CAPSTONE I · MILESTONE THREE

Who Draws the Card?

Women, Tarot, and the Making of Meaning

IDEATION · PROTOTYPING · TESTING

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Find us, and you will be found

✳ WHERE THE RESEARCH LEFT US

A practice women keep, *a doorway* no one has built

THE HISTORY

Tarot began as a **15th century Milanese card game**. Its occult meaning was added in France in the 1780s, and the deck everyone pictures was drawn by a woman, **Pamela Colman Smith**, then sold for a century under two men's names.

WHO READS NOW

11%

of US adults consult tarot yearly

14 vs 7

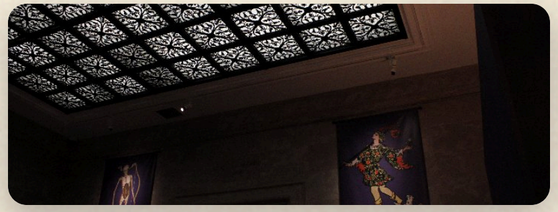
percent of women vs men

23% of adults under 30. Many readers are also religious.

MY SURVEY, N = 32

20 of 31 met tarot through a friend or relative.
13 of 32 have never tried it.
Top reason not to: *"I don't know enough."*
Top request: **a guide to reading**.

THE GAP The shelves are full of decks and the app stores are full of readings. What is missing is a **trusted, guided first step**, and it is missing most for women who are wary.



The Morgan, Oct 2



Il Meneghello, Milan



Decks compared, Oct 29



The Major Arcana, Nov 5

Sources: Rotolo, Pew Research Center, 2025; Wintle, World of Playing Cards; V&A E.482-1934; Jacobi survey (n = 32), Oct. 2026.

✳ WHAT CRITIQUE CHANGED

My question was too directed, *and it left out the wary*

FACULTY FEEDBACK ON MILESTONE 2

1. I chose the artifact before the question.
2. Add context for newcomers who resist or distrust tarot.
3. Learn who already reads it, and what the market looks like.

So I added a new stakeholder, **the Wary**, and traced six stories that keep people away. Only **one** of them is about what the cards can actually do.

It is a sin

Scripture and catechism forbid divination

It is a scam

NY still treats paid fortune telling as a misdemeanor

It is a stereotype

Centuries of policing Romani women as swindlers

It is satanic

The 1980s Satanic Panic

It is cursed

Horror films: *Tarot* (2024) grossed $49M

It is nonsense

Forer's Barnum effect, 1948

Sources: Catechism of the Catholic Church §2116; NY Penal Law §165.35; Meier, Critical Romani Studies, 2023; Little, History.com, 2025; The Numbers, Tarot (2024); Forer, 1949.

✳ THE QUESTION, REVISED

MILESTONE 2 · TOO DIRECTED	How might we turn a first tarot deck into a gift that welcomes a curious young woman in, credits every hand that made it, and is meant to be read with someone else?
OCT 22 · REOPENED	How might we help people who are curious about tarot, or wary of it, approach it on their own terms as a practice for reflection, connection and well-being?
NOV 5 · TIGHTENED	How might we help curious young women approach tarot as a practice of reflection, not superstition?

FINAL HOW MIGHT WE

How might we *welcome* women *wary of tarot* into it as a practice of *reflection* and *connection*?

It names a person and a change, and leaves the form open. The deck now has to earn its place.

✳ IDEATION · TEN IDEAS, THREE FAMILIES

From insights to *sub-questions* to ideas

I broke the question into five smaller ones: try it without believing, let history dissolve the myths, read with someone you trust, show who made the images, respect a newcomer's faith. Each idea answers at least one.

OBJECTS

A Gifted First Deck
22 cards to give, with a guide for two

B Maker's Mark
Every card signed, every hand credited

F Collector's Edition
Numbered prints with heritage makers

H Looking Cards
Image first prompts, no fortune telling

STORIES

E Beginner's Guide Series
Short videos teaching one spread

G Myths and Makers
Six myths set beside the record

I Esoteric Design Studio
Decks, prints, stationery: the first Tarocchina idea

GATHERINGS

C Reading Circle
A hosted first reading, read in pairs

D Seasonal Subscription
Cards and prints by moon phase

J The Society
Membership, letters and seasonal gatherings

A–F from Milestone 2; G and H from the October research addendum; I and J from November brand sessions. Highlighted ideas carry into the concept.

