page, featuring a solid black square at the top, a series of 12 dotted squares, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, a solid black square, and a series of 4 dotted squares at the bottom.

12

13

Chapter 3:

Starting with the basics

In this chapter, we will be taking the first steps towards divesting from tech giants.

- ◆ We will assess our current situation, establish what specific steps we will take, and name the values and priorities that guide us. ◆

Local Solutions

When we think about our digital landscapes and the tech giants that overwhelmingly constitute them, it can be difficult to move past their overwhelming scale. This is a

- ◆ moment to retreat, and, for once, focus on the details rather than on the ‘big picture’. Tech companies have technology, labour, and data at their disposal, which enables them to act on scales; however, individuals have the capacity to focus their attention on micro- and local levels, and make human-scale changes that have human-scale effects.

“Emergence” is a phenomenon that takes place in nature when when many agents, acting independently of one another, engage in similar behaviours that appear, from a more macro perspective, to be coordinated. When thinking about how you, as an individual, can make a difference in opposing tech giants, try to conceive of your actions on the appropriate scale. Rather than picturing yourself as a small human facing up against a massive conglomerate, picture yourself as a bird or a fish, in a flock or a school of peers, all together moving as a beautiful, extensive, adaptive multiplicity. ◆

Decentralization

Among the “local practices” to put in place include diversifying your platforms and channels, and supporting those engaged in specialized, ethical services. This also means being wary of which platforms and services you are entrusting your data and information. For example, having Google handle your calendar, passwords, messaging, conferencing, documents, and even payments means making the locus of your online activities an external entity, rather than you yourself.

✦ In diversifying tools, the goal is not necessarily to become more efficient; it is always worthwhile to question when and whether valuing efficiency is not just adopting a perspective molded by capitalist injunctions to produce.

There are many things about your life and workflow that you can self-maintain—or, if you are at capacity, that someone in your immediate location, community, or social circle can help you with. There is often no need for major companies to have such an outside role in managing your life. Think of the process of choosing tools as going to the market, and selecting items based on their quality and provenance—eggs from the chicken farmer, vegetables from the vegetable farmer—rather than running to the nearest fluorescent-lit supermarket and buying produce, proteins, and treats all from some distant, multi-pronged



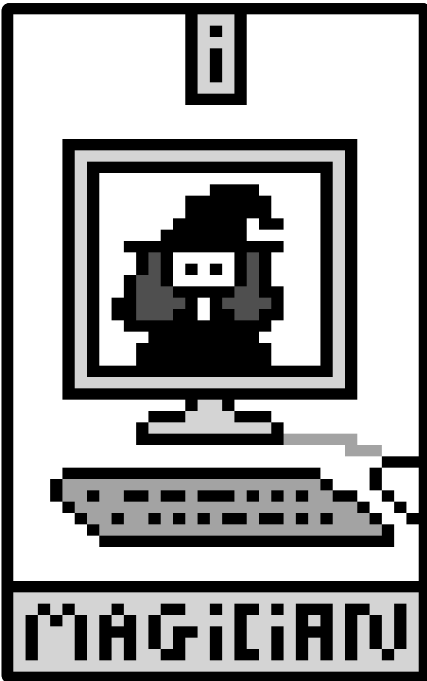
✦ food production company.

Choosing your own tools, at your own scale, is, first and foremost, a practice of re-acquaintance, and de-alienation. Think of this as cultivating your own open digital ecosystem. What would it mean to give care and attention to each of its elements, rather than being handed a pre-packaged and pre-determined set of tools, interfaces, and access points?

1. Magician:

Scales of divestment

The Magician activates the power of the fool through knowledge. He is confident and uses his willpower to move forward through worlds tangible and intangible.



The tech giants run most services and infrastructure of the web. As you progress from fool to Magician, consider the time and resources you are ready to put into this process. Circle which of these statements represents your situation most accurately.

*Level 1: **Soft divestment:*** you have limited capacity and want to start a long-term journey reflecting on the presence of tech giants in your life. You'd like to relieve the strain by filling gaps with tools aligned with your values.

