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TopHat

July 2005 - Edition 40

Welcome to July's TopHat ezine brought to you exclusively from MagicBunny.co.uk. We have a treat for you this month with an amazing edition of the ezine plus the launch of our all-new supplement, Chatter on Patter. I won't go into detail on the Chatter on Patter project here, since Will Wood (CoP Editor) formally introduces the series within the supplement. However, I can tell you that it is going to be a fantastic read through the coming months. I'd like to take the opportunity now to thank Will for the time he's put into this project... make sure you check it out.

It seems as if the ezine's content betters the previous one's every month. Each month, I read over the ezine after it's complete and I am always impressed by what I see. The contributions continue to flow, with outstanding work from so many people. Every article this month, in my opinion, makes this publication great. There's no second standard here, the time and effort that these writers have put into the ezine is phenomenal. You probably don't realise how much work these guys do to make this ezine what it is, so I'd also like to thank every contributor this month and everyone who's helped to make the ezine a success.

I'll see you next month with August's edition but until then, I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of TopHat.

All the best,
~Jon Snoops~
Editor of MagicBunny.co.uk's TopHat Monthly E-zine
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Every issue of the TopHat contains original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you would like to submit a piece, please email TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk

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YOUR CARD

YOUR CARD

Comedy Magic

By Peter Marucci



It's been said by just about every "name" in magic: If you know a hundred ways of finding a card and only one way of revealing it, the - to the lay audience - you only know one card trick.

However - well, you know the reverse of the above!

Here is one more way of making a simple card discovery look amazing and, as well, include a heavy dose of comedy.

In fact, I originally did this because of its humorous content and was pleasantly surprised by the amazed reaction I got when the card was finally revealed.

EFFECT:

A card is selected, remembered, and shuffled back into the pack. The magus shows the back of a jumbo card and asks "Would you be amazed if your card was on the other side."

Getting a positive answer, he turns the card around to show the words "YOUR CARD" printed on the other side. Many groans from the audience.

The magician looks puzzled: "Well, I said your card was going to be on the other side, didn't I? By the way, just what was the name of your card? "

When the spectator announces it, the magus says, "Yes, well I knew that, too," and unfolds the jumbo card to twice its size, showing a big card that matches the chosen one.

WORKING AND PRESENTATION:

The presentation is pretty well covered in the effect; if you do comedy, they you'll know what else to add (if anything); if you don't, then you won't do this routine anyway!

The "chosen" card is forced, of course. For the sake of argument, let's say it's the 10 of Hearts.

You'll need a double sized jumbo card showing the 10H on the face (the back doesn't matter since it's going to be covered).

Fold the 10H in half and round the corners off so that it looks like a jumbo card, only half the size it was.

On the back of one half, paste an indifferent jumbo card, with its back facing out; this will be the back of the card. On the other side (the other half-back of the now-folded double jumbo card), paste a sheet of paper on which you have printed the words "YOUR CARD".

Put this card in your case or in you inside jacket pocket.

Force the 10H from a regular deck and have it remembered, returned, and the deck shuffled. You can leave the deck with the spectator, since you no longer need it for this trick.

Take out the jumbo card, back facing the audience as ask if the spectator if she would be amazed if "your card were on the other side."

When she says "yes", turn the card over, showing "YOUR CARD".

YOUR CARD (cont.)

After the groans have settled down, ask her what the name of her card was. When she says 10H, open the double jumbo and show that you knew that, too.

SECOND THOUGHTS:

As I said earlier, you will probably be pleasantly surprised by the reaction when the card is revealed.

You may think it's "no big deal" but, to the audience, they think the trick is over with the production of the bad gag; to have a successful conclusion is cause for applause!

And you'll get it!

Peter Marucci

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99 Tricks, No Act

99 Tricks, No Act

Thoughts From Mid-West America

By Michael Saint-Louis



Lately a new question has been popping up. Or maybe it is been around for a long time and I've just been ignoring it, I don't know. Actually, it is a whole set of questions but they all center around one thing: how do I construct a routine?

It's not a bad question at all. A routine is the difference between being a trick monkey and a real performer. A good routine not only helps you entertain your audience by (ideally) providing a path for you to guide the audience's emotions but helps you technically by allowing you to smoothly flow from one

trick to another. In fact the two questions that we will repeatedly ask ourselves are "Does this make the best sense?" and "What do I need to be ready for the next trick?"

Of course, designing your own routine will be a great deal of work, so some of you are already wondering why you shouldn't just buy one of the dozens of ready made routines out there. After all, a lot of them are being marketed by magicians a lot more successful than Michael Saint Louis, right? True enough, but unless you are paying them to, no one is writing specifically for you. Jay Sankey, Michael Close or whomever you like doesn't know you, your needs or performance style, so how can they write for you? But if paying someone to write for you is a possibility then you should strongly consider it. There is no shame in having a behind the scenes team of writers, choreographers, technicians, etc. and you should use every advantage you can. And call me. I'll write for you... I'll take pounds, Euros, whatever.... I need the money because I'm only fourteen years from starting to pay for college educations and weddings won't be too far behind that.

Since the phone hasn't rang yet (or is it "rung yet?"), I'll assume most of you will design your own routine. The best way to discuss designing a routine is to go through designing one. So we're going to ditch The Complete Course for a little while and build us a routine. I took a look through my magic stuff and I have waaaaay too much crap to just put together a routine willy-nilly, but that's okay. The best routines are designed with a situation in mind... you don't just throw together a routine without knowing what you are aiming for. Walk around is different than stage is different than gospel, right? The first step will be defining what we need.

For this little experiment I figure we aim for a nice, light walk-around routine for a family restaurant. Something that only runs four or five minutes with something extra for special customers or tables with an extra long wait in front of them. Nothing too involved or racy, since my audiences may be 8 or 80. Because

99 Tricks, No Act (cont.)

we are aiming at a walk-around routine, it should probably reset automatically.

Like I mentioned before, I have a lot of magic downstairs, so I am going to narrow down our choices a bit. I have four little sets of pocket tricks I picked up from a chain store earlier this year for a buck apiece. They are cheap, plastic tricks but that isn't important because I am just using them as a nice pool of tricks to draw from. Additionally I might draw a couple of propless tricks from some common magic books.

So what do we have to work with? Multiplying billiard ball set with a shell, an Okito box, a German box, a tiny magic wand puzzle, a coin paddle, a thumb tip, a thimble set, a pea can, a magic coin base, a scotch and soda set, ESP die boxes, one of those cards where the number of pips change with each flip of the card, a magic arrow piece, ball and vase, a fake Hot Rod and a dice vision box. Add to that a couple of quickies that come right off the top of my head: an easy mind reading bit, a few cigarette bits, a couple of paper napkin folds (baby doll and flower) and a cloth napkin fold (rabbit) and we have a pretty good base.