✳ DESIGN CRITERIA AND HOW I CHOSE

No single idea reached *both* the curious and the wary

	IDEA	WARY	CURIOUS	EVIDENCE	FEASIBLE	ORIGINAL	FIT	/30
G	Myths and Makers	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●●	27
A	Gifted First Deck	●●○○○	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●●	25
C	Reading Circle	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	21
H	Looking Cards	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○	21
E	Beginner's Guide Series	●●○○○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●●	●○○○○	●●●●○	19
D	Seasonal Subscription	●○○○○	●●○○○	●●○○○	●●●○○	●●○○○	●●●○○	13

The history first idea (G) reached the wary; the deck (A) reached the curious. The answer was to stop choosing between them.

CRITERIA

- No belief required
- History before prophecy
- Respect faith; never costume prejudice
- Credit every hand
- Built for two
- Trust through people and place
- Finite, not endless
- Feasible by December 5

G + A + C, held together by **J**: a society whose letters tell the history, whose deck is the object, and whose gatherings are the table.

Scores 1–5 from my October research addendum, weighted equally; feasibility judged against the December 5 deck deadline.

✳ THE CONCEPT I SELECTED

Société Tarocchi

A society for women who read between the lines. Est. 2026, New York.

Tarot has always travelled through circles, from Milan's courts to the Golden Dawn, which admitted women as equals from 1888 and counted Smith among its members. The name joins *tarocchi*, Italy's word for the cards, with *société*, for the French revival that made them mystical.



I — The door

INSTAGRAM & TIKTOK

A mystery that invites, never a sales pitch

II — The letters

SUBSTACK, FREE

History before prophecy: Smith, Harris, Milan

III — The circle

FREE TIER

Calendar, grimoire and card art to download

IV — The members

PAID TIERS

Deeper letters, a printed booklet

V — The Empress

10 NUMBERED DECKS

The hand painted deck, by invitation

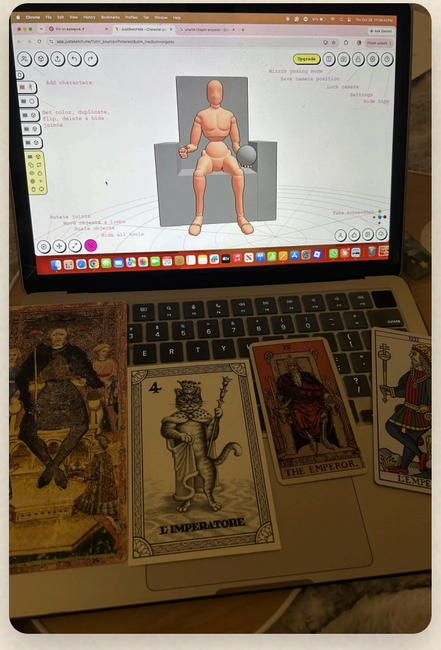
VI — The table

SEASONAL GATHERINGS

Women owned venues; reading in pairs

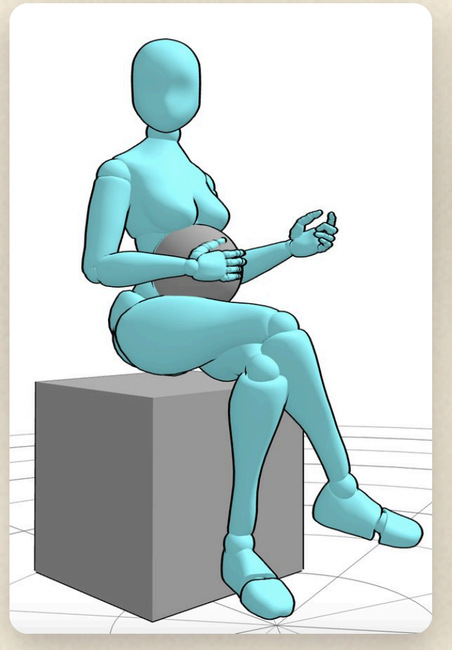
Sources: Denisoff, "The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, 1888–1901"; Halliday, Open Culture, 2025. Brand and tiers: Jacobi, Société Tarocchi, Nov. 2026.

