

Touchstone Tarot

78 friends you hold in your hand

☿ Kat Black 2020 ☿

SAMPLE

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Dedication by Mary K Greer:

“Kat Black, creator of the Golden Tarot, has done it again with the Touchstone Tarot. This is no ordinary deck of collaged artwork. Instead, it is a masterpiece in its own right, seamlessly combining historical portraits and backgrounds from the Baroque and Renaissance into easily recognizable tarot scenes of luminous color and clarity of detail.

This is a magical deck. Personalities dominate each card, and the perception in their eyes becomes a test—the touchstone—by which your sincerity and truth is measured. Gazing out from the cards, each demands you accept the hard-won wisdom and knowledge depicted therein. The past speaks, and it knows your secrets. I highly recommend this as a deck you’ll have to not just own but use—frequently.”

Introduction

I first created Golden Tarot in 2000 as an online project, a digital collage deck of early Renaissance artwork following Rider-Waite-Smith iconography. U.S. Games Systems, Inc. published it as a ‘real deck’ in 2003 and to my great surprise, it’s still in print today.

I wanted to create a deck that was a little warmer and more human though. Touchstone Tarot was originally intended for use on a cellphone, at a time when screens were very small.

We are social creatures and programmed to recognize very complex signals from facial expressions before we even learn to speak. A deck of portraits therefore made sense to me. It could be imbued with subtlety and nuance that could help the reader understand card meanings without having to memorize all of the RWS symbolism.

My development of the deck was encouraged and supported by a small Canadian publisher and a secret benefactor—very appropriate considering my source material was also created largely through the support of benefactors. Unfortunately, due to the Global Financial Crisis, the publisher went bust shortly after the deck was released.

Now, a decade after Touchstone Tarot’s very brief appearance in the world, U.S. Games asked me if I’d be willing to republish the deck. Of course, I immediately agreed!

As with Golden, U.S. Games understood the importance of the source material to me and allowed me to keep in all of the references to art I’d used. My hope is that readers find interest in the art as well as the symbolism and seek out artworks from the Northern Renaissance or Baroque style both online and at art museums.

In developing the deck, I found that if I took two steps away from Pamela Colman “Pixie” Smith, I immediately took a step back toward her. The influence of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck is still very evident, and there are many symbols in the deck that follow that tradition. Hopefully, this will make the deck easy to read, even if the faces in the portraits central to the deck don’t speak to you as strongly as they do to me.

My strongest hope though, is that they do. I hope that they become your friends who will speak the truth to you even when it might be uncomfortable. Friends who give you comfort and connection. Seventy-eight friends you can hold in your hands.

The Touchstone Deck

Touchstone is a traditional 78-card tarot deck with illustrated Minors in the tradition of the Rider Waite Smith deck. There are 22 Major Arcana cards and then the Minor Arcana with four suits of 14 cards each.

The Major Arcana

The Major Arcana cards represent the ‘big issues’ in life, which transcend the everyday.

Multiple Majors in a Spread: A significant time in your life—perhaps a turning point or an epiphany. There are powerful forces at work. Solutions given over to Fate and what seems ‘meant to be’.

Multiple Reversals in a Spread: Confusion, conflicting messages. Perhaps now is not the right time to act, when the options are unclear. Solutions found by taking an opposite view—standing in the other person’s shoes.



0. The Fool

A carefree young man with a flower in his hat wanders by a cliff's edge. A dog looks up to him. In the distance are hills and a bright blue sky with fluffy white clouds. While this card traditionally has the young man carrying a bundle on a stick, this Fool instead carries a flute. He stares away into the distance, as though a melody

is playing in his head and he is about to absentmindedly start playing along with the tune. He carries a basket, casually strung on his back.

Perhaps he has been playing in a field, picking flowers, singing and dancing a jig with his canine friend. Now he wanders close to a rocky cliff, but is oblivious to any danger.

MEANINGS: Beginner's Luck. Naïve enthusiasm. A hopeful journey commences. A sudden, unexpected event may influence the matter in question. Listen to the advice of a loyal friend. **REVERSED:** Foolhardy disregard for consequences. Inertia, pessimism. Unwillingness to accept reality.