Alrighty then. What the Hell do we do now? We need to start weeding through our material and to do that we need to set a few boundaries and make a few decisions. Are there any restrictions set by the establishment? Let's assume it is a no smoking eatery, so cigarette bits are probably out. Are there any environmental restrictions? Let's assume that while performing for each table our back will be visible to everyone else in the place and that may put a damper on a few things like the paddle. Will we have a chance to reset between performances? Moving table to table means we'll have to assume that our opportunities to reset our gimmicks will be few and far between. That is going to toss out the pea can. Anything else we can think of or personal preferences? I personally hate having my space invaded. A personal pet peeve, for example, is when the waiter sits down at my table. I wouldn't be comfortable doing anything that requires me to set props down on the table or in any way appropriate part of the table as my own. In short, I want to be able to perform everything standing up. There goes the ball and vase...

So what is left? The coin boxes, thumb tip, Hot Rod, scotch and soda, thimbles, pip changing card, the napkin folds, the order prediction, the dice tricks and the magic arrow piece and maybe a cigarette bit. The coin base and ball and vase are out because they would require table space. The multiplying ball set is out because I know that I can't keep the shell hidden from view. I do my ball work with an extended arm and the shell would be visible to about anyone in the place except for the table I was specifically performing for. I think the coin paddle is out for the same reason. Besides, the fake Hot Rod is stronger magic and works on the same principle. Two paddle tricks in one short routine is probably one too many.

Now we are ready for the real work of creating a routine. We need to bring our motley collection of tricks together so that they relate to each other and in an order that will allow us to work smoothly from trick to trick. Although we need to start thinking about what kind of setup each trick will require, our first order of business is to decide what our overall theme will be and how we can use that to draw the tricks together. Assuming that our fictional gig is at a family-friendly eatery, we should probably stick to something comical and light.

And this is probably a good place to stop for this month. You have plenty to do to keep you busy for a while anyway. You need to define your routine, figure out your available magic, figure your boundaries and start weeding out the tricks that won't work. And of course you need to start thinking about themes. By next month you'll want your list of possible tricks and two or three possible themes to work with. As a teaser, one of the themes I am thinking about using is "The Rules of Magic," although I am tempted to tell a little story about my uncle, the magician, and maybe show the audience the tricks that he did that I can't quite master. We'll just have to see!

Oh, and one more thing: as you get a chance, flip through your magic books (particularly the oldest and dustiest) to see if you can find any gems that incorporate some of the props you will be using or mesh well with the themes you are considering. Don't dig too much; you don't want to go out and learn a whole bunch of new magic. Instead, look for little things that will enhance what you are already going to do. You are looking for a little salt, not a main course.

If anyone needs to ask a question, argue with me or wants to pay me fistfuls of cash, PM me through the boards or write me at brownbagmagic@swbell.net

By Michael Saint-Louis

Look at Yourself! Part II

Look at Yourself!

Part II of an undefined number in a series

By Gary Scott



For those of you who read my last article on first impressions, this next topic, that really challenges my thinking, is about the all-important psychological set-up before performance.

You have been waiting a whole lifetime to do this. You have practiced until your fingers bled.

You have made every routine a part of you.

Something feels different. You don't feel the same as when you perform for family and friends.

Why? ...99% of the time, this is your psychological set-up taking effect... or lack of.

This is caused by nervousness and the body will react in a number of different ways for everybody. There are all kinds of biological changes going on in your body.

A common problem is the 'Butterfly Stomach', where you feel a rush of emptiness in your stomach as gastric juices are excited. Some will feel shortness of breathe. Some will feel like they are about to lose control of their bladder.

Nervousness will be different for us all. Stepping out on any kind of performing platform can be a daunting task.

You are about to be judged by a room full of people you don't know. They will be quick to make an assessment of you from the get go, and if you read my last article on first impressions, you are half way in making that nervousness disappear.

So... how do we tackle our psychological set-up? What can we do to calm our fears and make us do what we do best... perform magic?

First, you have to believe in yourself. Yes. You must be able to do this. You must trust everything you have learned, studied and practiced.

Second. Give yourself an ego boost. I have a very personal routine, where I look in the mirror and tell myself... "You are the worlds greatest magician!"... Over and over again... Some of you may scoff, but this works for me. I am about to step out on stage as a magician. Hopefully not a mediocre one.

I want to give the audience a chance to experience some wonder and magical experiences. I need to project that to my audience as soon as they come into contact with me. If I don't believe that I am about to perform miracles, then neither will my audience. I even use this technique for table hopping at restaurants. I arrive early and disappear into the men's room.

It will give you a complete confident boost.

Third. Do not think any negative thoughts. Don't think about problems in your private life, don't think about when you're getting paid (or not as the case may be). Focus on the job at hand.

You are a magician with magic powers. If this was real, you would have no problems and you would be using your powers for good (hopefully). So go out there with those powers and do the good thing.

Another key factor to easing your fears, is making the audience a part of your 'family'.

I learned this quite recently, when a real good friend of mine told me that his technique for performing was to 'think of the stage as his living room and everybody was invited over.' He has to play the part of the perfect host... a job he performs beautifully.

There are also some physical exercises that you can partake in backstage, that can be quite soothing. Meditation is one, but I do not practice this myself.

One of my tutors, actually jumps up and down on the spot, waves his arms up and down, shakes his arms and legs... literally 'shaking' the nerves out of him.

Martial Art forms can be quite gentle. Tai Chi is a good ground for focusing. It will teach you to take all your energy and put it in one direction. Karate Kata's are not recommended. Working up a big sweat is not what we want to go out there with. (See last article, TopHat, May 2005)

Do some research into other performance arts and see how they tackle nervousness.

Once again, a knowledge of multiple performance arts will enhance your magic and your performing prowess. Each student in magic will choose different arts to study. Mine are of the eastern Martial Art kind.

Ok... we are about to step out there. We have performed our personal 'rituals' for calming our nerves. Still we do not feel right... this is the other 1%. This is the adrenaline rush called 'happy excitement!'

Look at Yourself Part II (cont.)

Unfortunately, nervousness is 99% negative and conquering that 99% will take time to master and control. This is done by combining our personal rituals and another important factor. Experience. Within time the nervousness will dissolve and the 'happy excitement' will replace it and you will only be 1% nervous in the negative sense. I'm about 50% - 50% at the moment and every it time gets easier. These techniques are just as important for you to master as much as your sleight of hand. I have noticed so much of a difference in my performances.

Well... I hope you all have a good summer and have plenty of performing opportunities. Please do try these techniques and let me know how you get on. Remember... look at yourself!

Have a good one.

Siya all on Magic Bunny!

Best wishes
Gary Scott

Ramblings of a Reticent Cardician

Ramblings of a Reticent Cardician

Quest for Cards

By Bruce Graham

This article is not intended to be introspective nonsense or navel-gazing. I'm hoping that other magis will find this useful, perhaps you are trying to figure out what direction in magic you wish to take, or you have the equivalent of "writers block" when trying to branch out into a new area of magic.

