

# the **stoller trot**



**by Adam stoller**

Copyright © 2021 U.S. GAMES SYSTEMS, INC.  
All rights reserved. The illustrations, cover design, and contents are protected by copyright. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper or website.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Made in China



Published by  
U.S. GAMES SYSTEMS, INC.  
179 Ludlow Street  
Stamford, CT 06902 USA  
[www.usgamesinc.com](http://www.usgamesinc.com)

# introduction

It's been a long road to get this tarot deck into your hands. My interest in art started very early with a fascination for the comic strips that I saw every day in the newspaper. Soon I was drawing my own pictures, and I suppose I eventually saw myself doing this as a career. At the same time, I was a prolific reader, and spent a good deal of my time exploring subjects that appealed to me. From history to science fiction, I absorbed whatever information I could. Along the way, I came across tarot cards. It was probably the Fool card that attracted my attention at first, but when I explored a little further, I was fascinated by the imagery on each one of the 78 cards in the deck. Every card told a different story. That of course led to me trying

my own versions, which turned out to be rather cartoony.

As my cartooning skills progressed, I think I always had it in the back of my mind to pursue and finish a tarot deck in that style. So, I buckled down and started drawing, beginning of course with the Major Arcana. The characters were the biggest and boldest and seemed to be the most interesting ones to portray. With the Rider-Waite deck as my inspiration, I began to think about how I wanted to approach these images.

At first, I thought I would just reinvent the images of the Rider-Waite deck, but in cartoon form. It seemed like a less daunting task than reimagining all 78 cards. With that idea in mind, I kept working at it until I finally completed the deck. I had no idea what to do with my finished product. I think I mainly did

it for my own enjoyment. My original drawings were done in pen and ink and colored with colored pencil on two-ply heavy paper stock. I basically made them to function as a one-of-a kind tarot deck. I played around with the cards for a little bit, but they soon found themselves sitting on a shelf somewhere.

Every so often, I would pull those cards out and redraw a few before moving on again. Eventually time had progressed, and so had the style and techniques I used to produce my art. With an idea toward updating the whole deck, I once again began redoing all the cards. Where I could, I basically reused the same image, but I also began updating the images, here and there, adding more touches of humor and uniqueness. I still hadn't progressed far into the realm of computers at this point, and was doing

the cards by hand. I also had discovered a new way to add color to the images using high end art markers. This new version turned out better than I expected, so this time I did a little research and found a few companies that publish tarot decks. Unfortunately, none of those companies thought a cartoon tarot deck would be viable in the market at that time. That was OK, since I had mainly done them for myself. Once again, my deck of cards found themselves in a drawer somewhere.

Fast forward to some twenty odd years later, when I get a call from Stuart Kaplan from U.S Games Systems, Inc. It seems times have changed, and there is a greater interest in unique and whimsical tarot decks, and this may be the right time for mine. Unfortunately, over the years I had lost track of much of my

old work. I was only able to find some old photocopies of my pen and ink drawings. At first I was intending just to use these copies and recolor them on a computer, but after reviewing the deck, it was clear that some of the images would now be considered inappropriate and would have to be redrawn. I just wasn't sure I could duplicate the same style I used over twenty years ago. I like to believe my skills have gotten a little better since then.

Because I was going to be redrawing the images anyway, I thought I might as well do them all again, in my current style and take full advantage of advances in digital design technology. This time, however, I didn't want to copy the images of the Rider-Waite deck, but where possible, I wanted to reimagine them. Some images ended up being very different

from Rider-Waite, while others often started with Rider-Waite and then were given a little twist. For most of the cards, I tried to keep the various elements and symbols from Rider-Waite, but I would present it a little differently. My goal was also to stay true to the meaning behind each card, even while creating a distinctly different look.

For the experienced tarot enthusiast and those familiar with the Rider-Waite Deck, you may find it interesting to spot the use of some of the symbols found in Rider-Waite. I liked to think of it like a "Where's Waldo" kind of thing. For others, you might just enjoy a laugh at a humorous image. My goal was to make the whole deck as fun as possible, but still be useful for a serious tarot reader. You get to decide whether or not I succeeded.

As a final note, I would add that I did change the suits of the Minor Arcana a bit. Just to make the whole thing a little more whimsical, I changed the suits to Spoons, Balloons, Buckets and Brooms. They correspond to the more familiar suits like so:

Spoons = Swords  
Balloons = Coins  
Buckets = Cups  
Brooms = Wands

## **the cards**

The following is a brief explanation of each card, or more precisely, the story of the characters in the card. Where appropriate, I've tried to provide a bit of meaning for some of the symbols used in the cards, but I've also left it somewhat open for you to provide your own interpretations. To me, that's part of the enjoyment of the tarot; discovering its mysteries, and applying what you learn for your own personal growth.

# the Major Arcana

## o. the fool

The Fool is deep in thought right after being fired from his job at the palace. He doesn't realize that he is about to take his last or first step into the unknown. He carries his worldly possessions in a sack over his shoulder. In his other hand, he holds a white rose signifying he is pure of heart. The dog who has been following him for the last mile is perhaps trying to warn him of his peril, but could just be looking for a treat.

**Upright:** New beginnings, Leap of faith, Enthusiasm, Spontaneity, Innocence

**Reversed:** Naivety, Risk-taking, Distraction, Stupidity, Recklessness

## 1. the magician

The Magician performs on stage before a rather sedate audience. He's a bit impressed with his own accomplishment as he manages to levitate the four suits of the Minor Arcana. The rabbit looks on skeptically, uncertain of whether to fully emerge or not.