*Level 2: **Medium divestment:*** you have some capacity and are willing to migrate some of your activity to new tools. You want to primarily use tools aligned with your values but are also ready to stick with tools that work well.

*Level 3: **Bullet-proof divestment:*** you want to exist and operate on platforms you trust fully and have some ability to deploy. You have a good amount of capacity, time, and resources that can be dedicated to transitioning towards more ethical platforms and sustainable technological usage. You are ready to begin a process which may involve some trial-and-error in order to find solutions that will work for you in the long run

2. High Priestess:

Painting a portrait of your situation

While the Magician acts within the conscious realm, the High Priestess connects to the unconscious mind. Your gut feeling is often worth listening to: let it guide you in assessing the state of your current digital life.

Prompt:

For this exercise, start by listing the main tools, apps, and platforms you use. Once you finish, go back over each element on the list and indicate if it makes you feel enriched, depleted, or otherwise affected. Elaborate if so inclined.



Base areas

- Browser
- Maps
- Scheduling

Work

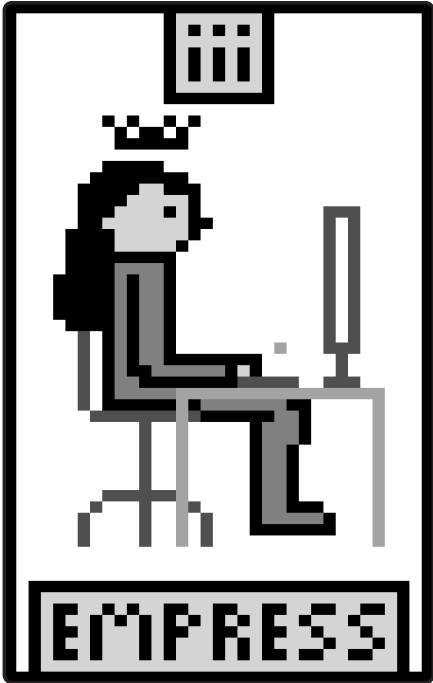
- Communication
- File storage
- Collaborative document editing
- Online meetings
- Note-taking

Life

- Communication and messaging
- Social media
- File storage
- Digital socializing
- Playful spaces
- Music
- Video streaming
- Health monitoring
- Digital purchases

3. *Empress:*

Identifying areas for change



The Empress card calls for connection with beauty, care, and joy. She also represents mother earth and asks you to take care of yourself and your world.



Look back at the grid from the last page and transcribe specific apps or tools you are unsatisfied with. Describe the change you'd like to see in these areas. Where is there space for exploration, play, and new modes of interaction?

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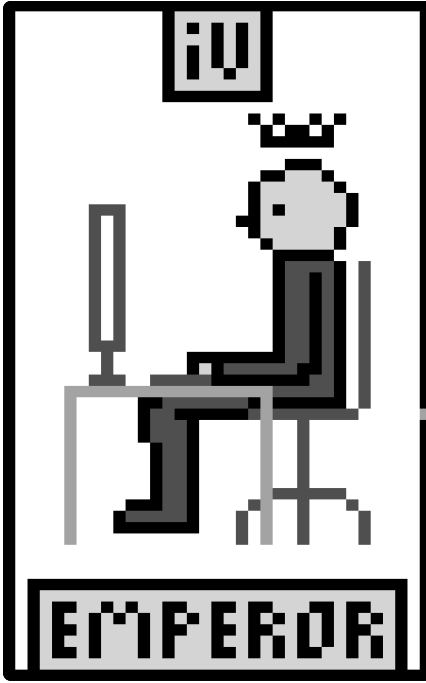
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4. Emperor:

Building structure



The Emperor imposes structure and order onto chaos by following rules, developing systems, or breaking problems down into parts. Divesting from tech giants is a complicated and messy process. There's no need to be perfect or to do everything at once. Taking small steps is your best chance at success. Remember that divestment is a long-term process and that you can always cycle back.



◆ Depending on the level you chose at the beginning of this chapter, select one, two, or three tools to focus on. Prioritize tools that are realistic to divest from and might impact your privacy or well-being most. Then, go back to your Empress page and circle them.