A tarot deck *painted by hand*, one card at a time



STEP 1

Reference decks beside a posed 3D model



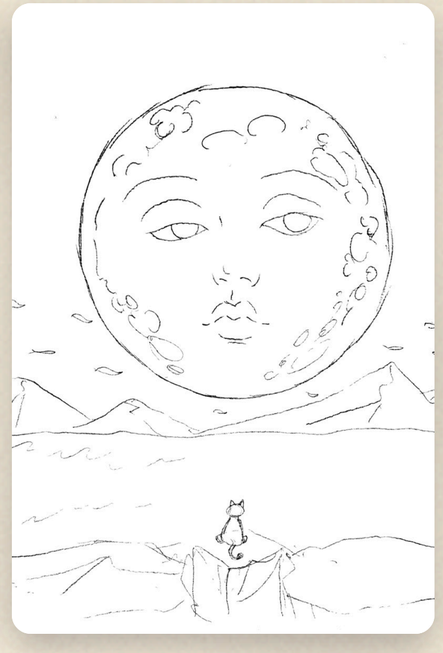
STEP 2

3D pose study, the Empress



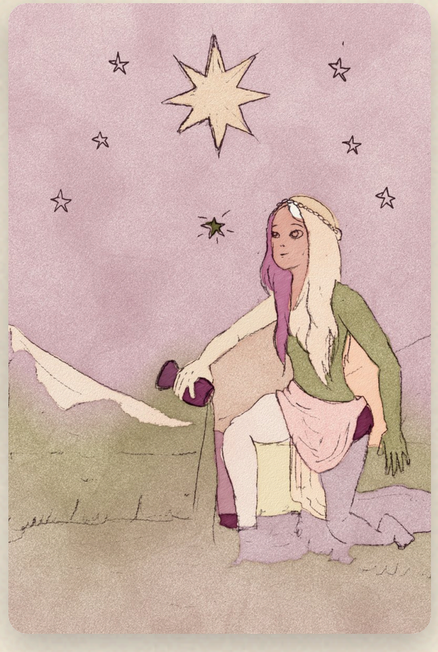
STEP 3

Pencil sketch on A4, the High Priestess



STEP 4

Digitised line art, the Moon



STEP 5

Digital colour study, the Star

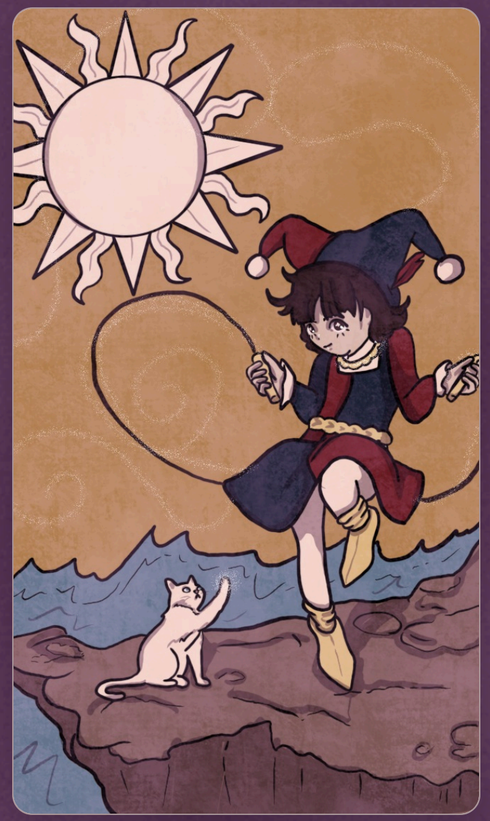
Major Arcana sketched; 0 to XIX in line art; **0 to III finished**.

