

Pentalogy

When Magic Becomes Theatre!

By
R.Shane

Introduction by
Robert E. Neale

PENTALOGY

Written By R. Shane

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Thank you all for helping.

You know who you are.

And the author has pictures to prove it.

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Introduction: “What About Shane?” by Robert E. Neale

We can count. ONE. TWO. THREE. FOUR. FIVE. There are exactly five books, approximately five hundred pages, and nearly a hundred effects. Good for us, but what about Shane?

Well, look a little more carefully. Browse through some titles and wonder what they signify. Maybe They Were Just Unlucky. Cassandra's Quandary Revisited. Signed, William Randolph Hearst. Of All-powerful Gods and Little Men in Big Buildings. The Quick and Presumed Dead. An Inoffensive Little Trick. Coins for the Ferryman, Plus a Little Something For the Crew. Slasher: The Day After the Night Before the Dawn of the Nightmare of a Texas Chainsaw Psycho Maniac, Part 17. Weeping, An Old Man. The-God-of-The-Month Club. Newton Versus Einstein Versus Quantum Magics. The Strange Revenge of the Celestial Wu. Bones, Modern and Cold. The Unkindest Cut of All. Don't you wonder? There is a suggestion of very wide knowledge and interest that cuts across all disciplines of study<literature, science, philosophy, religion, psychology, anthropology, history and politics to name a few. And the titles do suggest something more<offbeat presentations filled with serious challenges and entertaining wit. To label the contents "bizarre" or "storytelling" is accurate, but very limited. At the very least, we should add "surprising," "provocative" and perhaps most importantly, "unique."

Oh yes. Shane is a working magician. His presentations are not in the tradition of those pretending to be seated in a nineteenth century library mixing tricks with brandy snifters and literary devices. He tries out his words on people in a variety of circumstances and prunes, prunes and prunes. The plots are not just potent, but also clear and to the point. Because the circumstances of a working professional do not encourage a lengthy dissertation or rambling story unaccompanied by visible enticements, the performances engage the audience right from the beginning. And let me add, contrary to some of us in this mode of magic, Shane neither pontificates nor preaches. He is having a whale of a good time and desires that the audience will too. Pick out any script and you will realize that his spirit is infectious.

The tricks? They are for close up and stand up performance. And Shane is well acquainted with both classic and contemporary methods and effects. The props are varied, to say the least. Sure, he employs playing cards and coins, but also a great many other uniquely and especially constructed vehicles. He relies upon different approaches to method, using what fits the demands of the effect, sleight of hand, gimmicks and/or subtlety. The tricks reveal a strong search for practically. And they have been performed. Over and over. Shane's discussions of his experiences and revision are extensive and stimulating.

But what about Shane? Who have we been writing about? Who is Shane? What does he care about? All we have to do for an answer is to read his writing. It tells, maybe not all, but a great deal. Unlike too many in our craft, he does not hide behind his magic, but exposes himself to the reader just as he does to his live audiences. Perhaps reading ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR and FIVE might inspire us to reveal ourselves as well. If we asked him to create a presentation for a trick employing the terms, ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR and FIVE, what would he do? What props? What effect? What presentation? Two plus two equals five? We would be surprised for sure. What would we create? Yes, we too could be surprised by what we created. At

best, Shane's contribution will stimulate us to go and do likewise in our own idiosyncratic ways. Suppose, I asked him to respond creatively to this opening sentence: "Once upon a time, there was a god who did not exist. . . ." What would he do with it? What would you do? Oops! What would I do? Well, I'd come up with something. And then I'd confer about it with Shane. How could I do otherwise? And I doubt you could do better.

What about Shane? Enjoy him. And what about you and me?

Bob Neale
Fall, 2005

Preface

Wherein the author explains the history and origins of the book because, well, that's what goes in a preface.

Genesis

In the beginning were the words. Bunches of words. Big, heavy bunches of words. Someone, who shall go nameless for now, heard those words and said, "You know, you should really write a book." A laughing fit ensued. After all, thought I, what I was saying wasn't all that special. All I did was come up with some emotionally-loaded stories and presentations for some tricks. Everybody does that. But pretty soon, that nameless someone had talked me into it, and "One" was born.

After I wrote "One", with some of my seminal work and thoughts in it, the unspeakable, the unbelievable, the impossible happened: people wrote in wanting to know when the next book was coming out. Next book? I couldn't believe I wrote the first one! I still couldn't believe people were reading and raving about the first one, either. And people kept asking and rumors started flying and, well, you guessed it...

The Pentateuch

With the publishing of "One", I found a surprise: readers, performers, who liked to think about what they were doing, who liked thinking of what we do as an art form and not a diversion before the birthday cake gets cut. That was both a startling thing and a reassuring thing. So, in a natural progression, "One" begat "Two" begat "Three" begat "Four" begat "Five".

With each book there were more readers, more people that wanted evocative, emotionally-charged, workable material. Soon, before I knew it, I was getting requests for "Five" even though it certainly felt like "One" had just hit the underground. So, as with all of my books, as I'd retire material, it would find itself in a folder, ready for the day when "Five" would come out.

And come out it did. But there was something else I was being asked about, something that came out of the blue, something I wasn't ready for.

The Pentalogy

I began getting requests to put everything into one volume. I have to admit, right up front, that seemed insane to me, but it was a popular idea. As I thought about it, it started making sense to me in a warped, "Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not" kind of way. The next thing I knew, I was putting all five books into this single volume you hold in your hands right now. It was only after I had done it I realized I would not be paid for each pound this monster weighs. Live and learn.

But it was also a good time to do some cleaning. Having never written a book before, and now having written five of the damned things, mistakes became readily apparent. So this was a

chance to correct things that slipped by in the first editions. The writing was tidied up to make things more comprehensible, certain pieces were re-written, and the layout got a much-needed overall. You see, in my mind, the five books could have been titled “The Lecture That Never Was” – I was writing what amounts to lecture notes, and we all know how shoddy those are, so I was lax about things. The problem was that while I was writing “notes”, readers were reading “books”. I took this opportunity to make amends and give people the books they deserved.

Yeah, I’m being self-critical. I get that way. It’s part of my charm.

Revelations

And now we come to the end of the history of this thing. “Pentalogy”, at the end of the day, is the collection of my first five books into one volume because, well, people asked for it. To be honest, I’m grateful to those folks for making me get off my dead ass and on my dying feet to do it: this is the book I always wanted to write.

But, come to think of it, I already did, didn’t I?

I hope you enjoy it half as much as I enjoyed getting it to you.

Publisher’s Note: We had the pleasure of forming a mutual admiration society with R. Shane, shortly after he wrote this book and prepared to self publish it. We were delighted to form an alliance in which he has offered us not only this stellar work, but first opportunity on his future works.

In Pentalogy you will find a HUGE collection of what some people have called bizarre magic. True, many of the title and themes herein are inherently NOT the run of the mill magic junk we see tossed about hither and thither; BUT, this material is commercial, doable and powerful. It is, in short, magic THEATRE. Yes, many if the presentations are totally Shane, but if you find yourself gripped by an idea, learn from his style and re-write it to fit your own. Especially as a performer, it is vital that you... Know Thyself!

Foreword

During which we discuss exactly what a “pentalogy” is, why it is, and whodunit.

When I got back into magic after a couple of decades, give or take, I stumbled into something called “bizarre magic”. Now, you have to remember that when I left it, I was totally into regular magic (for want of a better term). I cut my teeth on Braue and Hay. I devoured Tarbell. When other beginners in my circle were fawning over Mark Wilson’s course, I was diving into Paul Harris.

Suddenly, years later, I’m watching guys talk about demons and devils and spells and doing things with the aid and assistance of Old Ones.

This weren’t Paul Harris, that’s for damned sure.

And I was hooked.

Oh, not because of the theatrics behind “bizarre magic”, but because of something that hit me: it was okay to be something other than a smart-ass who runs one-liners over each other worse than a stampede at Wal-Mart when DVD players go on sale two for a dollar. I didn’t have to cater to the public’s perception of magicians and magic; I could reach out and be whatever the Hells I wanted to be and do whatever the Hells I felt like.

Sure, go ahead and laugh. I didn’t think anything existed except for cookie-cutter magicians separated apparently at birth only so one would choose a blue-backed deck and the other red.

It was wonderful, it was liberating, and I was reeling with the possibilities.

And that’s what you’ll find in this book: possibilities.

Oh, don’t get me wrong. There is no vapor on these pages. The routines you’ll find here are workable pieces (I should know; I’ve been performing some of them for years but either grew bored with them or moved them to a different level and a different routine). They are practical. They are entertaining. They bring the goods to the table.

In this book, you’ll find close to a hundred different routines based on even more tricks and methods. You’ll also get a bunch of insights into why certain things work (and why certain things will blow up in your face). You’ll get a ton of material to read and think about and practice and perform and get an emotional investment from your audience for your trouble.

And, along the way, you’ll see the possibilities that bizarre magic (if you want to use a label) packs inside of it. You’ll see the possibility of reaching for an audience’s goodies, you’ll see the possibility of making magic mean more than tricks. You’ll see the possibility of going to a whole ‘nother level most performers don’t even worry about.

You'll see the reality that, yes, folks, people who do "this kind of magic" can make it in the real world where balloon animals and drunks picking cards are the norm.

Not bad for a little over five hundred pages now, is it?

But this pentalogy – the reprinting of five of my books into a single volume – is all about variety. The presentations run from silly to sadistic, humorous to horrifying, short-story to monumental epic. The methods are the same: cards, coins, cups and balls, photographs, business cards, rocks, and much more. In other words, whatever your performance requirements there is a routine in here that matches it. If I've done my job, though, there's more: there's everything you need to take the leap into this strange magical world even the pros will tell you doesn't exist outside of daydreamers and armchair experts.

The biggest thing you'll find in this book is at the end, when you sit it aside, and begin seeing that magic is entertainment, but when magic is art, man, there ain't nothin' better than that.

Oh, yes, there are possibilities a plenty.

I hope you enjoy reading mine and finding your own. I pray that "Pentalogy" helps you at least a little in that.

Shane
Parts Unknown
August 28th, 2005

One

Abyssus Abyssum Invocat ❖ Aut Disce Aut Discede

Maybe They Were Just Unlucky

During which common objects disappear yet still remain visible

In his wonderful book, "Impuzzlibilities" (I'll sum this up quickly: buy this book!), Jim Steinmeyer presents a cute self-working trick entitled "Understanding the Bermuda Triangle". This is based on the old counting trick involving a number of objects placed in a square so that the number of objects on each side always equal ten, regardless of the number of objects added to it. Jim re-structured the math so a triangle instead of a square is used, and the number of objects on each side equals thirteen, not ten. What follows is my presentation of Jim's re-working using his critical elements for the story: the triangle, strange disappearances, and the number 13.

You'll need a number of objects and something to put them in. I went to an arts and crafts store and found a small wooden box, about three inches square that was aged somewhat. While there, I picked up a bag of small stones, each about the size of typical aquarium rock. You could use glass beads, coins, just about anything as long as you have about forty of the objects and something to carry them in. These are just tools you use to tell the story; they are not relics from the Bermuda Triangle, remnants of a ship, or anything else. Oh, they can be, if you decide to go that route, but I prefer not to, for reasons that will be evident in a bit.

Now, let's take a look at the workings of this little number. First, lay the object out in small piles. Put the objects in three piles at the corners of the triangle so there are four objects in each corner. Next, add two piles on each side of the triangle. These two piles have either two or three objects in them. Your triangle should look something like this:

4
2 3
3 2
4 3 2 4

There is no big memorization here: four objects go in each corner; either two or three go into the piles in the middle.

The whole secret lies in moving objects out of the corners. As long as you do this, you'll always have thirteen objects on each side. Prove it: take an additional object and place it on any pile. If you put it on any of the middle piles (that is, piles that aren't corners), then move an object from either corner at the end of that side onto the middle pile of an adjacent side. Count objects again -- there are thirteen on each side. Now, if you happened to add an object to a corner, move two objects from that corner, one to a middle pile on each adjacent side. Count the objects.

