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by Karen Whitehouse October 9, 1997

Hundreds of pundits around the world make a living predicting what science and technology will bring us tomorrow. We looked hard to find the best and finally we settled on a methodology with a better track record than John Dvorak. The first in our new series in which the mystic art of the Tarot illuminates what the future holds for technology.

According to the cards, we can all relax: The [Cassini space probe](#), due to be launched on Monday, October 13, will **not** explode on launch, spewing poisonous plutonium across the Southeastern US. But that doesn't mean the mission will be smooth: I foresee equipment malfunctions, instrument failure, perhaps even loss of the probe.

For this reading, I used the classic Celtic Cross ten-card reading. I chose the Knight of Wands to represent Cassini; that card represents departure, dressed for war but on a peaceful mission. Here are the rest of the cards-- and what they mean in context.



1. **Atmosphere throughout:** Four of Cups.  
This card indicates dissatisfaction with the things of this world, which seems consistent with launching a space mission.



2. **Obstacles:** Justice.  
The Cassini mission has to overcome sober thought and rightness? Doesn't bode well for NASA... although it might explain some things.



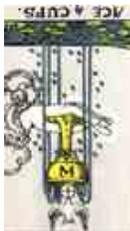
3. **Aspirations:** Eight of Cups, inverted.  
At the risk of anthropomorphizing, Cassini wants great joy and feasting (presumably on lots of rich data). Who doesn't?



4. **Resources:** Nine of Pentacles, inverted  
Yowza-- bad faith, deception, a VOIDED PROJECT? A little bit scary. But this is just what Cassini has to work with, not the final result.



5. **What has been:** Four of Wands  
Ahhh... repose, peace, prosperity. The house of gold out in the woods, hunting the horny-backed toad, as it were. Perhaps NASA and/or scientific complacency?



6. **What's ahead:** Ace of Cups, inverted  
Mutation (!) and instability? That sounds really bad. But another shade of meaning-- revolution-- says to me that this card just indicates more troubles for NASA, not an ecological disaster. Phew!



7. **Cassini's attitude:** Ten of Cups  
More anthropomorphization, but the sensible space probe feels content and satisfied, perhaps especially with the town of Cape Canaveral. It wouldn't want to hurt everyone there.



8. **Cassini's atmosphere:** Five of Wands, inverted  
Disputes, contradiction and trickery at NASA? Quelle surprise.



**9. Hopes and fears:** Final Judgment, inverted  
The card means simplicity and weakness, or deliberation and sentencing. In context, I take it as NASA's fear of legislation against sending plutonium into space, or maybe simply a defunding by the US Congress. It could mean that Cassini itself fears a physical weakness-- say, in one of those rocket boosters.



**10. Final outcome:** Two of Swords, inverted  
On this ambiguous card rests the whole question of Cassini's fate. Falsehood, imposture and disloyalty will come. I interpret this to say that Cassini's instruments will have trouble transmitting data, will send corrupted or incorrect data-- or maybe the entire craft will go astray and get lost in space.

So there you have it. No major disaster upon launch-- but a frustrating, disappointing mission whose objectives will likely go unmet. Beats a poke in the eye with a radioactive stick!

## OffSite links

[Cassini: Voyage to Saturn](#)

NASA's official (strangely folksy) mission site.

[Live Cassini Cam](#)

A webcam sending live pictures of the space probe as it awaits launch. There's also links and news stories (like the disturbing item about a leak in the fuel tank) on this overall optimistic, pro-NASA site.

[Cassini Space Launch news](#)

This mission is surrounded by so much controversy that Yahoo! has assembled one of its Current Events pages about it.

[Stop Cassini: NASA's Deadly Plutonium Probe](#)

*Why do all protest sites look so kooky?*

why do all protest sites look so rocky :

### [FCPJ Concerns with NASA's Cassini Mission](#)

The Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (who have a right to be concerned, since it's them who'll die if the plutonium leaks) want to cancel the launch.

### [Lovearth: Stop Cassini Mission](#)

Environmental concerns about nuclear space missions.

*If you have comments, send them to [karen\\_whitehouse@zd.com](mailto:karen_whitehouse@zd.com)*

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