About 4 weeks ago I realised I was wearing the label "***I do not do cards***" like a badge of honour. I had become proud of the fact, and could (almost) justify it.

I suddenly realised that there was a huge personal conflict here compared to the rest of my life.

I've made my career in recent years out of education, training, change management, knowledge management and affiliated techniques for intellectual progression. Yet, here I was, in magic (a subject that I'm passionate about), putting up a blocker to my own personal development.

I'd created a myth; I'd set up a delusion that I actually believed - I had convinced myself that there was something I did not want to learn.

Some people might just stop here, and say "***Stop being stupid***", and they may be correct, however, I'm fascinated by how we achieve small, imperceptible step-changes in human thought and development, and how to influence thoughts - this is how I make my living.

I know I didn't feel this way about cards 18 months ago when I discovered magic, so I set out to try and understand what had happened, why this was the case. In short, I embarked on the same sort of project that I would do with somebody who was creating a training course for a reticent learner.

1 > SOME HISTORY, AND THE REALITY

Firstly, I asked the following question:

"What knowledge, and evidence of interest do you already possess?" (i.e. has there been a time when you have learned, and been interested in cards?)

Ramblings of a Reticent Cardician (cont.)

Looking in my office, I pulled out anything relevant, and rediscovered Royal Road to Card Magic, (RRTCM), Giobbi's Card College Vol 1, and a variety of packet card tricks, (Twisted Sisters, Coin-cidental, Ani-Matrix, CardToon, Phil Plus etc.)

OK. Job done.

Some tangible evidence, and undeniable proof that I have been interested in cards at various times, to the extent that I'd bought things - usually a strong proof point for interest in a subject.

So what was I now saying about cards?

2> THE VERBAL AVOIDANCE TACTICS

The human brain has a wonderful capacity for delusion and delusional maintenance, for convincing itself that it can, or it cannot do things. In most cases, and with a will to do so, these can be changed. Very often, **saying something** assists the brain in creation and maintenance of a belief, whether the belief is right or wrong. (Anyone who wants to know more about this can start here - <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/dissonance.htm>)

So; using a smorgasbord of pop-psychology, NLP fundamentals and a little bit of guesswork, I wrote out the phrases that I was saying or "saying to myself", (thinking) when avoiding cards, and came up with something that made the belief obsolete or cancelled. (I'm sure the phrase "*reframing my visual submodalities*" or something would come in here, but you real NLP'ers out there would start explaining how it really works...). Anyway....

"I hold the cards and nothing "magical" happens".

True enough, but that's because I cannot do any magic yet. When I held a piece of washing-line 6 months ago nothing happened either, now I do rope magic I immediately start thinking of things with string/rope etc.

"Well, I must have some deep-seated fear of getting it wrong".

S**t happens – practice. Things always go wrong, with everything. Chop cups "fail", spongeballs ping out at the wrong moment, and I'm sure embarrassing things happen with the best-trained rabbits and doves. Just practice hard, and do your best.

"With cards there are 52 things to go wrong"

Well then, do not do tricks that involve 52 cards to start with.

"I have not got enough time, and anyway, I prefer mentalism"

I've recently started to get turn to mentalism rather than close-up magic, and in fact, it was linked to these statements, I'd never associated the two before. Here's what was going on:

I cannot do cards PLUS people expect them THEREFORE I will never have a complete close-up routine THEREFORE I'll never perform properly THEREFORE what is the point THEREFORE what else do I enjoy performing?

My beliefs had grown to the stage where they were forcing me down a certain route and creating self-doubt, **yet the beliefs were wrong.**

With the verbal statements out of the way, I had the next level of questioning to ask:

3> HOW DID THESE THOUGHTS GET HERE? WHAT IS CAUSING THEM?

OK – having nullified the "statements", I started looking at why I might have created these in my head in the first place, and coming up with cancelling statements again:

THOUGHT PROCESS #1 - There is a hell of a lot of information on cards, an "overload of expertise". In all the areas of magic, cards seems to be the one with the most content, I guess that I found this somewhat overwhelming.

Ramblings of a Reticent Cardician (cont.)

OK, so as I have often said to people approaching a career change, or huge increase in task responsibility, **"To eat an elephant, do it one bite at a time"**. Just because a subject is huge doesn't mean you should not investigate it and start learning. Anyway, cards are not the only subject that has this overload. For example, I own a book that has 23 ways to vanish a spongeball. How many does one person need for heavens sake!

THOUGHT PROCESS #2 - I often feel embarrassed in the company of "skilled specialists", and there are obviously lots of cardicians out there.

This is again true. It is also true that I am getting good, (very good I feel) at rope magic compared to my magical colleagues – i.e. I have my own set of skills. These skills are, in fact probably rarer. There is no need to feel inadequate or embarrassed, we all have our own specialisations.

So in short, I was looking at the "end" of the process, not the start of the process. I had built a wall between me and the goal, forgetting that I had the tools to get there, slowly, but get there nonetheless. I was letting the dedication and skills of others make me forget that a simple DL or False-Cut still puts me apart from most of the public that form our audience.

4> MOTIVATIONAL KICKSTART

By now, I was pretty happy I'd killed most of the gremlins, however, a tangible motivator is always useful. I tend to attach my flag to things that I have a strong emotional or experiential attachment to.

I know it sounds corny, but after seeing Michael Ammar at my local magic club, and having a good conversation with him on cards, I finally "got it", it actually felt like something "clicked".

To start with, I bought Easy to Master Card Magic Vol 1. Here are a few of the things that will support and encourage my own personal success at learning, and liking card magic:

1. The DVD has a *"dip in anywhere"* rather than a *"here's a big long list of sleights to learn"* approach – I find that less overwhelming.
2. Ammar's teaching style is one that I can empathise with, it has worked for me in the past with his Cup and Ball DVD's, so there was a high probability that it would again. ****My brain is already "trained" to accept success from this teacher** Do not underestimate the power of this psychological subtlety in your learning efforts. If you find someone you like - stick with them for the teaching, (not necessarily the presentation though!)**
3. The tricks are simple, not always using the full deck, (once again that "52 things to go wrong" delusion is smashed). I'm currently using a 25-card mentalism deck; so an 8-card effect should be easy!
4. The stories that accompany the effects are his, but I can easily see a way to personalise them, turning them into mentalism effects if I want to, the best of both worlds?
5. I love (visual) effects with colours, and e.g. Red-Hot Mama and 8-Card Monte have just that.

The current position, new thoughts, and the surprises

So, after a relatively simple process of self-analysis and thought, what statements and experiences do I now have about card magic that I did not have 4 weeks ago?