Repeat until boredom sets in. Trust me, your audiences won't feel it -- it's just too weird.

This can be repeated for some time; the only stopping point is when, after the moves are done, you have a corner existing of only one object. You stop here because there is the danger of a

spectator putting an object onto that corner, in which case you can't move two objects from that corner and leave any object there. As many times as I've done this, though, I've actually stopped long before that and still cause more than my fair share of astonishment.

Okay, so you've got the basic moveless moves down. The only things you're going to add to this are 1) some tom-foolery to take the pressure off the "corner moves", 2) a reason for moving those objects, and 3) an ending that still leaves the mystery "on-going" in the spectators' minds. I'll show all of this in one stroke, if I may. Notice that we're going to take advantage of the legend of the Bermuda Triangle to jump into the magic quickly.

The story thus far:

"Even Christopher Columbus ran into strange things as he sailed through that triangle formed at Bermuda, Miami, and San Juan." Pull out some of the objects and put them in a pile on the table.

"Since then, and certainly before, there have been hundreds on disappearances in that strange place, due to strange circumstances, or maybe they were just unlucky." Form the triangle, counting the objects aloud, thirteen on each side.

"The brigantine Marie Celeste sailed into the triangle..." Hand one of the objects to a spectator. "Please put that on any pile you'd like." Once the spectator has done that, begin the deviousness. Move an object between middle piles on a different side -- if at all possible, do not move any stones from the side the spectator put the object on. If that's not possible, don't worry about it; just make sure you don't move the spectator's object. Because you're moving between middle piles, and leaving the sacred corners alone, you're not affecting the layout of the triangle at all. "Some say the Marie Celeste encountered pirates..." you say, as you move the object. Now move the necessary corner object (or objects, if the spectator put their object in a corner), and complete the sentence with "...Maybe they were just unlucky." Begin counting the stones aloud again, showing thirteen on each side.

This is the basic procedure you're going to repeat each time: hand the spectator an object to place where they'd like, move other stones around (listing another "reason" for the disappearance, so the list gets a bit longer each time), make the critical move on the "Maybe they were just unlucky" line, then recount.

"The 15,000 ton freighter Cyclops sailed into the triangle..." Hand one of the objects to the spectator. You'll find the spectator is already aware of the procedure and needs no more prompting. "Maybe it was pirates..." Move a middle object again. "Maybe it was a sudden storm..." Move another middle object. "Maybe they were just unlucky..." Begin counting the stones aloud, thirteen on each side.

"U.S. Navy Flight 19, five torpedo bombers, flew into the triangle..." Hand one of the objects to the spectator. "Maybe it was a sudden storm..." Move a middle object. "Maybe it was faulty instrumentation..." Move another middle object. "Maybe it was an inexperienced crew..." Move another middle object. "Maybe they were just unlucky..." Begin counting the stones aloud, showing thirteen again. By this time, your counting is moot since the spectators will be counting along with you. Do it anyway -- it's dramatic and takes some of the pressure off the spectators

who don't want to verify for themselves what you're doing.

"The tanker Marine Sulphur Queen sailed into the triangle..." Hand one of the object to the spectator. "Maybe it was a sudden storm..." Move a middle object. "Maybe it was faulty instrumentation..." Move a middle object. "Maybe it was an inexperienced crew..." Move another middle object. "Maybe it was just not seaworthy..." Move another object. "Maybe they were just unlucky..." Count the objects, showing thirteen on each side.

Hold up one of the objects, stare at it, contemplating it and what it means. "In two months, I'm going on a cruise. I'll be sailing through the triangle." Give the object to a spectator and let them place it. "Maybe it will be a sudden storm...." Move a middle object. "Maybe it will be faulty instrumentation..." Move another middle object. "Maybe it will be an inexperienced crew..." Move another middle object. "Maybe it will be the lost residents of Atlantis..." Move another middle object. "Maybe it will be a UFO..." Move another middle object. Pause.

"Maybe I'll just be unlucky..." Count the objects slowly, deliberately. Thirteen on each side.

Gather up all the objects and put them away in silence. Repeat yourself, "Maybe I'll just be unlucky."

Finis.

Note you may have to alter things as you go. The worse case scenario is you leave out some of the tale and have to place the last stone yourself (in case you have someone do nothing but place object on corners). That's the **worse** case, and I've never had it happen. Ever. Even in the worse case, it's still astonishing.

Maybe you'll just be lucky...

Having Writ

Wherein divinations are made to appear by the un-earthly scratching of claws

Deep, dark confession: I have always loved the premise of Spirit Slates. The idea of some spiritual entity writing upon the surface of a small chalkboard previously shown blank just really struck me as a Powerful Thing. However, it's also something I wouldn't perform. Why? Venue, mostly. To be realistic, the slates have to be somewhat normal size -- since I work close-up so much, the teeny-tiny slates just don't cut it (has anyone ever seen those things used in anything other than a Spirit Slate routine? Me either). Also, in this day and age, whiteboards just make more sense to me than chalkboards. There's other reasons, too, but you get the idea; I just wouldn't perform it. Always wanted to, just never have.

What I have performed is a Spirit Slate routine sans the slates and chalk. I wrap a card-revelation around it, add a bit of personal creepiness, and the result is a good little piece I call "Having Writ".

Effect: A tarot deck is shown and shuffled. The spectator selects a card, noting it. The performer shows some blank note cards, giving two to a spectator to hold together between her hands. The performer begins an incantation, asking for assistance from some wandering soul. After a moment, the spectator is asked to open her hands and look at the cards. On one of the blank cards is the name of the spectator's selected card, scratched into the card as if by a fingernail... or, perhaps, a claw?

Set-up: You'll need a tarot deck (do not do this with an ordinary deck -- the impact plummets straight down to the Ninth Circle of Hell when you do). You'll also need some double-blank playing cards. Some preparation of one of those cards is necessary:

Using a sharp edge, scratch the name of a tarot card you're going to force onto the card. Let's say it's The Devil. Make the scratches deep and wide, but be careful not to make any impression on the reverse side of the card. I make mine by first scratching the name into the card with an Ex-acto knife, and then using the side of the blade to make the scratches thicker and deeper. Make some lighter scratches on the same side of the card to give the impression that something was scratching errantly against the card.

If I'm performing this for only a couple of people, I stop there. If I'm performing it for a larger group, I take some ashes and rub them into the scratches making up the name of the card, removing the excess that will be on the card (a few struck matches will do the trick easily enough). This merely has the effect of making the name show up easier for others not directly handling the blank cards.

Put The Devil card on top of the deck. Put the blank cards together, with a rubber band around them (if I have to say that you shouldn't bring them out in their little Bicycle card case, stop reading now -- this effect just ain't for you), so that the scratched card is on top, scratched side down.

Put everything where you can get to it and you're ready to go!

Performance: Obviously, you're going to force The Devil card. How you do it is a matter of taste, of course, but for those of you who are curious, here's the way I do it:

- 1) Shuffle the deck in a loose riffle shuffle, retaining The Devil on top of the deck.
- 2) Spread the cards out on the table as haphazardly as you can. Now, mix the cards around on the table, keeping your thumb on the top card of the pile. As you mix the cards, drag the force card with the thumb. To the spectator, you're mixing the cards up impossibly well; in reality, you're mixing all the cards except for the force card, whose location you always know.
- 3) Square up the deck, keeping the force card on top of the deck as you do. Have the spectator cut the deck, but not complete the cut. Shuffle the piles together, again keeping the card on top.

This subtlety will stick into the spectator's mind as them having done both shuffling and cutting later on when the story gets retold (and it will).

4) Explain to the spectator that you want her to find a card that represents her future. To do that, the mythical lie goes, she must think about a prominent moment in her past, and cut the deck as she does so. Do not rush her during this process -- let her take her time. When she cuts off the top portion of the deck, have her place it face up on top of the portion of the deck you're still holding in your hand.

5) Instruct her to next think about herself now, to examine her current state of mind and spirit, and to again cut the cards. Again, no rushing. Sometimes the spectator may cut immediately; sometimes they may take a moment or two. Let them have as much time as they need. When she cuts off the top portion, have her again reverse the portion she cut off and place it back on top of the cards you hold.

6) Have the spectator take the deck and spread the cards until she gets to the first facedown card in the deck. Explain that, because she was influenced in manner of her cutting the deck by her thoughts of her past and her present, this one card represents her future. Have her remove the card, remember it, and set it and the deck aside.

Yes, this is the Cut-Deeper force. But in this dressing, the two cuts make some sort of mystical sense to the spectator. It's a decent enough premise given the framing, and there will be no questioning the whole process.

7) Pick up the double-blank cards, scratched card on top. Pull off the top two cards into your right hand, keeping the scratched card on top. Do not deal the cards, just take them. Put the rest of the blanks aside.

8) You're now going to show the cards -- once -- to be blank on both sides. What you're not going to do is over-prove anything. You are not being chased; don't dare run now. Take the bottom card of the two card pair into your left hand, leaving the scratched card in the right hand. Both cards should be held in a deep dealer's grip. Now, as you turn the hands at the wrists, use the thumb of each hand to turn the card over. The two motions are done and completed at the same time. This is the Carlyle Card move, and is essentially a paddle-move done with cards. At the end of the move, the hands are palm down, the same side of the cards seen before are seen again. Drop the cards to the table.

9) Take the rubber band off the stack of blank cards. Pick up the two single cards so that the scratched card is on top. Spread them in the right hand a bit as your left hand picks up the rubber band. Wrap the band around the cards, but not so tightly the cards flex and bend. Offer the cards to the spectator, and have her hold them on the palm of one hand while covering them with the palm of the other hand. Instruct her to press her hands together to hold the cards securely.

10) You're done except for the build-up. Begin a low, murmured incantation, recite your best Latin phrasing, or whatever else you like. Myself, I'll sometimes blow smoke on the spectator's hands, or at the very least wet my fingers in a glass of water and "anoint" her hands with a couple of drops. The key here is to take your time. This is the dramatic moment, where the suspense should build a bit. Let it. At about the midpoint, I ask the spectator if she feels anything happen-

ing; 75% of the time, she'll say she did. This is known as "icing on the cake".

11) Sit back. Act a bit drained, and a bit apprehensive. Have the spectator open her hands and examine the cards. Ask her to name the card that represents her. Instruct her to remove the rubber band and look at the inside of the cards. Stand back and cover your ears -- she may scream.

Notes: This is a simple routine, to be sure. But there's several places where the impact of the routine can dampen if not completely vanish:

Resist the temptation to over-prove the cards are really blank. No Olram. No Elmsleys. Nothing other than the Carlyle. If you get carried away with emphasizing the blank cards, they will be more than object -- they will become the focal point of curiosity.

Don't do this one with a regular deck of cards. Use a Tarot deck. Trust me on this one: without the Tarot, a great deal of the framing goes away, and with it, the impact.

When doing the Carlyle, it's important to do it with both cards, even though you're really concerned with concealing the surface of only one of the cards. The reason is to hide the discrepancy of the way the hand performing the Carlyle ends. Try it doing the Carlyle on just one card in one hand and you'll see what I mean.

Please don't do this one with some message scribbled on the card with a marker or a pen. It just doesn't make logical sense -- where did the writing instrument come from? Stick with the scratches -- that's eerie enough for anyone.

The whole sequence with the Carlyle Card move can be used for things other than Tarot-card-revelations. I've done it to start a sequence of cold reading and to reveal the outcome of an "experiment" with the date on a coin chosen from a pile of loose change. The key to using that sequence is to keep the dramatic point on those blank cards -- everything else is just a tool, a means to the end. In other words, don't use that piece for the final revelation of a "Mental Epic"-type routine. Keep the audience curious and focused. You'll get fantastic results.

