

only because it is an air sign ruled by Venus. The Libra major, Justice, as we discussed in the previous chapter, is the dancing partner of the Fool: the structure that shapes elemental air into music. It is the shaping of eternal Time (Saturn) into finite rhythm by Venus. In the 3 of Swords, the World's dancer moves to the music of Justice/Adjustment. Against the steady drumbeat of Saturn's unbreakable bonds (*δεσμούς ἀρρήκτους* in the *Orphic Hymn to Kronos*), a harmonious thread weaves the fabric of circumstance, the dance of our timeline.

For a little while—a lifetime, maybe, or as long as love shall last, or until your other half becomes the proverbial "ball and chain"—we hold on to one other in the dance, forming connections of choice even whilst our cellular chains of telomeres grow shorter. There are times, though, when we cannot or will not follow the script, when the choreography confines us, when Saturn's chains feel like marionette strings. Then we break our pattern. The 3 of Swords shows how, wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or not, we then pay the price.

BINDING CONTRACTS

When Saturn, lord of commitments and unbreakable bonds, combines with the legal finalities of Libra, the result is a promise. You can think of the three swords as this: the two parties to the agreement—plus the agreement itself.

**Secunda facies est sani
 ⁊ est quietudis: vbertatis
 ⁊ bone vite quiete ⁊ secure
 ⁊ paupes.**



The promise itself, in other words, is the third thing: the deal, the contract, the marriage, the life. As Austin Coppock puts it in *36 Faces*, "...this face is nearly ideal for the binding of two things together, whether they be people in marriage, business entities, or merely a promise to oneself. It contains the formulae not only for knitting together, but continuing in happy union, and is therefore an arcanum of wonderful power." In the *Picatrix* we find recurring references to a wedding, or a bridegroom, or sometimes a "black man," leading the way (Saturn's color is black). In contrast to modern interpretations to the 3 of Swords, it is said to denote "relaxation, wealth,



from the Tabula Mundi Tarot by M. M. Meleen. As Leonard Cohen puts it: "There is a crack in everything—that's how the light gets in."