- 1> I'm currently re-reading RRTCM and Card College 1 with renewed vigour, and a different set of eyes; extracting the "can-do's", and aspiring to the "maybe's"
- 2> I fell asleep on the train recently and dreamed of doing an Ambitious Card routine.
- 3> I'm fully back to practicing Close-Up, because I know that I only have a few card tricks to learn (well), and I've got enough for a complete act.
- 4> I'm not promising myself that I will become a finger-flicking Charlier-cut Passing Erdnaser, I may get there one day, I may not.
- 5> I'm actually enjoying the learning process again.

Ramblings of a Reticent Cardician (cont.)

- 6> I know that I can still "fry" laypeople using nothing but DL's, an occasional OIram, simple cuts and time direction, and the occasional controlled shuffle.
- 7> Self-workers with the occasional slight are where I am at the moment, but that's OK.
- 8> I got annoyed at a hotel one night as I had not packed any cards and wanted to practice a DL at 0230 in the morning, (sad muppet....)
- 9> I understand the need to learn basic techniques, shuffling etc. however, this can now take place within a package of more structured, and focussed learning.
- 10> I can do a reasonable Swivel and False-Swivel Cut.
- 11> I have learned, 8-card Monte, the "**Luck of the Irish**" from TopHat, (Michael Jay – thanks), the Piano trick from RRTCM.
- 12> I can do a very passable Card Warp, (this will come as a shock to GarethWitty, who saw me make a never-ending series of c***-ups for half an hour on this!)
- 13> I've finally figured out how to do a Double Undercut - I'm no good at it, and it would not fool a five-year-old, but I know what I am meant to do, and can practice.
- 14> I wrote this – a card article, and enjoyed it!

I hope you did too.
Rgds – Bruce (BrucUK)

Life or Death Part II

Life or Death Part II

Who are the Victims?

By P. Craig Browning



There are numerous books, manuscripts, even videos & DVDs on the topic of Psychic Fraud and Paranormal Expose'. Seems that we of the magic world are bombarded by this kind of material and the bias it all offers on a regular basis. Attitudes and opinions that slowly deteriorate the very essence of our own innocence and yes, even our soul.

Sounds overly dramatic, don't it?

Well, the current attitude and many of the presentations made in conjunction to that attitude maintain the myth that If you believe in anything psychic, paranormal or even supernatural, YOU ARE A FOOL! This is "the company line" as some would say — the mantra of the magician's fraternity. A mantra that has and is costing this craft at the membership level as well as in business.

Why?

Well, if you are made to feel or are made out to be "a fool" because of your spiritual/religious beliefs, then either you will not do magic or you will not feel like you're an accepted part of it. Many a minister, especially in the ranks of the Christian-right, are now discouraging every youngster that holds an interest, even to the level of telling parents to not allow children to watch magic shows on Tv. Not because of the whole "art of deception" thing and how that may relate to the devil himself, but because so many involved in magic have such little respect for things spiritual, religious, etc. Some of our fellows going so far as to present Tv and live show demonstrations of deliberate sacrilege and blasphemy — antics that defame and disrespect all aspects of religious culture and testimony bar none — Sacred Cows Be Damned!

Sure, you've read my own words of anger and resentment when it comes to certain facets of organized religion and the corruption that can be found therein. I get very bent out of shape when it comes to the double-standard we, of the magic community as well as western society itself apply when the Religion Card is in play. We all look the other way when it comes to the "marketing" tactics of the church and the

Life or Death Part II (cont.)

psychological manipulation used within the sermons and various books, that exploit people's fears, phobias, and ignorance. Yet, when a "Psychic" even slightly applies a similar technique to a far less degree than the auspices of clergy, they are instantly labeled "Predator" and the hot tar is made ready.

This double-standard is so prevalent that I actually had a fellow magician point out that people who get taken by sidewalk hustlers tossing cards or doing the pea & shell "volunteer" to be taken and the magicians putting out the game, aren't in the wrong — *they aren't nearly as big a predator or consumer fraud element as Card and Palm Readers.*

Now I'm an old Carney and I've seen some serious hustling over the years — "Games of Chance" as we called them on the midway. Now a good joint operator can easily take one to one-thousand people for hundreds of dollars each in a single day. I've seen people sign over their cars, their homes, boats, etc. just for "one more chance"... This is how Las Vegas, Reno, Tahoe, Laughlin, Atlantic City, Monte Carlo and all the other great gambling cities were built. Not because a *fair shake* is extended, but because the mark is stupid enough to play the game and little to no mercy is offered.

Based on this factor alone, it would seem that the opportunities for crooked magicians are far better and less debated than those taken by the traditional street corner Reader. The contention of this particular mage is that those that volunteer to play these games make it a "Victimless Crime"... the same argument has been held for generations when it comes to the issue of Prostitution, Drugs, and of course Psychic operations. No one is forced to pick-up that escort and have sex with her... no one is holding a gun to your head and making you smoke that rock! We all volunteer, including those promiscuous types that slept with the whore and ended up HIV positive... hmm...

NEWS BREAK, these people are targeted!

Forget everything you've read about how Psychic's cheat that "dupe" the public. What I'm about to disclose is the part of that reality that's rarely discussed. The reason it is such a rare thing brought out by the debunkers and skeptics of the world is because of that double-standard thing I mentioned previously. You see, if you knew how it all worked, then you would see it and be able to question its application in alternative "business" settings.

If you were to go to Business School and take a course in Marketing you will learn how to create demographics that allow your client to target specific cross sections of each community or region they are appealing to. Since the late 1970s one of the hottest demographic groups are young adults 16—25.

Why?

Well, they're new to the world, inexperienced, think they know it all, and are completely ignorant when it comes to how cruel and cunning the world can be. Before they complete their Junior year in college an amazingly high percentage of young adults are already \$10,000.00 or more into personal credit card debt + school loans! They have become slaves — worker bees doomed to a life of servitude. This is actually part of the social design in that it actually benefits society, business, and the politicians. It also opens the door for those mediums (not the psychic type, but venues of business) that offer "hope" e.g. psycho-therapy, health spas, religion, gambling/lotteries, etc. Before these young people hit their early 30s many will be dependent upon at least two types of prescription drug, typically those that deal with anxiety-depression disorder. You will also find that many of them shift their spiritual perspectives during these days of crisis, either running to and embracing the traditional ideas of the Divine or else, turning their back on such antics entirely; exchanging God for Science. Primarily due to the fact that God obviously don't give a damn about their predicament (and of course, they tend to forget that God didn't put them there in the first place.)