Nocturnal Transmissions

During which a strange vampiric artifact shows its truest purpose

Effect: A nocturnal is introduced and explained to be timepiece used before clocks to tell time at night, akin to a sundial used during the day. Sailors, it's explained, used nocturnals at sea and according to legend by a race we know as Vampires. Once used by a Vampire, it's said, the nocturnal became good for another use: the nighttime hunting. A stack of envelopes is laid out in the pattern of a clock. The spectator is given the nocturnal and told to hold the nocturnal over any one of the envelopes they wish. After a bit of by-play, the envelopes are open and shown to con-

tain glass microscope slides. The one selected by the spectator is shown to contain a glass slide as the others, but the only one with blood on it. The spectator is uneasy; the nocturnal is pleased.

Props: Make a trip to a chemical or science supply shop, and purchase twelve glass slides. Prepare one of the slides with red food coloring (or stage blood). If you're not sure how to do this - meaning, like me, you slept through science class that year, ask the nice guy behind the counter at the science store. It's not at all difficult, just better seen than explained.

You'll also need a nocturnal. I purchased mine from Museum Replicas for around US\$20, already aged and absolutely gorgeous. Nocturnals were actually used before the advent of clocks to measure time at night. Simply, you sighted Polaris through its center, and then moved a dial to reflect the month, and a small arm to match the angle of Big Dipper. The result is a time read on the dial. Quite nifty, actually, and great for use as a pendulum...

Or the clock-force, which is how we use it here. Here's the mechanics...

Put the slides into envelopes. Make a nick mark on the one containing the "blood" slide. Bring out the slides and mess them about on the table. Please, no shuffling or cutting or anything that even resembles cards and card tricks. Slide them about until the envelopes are roughly laid out in a clock-face, that is, an envelope at each number position as seen on the face of a clock. The blood envelope you want to arrive at the spectator's one o'clock position -- if you're across the spectator, it would be in your seven o'clock position.

Have the spectator think of any number found on a clock-face, one through twelve. Have her hold the nocturnal tightly in one hand then, placing that hand on the twelve, move that hand randomly three times. Of course, it's not random at all: first have her spell the number she's thinking of, then the number she lands on, then that final number. She'll end up at her one o'clock position. Here's an example:

The spectator thinks of nine. She starts at twelve and spells "nine". That puts her hand on the four o'clock. She spells "four", which ends her on eight o'clock. She spells "eight" and ends on one o'clock. Voila! The force has put her on your bloody slide. All done.

However, "presentation uber alles", so...

"You've heard of sun-dials, probably even seen them, right? Well, this is a nocturnal. Basically, it's the same thing as a sundial, but it uses the stars and allows for the telling of time at night. Now, we know from history these were used before clocks by sailors for navigation on the open seas. Legend, though, says they had another purpose -- used by an ancient race -- to tell how much time they had before the deadly sun came up. And the legend says once a Vampire for a nighttime hunt used a nocturnal, it was never the same again: it led its owner to the safest... food it could. Let's try the legend out now and see if this little thing was ever used for a darker purpose.

"Here we have some envelopes. I'll keep the contents secret from you for now, since I don't want anything to influence you. You hold the nocturnal in your hand -- hold it tightly now. You'll notice I've laid the envelopes out almost like a clock face. Here's three o'clock, for example, and here's eight o'clock. Of course, here is the equivalent of high noon for some -- midnight. Now,

what you're going to do is choose a couple of positions on this clock of ours, one after the other, until you arrive at a totally random position... it appears. If the legend is true, the nocturnal will have a quiet say in the matter.

"First, try to let your mind go a little blank. Don't concentrate on anything; don't let your thoughts run loose. Close your eyes and imagine a soft, gentle night, with only the softest of breezes touching you. You may feel a little tingle in your hand, or even a little tickle in your mind. Don't be alarmed or afraid; that's normal and not harmful at all. Now, think of any number on the face of a clock. Any number, one through twelve. Open your eyes now and put your hand, the one holding the nocturnal, on the twelve.

"Spell out your number, one letter for each position on the clock. For example, if you thought of one, you'd spell 'o-n-e' and end up here. Do that now. Good. Now, spell out the number you landed on the same way. Excellent. One more time -- spell out that number. Very good. Thank you.

"So you've landed on this envelope. You did purely out of your own free will. We confused matters as much as possible in the process. There's no way you could know, probably not even guess, what is in that envelope.

"But the nocturnal you hold knows better than us, I'd wager. If we look inside the other envelopes, we find small glass slides, used to capture specimens for observation under a microscope. All these slides are clean, nothing on them other than a speck of dust here and there.

"The nocturnal knew better, though. Did you feel anything? Did you feel a tingle here and there? Maybe a bit of a nagging thought? Did you feel a bit strange at times during this? That was the nocturnal, and this is what it found.

"Blood. Warm, salty, tasting a bit like copper. And giving life to the owner of this most darkly precious nocturnal."

Finis.

Note the construction of the patter and the psychological pieces. These are the real pieces of work here. By planting the thought that she will feel "something" -- in truth, anything -- and taking it out on the poor spectator's hand (hold anything tightly in your hand for a minute, you'll see what I mean), when the time comes, she'll feel something. I've had spectators swear they heard something tell them which number to pick, felt the nocturnal move in their hands, heard something like scratching in their ears... you name it. The more imaginative the spectator, the more likely and lively the results.

A little secret: when it comes to psychological influences, all humans want control. Of at least themselves. It's part of the human condition. Note here that I give them the permission to release control -- "it's the nocturnal, dammit!" -- so they are more likely to go along with what I suggest. Yes, suggestion is used here (quite obvious, too, once you think about it). You'll find, done right, they will not even question the force you used.

Amanda's Great Magic Trick

Wherein a deadly curse is passed on and on and on and on and

Ron,

I hate to do this to you, but I must. The about a week ago, I was shown a trick using thirteen cards and a letter of instructions from a young girl named Amanda. I don't know her last name, I don't know her age, I don't know anything about her, nor do I care. All I know is it's been nine days and I don't want to take any chances. You'll need thirteen cards from a regular deck, the Ace through King of Spades.

I can't say more. I really won't say more. Just please get the cards and follow the instructions in Amanda's letter.

And forgive me if you can. I'm truly sorry, but you're my last hope.

Shane

Amanda's Great Magic Trick

Want to see a magic trick? It's a good trick. It's my trick, it's called Amanda's Great Magic Trick! Please play along -- I know you'll never forget it!

There's some playing cards with this letter I wrote. They are all called spades which Mommy told me are little shovels you dig holes with to bury things in.

To play Amanda's Great Magic Trick, put all the cards in order. I'll count with you in case you don't remember how. Put them like this...

1 that's the ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, jack, queen, king.

Hold the cards face down so you can't see them. Look at the card on the top. That card should be the ace. The ace should be on top when you hold all the cards face down, then the two under that, then the three, then the four oh you know the rest. If it

isn't then you put the cards together backwards. It's okay. I'll wait for you to get it right. You have to get it right though or Amanda's Great Magic Trick won't work and I won't like that. Ready?

Think of any one of the cards you like. They are all the same so just think of the number. Don't tell me or anyone what it is! I hope you can spell, because you're going to do some spelling stuff.

Spell the number you're thinking about. If it was nine, then spell it n, then i, then n, then e. Whenever you spell it, take one card from the top of the cards for each letter. Pretend you were thinking of 6. Spell it s, and move one card from the top of the cards to the bottom, then i, move one card from the top to the bottom, then x, move one card from the top to the bottom.

Oh, it's easy! Just like a lot of things.

Look at the top card now when you get done spelling. Whatever card that is, spell it just like you did the number you thought of. Don't forget to move a card from the top to the bottom for each letter you spell.

You spelled to a new top card. Look at it and spell it, too, just like you did before, putting a card from the top to the bottom for each letter you spell.

You just spelled three times. Mommy says cards can tell the future sometimes. I know they can tell the past. You spelt three times: once for mommy, once for daddy, and once for me, so it's like my story is in the cards. They tell my past, too.

Ace. A one, like me. I was an only child.

Two. The number of brothers and sisters I had. I didn't like them at all.

Three. Our family. My dad, my mother, and me make three!

Four. This is how many were in the fire. Mommy and Daddy made it out okay.

Five. The number of weeks I spent awake because there was a cat making noise outside.

Six. That's how many dead kitties they found in the backyard, all crushed up.

Seven. Seven days I stayed at the hospital, but I wasn't sick. They all just wanted to talk to me.

Eight. Eight people talked to me at the hospital. They watched me all the time. I didn't like them and they died.

Nine. The number of steps down to the basement. That's where my room was.

Ten. I was ten when they put me in the hospital all the time. I didn't like it at all there but they wouldn't let me out!

Jack. The doctor at the hospital. He bothered me with all his questions. I was happy he wasn't around long and they let me out.

Queen. My mommy. She was two-faced, too. She didn't really love me like she pretended. She went crazy I think.

King. My daddy. He killed me but I came back! I hate him! I HATE HIM! GOD DAMN HIM!

AND I HATE YOU, TOO! TURN OVER THE TOP CARD! IT'S THE KING! THE KING! LIKE MY DADDY WHO TRIED TO KILL ME BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID OF ME SO I KILLED HIM LIKE I KILLED ALL THE OTHERS!

LIKE I'LL KILL YOU! IN TEN DAYS! ONE DAY FOR EACH YEAR OF MY LIFE!

I'LL ONLY STOP IF YOU SHOW AMANDA'S GREAT MAGIC TRICK TO SOMEONE ELSE SO EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME!

EVERYONE MUST SUFFER!

Amanda



This is, again, an effect explained by Jim Steinmeyer in his book, "Impuzzlebities". This time it's a simple card force. The idea of turning this into viral magic hit me after seeing "The Ring", a movie in which watching a video tape will kill you unless you pass it along to someone else. Hence the plot.

To perform this, simply print out Amanda's story (leaving off my message to Ron [Dayton, a friend and ally in my magic leanings]), package it with the Ace through King of Spades, put it all in an envelope and you're ready to go.

Resist the temptation to age the paper, the envelope, or the cards. Remember, this is not some ancient artifice – this is a copy that was given to you for you to relieve the curse and pass on to someone else.

Be warned that this is powerful and frightening stuff. After a time or two, it becomes an entertaining curiosity; the first person to receive this will be hit with the full brunt of the emotional power.

Of All-Powerful Gods & Little Men in Big Buildings

Whereby “Sheeps and Thieves” take on a new meaning entirely

Seven coins are dropped on the table.

“A long time ago, two gods were contesting over the souls of mankind. They caused two temples to be erected and, with promises of worldly success – fat livestock, abundant crops, sensual pleasures – mankind flocked to their temples in equal measure.”

The left and right hands of the performer pick the coins up, alternately.

“However, what the gods wanted in return was complete obedience, and mankind was not prepared for such a sacrifice of their freedom. So, one by one, they left the temples.”

The coins are dropped from the hands, one at a time, again alternately, leaving one coin in each hand.

“The gods waited as mankind struggled long and hard merely to survive, let alone thrive. Soon, mankind became weary and re-entered the gods’ temples, one by one in equal measure.”

Once again, the coins are picked up, one at a time, by the left and right hands.

“But as their herds grew and their harvests multiplied, mankind began to think more and more their success was because of their own hard work and less and less of the gods’ requirements of blind obedience. They began to worship themselves, leaving the gods’ alone in a temple.”

The right hand is opened to reveal five coins; the left hand opens to reveal two.

“The gods, not being fools, tried a different approach. This time, if the gods were worshipped appropriately, they promised mankind an afterlife full of rolling green hills under a summer sun,

where there are no wants or needs. Mankind returned to their temples in equal measure.”

One at a time, the coins are picked up the hands as before.

“Mankind, though, still toiled in this life, not the one after, and they became bored waiting for what they would receive when they died, especially since the worship of the gods took place immediately. Enough is enough, they thought, and left the gods’ temples.”