**Upright:** Skill, Self-confidence, Will, Diplomacy, Concentration

**Reversed:** Loss, Mental distress, Disgrace, Manipulation, Latent talents

## 2. the popess

The Popess feels a bit awkward as she sits on the moon. She hesitantly holds out her resumé, demonstrating how she is just as qualified as her male counterpart, the Pope. The columns behind her represent the Boaz and

Jachin from the Temple of Solomon. The pillars signify the great spiritual principles strength and will, and provide a little support for the moon.

**Upright:** Spiritual insight, Hidden talents, Intuition, Mystery, Things yet to come

**Reversed:** Secrets, Things withheld, Lack of personal harmony

### 3. the empress

The Empress is the perfect example of fertility. She is surrounded by the beauty of nature and a bountiful field of wheat. Her faithful dog notices she is quite pregnant and presents her with a gift. Truth be told, she's a little tired of the whole thing. She's two weeks overdue and wishing she would deliver and officially meet her baby.

**Upright:** Pregnancy, New opportunity, Nurturing, Abundance, Maternal care, Stability

**Reversed:** Financial issues, Stagnation, Unwanted pregnancy

#### 4. the emperor

He holds the symbols of his office, the ankh and globe, officially making him the Emperor of the World. His throne is on the highest peak so he can view his entire domain from there. The raven brings him messages from the world below. It is yet to be seen whether the messages are for good or for ill.

**Upright:** Stability, Power, Law and order, Protection, Leadership, Authority

**Reverse:** Immaturity, Obstruction, Loss of authority, Lack of discipline

## 5. the pope

The Pope blesses the two keys at his feet, which represent the keys to heaven. The two bishops behind him looking on wear a lily and a rose, representing love and purity. They are also thinking about how they might be needing to find a new Pope pretty soon. Going around blessing keys probably isn't normal. Last week they found him blessing a sock.

**Upright:** Marriage, Alliance, Tradition, Seeking counsel or advice, Wisdom, Inspiration

**Reverse:** Breakdown, Rejection of family values, Abuse of position, Poor counsel

## 6. the Lovers

Like Adam and Eve, the Lovers are tempted to partake of the forbidden

fruit as the serpent entwines his body around them and whispers in their ears. Having been struck by Cupid's arrow, the woman appears to be enjoying this new relationship. The man is still a little uncertain about where this is headed. The Yin/Yang backdrop reflects this struggle of two ideas.

**Upright:** Attraction, Love, Beauty, Trials overcome, Commitment, At a crossroads

**Reverse:** Failure, Separation, Infidelity, Relationship issues, Broken connection

## 7. the chariot

A weary Roman presses his horses hard to make the long journey home from Britannia. A raven flies overhead signifying that perhaps the charioteer better keep his eyes on the road or he might end up in an aqueduct.

**Upright:** Overcoming obstacles, Drive, Willpower, Confidence, Ambition

**Reverse:** Scattered energy, Lack of direction, Doubt, Defeat

## 8. strength

A circus strongman is bulking up by lifting weights. He is attempting to show his domination over the lion. In retrospect, it was probably a bad idea to try and incorporate the lion into his act. As the lion tamer noted when the strongman was rushed to the hospital, lions don't like to be surprised.

**Upright:** Virility, Inner strength, Potency, Confidence, Vitality, Power

**Reverse:** Weakness, Discord, Self-doubt, Lack of self-control, Vanity

## 9. the Hermit

The Hermit has somehow found himself

on a mountaintop wondering how he got there. Somewhere along the road he must have taken a wrong turn. The Hermit holds his lantern before him and carries his staff to aid his footing as he attempts to retrace his steps back down the mountain.

**Upright:** Soul-searching, Solitude, Introspection, Meditation, Prudence

**Reverse:** Misfit, Withdrawing from loved ones, Exile, Sadness, Loneliness

## 10. WHEEL OF FORTUNE

The lion, the eagle, the man and the ox have decided to take a trip to Vegas and test their luck. The eagle, representing the astrological sign of Scorpio, is down to his last two chips, yet he still believes he's going to win. The man, representing Aquarius, is being a little more prudent with his bets. The lion, representing Leo,

and the ox, representing Taurus, have both decided to bet heavily on a single number, but they have also held back something in reserve for one more spin.

**Upright:** Changes, Opportunity, Luck, Destiny, Winning, Chance

**Reverse:** Mishap, Unforeseen setback, Bad luck, Disappointment, Misfortune

## II. justice

Lady Justice stands with scales in her left hand, perfectly balanced, and a sword in her right hand to defend her decisions. Despite being blindfolded, she is still able to slice the serpent in two and prevent him from influencing her decision. It also could be that she just doesn't like snakes.

**Upright:** Fairness, Justice, Cause and effect, Balance and equilibrium, Responsibility

**Reverse:** Lack of accountability, Unfair treatment, Dishonesty, Legal flaws, Imbalance

## 12. the HANGED MAN

No one is quite sure how the man came to be hanging from a tree. Perhaps someone hung him by his ankle as was commonly done to traitors, or maybe he did it to himself. In any case, the blood rushing to his head appears to have given him an epiphany, a profound understanding of the universe.

**Upright:** Wisdom, Discernment, Trials, Circumspection, Sacrifice, Intuition

**Reverse:** Selfishness, Inability to change, Missing an opportunity, Egotism

## 13. death

The figure of Death contemplates the last rose in a desolate landscape. If he