Though there will always be an element from this core who will seem to wander about the world aimlessly, as well as those over-achievers that seem to move forward at an amazing pace, meeting their every goal. I can assure you that such is but temporal. By the time "mid-life" roles around, they all come to the point of having to pay the piper. Regardless your age when this moment hits, the only objective in your mind is going to be "relief" — the discovery of something that gives to you hope, inspiration and a sense of renewal. The is especially true for those having just gone through a tumultuous period in their life; a personal loss or divorce, personal health crisis, personal or familial economic crisis... the list is nearly infinite. The point is, you are psychologically susceptible to the con which awaits. Bottom line however, young people remain the

Life or Death Part II (cont.)

prime target. Not just for those "less honorable" operations we've all heard about, but for most every facet of the marketing industry. They want to gain converts early in life so that they have a dedicated consumer base over the next 30+ years. Which brings us to the secondary population group that the charlatans of the real world, target... Senior Citizens!

This demographic is shifting in that so many *baby boomers* are now entering retirement age and don't have nearly half the ailments and states of loneliness known to previous generations. The thing is, my parent's generation were raised in a culture where a person could be taken at their word and on a handshake. That's simply not how things work today. This sense of trust coupled with their religious and political perspectives makes them and most seniors, prime marks for just about every hustle that comes down the path. Especially if you are well into your 60s or early 70s and the person you've spent most all of your adult life with just passed over.

There Are Even Commercials Now That Encourage People to Sign-Over Their Homes, Cars, Boats, etc. to Their Church Upon Their Death

The biggest source of Senior Exploitation stems from the Health Care market itself, but when it comes to what I call "Passive Exploitation" the leader of the pack are the American Televangelists and Charismatic Christian leaders. They know that the larger aspect of their viewing audience is over 50 and in most instances, well over 60. They also know that a large cross-section of their viewing audience is composed of persons under that age mark but dealing with chronic or life-threatening illnesses, handicaps, etc. The bottom line, we are talking about persons on limited income and yet these "Men & Women of God" are asking them to send \$25.00, \$30.00, \$50.00, or even \$100.00 a month to their ministry. There are even commercials now that encourage people to sign over their homes, cars, boats, etc. to their church upon their death.

The sales pitch of religion is exceptionally outrageous and yet, few ever look at its cruelty and strive to pass laws that govern their tactics and marketing strategies. After all, every successful politician has to have the assistance of clergy in order to keep his/her job... not that I know of any recently re-elected world leaders that fit that mold...

Thus far I've brought to the fore two chief demographic groups that are victimized on a regular basis by businesses and organizations that have absolutely nothing to do with Psychic Readings or the act of Communicating with Dearly Departed. Yet, each of these industries sell false-hope and exploit the very same fears, emotions, phobias, prejudices, etc. as the Psychic is charged with exploiting and manipulating. *How... why is it wrong for one small group of people that typically aren't harming anyone and yet it's perfectly fine for multi-billion dollar corporations, profit based and non-profit alike, to do the same without penalty or contention?*

Morally nor ethically is it right. The same rule of measure must be applicable to each situation without exception. That is, if our "rules" for judging something as be dupolistic and exploitive are to host a viable sense of constancy and genuine foundation e.g. *what's good for the goose must be good for the gander...*

When it comes to the corrupt psychic/spiritualist we must bring in another set of demographic realities. Namely the fact that these operations are rarely a "one-man-show". The most successful and cruel Psychic con operations are run by multi-generational families. I've seen operations that involved up to five generations but most only have grandma, mom herself and the eldest daughter in the "public" seat. They are the one's that deal with the clients and deliver the actual Readings. Other family members typically have jobs in key venues that allow them to glean information on various marks, make referrals, etc.

Not to sound a bigot, but most of these operations tend to be Hispanic and target the Hispanic communities around the nation. This is partly due to the Santeria religion's prevalence in this as well as aspects of the Black community (especially folks from the Islands, New Orleans and so forth.) It's not the race they are targeting, but the cultural factors — low education, poverty or just above poverty level existence, strongly religious and therefore superstitious (not to mention, dramatic/emotional). We could add to this list a plethora of "Issues" such as the abusive family life, addiction factors, and incest but let's keep things simple.

Life or Death Part II (cont.)

The Psychic Operators that hit these communities intentionally seek out persons that fit the negative stereotypes. Especially individuals that seem lonely, or "determined"... let me explain that part.

One of the prime hustles of this kind of operation is to either cast spells or remove a curse. It's what I call Anna Riva 101 Psychic Practice due to the fact that Anna Riva composed a wonderful little *Psychic Prescription* book years ago known as "Black & White Magic". This little tome explains conditions that "may exist in a reading" and how to "correct" them e.g. sell the candles, oils, and other ingredients for casting a spell or worse, they pitch the service of doing a spell themselves for the querent.

Spell Casting can garner THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS in a single day for a family operation of this kind. When you consider that they are encouraging dozens of people from their own community to give them hundreds if not thousands of dollars for casting a spell, removing a curse or *whathaveyou*, it becomes apparent that such "Readers" aren't common to the "New Age" consciousness of helping and healing in ways that are non-intrusive and self-perpetuating.

When I lived in northern Nevada I had several patrons from within the local Hispanic and Native American communities come into my store and ask about a situation put to them by a noted lady Reader in the area, who wanted vast amounts of cash in order to help said person or a family member. These people were terrified in that it is a belief in their culture that questioning the word of a psychic could result in a personal curse or worse. That is to say, if the other psychic knew they had come to see me about them, the poor patron could be lead to believe that the original Psychic had cursed and damned them. This is how it works in Santeria culture where someone mis-useses the ways of faith to their advantage. Then again, there are ways of doing the same with most any theological concept; they all have their beauty and genuine truth as well as their deceptions and darker side. Like GOD, no one group hosts an exclusive on either side of this issue. Humans will be humans and some of us are just predatory creatures from the get go.

Situations of this kind are being pointed out more and more these days, not by the skeptic's societies or debunking squads, but by the shut-eye community itself and the professionals found therein. The past ten years have seen a strong growth of awareness from within this community and the desire to stamp out such operations. Not just for the sake of protecting the community form a pariah but because these operations are frequently singled out as "proof" that "all" psychics are dubious con artists and cheats. Seems to me the people that hold to that concept fail to remember the lesson about the single bad apple not ruining the entire barrel of fruit.

Yes, exploitation happens but it is something that takes place via various forms and vehicles. As much as I moan and complain about certain aspects of organized religion, I also praise it and even celebrate it to a significant degree. I don't condemn people just because they're registered Republicans, Bush Supporters and Born Again Christians... I may wonder why anyone would consciously choose to live such an *unnatural life-style*, but have accepted that it's no choice, they are born that way (think about it...) At the same time, I don't go out of my way to embrace every left-winged fanatical feminist I encounter either (and the gods know there are plenty in this region...) In short, I try to judge each situation or scenario as it is presented to me. I try my best to leave room for all possibilities and/or explanations. After all, it's just a matter of where you stand that allows you to see the illusion of someone floating in the air or what makes that illusion possible. So it is on the whole Psychic issue; if we do not change our position here and there and look all the way around what is being presented, we are probably being sucked in on some sort of deception. The wise one always weighing his/her options, including all the various possibilities that pertain to the issue at hand.