The right hand is opened revealing five coins; the left hand is opened revealing two.

“The gods were getting a bit desperate. What began as a contest to see which one would attract the most followers had become a challenge merely to get mankind to worship them at all! But there was one last gambit left to be played.”

“Power. The gods promised mankind they could be gods themselves. Well, now there was something mankind was interested in! So once again they filled the temples, and now the gods could see who won the contest! One god even made himself a ring of gold in honor of his impending victory.”

The coins are gathered up into the hands as before. A ring is taken into the right hand as well.

“When the counting came, one god has a few followers.” The left hand is opened revealing three coins.

“In the other temple, that god’s followers were also few.” The right hand is opened revealing three coins and the ring.

“But there was a problem. Mankind truly had become as their gods. They had learned their power laid in their conquest of fire and mathematics, the wheel and biology, language and physics. Mankind learned much about themselves and made the gods an ultimatum: ‘You worship us, gods, or we’ll forget you ever existed.’ The gods, knowing to be forgotten was to be destroyed, bowed their heads and began to worship mankind in their own temple.”

The left hand is opened and seen to be empty; the right hand is opened revealing all the coins and the ring.

“The contest, and the ring, belonged to mankind, who learned something they should have known from the start – they created the gods in their own image.”



This is, of course, a presentation for the classic “Sheep and Thieves/Thieves and Sheep” trick. This particular routine is greatly Ron Bauer’s “Butch, Ringo, and the Sheep”, which is a comedic presentation of what I consider to be the best non-gimmicked version of this classic effect.

You’ll need seven coins, all alike (or similar enough not to be distinguished from one another from a short distance) and a gold finger ring. You’ll also need a table on which to perform this.

You could do this in the spectator's hands, but I don't recommend this: the routine takes about two minutes and a spectator's arm can get tired holding it out all that time.

The routine is in three phases; I've broken out each phase for description.

Phase One: Worldly Success

1. Bring out the coins and place them on the table. Put one coin to the left, one to the right, and five in the center in a loose pile. The finger ring should be worn.
2. Pick up the coin on the right with your right thumb and second finger into your loose fist. Pick up the coin on the left with your left thumb and second finger, pulling it into your hand as you did with the right.
3. While holding onto the coin in your right fist, pick up a coin from the pile as you did before, pulling it into your hand with the thumb and second finger. Repeat this with your left hand.
4. Perform this action again, picking up a coin with your right hand, then your left, and finally, with the last coin in your right hand.
5. Use your thumb to push a coin from your left hand's fist onto the table, where the center pile was located. Do this also with the right hand.
6. Continue alternating replacing the coins in this manner until five coins are back into the center pile. The situation appears to the spectators to be you have a coin in each hand; in reality, you hold two coins in your right hand and no coins in your left. It's important to sell the illusion that a coin does indeed still exist in your left hand.
7. Begin to pick up the coins from the pile again, starting with your right hand, then with your left. Alternate as you did before until the coins are all picked up.
8. Open your left hand revealing two coins. Open the right hand and let the five coins fall from your hand back to approximately where the center pile was located.

Phase Two: A Wonderful Afterlife

9. Push all seven coins together in a loose pile in the middle of the table. This action will bring both hands over the group of coins simultaneously. Apparently pick up a coin into each hand. In reality, though, pick up two coins into the right hand and no coins into the left. Use the same pick-up action you've used before; that is, pick up the coins (the two real and the one imaginary) with the thumb and second finger and pull the coins into your hand. Be careful of the two coins hitting each other and talking during this action.
10. While holding onto the two coins in the right hand, pull another of the coins into your loose right fist.
11. Still pretending to hold a coin in your left hand, extend the left hand out and draw one of the coins into your left hand.
12. Repeat this, alternating as you do, until all the coins have been picked up.
13. Open your left hand, dropping two coins onto the table. Open your right hand, revealing five coins. Let all the coins fall from your hands to the table.

Phase Three: Godlike Power

14. Use both hands to push the coins into a pile. Pull one coin to the left and one to the right of the center pile. This is the same starting position used in at the beginning of the first phase.
15. Move the coin on the right away, putting it aside. Take off the gold finger ring and hold in the right hand at the base of the ring and little fingers. Pick up the coin on your left with your left hand. Close both hand and turn each palm down.
16. Pick up the five coins from the pile, alternating and one at a time, beginning with your right hand. Keep this coin at your fingertips instead of bringing it fully into your fist as you've done before. After you've picked up a coin in your left hand, pick up one with your right by placing the first one onto it and picking up both in a two-coin stack. Again pick up a coin in the left hand, then another in the right. As you did before, pick up the coin in the right hand by placing the two coins on top of it, making a three-coin stack. Pull this three-coin stack into the right hand into thumb-palm position (that is, clipped between the thumb and the side of the hand).
17. Dump the three coins from your left hand onto the table.
18. Pick up the three coins, one at a time, with your left hand. Then, with your left hand directly in front of you, close it into a loose fist with your thumb uppermost and your little finger on the tabletop. Relax your hand a bit and let the coins fall into the bottom of your fist so they are actually touching the table.
19. Apparently toss the three coins and the ring from the right hand onto the table. In reality, though, execute the Han Ping Chien move, holding onto the three coins in your right hand and letting the three coins in your left hand fall to the table. Move the coins about with your right hand (a subtlety, convincing the spectators the right hand is empty while you are retaining three coins in the right hand in thumb-palm position).
20. Pick up the three coins and the ring in the right hand all at once by scooping them up into the right hand. Open the left hand to show it empty. Open the right hand, spilling the coins and ring onto the table. Replace the ring with the seventh coin you placed aside.

Hand of Death, Sword of Justice

In which Death's bony hand is held in check by gleaming steel

This routine is dark. Very dark. And I imagine that I'll be the only one ever to perform this effect. It is frightening when done correctly, and can cause nightmares with the right theatrical approach behind it. This is not hype just to get you to read further; this is the honest truth. Most effects have disclaimers concerning personal injury. I present this routine to you with a different sort of disclaimer: this effect can cause mental trauma and anguish. Perform at your own risk.

Effect: The performer introduces a stack of business cards (or simply blank cards of any sort),

upon which are written the names of serial killers. The spectator merely thinks of any one of the cards, writing down the name of the killer on a piece of paper. The cards are turned face down and mixed to the spectator's content. The performer introduces a knife and begins randomly tapping the backs of the cards, asking the spectator to mentally spell the name of the killer she's thinking about. She stops the performer when she has finished spelling the name and the performer plunges the knife into the card underneath the knife. It is shown and the name read aloud. It matches the name thought of by the spectator and written down on the paper before the trick began.

Setup: This trick uses a principle that was old when Annemann was young. Usually the effect is done with objects written on the cards, or as a living/dead test. Here, I took it down a frightening and brutal road.

The original cards were colored for easy recognition. This is something I can't recommend; the color-card scheme is simple to easy to figure out with just a bit of thought. Better to use either business cards, index cards, or even blank playing cards. Whatever you choose, you'll need six of them.

If you're using business cards, write the names of the serial killers on the backside of the cards, one name per card. If you're using index cards, use lined cards and write on the blank sides. If blank playing cards are your thing, write on the blank side (obviously, but here for completeness). I write the name horizontally, and with the print all about the same size.

Here's the gallery of serial killers. Remember; write just the name down on the cards.

- **Wanlin.** Chinese, doctor, killed 190 while treating them with poisonous herbal remedies.
- **Gaskins.** American, thief and killer, killed 100, including a number of fellow prisoners. He claimed to have "a special mind that gave permission to kill."
- **Gavarito.** Columbian, killed 140, all children.
- **Chikatilo.** Russian, teacher, killed 52, known as the "Hannibal Lechter of Russia" for his cannibalistic tendencies.
- **Onoprienko.** Ukrainian, sailor, killed 52, all complete families, during the commission of random household burglaries.
- **Christopher.** American, US Army private, killed 13, all racially motivated as his victims were all black men.

These serial killers were chosen for a reason. No, not their levels of brutality or gruesomeness, but the number of letters in their last name. In terms of setting this up, think of Wanlin (with six letters in his name), to be "one", Gaskins (seven letters) to be "two", Gavarito (eight letters) to be "three" and so on.

On the side of the cards opposite the writing, mark the cards so you can recognize this "one-two-three" sequencing from the backs. If you're using business cards, pencil dots under your phone number or some text will work fine. This method also works with the blank playing cards. If you're using the lined index cards, running a fine-tipped blue pen ruled lines to thicken them will work beautifully, too. The point of this marking is so you'll know which card is tapped when in the sequence, counting 1-2-3-4-5-6. Don't worry; you won't have to know which killer

aligns with which marking; just which cards to tap when.

In addition to this specially marked set of cards, you'll also need a knife. Any knife will do; I use a very large decorative dagger I bought very cheaply which is nicely blunted.

Put everything away however you see fit (my set has the cards wrapped in a black cloth, the dagger wrapped in a white one, and the whole thing carried in an old torn egg bag).

Performance: You'll see that the performance of this number is about as easy as following the effect description.

1) Bring out the cards and the knife. Set the knife aside and show the cards to the spectator, reading off the names as you do and giving the spectator a bit of the background for each of the serial killers (there is a bit of this information above under each killer's name and gives you enough to emphasize the evil nature of this cast of characters.

2) Give the cards to a spectator for shuffling. Have her place the cards on the table face up, and turn away. Ask her to think of one of the killer's listed on the cards, and write the name down on a piece of paper so she will be sure to concentrate solely on that one being. Have her turn all the cards face down again, and again mix them up. When she confirms she's done all of this, turn back around to face the spectator.

3) Introduce the knife to the proceedings. Explain to the spectator that she must really concentrate now on the infamous name she is thinking of. Go on to tell her that you're going to begin touching the backs of the cards with the tip of the knife, and with each touch of the knife she is to spell a letter of the killer's name; when she has stopped spelling, she is to tell you so.

4) Begin touching the cards, but not in a random manner. In reality, touch the backs of the cards in accordance to the markings on the back. In other words, touch the back of the card you have marked to be "one" first, then the one marked "two", then "three" and so on. Because the cards are randomly mixed on the table, your movements with the knife will appear random.

5) The spectator will stop you, and, thanks to the mathematics involved, the card the knife tip is resting on will match her thought-of killer. Have the spectator put her hand on the knife and, together, stab the knife into the card, raise it up, and read off the name. Have her open the piece of paper, revealing the name she was thinking of. They will, of course, match.

Theatrics: This trick has a built-in anxiety factor already, given the subject matter. I up the ante on this a bit more while also giving an ending where justice is triumphant.

The reason given for the spectator thinking of the serial killer is not to put the spectator in that role; do not even think of playing it that way. The spectator's role needs to be looked at as something far more subtle than that. As is typical with my darker pieces, the spectator plays Fate in this one. This relieves the spectator from any affiliation with the serial killer, which can be far too much for them to bear. The knife itself represents Justice, or the Law of the Will of the People. The goal here is to show the working of Fate with Justice to bring the killings -- and the killer -- to an end.

The patter runs something like this:

"Beyond the merest lines of Good and Evil, there is a neutral force at work at all times. This force is called by many names: Chance, Luck, Destiny... I prefer calling it Fate. Neither good nor evil, moral or immoral, scrupulous or not, Fate merely...is. Fate creates monsters among us, the vilest our species can endure, and Fate brings those monsters down.

"What I propose to do tonight is show you that simple truth in action.