15 of 16 court cards and all four aces sketched.

Pip cards to be collaged from painted suit symbols.

Tarot size, 2.75 × 4.75 in, printed with a pocket guidebook.

Photographs by the author. The colour studies are digital references made from my line art to test colour; the first finished cards follow.



0

The Fool

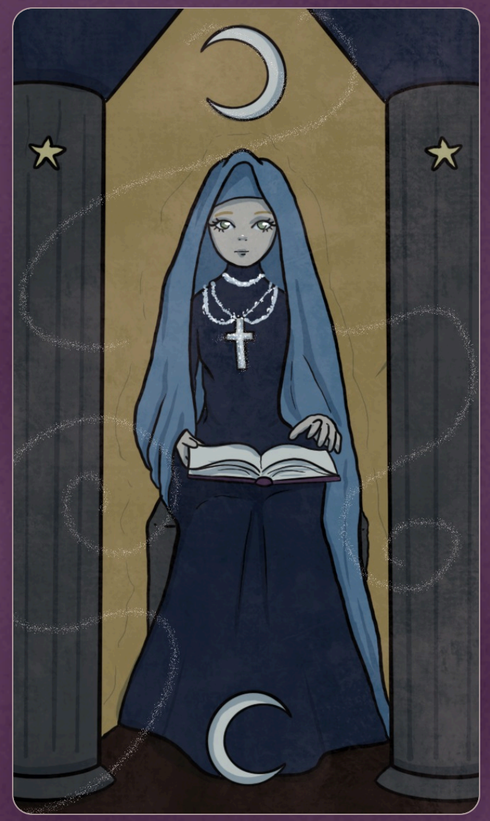
Sun, cliff edge and a white cat in place of the little dog



I

The Magician

A woman, wand raised, the four suit tools on her table



II

The High Priestess

Two pillars, crescent moons, the veil and the open book



III

The Empress

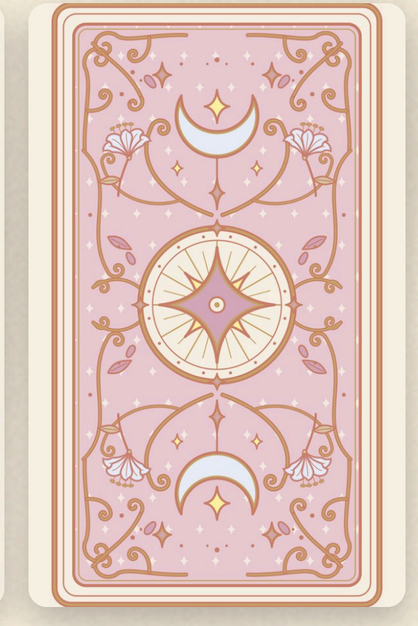
Crown of flowers, sceptre, the Venus sign, an expectant mother

Illustrations by the author, finished November 11, 2026. Each keeps the traditional symbols a newcomer can learn from; the Magician is drawn as a woman.

From a pastel deck *to a society*

VERSION ONE · TAROCCHINA · OCT 27





Sweet, but it read as a product, not a practice. The cover leaned on Canva library graphics that cannot be used in a trademarked mark, and the name never felt settled.

VERSION TWO · SOCIÉTÉ TAROCCHI · NOV 10





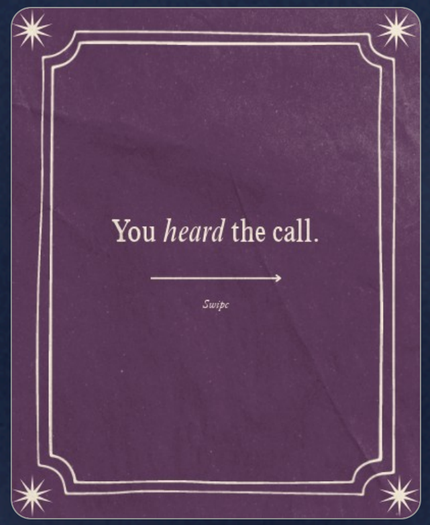


Plum, midnight, parchment and gold; an eight point star; a condensed serif with a script. It borrows its authority from tarot's own history of salons and orders, not from a logo, and it can hold a deck, letters and gatherings.