It's something to think about.

By P. Craig Browning

Erdnase Ending

Erdnase Ending

Erdnase Aces Variation

By Damion Corbett



Erdnase Aces by Jay Sankey is one of my favourite effects for walk around. It is quick visual and hits very hard. It is also very easy to follow, and for those of you unfamiliar with effect, here it is:

ORIGINAL EFFECT

The four aces are displayed and then lost in the deck. After shuffling the deck, the magician displays the top and bottom cards of the deck – showing them as indifferent, illustrating that none of the aces have accidentally been shuffled to the top or bottom of the deck in the course of the mixing. The Performer then rubs the top face down card of the deck causing one of the aces to appear on the top of the deck above the indifferent card. The ace is handed to the spectator and the process repeated; the indifferent card displayed, rubbed and revealed that another ace has appeared above it.

This ace is also handed to the spectator and the top card of the deck turned face up (it is still the indifferent card.) The face up indifferent card is rubbed by the Performer and a face down card visually appears above it; the face down card is flipped over and shown to be the third ace.

In the final part of the effect, the indifferent card is waved and visually changes into the last ace.

ORIGINAL HANDLING

I am not going to describe in detail the workings of Sankey's effect, but I'm pretty sure that most of you, if viewing the effect, would guess that the aces "rise to the top" by use of the Erdnase Colour Change. The last part of the effect in which the indifferent card changes into the final ace makes use of the Pivot Change. If you are unfamiliar with the effect then I will leave it to your own discretion as to how to apparently lose the four aces in the deck when in reality, shuffling them so that they end up at the top of the deck with one indifferent card above them.

BACKGROUND

I love the Erdnase Colour Change. I remember years ago seeing this change as a layman and being completely stunned by it. It looks extremely clean and effortless when performed correctly. I also love the Erdnase Aces effect but was always left a little cold by the ending. The card "changing" seemed a bit of a step away from the rest of the effect and didn't quite fit in with the idea of the aces rising to the top of the deck. I also, in my arrogance, feel that the Pivot Change is a somewhat transparent method for changing a card and, when seeing it performed, had the feeling that it was 'shoehorned' in as a convenient way to end the routine.

After a little playing around I came up with a way of ending the routine with a more powerful revelation. It fits in perfectly with the notion of the aces rising to the top of the deck and allows the spectator to perform the magic themselves; which we all know is a lot more powerful and engaging than simply having the perform demonstrate the miracles.

It is an application of the Erdnase Colour Change which to date I have not seen before. Essentially you will be using the Erdnase as a covert card switch, rather than a visual change and in conjunction with this, a double lift to apparently appear to have the magic fail. This is an application that I have used for years in many different effects but I originally came up with it as an ending for Erdnase Aces and I humbly offer it here as an alternative to the original climax.

Erdnase Ending (cont.)

MODIFIED EFFECT

Three of the Aces have already risen to the top of the deck and are being held by the spectator. The Performer flips the face up indifferent card on the top of the deck face down and begins the rubbing procedure as before. He flips the top card face up and to his dismay the indifferent card remains. He flips the indifferent card face down again and suggests that maybe the spectator should try to cause the final ace to rise. The spectator imitates the Performer by rubbing the top card of the deck as he has seen the Performer do. The spectator then turns the top card face up and, to his absolute astonishment, has caused the final ace to rise to the top of the deck.

METHOD

The indifferent card is flipped face down and a fourth and final Erdnase is performed, secretly bringing the final ace to the top of the deck. A double lift is then performed revealing the indifferent card still on top of the deck. The double is flipped face down and the Performer allows the spectator to mimic his actions by waving their hand over the deck themselves. The spectator is immediately asked to turn the top card of the deck over to show that it is now the ace.

THE DOUBLE LIFT GET-READY

I've noticed that there is a property inherent within the Erdnase Colour Change which allows for a double lift "get-ready" to be accomplished with a little practice. The Erdnase is performed as usual with the right hand pushing the top card forward, sliding the 2nd card clear of the top card in the backwards motion, and forward to position it above the original top card. However, instead of the left index finger pushing the outjogged card flush with the deck, the card is left outjogged and the new top card is pushed flush with it (so that you have both cards outjogged as one unit.) The left index finger then pushes the cards flush with the rest of the deck but with a slight downward pressure which causes the bottom right corners of both cards to pop up, allowing for the left pinky to slide in for a pinky break beneath the top two cards. A double lift is now easily performed.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

It must be said that I have never performed Erdnase Aces in its original incarnation (i.e. using the pivot change ending) and so I have no idea how the original ending plays compared to the modified effect. I do know however, that after countless performances of the modified handling, this ending is the part of the routine that gets the best reactions and is the element that gets talked about the most, subsequent to performance.

Note: *It is also probably worth mentioning for the sake of clarity that I do the Erdnase Colour Change much deeper into the hand than Jay Sankey does which may help when learning the double lift get-ready as detailed above. Instead of the tip of the pinky pushing the top card forward, I use the pads at the base of the fingers and the top of the palm to move the card forward and the heel of the palm to bring the second card out in the backwards motion.*

Anyway thanks for reading and I hope you find a use for this application; if not in Erdnase Aces, then in some other incarnation. Jay Sankey liked the idea and I hope that you do to.

'Till next time.

Daymo

From Head to Toe Part I

From Head to Toe Part I

A check list for the performing professional (whilst on *and* off the stage!)

By Lee Alex



Many of the items mentioned below may be common nature to you (I hope they are!). Others are pure common sense. More still are gained from experience in different circumstances.

This list is not aimed at any one type of performer, but has been generalised to include all types of performers.

The basic idea of this simple check list is to allow you as a magical performer to reach a certain level of appearance, to remain within a persona, and to be viewed by your audience for the person that you are and should be respected as. On the other side of the fence applying this check list will in turn show your respect to your audience and fans!

In order that we don't over look any area I will go through a logical list, starting from the head and working down right to the shoes...

✓ Hair – or lack of it!

Whether you are a male or female performer personal grooming is of utmost importance. A regular visit to the hairdressers is something that most of you would not miss any way during the course of your regular habits.

Some of you may perform as a character. This may stem from a personal trait, your chemistry, your passion. Live the character to the full. Act and resemble that character. Your face is as important as the rest of your body, and that includes your hair.

We see many glamorous fashion models, film stars, actors every day of our lives. A change of hair can be a change of character, something that makes us unrecognisable – a means to throw the performer off stage into the character in front of the audience. A good cut in a great style can add so much charisma to a performer. It can even become your trade mark (cf. Hans Klok).

Take great care of your hair- a regular wash with the correct shampoo and conditioner. A demanding performance may require regular styling, and with this constant use of various hair products. You require a regular wash to avoid a build up of gels, sprays, mousses, wax (is there nothing that we don't spread through our hair?). Dull, limp hair reflects a character – lifeless and unexciting. A shiny mass of dynamic locks is far more acceptable. If you are unfortunate enough to develop dandruff, consider that you are in the public eye, often working in close quarters to your audience. Find a suitable treatment, and don't risk an impromptu performance of the now popular snowstorm effect – you may find you do not receive the reaction that you desire!