"Here I have a small stack of cards, on which are written the names of six monsters, inconceivable monsters within the human race. Here's Wanlin, a Chinese doctor who killed 190 men and women while treating them with poisonous herbal remedies. And Gaskins an American thief who became a serial killer while first in prison. He killed over 100, including a number of his fellow prisoners. He claimed to have "a special mind that gave permission to kill." Gavarito, a Columbian merchant, who killed 140 children in his depravity. Chikatilo, a Russian teacher, who is referred to as the "Hannibal Lechter of Russia" for his cannibalistic tendencies. He killed 52 before he was caught. Onoprienko, a Ukrainian sailor, also killed 52, all complete families, during the commission of random household burglaries. And lastly, Christopher, an American GI, who so hated black men that he killed 13 while in uniform. He was caught as he tried to kill a 14th while he was on duty at an American Army base.

"There are no words in our vocabulary to adequately describe these...creatures.

"But there is a word for what stops them, destroys them. Together, we'll see that word in action.

"Please take these cards and shuffle them. Now deal them face up on the table so that you can see their names. I'll turn my back to you now, so that I'm completely blind to your next actions. Please look at any one of the cards and remember the name on it. Let it burn into your mind, this one name. Picture this criminal however you would, as vile as that is. The utmost concentration is needed, so please write down the name of the beast on a piece of paper and fold it so that no one -- neither you nor I -- can see the name hidden inside. Think of this monster as you write his name, feel the natural loathing and repulsion for his acts as you do this. Done? Now turn all the cards face down, hiding the names. Mix the cards up on the table, move them around... leave no trace whatever of the name you're thinking of. Finished?

"You have played the role of Fate here. You have chosen the monster to be stopped, to be brought down. You've done a fine job -- you have created a mystery rivaling the best Fate could give us, choosing one of these cards to be the black hand of Death. Which one? Apparent to Fate, perhaps, but not to anyone else. However, there is that word that will bring the monster to his knees. Here is It's sword, the sword of Justice.

"As Justice is blind, so I'll move blindly. I'm going to touch these cards, one at a time, and try to let Justice take its course. This may take seconds, it may take moments, but, in collusion with Fate, Justice may prove out. I'll need you to concentrate on the name very, very hard now. As I touch the back of each card, I want you to say to yourself a letter in the beast's name, spelling it out as we go. Don't just think of the letter, think of the letter and the name. See it in your mind. As Fate takes an active hand in things, you'll need to be active here. When you have finished spelling the monster's name, simply say 'stop'. At that time, as you say the word, think of your-

self saying it to the killer, see yourself telling him to stop. And, between Fate and Justice, we may do that very thing. Ready? Let's begin."

A side note here. The touching of the backs of the cards is the key theatrical element. Do not merely start touching cards wholesale and quickly. Stumble a bit. Fumble along. It's your mental concentration combined with the spectator's that will reveal the killer -- this effort should not be easy. Just be sure that you do not bring the knife into contact with a card, or even close to it, to avoid any confusion on the spectator's part. I hold the knife completely away from the cards when I'm not in the middle of the tapping, usually close to my face. Then, when I'm ready for her to spell again, I go straight to the properly numbered card. It's this hesitation that sells.

"You said 'Stop'. You have stopped me, you have halted Justice's search here. Please put your hand above mine on the knife. It's not that warm, just enough to let us both know that something has happened. Feel it? So do I.

"Did Fate and Justice work together enough? Where we entwined enough to accomplish what needs to be done? Only one way to find out now..."

At this point, push the tip of the dagger through the card. Let the spectator's hand go along for the ride. You're working together, after all.

"What was the name you thought of? That's what was written down? Open the paper so we know for sure. Now observe the killer brought down by neutral Fate and blind Justice.

"We have stopped him. This one is finished."

Notes: Like I said, not for everybody, or anybody perhaps. If you like the idea, it can be applied to many other different topics. Many years ago, I used to do this same thing with names of candy bars and a (fake) tooth -- my sweet tooth as it were. However, tastes change (pardon the pun) and this has a place in my admittedly warped repertoire.

Oh, and this doesn't make a good effect for restaurants. Just in case you were wondering.

Paying The Bill

Wherein a whoopee cushion is introduced at the Last Supper

"To be Born and raised Catholic is to brought up on tradition, most unknown to all but a few, and some whose origins have been lost in time. Every time a new Pope is elected, for example, there are many rituals and ceremonies observed, all in accordance to tradition. There is one tradition very few know of, and whose origins were lost. Only recently has that tradition been made public, and even more recently has its origins been discovered."

I display to all a small silver tray. Resting upon that tray is a piece of parchment paper.

"Soon after the new Pope is elected and takes the throne of the Holy See, the Chief Rabbi is given an audience with the Pope, without asking. He is led into the Pope's presence, where the Chief Rabbi presents him with a silver tray much like this one. On top of that tray is an envelope containing a shriveled piece of parchment."

I pick up the envelope, opening it, and removing the parchment paper. I unfold it carefully, and show the relic, empty of all but symbolism, to my students, and place it back on the silver tray.

"As tradition demands, the Pope puts out his hand, rejecting the offered paper. The Chief Rabbi leaves the throne, taking the paper with him and does not return until the election of the next Pope.

"John Paul II was intrigued by this ritual, even as its origins were unknown to him. Employing the best scholars and researchers in the Vatican to look into the matter yielded nothing. When the time came, and the Chief Rabbi was shown into his presence, John Paul II dutifully enacted the ritual rejection but, as the Chief Rabbi turned to leave, John Paul II called him back.

"My brother," His Holiness whispered, "I confess that we Catholics are ignorant of the meaning of this ritual enacted throughout the centuries between us and you, the representative of the Jewish people. I have to ask: what is this all about?"

"The Chief Rabbi shrugged. 'But we have no more idea than you. The origins of the ceremony is lost in the traditions of our history.'

"The Pope offered a suggestion: they would retire to his chamber, open the envelope, and perhaps discover the secret to this mystery. The Chief Rabbi agreed readily.

"With courage of their faith, cloaked in their convictions, the Pope and the Chief Rabbi opened the envelope and removed the parchment. Imagine the trembling fingers as the Rabbi began unfolding the paper."

I let the parchment fall from the tray into one of my student's hands.

"As the Pope looked over his shoulder, the Chief Rabbi slowly opened it. Imagine now their shock, the great weight of unbelievability that they felt. Here they held a key to a sacred and shared ritual between their two peoples, a secret as old as their religions. Instead they find this..."

I prod my student to open the paper and read it aloud. She clears her throat and reads:

"Thirteen All-You-Can-Eat buffet dinners, three jars of wine, ten fruit platters. Total, three tri-ans. Please pass your server. Thank you and come again!"

"The Bill for The Last Supper."

Obviously just a switch. The written parchment is folded and under the tray. When the envelope is opened and the parchment taken out and shown blank, the parchment paper is put back on the tray -- the envelope is laid aside. As you tell the tall tale, pick up the tray and the hidden parchment under it. In the act of dumping the paper onto a spectator's hand, retain the blank with your thumb and let the extra, written parchment fall.

Don't anyone shoot me for this one. It's an old joke that Mona Santow reminded me of today. It's her fault. I'm just the twisted Judeo-Catholic with leanings in diabolism that put it down as an effect for some colleagues today. The fact everyone groaned and I felt the urgent need to run for the comfort of a foreign border told me that this effect just may be worthwhile.

A Cautionary Tale

In which even bizarre magic meets merrily with sexual education

This tale is wrapped around one of my Spellbound effects. Of sublime importance, it is a "sucker trick" on many levels, but never is the spectator subjected to ridicule. Persecution by exposure to really, really bad poetry, certainly! But never ridicule.

You'll need two things: a copper/silver coin and a medallion with a crucifix on it. This medallion must be round and about the size of the copper/silver coin. Most Catholic stores have these in multitudes. Failing that, purchase another medallion of some sort, in keeping with the theme, and attach a small crucifix to it.

The gist of the routine is a copper coin turning silver and then back to copper over and over until the spectator is convinced the coin is "two-sided". At that time, the coin changes to a golden coin, which is shown to be a medallion. No point is made of this "two-sided" coin; it's never mentioned as such. We merely lead the spectator to this obvious -- and quite correct -- conclusion. The appearance of the gold medallion is the thing.

As well as the story, which is *bad* on many levels. One, its bad poetry, full of contrivances. Two, it's risqué -- very risqué. Three, I can't even vouch for the punctuation.

But the moves first: a standard Spellbound will suffice. I use one by David Williamson from his book, "Williamson's Wonders" because I consider it the most visual. If that is more difficult than you want to toy with, then the simplest Spellbound change will work:

Hold the copper/silver coin in the left hand between the thumb on top of the coin and second and third fingers at the bottom (this is also the position for holding the coin as it's revolved by the right thumb to show the coin as either copper or silver). In the right hand, the medallion is finger-palmed, crucifix facing away from the fingers. To change the copper/silver, bring the right hand in front of the coin from the right side. Just as the thumb comes in front of the copper/silver coin, hit it lightly with the thumb, letting it fall back into a finger-palm in the left hand. At the same time, straighten out the right fingers, which push the medallion into the left fingers in the same position as the copper/silver coin held. Move the right hand back to the right, revealing the change. Use the Ramsey Subtlety to seemingly show the left hand empty as you turn the medallion over to reveal the crucifix.

I just realized it's a lot easier to do than describe. Be that as it may...

What follows is the story of a slightly sexual nature. Consider it rated R. The timing of the moves with the story is fairly apparent: when "copper" is mentioned, the copper/silver coin should be seen as a copper coin. When "silver" is mentioned, it should be seen as a silver coin. When "gold" is mentioned, the change is executed, revealing the backside of the medallion, which will look like a gold disk. That remains visible until the mention of "crucifix" at which time you turn the left hand over, showing the crucifix on the other side, then dropping it to the table (allowing you to get rid of the copper/silver coin).

I hope you enjoy this; I personally enjoy it as a bizarre whoopee cushion. At least until the doctors change my medication.

And now, the really bad story...

There once was a young man quite wide-eyed,
Who sought company on the Red-Light side.
Traveling down the road, a lump in his jeans,
He suddenly spied the girl of his dreams.

Tall was she, raven-haired, fully stacked,
Obviously not a single sexual skill she lacked!
Full lips, firm thighs... her body had all those bits,
Including huge, ponderous pieces that gave the man fits!

"For a copper coin", said she, "I'll suck you dry."
It was the way she said it, with a moaning sigh.
He ran through his pockets quick as a flash,
And grabbed his only coin, his last piece of cash.

It was silver, not copper, but it would have to do.
The girl, grabbing it, said, "Well, I'll do other things, too."
"I asked for a copper, a silver you give me,
"So for that coin I'll make you feel true ecstasy.

"Suck you dry for a copper, yes, for a silver, indeed!
"You'll never know what happened, you'll renounce your creed!

"Instead of the copper's worth, you'll get silver's good gleam
"You'll be talking to God, not in prayer but in scream!"

So the silver changed hands and suck him dry she did then and there
And his head went light, and his eyes took a glassier stare.
Copper she wanted, silver he gave,
But gold would have served better, gold might have saved.

Not a gold coin, but a gold crucifix, to be sure
Would have kept his blood safe and secure
Suck him dry she did, his blood to the last drop
For his blood was virginal, the cream of the crop.

This tale I tell, as a warning to you,
Be careful what you pay for, or the consequences you'll rue.
"Let the buyer beware!" says a voice from the grave
Who if he had asked "Suck what?" might have lived one more day;
Buyer beware, of the vampire's lair, and the vampire way!

The Tale of Cedar Creek

During which a mysterious city travels on the bones of its victims

The storyteller shuffles a deck of cards. There is a heavy tale within the cards this time, and the weight of it all but forces a deep breath from him as he begins.

"Somewhere on the island of Honshu, in central Japan, laid a village named Sugisawa. Sugisawa, when translated, means 'Cedar Creek', for it's imagined the village sat on a small creek surrounded by nearby cedar trees."

He spreads the deck before his listeners, first face-up and then face down. Absently, he pulls one of the cards from the deck, gathers the deck up, and places the card face-up on top.

"I say 'imagined', because no one alive knows for sure anymore. Sugisawa, Cedar Creek, no longer exists on any map.