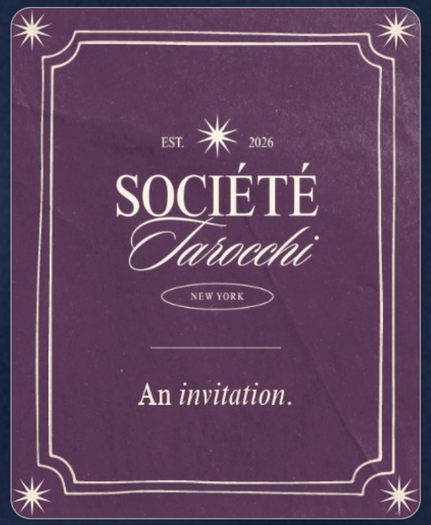
Brand guidelines, logo, star and floral pattern by the author (Canva), Nov. 10, 2026.

PROTOTYPE III · THE INVITATION, LIVE

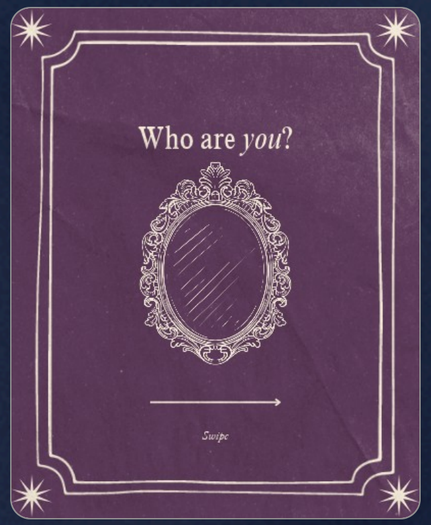
A soft launch at *11:11 on 11/11*



Teaser, Nov 10



The invitation



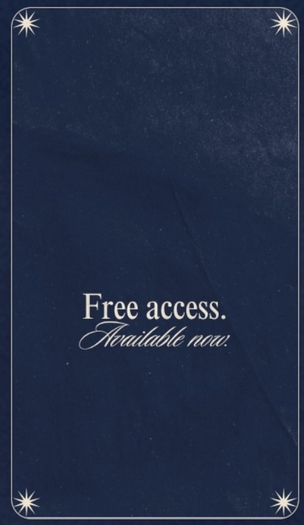
"Who are you?"



Story, 11:11



Story, welcome



Story, free access

THE LAUNCH LETTER

Opens in Milan with the Visconti cards, then Pamela Colman Smith and Frieda Harris, then my research, then the invitation. **History first, by design.**

THE TIERS

Free letters, calendar and grimoire → paid letters and a printed booklet → **the Empress**: ten numbered decks, by waitlist.

Société Tarocchi Instagram and TikTok posts and stories, and Substack launch letter, by the author, Nov. 10–11, 2026.

✳ TESTING · ROUND ONE

Three tests with *three kinds* of stakeholder

THE KEEPERS · OCT 15

Critique

Faculty review of my Milestone 2 question, framing and evidence.

Tested: is the question open enough to let the research surprise me?

THE MAKERS · NOV 9–11

Production

Specs sent to two printers; seven quotes back from Greenerprinter, one quote paused at Superior POD.

Tested: can a hand painted deck be made, boxed and delivered by Dec 3 on a student budget?

THE CURIOUS & THE WARY · NOV 10–11

Soft launch

Posts, stories and the launch letter, live on Instagram, TikTok and Substack.

Tested: does a society, introduced through mystery and history, make women want to step inside?

[#]	[#]	[#]	[#]	[#]
Instagram followers	TikTok followers	Substack subscribers	Empress waitlist	Replies to “Who are you?”

Faculty critique, Oct. 15, 2026; Greenerprinter quotes #2869068–#2869665 and emails, Nov. 9–11, 2026; Superior POD emails, Nov. 10, 2026; launch counts as of Nov. 11, 2026.