You may want to consider a wig. This goes for children's entertainers (clown, cartoon character for example), especially for female performers and assistants (an instant change of colour and style to suit the mood of presentation, a match of colour for a themed act or costume, a hair extension from short to flowing) and even the male performer (a hair piece, a character wig). This hair is a part of you. It should not be looked upon as an accessory, and in that respect should be the best quality that your budget allows. The difference between cheap and quality is instantly recognizable. Where possible seek the advice of a qualified person. This counts for your choice of hairdresser too.

A completely bald man is considered sexy by some. If you are partially bald, your remaining hair should be taken care of just as if you had a full head of hair – clean, neat and groomed. A shaved head can be most charismatic. Keep your head clean shaven if this is the road you take. A bald head seems to perspire more than a full head of hair. Often under lights the unavoidable shine can be brighter than the D-Lite on the end of your thumb. A light dusting of the correct toned powder can help to reduce the situation.

From Head to Toe Part I (cont.)

Whilst on the subject of hair, take into consideration the often unsightly hair sprouting from your ears or nostrils. These may be trimmed to an acceptable level and reflect the squeaky clean image that we are trying to present. Children especially do not mince their words. You should avoid being the brunt of any potentially embarrassing innocent child remarks – and yes, children will pick up on the smallest detail.

Facial hair is a question of choice. Personally I prefer a clean look which goes with my childlike character. Many a performer have made there character using facial hair as a trademark, the most recognizable being Eugene Berger. The beard is used for some effects, therefore has a purpose and is a part of a persona. Other such groomed magicians include Max Maven and the late Harry Blackstone Jr. both of who count amongst the best styled and well presented magicians whom I hold in high esteem. Facial hair can give a certain amount of power – like any accessory there are certain underlying statements which a beard or moustache may hold. FISM winner Julius Frack from Germany wears a false beard to complete his tailor character, which works extremely well for him. The facial hair piece gives a different dimension to his face and adds an air of eccentricity to the whole persona which has a great effect on the whole scenario. Errol Flynn would not have been Errol Flynn, and likewise Clark Gable would not have been Clark Gable without the obligatory pencil-line moustache.

Like the hair on your head, the hair on your face should always be kept in great shape, and most importantly should be clean, whether you choose to wear a moustache, a beard, sideburns or a combination of any three.

✓ Hat – a character statement!

On top of your hair your character may require a hat. Again I want to reiterate my words from above - the difference between cheap and quality is instantly recognizable. I have cringed at performers who use a so-called Top Hat, a flimsy plastic representation of one of the publicly recognized symbols of magic. I consider this symbol, if it is going to be used at all, worthy of respect. In the worst case a solid felt hat is far more aesthetic than shiny plastic, but of course an investment in the real product is the ultimate.

Carry your hat in an appropriate container. A squashed or buckled hat, just as with any accessory or item of clothing shows lack of respect to ones self. Keep your hat dust free, check for loose threads, and maintain this item as you would your most prized magic prop. If you are wearing a hat, you are making a statement – make the right statement in a bold and confident fashion.

Having read through the above once more, a person who sticks out of line from this philosophy is seen to be the beloved Juan Tamariz from Spain. His hair seems unkempt, long, bedraggled and limp. Juan counteracts this fact by adding another trade mark to his head, the unforgettable purple velvet hat. The man shouts "mad" before even having opened his mouth. The whole outfit is a cleverly calculated development of character which is evident throughout the whole performance.

To be continued...

By Lee Alex

The Disturbed Waters

The Disturbed Waters

Tales from Admin

By Nigel Shelton



Many of my public house gigs are scheduled for a Friday or Saturday evening. This is the time of week that many pubs vie for weekend custom by offering some form of in-house entertainment. Certainly, an evening of mentalism makes a welcome change from either a karaoke night, a pub quiz or some singer and I find that, having been established and become well known, my Friday and Saturday evenings are now fully booked up for to two months in advance. Even from the earlier days of my career change, I found that the weekend slot was the one that was most keenly sought after.

For no apparent reason, I recollect one date of these booking with a vivid recall; Friday 2nd May. I had been asked to provide a double session at one riverside pub in Great Yarmouth; The White Swan. The evening booking was no different to any of my other weekend calls, I was there to simply entertain the regular punters and to draw holidaymakers from the many cruise boats that had moored at the riverside for the bank holiday weekend. At this time of year, holidaymakers would be arriving in the town for the start of the season and some of these would travel along the River Bure by cruiser, as part of an extended journey exploring the Norfolk Broads. The afternoon session was slightly different, however, in that the pub had recently revamped its catering facilities and wanted to offer some form of entertainment to complement the launch of this updated facility. The management had simply decided to combine the two bookings with one engagement and I, luckily, had been asked to take responsibility for both of these.

I arrived at midday as planned and got ready for the first of these two sessions. This was simply to be a two-hour table-hopping session from one thirty until three-thirty after which I would receive a meal. Next I would have a break until seven and it was my intention to walk the short distance into the town centre and spend an afternoon browsing the local shops. From six o'clock until eight I would return to repeat my table-hopping session in the restaurant and bar areas before a second, much shorter, respite that would finish with a forty-minute cabaret show in the pub's function rooms. All in all, I was looking forward to the day's work. I knew that it was going to be a long day but I had a great deal of material planned. I knew that I could pace myself effectively, simply repeating material in a cycle; material that was well known and polished from many previous similar engagements.



I stepped out from my car, parked amongst many other vehicles in the pub car park and looked around the site. This pub was a favourite of mine and I had visited it many times before as a customer. It was situated in the northwest corner of the old medieval town, nestled behind the imposing remains of an old flint pinnacle tower that once formed the start of a chain of ancient town defences against an eminent Spanish attack. The attached medieval flint wall had long since been demolished to make way for a short stretch of road, leaving the stout tower standing aloft and detached from the remainder of the town's historic defences. I always marvelled at the contrast of both old and new, as cars streamed past this commanding ancient monument into the town from the two main arterial routes; the Acle Straight from the west and the Caister Road from the north.