"You see, centuries ago, Japan was ravaged by fierce civil wars. A famine fell across the nation. A lack of rice -- the staff of the people -- caused thousands of people to starve to death, slowly and horribly, as war led to starvation which led to fighting which led to war which gave birth to further starvation. Only death broke the endless cycle.

"In Sugisawa, the cycle was broken awfully, even by the twisted standards of a nation torn apart in war. Two citizens of Sugisawa seized upon what was -- to them -- a perfectly logical and divinely inspired plan to survive the starvation. They rounded up all the villagers of Sugisawa, all either children, the elderly, or women as the men had gone to war. As quickly as they could, the two began butchering the villagers with axes, slaying the thirty or forty people of the village.

"The plan, you see, was to simply kill everyone except themselves and hoard all the food they could."

He turns the card face down onto the deck.

"Even in war, there is law and justice, and both were served. Authorities tried and executed the two villagers. Because of the shadow the tragedy would project over their people, the authorities simply removed Sugisawa from the map. Literally. There was no mention in any cartographers' works of the small village by the creek amid the cedars."

He goes into his pocket, retrieves a hole punch, and makes a hole in the playing card.

"In time, the village disappeared, a hole of sorts on the landscape of Japan, even as peace came to Japan and became industrial and bountiful."

He covers the hole with his finger, moving the finger along the card to the side. The hole is nowhere to be seen.

"Still, stories abound of Sugisawa being found and then disappearing again. Once it was found on the eastern coast, but disappeared, only to be found later in the southwest. From there, it vanished again, re-appearing in the center of the island again.

Lifting his finger, the hole is seen located on the side of the card. Again the hole is covered, again the finger moved, and the hole is now through the corner of the card. The hole is covered again, the finger moved to the middle of the card, and the hole seen plainly in the center of the card.

"Where Sugisawa is now is anyone's guess."

The hole is covered again, the finger lifted, and the hole is nowhere to be found on the intact card.

"Only one constant seems to remain about Sugisawa: if you manage to find the rock in the shape of a skull, which is the entrance to Sugisawa, there is a good chance you will never leave."

The card is waved over a spectator's hand. There's a gasp as she feels something touch her. Looking, it's a small skull, carved from stone.

"So you never forget the tale of Cedar Creek, or the tragedy of Sugisawa."



The workings are simple (ah, so easily said)...

First you'll need a playing card rigged for the "Portable Hole". This has been described just about everywhere, so I won't go into details. Just make the hanging chads (my, what a mental image of yuppies with sweaters tied around both their necks and low-hanging branches) on a double-backed card. This makes handing out the card at the end a simple thing. Put this card on the top of the deck, hinges up. If you're not familiar with the routine, may I suggest Menny Lendsfeld's "Hollow"? It's a gimmicked card, perfect for this routine, which is reusable to the utmost. And it comes with a hole-punch already.

Second, you'll need a small skull of stone. These are not at all impossible to find. Depending on the quality, you can find them in aquarium shops (where I got mine), arts and craft places, etc. Failing that, they are simple enough to make out of clay. As always, stay away from plastic -- there is nothing scary about a plastic skull. Plastic dog poop, yes; plastic skull, no.

Put the skull in the pocket with the hole punch, put the deck of cards someplace handy, and you're ready to go.

Go through the routine up until you turn the card face down on top of the deck. When you do this, actually do a double turnover (invisible because of the double-backer). Go through the typical "hole" routine in accordance with the story, stealing the skull into a finger palm as you go fishing about for the hole punch.

At the end of the moving hole part of the routine, put the card back on top of the deck, do another double turnover, and push the card off into the fingers of the hand concealing the skull. Hold the card over a spectator's hand, using your right and left fingers to hold the card on their short ends. Flex the card a little to cause an audible "pop" and, simultaneously, release your grip on the skull.

The End.

As to the legend, Sugisawa is one of Japan's "ghost town" stories, similar to the Pizen Bluff legend of the American southwest. As I write this, there are actually teams of investigators looking for Sugisawa since it's last appearance a few years ago. Seems three teenagers were driving home from a trip when they found the skull-shaped rock and decided to check out the old wives' tale for themselves. Two of the teens were never seen again, while the third -- a young girl -- was found by the police some time later in the car, her hair white and some pulled out in clumps from her head. She was sent to the hospital where she was treated for a nervous breakdown. She told her entire store to her friends, then disappeared soon afterwards.

So the legend goes, anyway.

November Rain

During which it is discovered sometimes the most potent love spell...isn't

I had told myself I'd never do this, never use what I know like this. The Great Work doesn't allow for such selfish activities.

Love has a way of changing a man, even a man such as I. Particularly a man such as I. So I stand alone, a man of stone, in a cold November rain, doing what I must do. This night. No rationalization is good enough to justify what I do. Even True Love, that most vaunted of Holy Grails, is not a good enough reason. But it is a reason, and my heart, mind, and soul require little else.

Just a reason. Any reason.

I let the rain purify me. I find its chill comforting, a baptism of sorts. Caught in the moment of desire, I spread my arms wide and look skyward. The wind blows gently through the trees and around me, embracing me in coldness as I would have her embrace me in warmth.

Warmth. And Love.

Enough. I have work to do. And my nerve may leave me as easily as my Teacher's warnings of performing such things.

I kneel on the wet ground. Reaching into my coat pocket, I withdraw a small box containing what I need for this ritual. Slowly, I open the box, steeling myself for the act I will perform to give me what I so desperately seek.

A photograph. A crayon. A small bottle. A small charm, a heart with the words "I Love You" engraved on it.

For a moment I pause. Is this what I have sunk to? Casting a spell such as this because of love? Do I have no pride anymore? No shame whatsoever? Is there still time for me to put all of this away and deal with this as any normal man would?

The answer to all those questions is "No."

I remove the contents of the box, examining them carefully. The charm, representing both goal and gift, a small silver thing. My heart I would give if she were to tell me she loved me. The small bottle, fragile and beautiful and filled with tears of loneliness and pain and despair and longing. The crayon, black as the night I wallow in now, a tool for messages yet unseen. The photograph.

Her name is Kathy. She is beautiful. Looking at her picture now, I feel the longing all over again, the wanting so great I ache. Her long red hair, her complexion of ivory, her eyes dancing with life and laughter. I loved her the first time I saw her, and here, and now, I love her still.

Still.

I consecrate and sanctify each thing as I put them back into the box, cleansing them, making them holy after a fashion. I look at the photograph one more time before I close the lid and begin the spellwork.

A spell. For love. Because of love.

An incantation as I think about her. An unbidden promise while I think of her eyes, bright and lively and full of life and love. A quiet acquiescence alongside images of her sweetest smile. A whispered summoning as I hear again the angels' wings in her sighs.

Her sighs. And her moans of pleasure and ecstasy. Her ecstasy.

And his.

In our home.

In our bed.

The rain has stopped, the chill thicker around me, cold hands at the end of cold arms, urging me on. I hear something from within the box, a slight scratching. A rapping then. A knocking.

A breaking.

The spell is complete. My desire answered.

I open the box with more than a little fear. Have I really done it? Have I really given such a large part of myself over to achieve this thing?

The answer to those questions is "Yes".

I open the box to see what I feared and hoped. The charm bent in two, a love forever and irreparably altered, the words "I Love You" barely legible, hardly seen. The crayon broken in half by the exertions of they with whom I bargained.

Kathy's picture, eyes blacked out, a large "X" drawn through her immaculate features. Two words scribbled on it: "Yes" and "Dead".

Nothing lasts forever, and hearts can change. Hers changed first, and then mine.

They say Hell has no fury like a woman scorned. Maybe so. But Hell has exactly the fury of a man scorned. Even a man such as I. Particularly a man such as I.

Dark Workings:

The methods here should be obvious. The box is a card box, magnetic locking flap type. However, I use the Viking Card Box which, in addition to being quite deep (enough to hold a full deck of cards), also comes with a simple wooden flap. This is the flap I use instead of the locking magnetic flap. Since the spectators take the items out of the box and return them (actually most of them) and there are a great many changes occurring instead of just a photo, little suspicion is placed on the box.

Two photos are used, one previously marked and loaded into the box.

Two charms, likewise, are used. The charms are identical but one is bent and scarred. Keep this abused charm in a finger palm.

The bottle is a macguffin and serves no other function than to be part of the drama.

The crayon is broken before the performance and placed back together.

In performance, show the box and its contents. Describe them, and have the spectators remove them as you describe them. Have the bottle removed first, then the charm. Ask a spectator to remove the photograph, and remove the crayon yourself with only a light mention of it to make it easier for them to get to the photograph.

Have the photograph replaced first and, in asking for the bottle to be replaced, let the flap and the second, marked photograph fall. As the bottle is replaced, reach your hand out for the charm, taking it and switching it for the marred charm as you place it into the box. Place the crayon in the box, show the open box and its contents around at a fairly good pace (so the switch-in charm is not noticed), and then close it.

The box is now loaded. At this point, have the other spectators put their hands on the box as you hold it in both hands, fingers below, thumbs on top. As they are putting their hands on the box, move the charm you're concealing to your fingertips. By rubbing it against the bottom of the box very slightly, sounds of scratching will be heard and felt by the spectators. By rapping it against the bottom of the box, knocking is manifested. Have the spectators remove their hands and ask one of them to open the box and remove the contents.

And so it is accomplished.

Post scriptum:

This is actually a piece of a larger routine, doctored a bit with a story of sorts for your entertainment. In reality, I play this as a miniature spirit cabinet, or a miniature "sefalajia", with a great many things happening in that little box, courtesy of a bottle of my great-aunt's favorite perfume (the bottle). In that routine, the picture is of me, and my "aunt" colors in a mustache and glasses on it for comic relief at the climax. Before that, I use a variety of sneaky bits to demonstrate the present of my "aunt" in that box, including a ring-and-string penetration (looking as if the dear old thing has threaded the ring on the string), the commercial "Nut and Bolt" (yes, the sweet

lady also is mechanically inclined), and dice that turn courtesy of the old broad to match dice turned by a spectator. The sources for these are many and varied; since they are not mine to describe, I leave their workings to you to discover.

The knocking and scratching and rapping is accomplished in that routine courtesy of a dime I placed under the box to begin with using wax and manipulate as above. You'll find that having the spectators as part of the "séance in miniature" really adds to the routine and makes it very entertaining. Of course, you could go completely for chills and have the disenfranchised spirit also write a nice little "RIP – 2003" on your picture as well. Personally, I prefer showing some spirits with a sense of humor at times, but that's up to you.

God and the Scientist

Wherein The Most High gets the Last Laugh

I was at the hospital, minding my own business before an appointment, when I overheard a group of three people telling jokes. Nothing bawdy, but cute little things much as you'd find in Reader's Digest. I interjected myself into the group who, like me, were awaiting appointments.

"Did you ever hear the one about God and the scientists?" I asked innocently enough.

Probably out of politeness, they said they had not.

"One day," I started, "all the scientists in the world got together and decided science and mankind had come such a long way they no longer needed God. So they elected one of their number to go to God and tell Him they were finished with Him.

"The chosen scientist walked up to God and said, 'God, we've decided we no longer need you. We're to the point where we can clone people and do many other miraculous things; why don't you just go ahead and get lost?'

"God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, 'Very well. How about this, first: let's have a man-making contest.'

"The scientist, confident in the powers of his science, eagerly replied, 'Sure!'

"God said, 'We'll do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam.' The scientist, again remembering the might of science replied, 'Of course! No problem at all!' and bent down to get a handful of dirt."

I bent down myself at this point in the story, and picked up some dirt from the ground and held it in my hand.

"God stopped the scientist, telling him quite loudly, 'No, no, no, no. You go get your own dirt!'"

I opened my hand and the dirt was gone.

Giggles and laughter went around for a bit. That turned to mild astonishment as I rubbed my hands together and dirt slowly began falling back to the ground.