Level 1: Choose one or two tools that are simple to move from. ex: going from Zoom to Jitsi

Level 2: Choose one or two moderately complex tools to move from. ex: moving your files away from Google Drive

Level 3: Choose one tech giant to divest from entirely. Consider all affiliations you have to it and migrate your activities and data one by one.

Chapter 4:

Looking to the earth

In this chapter, we will be taking concrete steps towards divesting from tech giants. ✦

Embodied digital presence

✦ We assume that digital problems have digital solutions. We don't often consider digital realms' direct physical and material impacts on us. For instance, consuming stressful content will affect your body chemistry, muscle tension, and perception of your surroundings. It might affect what how long you engage with content, which platforms you are drawn to, as well as which behaviours you engage in even after you have put your phone or computer away.

Much of the research undertaken by tech companies touch on how to take advantage of human biological and psychological mechanisms to ensure that their platforms are maximally engaging—even addictive. However, we also develop our own emotional and

behavioral mechanisms to counteract or support our use of technology. Some might find notifications overwhelming, while others have adapted to accommodate their constant flow. To take control of our digital gardens, we need to tune into our sensorial experience of technology and develop strategies and practices of embodiment

✦ From the brief survey we did earlier this year, we found that individuals coming to understand their own personal stakes with regard to issues of technological divestment was a major motivating factor, and even an indicator of future success in the practice of divestment. It's essential to bring these issues out of the black box, as tech companies—and capitalist organizations more broadly—obscure ✦ their shortcomings and exploitative structures behind promises of convenience, fabrications of aspirational lifestyles, and superficial technological 'progress'. Meeting others invested in this process and witnessing the impacts that tech giants have on communities and individuals allows connecting the divestment struggle from screen to life. The impacts tech giants have are far from being abstract.

Alignment

Deciding to align the technological tools you use with your values can have a ripple effect throughout the rest of your life. It will make you question your communication practices, who you talk to, when, and why. It will make you think about how much discomfort you tolerate and how you've adapted to cope. You cannot dissociate the way you work from the way you rest. This zine invites you to look at your technology usage as one of the many ways to bring the many aspects of your life into alignment.

5. High Priest:

Establishing priorities and values

✦ The High Priest represents institutions, tradition, and ethics. At this stage, we'll take a moment to consider which values we want to nurture moving forward. You might want to take into account values passed down to you through familial or cultural ancestry. Are the norms you currently live by ones you have been subjected to or ones you have considered and chosen? Do you feel content, realized, and free within them, or will you decide to move against them? In transforming your digital ecosystem, what are your needs and priorities?

Here is a list of values that might guide you. Circle the ones that resonate most with you. Refer back to them while selecting tools to migrate towards.

- Low environmental impact
- Ethical treatment of employees
- Accessibility & ease of use



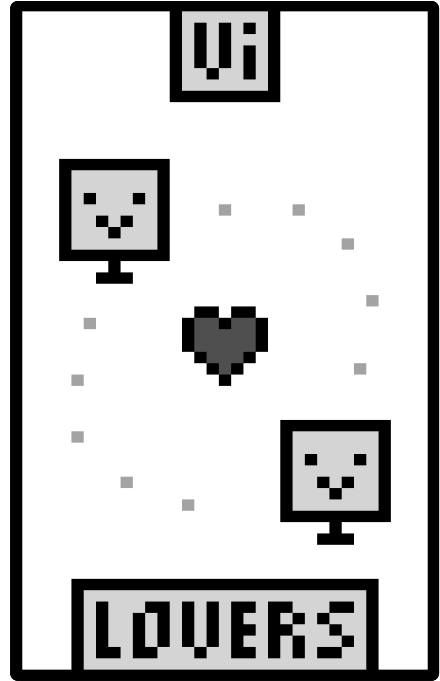
- Reliability
- Strong user protection & harm-reduction strategies
- Freedom of speech & anti-censorship policies
- Privacy (transparency of internal policies, encryption, advanced user settings)
- Open source development
- Technological advancement
- Wealth redistribution
- International cooperation & bridge-building
- Slowness
- Human rights advocacy
- Ownership of content

6. *Lovers:*

Considering relationships

The Lovers card represents healthy relationships between entities that are either embracing or parting. How can your relationship with technology enhance, rather than degrade, other relationships in your life—with work, with leisure, and with other people?