My first session of the day went as planned and received a generally warm response from the many customers in the pub. Most of these were indeed holidaymakers from the nearby boats and were drawn by the prospect of forgoing the numerous problems associated with the cooking a hot meal in the confines of a motor cruiser. The time seemed to pass very quickly and soon the numbers in the bar began to dwindle as

The Disturbed Waters (cont.)

the clock approached two-thirty. In fact my last routine of the afternoon was performed very much later, at the bar in front of a small gathering of one of the staff and a group of four elderly regulars. By now, time had drawn on and I had already eaten my lunch and relaxed with a drink. The pub had emptied of all of its customers except for a small group of regulars and the time began to draw into the hours of late afternoon. It was quite a relaxed assembly around the bar and I had been asked to join them. The patter followed my usual pattern of some sinister ghostly anecdote and as I finally finished this I bid the collection farewell and drew the session to a formal close. One of elderly crowd, an old man dressed in a trilby hat and dated jacket, asked whether I would be interested in listening to a story of his, one that perhaps I could add to my repertoire. I had nothing formal planned; except for a jaunty stroll around the town to browse the many shops and so I readily accepted his offer and followed him as he beckoned towards the doorway of the pub. We stepped out onto the car park facing across the river beyond, towards our left stood a recent sturdy concrete bridge that spanned the river and a mass of cars swarmed like hurrying rats across this, to make their way in and out of the town from beyond the marshes to the west of the town.

The elderly gent pointed beyond the bridge towards a second pub called "The Suspension Bridge" and began explaining how he, as a younger man one foggy evening, had witnessed a stagecoach approach from the distance drawing in from the hues of the mist. I must admit, that normally I would be entranced by the details of the story and I would begin to etch the very words into my memory but somehow the facts of his account failed to make any impression. I knew that the modern concrete bridge replaced many earlier ones that had once stood upon this site but his account of a stagecoach travelling in to the town from across the marshes failed to take account of the fact that the road to which he was now pointing did not tie into his account in one major detail – it was the wrong date. The modern Acle Straight stretched away into the far distance, forming the main A47 artery into the town from the west, like a straight slice across the marshes. Indeed a quick glance at any road atlas will show you that this road cuts an unnaturally straight line across some seven or eight miles of open marshland, with a single kink roughly two-thirds along its length to nudge pass a natural bend in the River Bure. However, this road is a modern phenomena and the main ancient route into Great Yarmouth was via a longer straggling route through the numerous small villages and the town of Caister, to the north of the town. Quite simply, no mail coaches would have ever taken the A47 into Great Yarmouth, as the road plainly did not exist then.

I knew that the story of the elderly man was well-meaning but I wanted to draw his ramblings to a polite and respectful close so that I could leave but not offend him in doing so. I glanced at my watch and noted with astonishment that the time was now past five o'clock. I didn't appreciate at how far into the afternoon this had all taken me. By this time, the cars that were once streaming into the town were, by and by, heading in the opposite direction as many of their occupants were bearing away for the start of the weekend. Suddenly, the continual bustle of the car engines was broken by a woman's scream from further north along the riverside. I broke off from the elderly man and raced along the cruiser moorings towards the yacht station to discover the embarrassed face of a woman, standing on the deck of a moored boat. Alongside the bank stood a small boy of about eight or nine, staring into the swirling currents of the waters.

Immediately I received a profound apology from the woman, "The river currents jostled the boat about and I dropped my drink – nothing more! Please accept my apologies – I hope that I did not scare you."

I glanced down to see nothing in the waters except the remnants of some swirl. There was nothing to be alarmed about nor was there anything that would warrant any interest. The river eddied around the hull of the boat with its usual incessant swirls and I looked into the face of the woman. To this day I can recount every detail of her complexion to the most minute detail, even though my glance at her face lasted no more than a second or so. I could spend a paragraph explaining how she had brushed her long blond hair across her temples and behind her right ear or how exquisite and precise the line of her eyebrows took across the crown of her face but the fact that confuses me to this day is that of the young boy who stood at the bank of the river. I recall that he stood there looking into the waters and of the events of that followed but of his appearance I can recount nothing. It is as if my memory of him has been erased completely from my memory like chalk from a slate. I do recall that the boy looked into the town and beckoned me with his finger but I simply fail to recall any detail of his appearance or how he was dressed.

Normally, I would be reluctant to follow the directions of a simple hand gesture but for some strange reason I felt compelled to follow the direction of his hand as it now pointed into town, along the busy roadway of

The Disturbed Waters (cont.)

Fullers Hills towards the parish church of the town. He uttered no sounds nor engaged my eyes in any direct eye contact but I responded quietly and obediently to his simple outstretched pointed finger and made the short journey into town. It is going to be difficult for me to explain how I felt or what made me take the steps that I did and all that I can write here to put your possible questions to rest is that it felt to me as if I were like a leaf tumbling and falling in a soft breeze. The was no strong inclination to take the route that I did, it simply felt right as if I was controlled by some external force that was nudging and edging me to take the steps that I did. I soon found myself being directed to a gateway off the main road, into the church graveyard. There the influence eased abruptly and I found myself once again being thrust back, out of my trance, into the hustle and bustle of the modern town. I looked around to find myself standing near the entrance to this imposing flint structure. To my left stood the magnificent towering grey flint faced walls of the church and to my right stood a series of low black painted wrought iron railings, behind which stood a number of shoddy, poorly-kept, eroded gravestones. I knelt down and pushed my hands through the railings to ease the grass away from the lower line of the graves. I read the name, "George Beloe" under an engraved etching of a broken suspension bridge but I felt confused as to what all of this was about. I had no time to investigate further. The time was drawing on and I did not want to be late for my next engagement that would begin at six o'clock. I headed back to the riverside pub somewhat confused regarding the afternoon's events but determined that, later, I would get to the root of the incident.



Later the following week, I found myself in a position to explore further. I was in Great Yarmouth again and had some time to spare. This time, rather than spend those hours rambling around the town centre, I made my way to the library on the far side of town and started to research into the archives of the town. After an hour or so, with help from the library staff, I had found what I wanted in the form of an old newspaper cutting dating back to May 1829. Rather than confuse you with the vocabulary and extra details from this period I shall finish my recount of this incident with an abridged version of what I read within those pages and leave you to draw your own conclusions about the events that I experienced:

On Friday 2nd May 1845 a clown called Nelson was due to sail in a washing tub, drawn by four real geese from Haven Bridge, under the old suspension bridge, to Vauxhall Gardens at 5 o'clock to advertise the erection of a large building in the town. The riverside was packed with crowds of onlookers, many of these being children, but the most advantageous view was deemed to be found from the crown of the bridge itself and this was crowded with about four hundred people. As the clown approached the air rang with the cries of, "Here come the geese!" but very few people noted that the bridge failed to retain its convex form, instead being completely flattened under the weight of the crowd. As the bathtub drew under the bridge, the weight shifted and the chains on the southern side snapped with the result that the entire bridge flipped over, tossing nearly all its occupants into the freezing river below, the rest hanging from the northern chains. Immediately, all nearby boats were in requisition and as many of twenty-five were soon on the spot. A total of seventy-nine people lost their lives on that day, many of them being women and children, causing this disaster to be the greatest peacetime disaster to befall upon the town. It was said that, in the days that followed, there was not a dry eye in the town; every household had lost a friend or a family member from that disaster.

By Nigel Shelton