

JANUARY 14, 2011  
READING #3

CARDS DEALT: Bay Leaves, Big Brother, Aurora, Conversion, Sun Dogs, Frazil, The File Cabinet, Red Flag

The first card I laid out was *BAY LEAVES* and this card represents a letter soon to come. This card is *BIG BROTHER* and it represents paranoia. This card is *THE AURORA* and it represents exposure. This is the *CONVERSION* card and it depicts the trees of Tara.

*So now I am going to deal the next round of cards.  
Now please pick one of the four cards that are face-down.*

This card is *SUN DOGS* and it represents the hollow earth.

*Of the three cards I just put face-down please pick one.*

The *FRAZIL* card. This card represents the birth of ice and morality.

*Please pick one of the new cards.*

This card is *THE FILE CABINET* and it represents the ice cores.

And the final card of your reading is *RED FLAG* and it shows language at sea.

I’m going to start with *SUN DOGS* because it is a portal into another world. Scientifically, the *SUN DOGS* is light being reflected by ice crystals in the atmosphere which then creates the illusion of two or three suns. I see in this card the theory of the hollow earth. Since early on, there was a belief that if you got past the cold north, one would find a place of warmth, where people lived unusually long lives. For the ancient Greeks, the unknown north was called ‘hyperborea’ meaning ‘beyond the north wind.’ The idea of a northern tropical paradise has endured into relatively recent times. In Arctic expeditions in the 1800’s, explorers often believed that if they got past the ice, they would end up in a warm place–free of ice. It was called the ‘open polar sea.’ Other explorers took this idea of an open polar sea even further, thinking that if you got to the top of earth there would be a portal that would lead you to the south pole. Some people still believe in this idea. During the first winter of the expedition, I was told that the filmmaker aboard would bring the other guys outside to sit on the ice and chant, hoping to find the energy of the hollow earth.

The navigator searching for unknown places leads me to the *RED FLAG*. I see in this card the final stage of the expedition: sailing back to France. A red flag is a way of communicating at sea–during the day. At night, ships communicate with lights. You aren’t suppose to speak to boats passing through the radio. It’s an economy of language based on the arrangement of lights. And the lights on a boat can tell you pretty much everything you need to know about it. There are poems that help the memory, for example: red over red, the captain is dead; red white red, the work I dread; green over white, eating shrimp tonight; red over green is a sailing machine.

Red over green is a sailing machine. That means a boat is using its sails to propel itself and not its motor. We were in a big rush to sail back to France in order to make it to the party on time so we burned a lot of kerosene fuel by having our engines on all the time. The conversion of energy is represented here in the *CONVERSION* card. You can see here a homemade tree of eucalyptus leaves. It’s really a bouquet put on top of an ice pick. We used the bouquet to beat ourselves in the sauna. Twice a week we had a sauna and this was a nice break from the routine and a way to really warm up and roll around naked in the snow for a minute before running back inside. There were two other trees on Tara: one was the mast of the ship because in Italian the mast of the ship is called ‘albero’ or tree. The other tree was our wooden Christmas tree. Our little wooden Christmas tree was one foot high and I was told it took the mechanic during the first winter a week to paint the tree solid green because he used a single-haired brush. I was told it took him a really long time to do things.

I guess maybe the idea of drifting, or not knowing where we’d be next, affects people in different ways. That brings me across the *CONVERSION* card and over to *BIG BROTHER*. Before I came aboard the summer crew had been working with a psychologist in Paris via the doctor aboard.

The psychologist was going to do a Mars simulation experiment by sending a small group of people to Antarctica to live locked-up. But unlike our expedition, if people really lost it, they could call for help and be picked up. So once a week the doctor filmed the crew eating dinner. These tapes went down with the last rotation. When I came aboard I came with a little plane that dropped me off and took the video tapes back. But the tapes never made it to the psychologist, they ended up sitting in the Paris office of Tara. This really freaked out the crew because everyone would complain about the office crew in Paris. Because even at the end of the world, they were our bosses. Paris represented the PR campaigns we had to do, interviews. It’s funny because I just got in the mail the book about the expedition that the chief wrote. I was curious how he was going to represent the dynamics aboard but in the end he left everything out except for repeated digs at the Paris office team. So I guess that’s the dynamic that lingered for him the most. So when the crew found out the tapes were sitting in the office, everyone completely freaked out. Then the doctor had to write to the logistic coordinator and say listen we really need to get those tapes out of your office–everyone is really upset. His response which was printed out and tacked onto our community bulletin board. It said, “I have better things to do than watch you eat your ‘petits plats’ on Tara, despite how charming that might be. Big brother is not among you.”

Communication is also seen in the *BAY LEAVES* card. This card represents a letter soon to be delivered. This was a saying that the Russian scientist had when we were eating soup. We had soup twice a week after the sauna. Since we were on rations, there was only one bay leaf in the soup and if someone came upon it in their bowl, the Russian would say, “A letter will be delivered to you soon.” He might as well have said, when your folder in your inbox turns yellow that means a letter is waiting. We didn’t have the internet in terms of surfing the web, but we did have an iridium phone that made a data call to retrieve our e-mails and to make calls.

*So now I am going to take a moment and consider the rest of your cards.*

There is a very strong connection between the *THE FILE CABINET* and the *FRAZIL* card. These cards are two stages of ice development. Frazil is very young ice. The moment of its birth. I asked the scientist, the other scientist, if this was a good thing. And he said, “we don’t talk about morals in science.” Growth and decline of the ice was what we were studying. But in order to see into the far future for climate change, you have to know the deep past. And that’s what an ice core represents. It’s like a file cabinet turned upside. Once particles in the atmosphere fall back down as snow and then compress into ice, it is distilled–like a tree ring. In an ice core a scientist can see lead smelt from the Roman Empire, nitrates nowadays from cars. This is a record of time passing in the arctic. One day after extracting some ice cores, the ‘morality scientist’ said, “You know all we are doing up here is gathering data to feed a machine. A super-computer can process all of nature’s mortality in 24 hours...like the Earth Simulator in Japan which simulates weather.” And I imagined a room that was really cold and a room that was really hot. But when I went to the Earth Simulator in Yokohama after the expedition, I saw it to be a massive building filled with hard drives.

*Often, at the end of a reading, I like to extend one question. So, do you have a question of these cards?*

*Where is this card from?*

This card is an aurora. And it looks better in photographs than in real life somehow. The aurora is always moving. The aurora is suppose to whistle which is suppose to mean that spirits are running on the snow. It could also be that the sky is a solid dome and there is a little hole where that spirits can pass through and that’s the aurora. A lot of aurora stories are about the departure and visitation of the deceased. Your reading has come full circle to the card we started with, the *SUN DOGS*, of trying to find the beyond in the world itself. So with this card we will end your reading.