With social media, in particular, it is easy to think that we are building connections when more often than not, we are observing others rather than connecting with them. In many more cases, we are looking at content, rather than learning how to communicate with others. It becomes crucial to take the time to reflect on the channels and strategies we use to communicate, so that our social platforms do not, ironically, contribute to cycles of atomization that in turn feed relationships with technology which are compulsive, dissociative,



and alienating.


With this step, it becomes of paramount importance to begin to share with others the reasons that you are choosing to divest and migrate from platforms and choose different tools. Many of the new tools you will adopt over the course of the divestment process are, ultimately, chosen individually. For communications tools, the

process is necessarily collective. Asking your friends, collaborators, and loved ones to make a switch alongside you will require a measure of knowledge-sharing and persuasion; strong communication is firstly built on trust and clarity, rather than on any technological medium.



Finally, have fun! This part of the process is an opportunity to invite your friends along your journey with you. Explore new technological contexts and surroundings with good company, and try to find or create new digital spaces that feel safe and fun. This is where you begin to define the heart of your digital world, with your relationships being all of its extensions.

Prompt:



How, where, and why do we form connections? Take a moment to make a diagram or a list of the spheres of your life that you wish to prioritize, give attention to, and receive enrichment from. These can be skills you are developing, interests you are researching, work and personal projects in which you are engaging, and different social areas and people with whom you wish to connect. How can you approach these spheres, learn from and within them, and build intimacy?

Then, make a parallel diagram of your online and technological spheres. What platforms or tools do you use most often? Where do you spend the most time, doing what? Who do you spend the most networked time with? How is your platform and tool use contributing to or detracting from your intentions with regard to the relationships you wish to build with others, and between yourself and the different areas of your life?



7. Chariot:

Reserving time

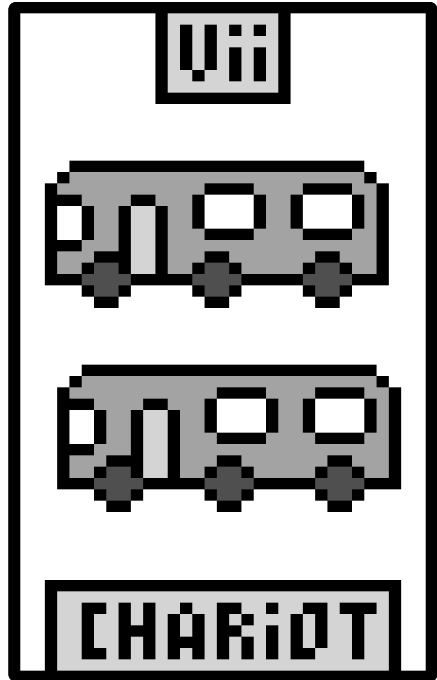
◆ The Chariot pushes forward in the right direction, taking action on decisions. Your willpower is strong and will lead you to success if you are able and prepared to put in place positive systems of discipline. Stay positive and keep going! You are in the process of building new roads that lead to new places, which will take time. If—and when—you are ready to embark on this work, pick a time each week to dedicate to making progress, at your own pace. Go into your calendar app and schedule it.

Level 1: 45 minutes per week

level 2: 1.5 hours per week

Level 3: 2.5+ hours a week (distributed however you like)

Who is on this chariot with you? Write down the names of friends you could reach out to who might be interested in embarking on this journey with you. Who can you ask for help or company?