I. The Magician

An enigmatic man with a knowing smile and fine clothing covered in mystical symbols displays an array of items: a knife, a coin, a cup and a wand. There are books on the shelf, and an owl perches behind him. In his right hand, he holds a small gold orb on a chain.

MEANINGS: A wise person with deep knowledge. You are the sum of what you know. Assess your

choices well, using all available tools. An important new venture begins. Scientific knowledge. Action. **REVERSED:** Take care whom you trust. Beware sleight of hand. Instability, fear of the unknown, inaction. Misuse of power, talent wasted.



II. The High Priestess

A mysterious, androgynous woman in a dark blue robe and double-peaked gold headdress stands between two pillars—one light, one dark. She holds a scroll, a pomegranate and a finely-tooled red leather book. A crescent moon and waterfall can be seen behind her. She looks directly at the viewer with her large, dark eyes.

The face in this composition is by the female Renaissance painter Sofonisba Anguissola. It's titled as a portrait of her sister Minerva, but looks strikingly similar to Sofonisba's many self-portraits of the same era. Sofonisba was from a remarkable family and her father encouraged all of his children to reach their full potential. A number of her sisters also became painters, although none as well known as her. In her late 40s she married a sea captain decades younger than herself, and they lived a happy married life until her death in her 90s. Seven years after her death, on what would have been her hundredth birthday, her husband had inscribed on her tomb, "To Sofonisba, my wife ... who is recorded among the illustrious women of the world, outstanding in portraying the images of man ... Orazio Lomellino, in sorrow for the loss of his great love, in 1632, dedicated this little tribute to such a great woman."

I thought that the High Priestess was a perfect role for her—a woman who achieved greatness in her lifetime, despite the limitations placed on her by society. Forbidden to study nudes and therefore finding large multi-figure church commissions impossible, she revolutionized the art of portraiture. Those who were influenced by her work included Sir Anthony Van Dyck and Pieter Pauwel Rubens.

MEANINGS: A mysterious, insightful woman. A keeper of secrets and esoteric knowledge. Stillness and contemplation. The Divine Feminine. **REVERSED:** Emotions run wild. Neuroses, destructive passion, illicit affairs, secrets exposed.



III. The Empress

A gentle-looking woman meditates, surrounded by symbols of fertility—flowers, corn, grapes, wheat and other produce from a bountiful harvest. A plump hare sits amidst the harvest.

This is Demeter, the ‘earth mother’. She may be pregnant—suggesting the beginning of a new project, the forming

of a practical plan.

MEANINGS: Matriarchal authority. Fertility, creation, nurturing love. The Earthly Feminine. Collaboration, co-operation, working together. The earth’s natural abundance and balance. Emotional intelligence. **REVERSED:** Bare earth. Barrenness, drought, apathy, weakness. Abandonment or neglect.



IV. The Emperor

An alert, bearded fatherly figure sits on a stone throne adorned by rams' heads. He holds an orb and scepter, and wears a bejeweled crown and majestic gold-trimmed cape and gloves. Around his neck he wears a black eagle on a gold medallion. His long beard and hair are graying, but

he is still a strong, confident figure of authority—a man of experience and earthly power.

MEANINGS: Patriarchal authority. Virility. Competition, aggression, desire to rule. Masculine strength. Rational intelligence, decisiveness, logic. Order, structure, rules to be followed. **REVERSED:** A stubborn man. Misguided action, inability to compromise even when that is the logical course. Inconstancy, indecisiveness.



V. The Hierophant

An aloof young man in papal regalia stands between two pillars. His regalia includes a large peaked hat covered in ornate decorations, a gold cape with a beaded collar, a gilded hook staff and a pair of large gilt keys on a chain around his neck. He has chiseled features but soft, blue-gray eyes. An older man, perhaps a priest or donor, kneels beside him at a respectful distance.

MEANINGS: A spiritual leader. A tendency to conservatism and conformity. A spiritual awakening or calling. Education,

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