✳ WHAT THE FEEDBACK TAUGHT ME

What broke, and *what it means*

The rush is the cost, not the quantity

HEARD Express with tuck boxes came to about $980 to $1,050 whether I ordered 5 decks or 25; standard printing was $206.72 for 10. No student discount, no guaranteed delivery.

LEARNED Order early, on standard turnaround. A small, numbered edition is the right scale.

A platform cannot keep a circle closed

HEARD Substack cannot cap how many people join a paid tier, and I can only make ten decks.

LEARNED The Empress tier stays closed: a waitlist and a personal invitation. Being invited builds more trust than a checkout.

The door says witch; the research says wait

HEARD The teaser ends “Stay tuned, witch.” Only 1 of 32 respondents calls herself a witch, and the top reason is “I don't know enough.”

LEARNED Test witch language against history first copy with the wary before I use it again.

Credit every hand, including mine

HEARD Some carousel images are found photographs and film stills I did not make or credit.

LEARNED Replace them with my own cards, or credit every image, as the brand promises.

From critique: my first question held its own answer. Reopening it brought in the wary, and the wary are why the concept became a society rather than a deck alone.

Greenerprinter quotes and emails, Nov. 9–11, 2026; Jacobi survey (n = 32); Société Tarocchi teaser carousel, Nov. 10, 2026.

What changes *before the next round*

The deck	Finish the remaining Major Arcana by Nov 15 and every card by Nov 22. Files in CMYK, borders clear of the ¼ in corner radius, tarot size.
Production	Order a single proof deck first from a dedicated card printer, then the edition of ten on standard turnaround, approved by Nov 16 to 18.
The guidebook	Cut my 78 card draft to a 32 page pocket guide that opens with history, then a two person spread and a looking prompt that needs no belief.
The membership	Name the tiers, keep the Empress closed behind a waitlist form, and invite members one by one.
The voice	A history first series (Smith, Harris, Milan) beside the mystery posts; my own art in place of found images.



The Empress, finished: the standard for the remaining cards.

Production schedule and checkpoints from my November 2 deck timeline; guidebook from my draft "Pocket Grimoire of the 78."

From followers *to a table*

ROUND TWO · NOV 14–22

Paired first readings

Who: three curious and three wary pairs: survey volunteers, plus referrals of a practising Christian, a sceptic and someone afraid of the cards; one session in Portuguese with Porto Alegre.

How: a printed proof of the Major Arcana, a one page history card, the guide draft; one card read in pairs, then five questions.

ROUND TWO · IN PARALLEL

The door, measured

Instagram: history first posts against mystery posts; polls, quizzes and an "Add yours: your first deck" sticker.

Substack: open rates on the history letters.

A reader: one interview with a professional reader in New York about first time clients.

ROUND THREE · DECEMBER

The first gathering

The printed deck in hand by Dec 3, presented at Milestone 4, then a small launch gathering near the winter solstice with an exit survey.

Success looks like: the wary rate the concept as highly as the curious. In Milestone 2 the gap was **3.0 against 4.2**.

Five questions after each reading: How interested are you (1–5)? Would you try it again? Would you give it to someone? Who drew these cards? Where did tarot begin?

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Meier, Verena. “Fortunetelling as a Fraudulent Profession?” *Critical Romani Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 30–48.

New York State Senate. Penal Law §165.35, Fortune Telling.

Rotolo, Chip. *30% of Americans Consult Astrology, Tarot Cards or Fortune Tellers*. Pew Research Center, May 21, 2025.

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Jacobi, Catherine. “Women, Tarot, and the Making of Meaning.” Survey, Google Forms, October 1–10, 2026 (n = 32).

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Greenerprinter, quotes and emails to the author, Nov. 9–11, 2026; Superior POD, emails to the author, Nov. 10, 2026.

AI disclosure: *Claude (Anthropic) helped me structure the synthesis, check sources, digitise my sketches, make the colour studies, draft copy I then edited, and lay out this deck. Research, fieldwork, drawings, brand and decisions are my own. Full notes, URLs and test protocols are in the Milestone 3 Compendium.*