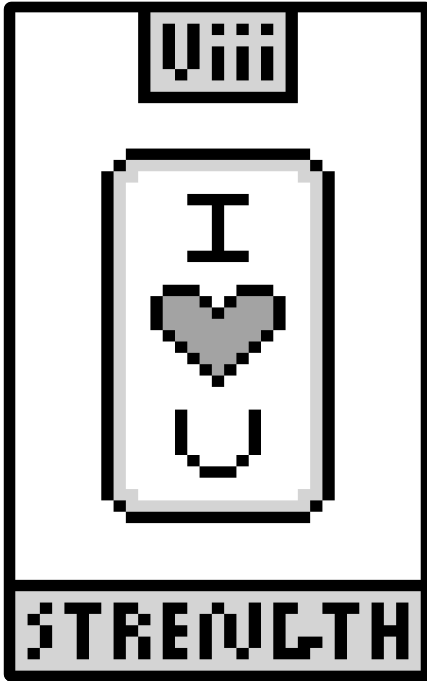


A large, empty, rounded rectangular box for writing names of friends.

8. Strength:

Selecting alternatives

- ◆ The Strength card offers stamina, determination, and focus as you confront
- ◆ inner challenges.
- ◆ Forgive imperfections



and remember to show yourself compassion. As you migrate digitally, you will find that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. You will have to test tools yourself and see what works best for you personally.

There are plenty of alternatives to every major digital platform. Each have their pros and cons. For each of the tools on the Emperor page that you decided to divest from, look up 1-3 alternatives to try. I'd recommend simply searching "ethical alternative to ____". Below, I have provided a selection of tools I use to replace tech giants in my own digital ecosystem.

Alternative for	My Tool
Google docs, Google sheets	Notion
Gmail	Protonmail
IG dms, FB messenger	Signal
Google drive	Wetransfer + Physical storage
Google Chrome	Firefox or Brave
Google Slides	Canva
Zoom	Jitsi, sprout, gather.town

Chapter 5:

Walking the road



In this chapter, we will be actively switching tools away from tech giants toward new platforms.

Path of least resistance

Tech giants prioritize offering convenience and frictionless experiences to users to guarantee we continue using their products. Their technologies keep us boxed into their ecosystem instead of raising the general digital literacy of users. Although iPhones and android phones share essentially the same design and functions, details such as cable connector types and button functions make moving from one to

another particularly jarring. In a context where most of us are at maximum capacity, taking any path other than the one of least resistance is hard. The frustration or learning curve involved in adopting new tools using a new tool often discourages us from switching over.



Purposeful friction

◆ Divesting from tech giants is uncomfortable.

There are habits that the apps do for you that might have to be re-grown. To do things yourself means you have more control but also more responsibility. However, engaging more directly with the labor necessary to accomplish tasks isn't necessarily bad. Watering a garden by hand is more complicated than sprinklers, but it also offers a more intimate and attentive relationship with what grows there. Familiarizing ourselves with friction and the type of labor that is borne of self-determination and care also ties in with embracing slower rhythms.

Moreover, you can build friction into your process purposefully to move you closer to your goals. Organize your digital landscape so that the tool your new chosen tool is the one of least resistance

◆ while the one you want to divest from takes extra steps. Your default apps, notifications, and home screen icons should be the ones you want to use. Examples of adding friction would be to not auto-complete passwords for tech giants, delete the apps from your phone and only use mobile sites, or delete saved payment information so you have to enter it every time manually.

Divesting from tech giants has many barriers which can be preventative for some, especially when taking accessibility concerns in mind. Many smaller tools can have flaws that make their use

◆ more difficult for certain users. Be patient with yourself even in moments of frustration as you continue to distance yourself from tech giants; you can always course-correct and re-assess your capacities and goals as you go along.

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10

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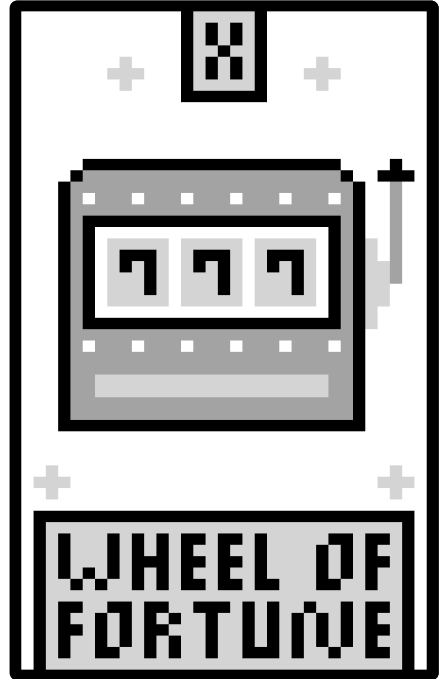
20