A bit of apparently impromptu silliness, to be sure. And yes, it's the old "vanishing salt" trick, gussied up a bit courtesy of some nice timing and a bad joke. If anything, this should prove you never, ever, leave home without a thumb tip.

Cassandra's Quandary Revisited

Wherein a wonderful effect is simplified for the simple-minded such as your Humble Servant

Guy Hollingworth is a genius. This is beyond dispute, and anyone who argues the point is a fool. His classic book, "Drawing Room Deceptions", is an incredible collection of card routines, each a thing of power. In that treasure, there is one routine that quite literally had me leaping to my feet. It is the final effect in the book and rightfully so; it is the most powerful climax possible. Hollingworth calls it "The Cassandra Quandary". Unfortunately, I just couldn't bring myself to love the method as much as I did the plot. So I began playing with the idea, trying to come up with my own version. What follows is that version.

A quick description of the effect would be this: the performer, in advance of any action, names a card as a prediction. This card is found in a deck, removed, and placed in an envelope, making its selection impossible. A card is chosen from the shuffled deck. The envelope is opened and found empty. The selected card is turned over and matches the performer's prediction.

All of this is done to the story of Cassandra, a prophetess in Greek mythology and a tragic figure. Cassandra was given the gift of foresight, but also the curse that no one would ever believe her prophecies.

When broken down, there are two parts to this effect: the disappearance of the card from the envelope and the forcing of the prediction. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of way of accomplishing these two things. However, let's put some restrictions to it. First, let's make sure the deck is completely examinable before and after the effect. Second, for theatrical reasons, the force should be dramatic. Third, the spectator should be handling the envelope as much as possible. Fourth, there should no extraneous props – no wallets or boxes or the like. For this to be as powerful as possible, this should be as clean as possible and stay as close to Hollingworth's version as possible.

The force. Peek forces, crosscut forces, even classic forces are out. This needs to be the point where dramatic flare is brought to the forefront. Hollingworth's original force entailed the spectator continually cutting the deck in half until just a few cards remained, then the spectator had a free selection of those cards. Cards not chosen were shown to be indifferent cards, showing the spectator any of those cards could have been selected.

Now, there are many force decks that could allow this, from a simple Mirage to a Pop-Eyed Popper. But we don't want to use a gimmicked deck if we can help it. Yes, we could switch decks, but we'd be muddying the waters of what must be an incredibly clean routine.

After more soul-searching than I was prepared for, I opted for the force Kenton Knepper uses in his effect, "Krystal Revelation". The force is simple and doesn't gaff the deck beyond repair, only making use of a duplicate card. Further, it is quite theatrical while looking quite innocent.

Next came vanishing the card from the envelope. Where the force needed to be dramatic, this has to be as common a thing as could possibly be. In the context of the effect, this is something that is done to further the plot and that is the only reason. So no flare here at all.

As I said, Himber Wallets and change boxes are out; keep it clean, remember. Also, no gimmicked envelopes; the spectator needs to be the keeper of the envelope at all times and we should avoid anything here even the slightest inspection may reveal. No steals through slits, either – that would require the destruction of the envelope and that detracts from the effect.

That pretty much leaves switching. After much experimentation, I found a simple turnover switch works beautifully and is invisible with the proper distraction. The only thing it brings which is extraneous is envelopes that are not used within the routine as cover for the change, which passes by during performance with no explanation needed or requested.

To prepare for this effect, you'll need a regular deck of cards (preferably unopened), two duplicates of your force card/prediction card (let's say Five of Spades), a small stack of five to ten envelopes, and a marker of any color.

If you're using an old deck, that is one that is not still factory-sealed, put it into new deck order, Ace through King of each suit. The reason for this is so the spectator can see, at a glance, the deck is complete and contains no duplicates or anything else that may come to her mind.

Take one of the envelopes and seal it. This will be the sealed empty envelope you'll switch into play later.

Put the envelopes and duplicate Fives together as a stack as follows: both duplicates face down, the sealed empty envelope (with the flap side down), an unsealed envelope also flap-side down, the other unsealed envelopes on top, flap-side up. Place this stack in a pocket with the marker, put the deck into another pocket, and you're ready to go.

The performance, you'll see, is remarkably simple.

- 1) Introduce the deck of cards. If it's a new deck, have the deck opened and the advertising cards removed. Spread the cards on the table, having the spectator note the deck is complete.

Close the spread and give it to a spectator to shuffle. Let them shuffle as much as they want – considering they just saw the deck in order, this will probably be quite a lot. When they are finished, have them place the deck on table face down.

“Have you by any chance heard the legend of Cassandra? Cassandra is a figure from Greek mythology, and a rather tragic figure. Because of her beauty, Apollo gave her the gift of the power of prophecy, of foresight, so she could predict the future. When Cassandra refused Apollo’s advances, though, he also gave her a curse: she could predict the future, but no one would believe her.

“You’ll notice this deck of cards. Notice it is a regular deck, in numerical order. Please examine the deck, and then shuffle the deck to your heart’s content. Stop when you think the deck has been thoroughly shuffled. Thank you.”

2) Make the prediction, naming the Five of Spades.

“Now, if I make a prediction, you’ll be expecting it to come true, especially considering what am I and what I do. So, to feel a bit of Cassandra’s curse, we’re going to create a situation where my prediction cannot possibly come true, when it is impossible for my prediction – the Five of Spades – to be believed. And that is my prediction: the Five of Spades. Remember that, please.”

3) Have the spectator look through the deck and hand you the Five of Spades. Show it to everyone, then place it face up on the table. Reach into your pocket and bring out the envelopes and cards so the duplicate cards are below and hidden from view.

“Please go through the deck you shuffled, and find the Five of Spades and remove it from the deck. Everyone, my prediction, the Five of Spades. Now we’ll make my prediction impossible for you to believe with a little bit of thought.”

4) Hold the stack of envelopes over the deck non-chalantly. Open the flap of the top envelope and ask the spectator to take the Five of Spades and put it in the envelope. When she reaches for the playing card, allow the two cards hiding beneath the envelopes to fall on top of the deck, secretly adding the needed duplicates.

“We’re going to isolate the Five of Spades I predicted from the rest of the deck. Please pick up the Five of Spades from the deck and put it in the envelope.”

5) Hand the envelope to her, let her put the card in the envelope and seal it, returning it to the stack of envelopes. Once she has done that, bring out the marker. Under the cover of that, turn the stack of envelopes over in your left hand. This effectively switches one sealed envelope for the other.

“Please take the envelope and seal it. The envelope, as you can see, has been sealed perfectly. Now, let’s mark the envelope so there is no mistaking the envelope stays sealed.”

6) Remove the cap of the marker and have the spectator make an “X” on the envelope. Drop the envelope on the table, put the cap back on the marker, and pocket the marker along with the envelopes.

“Please make an ‘X’ or put your initials across the flap of the envelope so everyone can see it. Thank you. Let’s put the envelope here so it is always in plain sight at all times. Good. Now the Five of Spades is entirely out of the picture.”

The situation is this: the spectator believes the card is in the envelope marked with an “X” sitting on the table, which it is not – it now resides in your pocket. Also, both of the duplicate cards are on top of the deck, apparently in their newly shuffled state.

7) Pick up the deck and undercut the top card to the bottom. This leaves you in the position of having a Five of Spades on top and on bottom of the deck. Cut the deck into four piles on the table, re-assemble the deck (making sure the duplicates again are on the top and bottom), and hand the deck to the spectator so she can duplicate your actions.

“I would like you to select a card through a process of elimination, thereby ruling out any influence or suggestion on my part; a truly random selection of a card. Please take the deck and cut the cards, not like this, but like this: into four piles on the table. They don’t have to be even, or even close; we just need four piles you have cut to. Thank you.”

8) As she cuts the deck into four piles, keep mental track of which of the four piles contain the duplicate Fives, and whether the fives are on the top or bottom of the pile.

9) Ask the spectator to point to any two of the piles. There are three outcomes here:

- She picks two piles that do not contain the duplicates. If this is the case, pull the two sides aside, spread them so the spectator can see she could have cut to any of the cards, gather them up, then set them aside.
- She picks two piles that contain the duplicates. If this happens, pick up the other two piles, spread them as above, then set them aside.
- She picks one pile that contains a duplicate and a pile that doesn’t. Gather these two piles together so the duplicate Five is on top of the face down cards, undercutting if necessary. Spread the cards between your hands, be careful not to show the duplicate on the back of the spread. Close the spread and put the cards to the side.

The spectator now has two piles in front of her. You have shown all the cards she did not select as different.

“Please point to any two of the piles you like.”

If she points to the two piles that do not contain the duplicates, continue with, “You pointed to these piles, so we’ll eliminate them. Notice that cutting one card more or less would have ended up with entirely different cards.”

If she points to the two piles that do contain the duplicates, continue with, “You pointed to these piles, so those you’ll keep and we’ll eliminate the two you did not choose. Notice that cutting one card more or less would have ended up with entirely different cards.”

If she points to one pile that contains a duplicate and one pile that does not, continue with, “You pointed to these piles, so we’ll eliminate them. Notice that cutting one card more or less would have ended up with entirely different cards.”

Remember what action was taken in this step: did you eliminate the ones she pointed to or did you keep them in play? This is important for a later psychological push.

10) Have the spectator put her hand on top of either pile. This time, one of two outcomes is going to occur:

- She puts her hand over the pile with a duplicate card. If this happens, take the other pile, show the cards by spreading them (again, if this pile has a duplicate card, undercut it to the top of the pile if necessary then spread the cards being careful not to show the duplicate Five at the rear of the spread).
- She puts her hand over the pile without a duplicate card. If this happens, have her pick up the pile, let her spread through it herself, and put the cards aside.

“Four piles to two. Now, two piles to one. Please put your hand on top of either pile.”

This reads a bit complicated, but it is not. You are going to use the action taken on the first decision – eliminate or keep – to add more buoyancy to this last elimination. This may sound like a little bit of fluff, but it is vital. It kills the whole “magician’s choice” or “equivocate” feeling dead. So here we go.

If she put her hand over the pile with the duplicate card, and if you kept the cards she pointed to in step 9, then continue with “You’ll keep that one and we’ll eliminate the one you didn’t choose like we did before.”

If she put her hand over the pile with the duplicate card, and if you eliminated the cards she pointed to in step 9, then continue with “You’ll keep the pile you’re holding onto and we’ll eliminate this one you did not choose.”

If she put her hand over the pile without a duplicate card, and if you kept the cards she pointed to in step 9, then continue with “Turn the cards over, look through them. See again that cutting one card more or less would have left you with entirely different cards. Put that pile over with these others you’ve eliminated.”

If she put her hand over the pile without a duplicate card, and if you eliminated the cards she pointed to in step 9, then continue with “Like we did before, we’ll eliminate the one you chose like we did before.”

After this, you have forced one of the duplicate Fives, either on top of the packet or on the bottom.

11) Have the spectator pick up the marked envelope and open it, finding no card inside.

“It’s impossible for any of us to know the identity of that card. The only thing we know for sure is that it is not the Five of Spades, my prediction and the card that is in the envelope sitting here. Please pick up the envelope and open it.”

12) Have the spectator either turn over the top card of the packet (if the duplicate Five is on top)

or turn the entire packet over (if the duplicate is on the bottom), revealing your prediction, as impossible as it could have been, has come true.

If the duplicate is on top of the packet, continue with “Please turn over the top card, the card you selected.”

If the duplicate is on the bottom of the packet, continue with “Turn all the cards over and look at the card you selected.”

Stand back. Screaming may be involved.

Realize that, when the envelope is opened, the moment of astonishment begins. The spectators will know, somehow, the prediction, which should be completely impossible to be accurate, is both of those; it is impossible and it is accurate. The initial instinct is going to be for the spectator to grab the cards in front of them. If the duplicate happens to be on top, let them. Otherwise, manage your spectator appropriately; as the envelope is being opened, have the spectator turn the packet over. This simultaneous revelation doesn’t dampen the impact at all, but it does keep the spectator from making his or her own actions more important than yours.