21

9. Hermit & 10. Wheel of Fortune
& 11. Justice:

Confronting ease, welcoming friction

Try the tools on your strength page and circle the ones you prefer. Keep in mind that one tool might be replaced by two that ✦ work synergetically together. Once you've selected which tools you will be moving forward with, you can start migrating your content and activities from



one place to another! In the spirit of the hermit ✦ card, I'll be letting you take the next few steps on your own.

Here are some tips for the road.

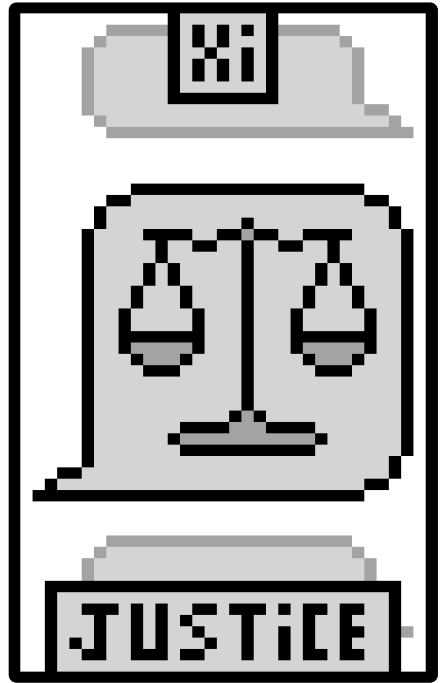
Migrating Data

Moving from one platform to another is like uprooting a garden. You might want to time your digital move with the start of a new project, the arrival of a milestone, or a significant moment of the year like the new year or your birthday.



Be prepared for some level of chaos and confusion.

Be precise and realistic, and as committed as possible to avoid getting stuck between your old and new platforms. As you are transitioning, do some digital decluttering. You can archive files you don't regularly need on physical drives, while documents you use often should be on your new platform for easy access. You don't need to move all of your files away, but make sure you keep a close inventory of which files you have stored where.



Try creating an index according to these prompts:

My old platform:

Files I am keeping there:

My new platform:

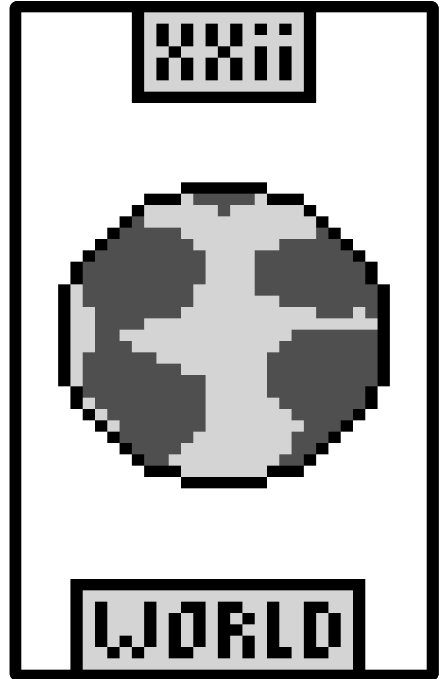
Date from which I am using it:

Files I am backing up on a physical hard drive:

20. Judgment & 21. The World:

Continue the process of rebirth

Judgment represents rebirth, seeing the big picture, and recognizing a change that has already occurred. The world card tells you that something has been completed and asks you to find a sense of wholeness in your body. You are the master of your world.



Look back at what you wrote in chapters 1 and 2 and acknowledge your progress, however big or small. Are you closer to your star? Further away from the Devil? Is the warmth of the sun any stronger? Is the view of the moon any clearer? How has your relationship with speed and slowness changed?