The True Cost of Money

During which it is discovered why few magicians are wealthy and the wealthy ones live short lives

“You know what I hate about magic and magicians? If all this were real,” she began, “then you’d just magic up a shitload of money and retire!”

Truly a happy soul, she is, given ignorance is bliss.

“I assure you, I could. But the price is too high.”

“But you could afford any price with all the money, so basically you’re copping out.”

I shake my head slowly, and try to remember patience is a virtue. “No, not at all. You’re just thinking of money as the only coin available and your bar-tab as the only price to be paid. You’re honestly wrong on both counts.”

“Bullshit. You’re just full of the same crap all the other magicians are.”

I reach into my pocket and pull out my business card case. Looking around the bar, I find a pen.

“Here, let me show you how it works.” On the back of a business card, I write my name, then

the year of my birth, a dash, and the year “2034”. At the bottom of the card, I write, “As witnessed by” and an “X”.

“There is my full name. Also the year I was born. The ‘2034’ is the year of my death. This I have known for some time. Sign your name to it as a witness, right by the ‘X’.”

She does so, smiling. It’s all just another trick to her, somewhat akin to having her pick a card. She’ll learn differently.

“Now, take the card and hold onto it. Don’t let it go just yet.”

She humors me a bit more, doing what I ask. The patronizing attitude she emits is almost a stench. But she does what I ask, nonetheless.

“You wanted me to produce money to pay your bill. You wouldn’t accept that doing such a thing as producing money has a higher price than the money itself. Remember the year of my death is ‘2034’. Hold your hand out, flat. Now, watch.”

I show my hands empty, as any “magician” would. I hold them over her hand. I chant the incantation I was taught so long ago, perspiration coming to my forehead as I begin to see reality being altered and thoughts taking shape.

After a moment, she jerks in surprise. On the palm of her hand is a golden dollar coin.

“Oh, wow!”

“Yes,” I say, “and neat-o, too.” I sit back, exhausted by the exertion and, more, by the loss.

“But I told you, there’s a price to be paid. A high price.” I take the dollar coin and gesture to my business card she signed. “Open it. You’ll see what I mean.”

With a smirk, she opens it. The smirk disappears, as does her smile and the blood from her face. With a grim pallor to her skin now, she turns to me wordlessly.

Her witnessing signature still sits on the card, but there have been... changes. On the business card, the year of my death, 2034, has been crossed out with a single line. Written next to it, in red, the year 2033. Under the years, the words “1 year for 1 dollar.”

“As you can see, I have few enough years left to squander them on making money. Good night.”

I toss the dollar coin onto the bar and walk to the exit, making a mental note to steal a year from her the next time I see her.

“Magician” indeed.

As she so eloquently put it, “Bullshit”.



This came to me one night when I watched a magician I did not know squirm his way through a restaurant patron asking the ages old question, “Why don’t you make money appear and pay for my dinner!” Oh, the magician got out of it, courtesy of a cute little one-liner, but it struck me bizzarrists, being such as they are, needed a way to get out of the same plight.

Oh, and completely play with the minds of the participants at the same time.

The business card bit is, of course, the classic “Out to Lunch” principle. Myself, I use business cards tucked into a commercial case called “Stockholder”. This case is available in magic shops and works wonderfully well for any OTL-based effects while looking quite innocent; I seldom leave home without mine.

The coin appearance is geared toward American audiences, I’ll admit, as the quarter-sized golden dollar coin is perfect for this effect. For international use, you’re really looking for a coin that has a simple design on it’s back and preferably without any ridges or grooves on the edge of the coin.

To make things really easy, I’ll give a method which will work with any coin you can comfortably palm, as well as the method requiring a coin meeting the above requirements.

The first method is nothing but sleight of hand. Specifically, it’s a single sleight: David Stone’s “Wiped Clean”, which can be found on his video “Basic Coin Magic Volume 2” (I wholeheartedly recommend learning the sleights on that video; it truly is something you must have if you’re at all interested in coin work). In turn, this is a modified handling of Michael Ammar’s “Wiped Clean”. I find Stone’s to be superior and perfectly matched for this effect. However, it will take some work; it is not an easy sleight.

Let me throw a caveat in here. Yes, you can basically use any coin appearance you know, including just letting the coin fall from a finger-palm after you’ve used the Ramsey Subtlety. Do not do this. Believe me, after much trying, you cannot overcome such a weak trick with your most powerful presentation. The coin’s appearance requires something else – the suspension of disbelief. You do not gain this by doing a grown up version of “Coin from Nose”. Take the time to do this right.

Now, on to Stone’s “Wiped Clean”.

Start with a coin in the classic or thumb-palmed position in the right hand. The palm down right hand wipes the palm up left hand from the left wrist to the left fingertips. Stop when the left fingertips rest in the coin in the right palm. Rotate your hands now so the right hand is palm up and the left hand palm down, with the left fingers covering the coin in the right hand. Slide the coin down to the right hand fingertips under cover of the left hand.

When the coin reaches the right fingertips, rotate the right hand counterclockwise and out from under the left hand fingers so that the back of the hand faces the audience. The coin is, at this point, on the right hand fingertips.

Curl your right little, ring, and middle fingers inward with the coin, sliding your right hand along the back of the left hand from the fingertips to the wrist in a pointing gesture. Turn the left

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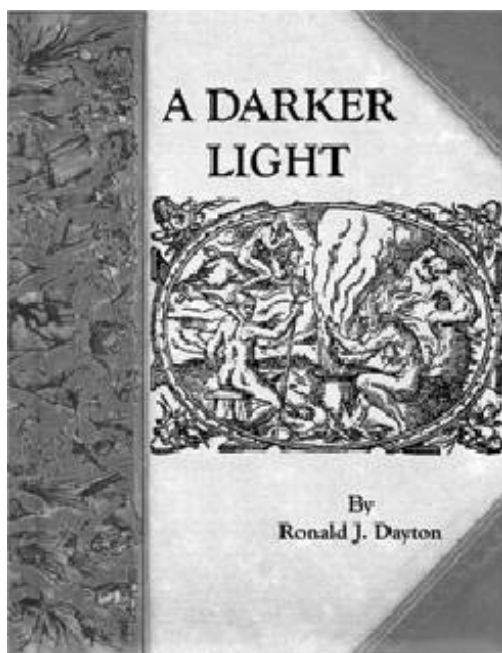
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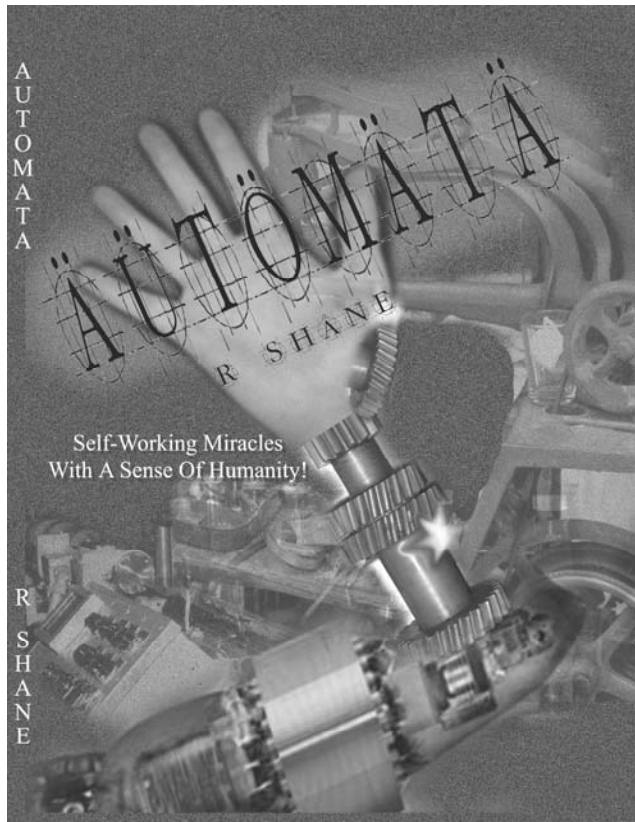


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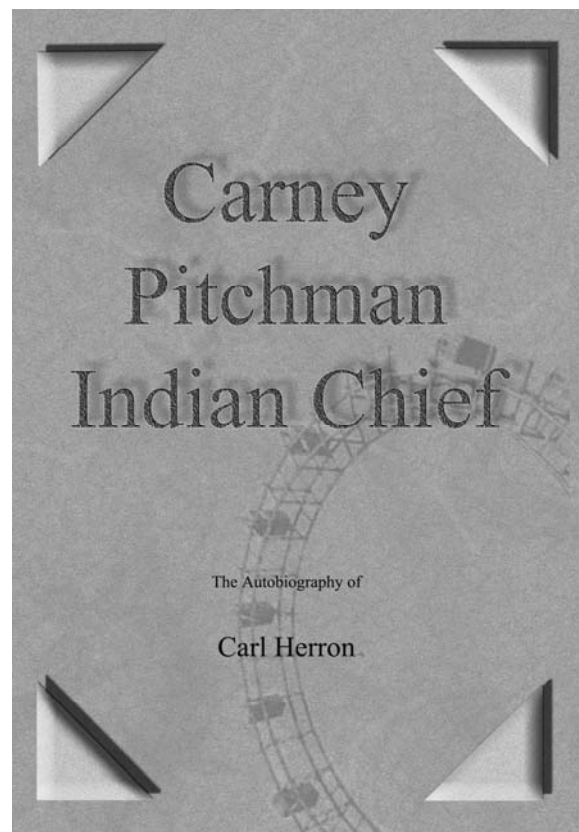
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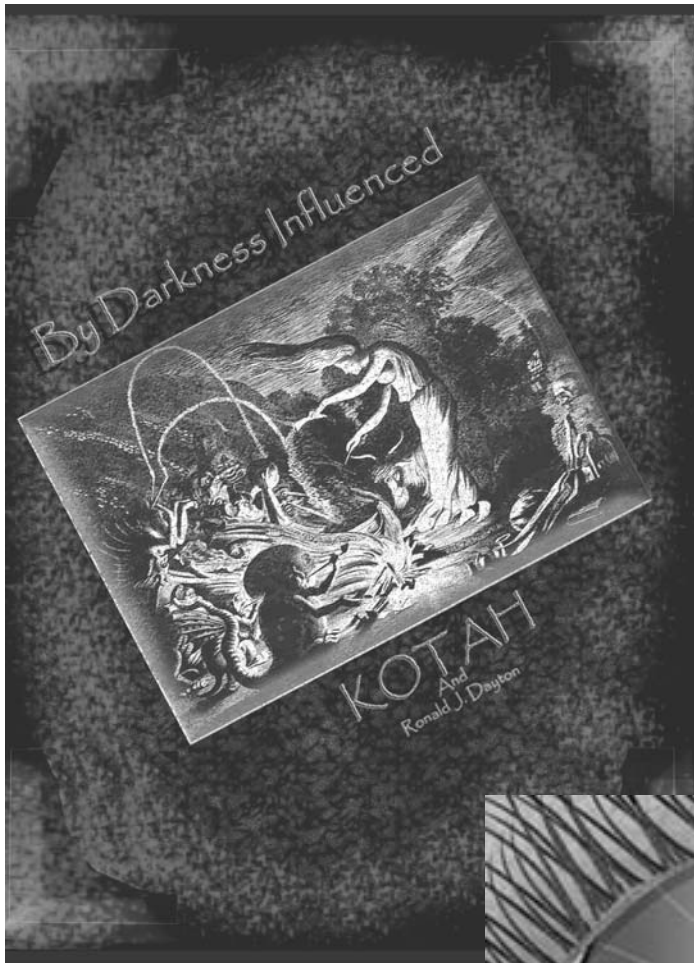
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