

Murder

By Magic:

Alternate

Routines

Thank you once again for purchasing “Murder by Magic: The ULTIMATE Corporate Magic Show!” I’m creator Cris Johnson. I’m going to assume you’ve started going through the material in this course by starting off with the main script analysis book, so I’ll keep my introductions here brief.

As mentioned elsewhere, in the development of the Murder show, I had worked on and performed many different routines and scripts. In this booklet, I’m going to provide you both with alternate routine ideas, different plot points and fully scripted routines for some of those plot points.

I’ll detail my thinking behind each as well as my reasoning for ultimately leaving these routines out of my main 60-minute version of the show. This will sort of be like seeing the ‘deleted scenes’ for a movie on DVD or Blue-Ray: stuff that was filmed but cut due to length and/or pacing or aesthetic reasons.

Obviously, some of these routines may appeal to you, so you can feel free to swap them into the structure or you can add them to the overall show if you choose to offer a longer show to most clients.

Let’s get right into it.

The first routine I’m going to cover in this booklet is called Suspects Psychological Profile.

Suspects Psychological Profile

A Variation on Sneak Thief

CRIS *(to the psychic)*

Now, please call up the five most GUILTY-LOOKING people you can find!

The psychic gathers, amid much laughter, 5 suspects. Cris has them line up in a straight line, facing the audience.

CRIS

So now we have five suspects! I want to conduct a psychological profile on each of you to learn about you. Here’s what’s going to happen: I’m going to pass out pieces of cardstock and a marker to each of you. I’d like each of you to write, in BIG bold letters, in just a few words, how you would hypothetically kill a clown! Don’t start writing until my back is turned, because I’m going to try to read your body language and vocal tonality to see if I can determine who wrote what!

Cris then passes out the cardstock and markers.

CRIS

I'm going to turn my back now. Our psychic is going to stay up here to make sure none of you tries to get away!

Cris turns his back.

CRIS

All right, all of you, please now write on your card how you would kill a clown! When you are finished, please pass your markers and your card stock to our psychic.

The psychic collects the drawings and markers.

CRIS *(to psychic)*

You have all five? Great, mix up the pieces of cardstock so we don't know which belongs to whom. When you're finished, please let me know.

The psychic finishes mixing the card stock and hands them to Cris, who straightens the pile and drops them writing side down onto a nearby table or case.

CRIS

All right, one at a time, I'm going to take a piece of cardstock and show it to the audience. I'm going to ask each of you if you wrote the method of execution on the cardstock. Obviously, each of you will say no. Based on how you respond, your body posture and so forth, I will hopefully determine who wrote what!

At this point, Cris picks up the cardstock on top of the pile and shows it to the audience. The cardstock has the word "ROPE" on it.

CRIS

So...I'm not sure if this person would hang the clown or play jump rope to kill the clown? Maybe wear the clown out with some intense cardio?

(NOTE: This is a great place to have fun and adlib because who knows what weird things people write! It's really fun!)

CRIS

Okay, I'm going to ask each of you if this is yours. You'll all say no...

Cris then works his way down the line of 5 suspects, asking each if they wrote what's on the cardstock. Each says "no." Based on how each answers, there's more room for comedy! "The way he said no makes me think he's a shifty character" and so forth.

After asking each of the five, Cris hands the cardstock to one person.

CRIS

Don't tell me yet if I'm right – we will do it all together.

This procedure is repeated 3 more times, with a lot of comedy and adlibbing. At the end, 4 of the 5 suspects are holding cardstock. One remains face down.

CRIS *(to the suspects)*

To the four of you holding card stock, if I have correctly given you back what you wrote, please take 2 big steps backwards!

Sure enough, the four suspects holding card stock each take two steps back! The audience applauds.

CRIS *(to the suspect who is not yet holding a cardstock)*

There's one left. It has to be yours, but we haven't looked at it yet! Let me try to pick up what you drew.... Based on how you are standing, I believe you wrote something about tires...maybe a bumper on a car...

Cris picks up the last card stock and shows it to the audience. It reads RUN THE CLOWN OVER.

NOTE: I never reveal "exactly" what was written on the last card stock but I'm close, which makes it more believable!

The audience applauds again! At this point, the show picks up with the suspect passing out the Suspects envelopes and sending the suspects back to their seats. Cris then begins the Blindfold Routine...

Analysis

This routine is what I use in my current version of the show most often. It replaces the Human Phone Number from the original script. This way, 5 suspects are called up instead of 8, and instead of a phone number, the idea is I'm doing a psych profile on each suspect. It makes more sense to include this routine from a scripting standpoint and a logical standpoint. After this

routine, the actual Suspects envelopes are handed out, the suspects return to their seats, and like the main script, we then move to the Blindfold Routine.

The routine starts right after the time of death has been established and the coroner sent back to his seat. The Psychic is still with me onstage.

The (simple) workings are covered both in the video and in written form in the Secrets booklet.

A Change in Plans

This routine is another way of opening the show using a very cool prop from Peter Loughran and Sean Bogunia.

(The client walks to the stage/platform area to read the introduction for the evening's entertainment)

CLIENT

“Ladies and gentlemen, our entertainer this evening has been making young children laugh at him for 5 years, 6 if you count the year before his indictment. He’s fresh off of his latest house arrest and guarantees you’ll love his hand puppet routine.

Whether your face is hit by a pie or water squirted in your eye, you’ll love Binky the Clown. Please give it up for BINKY!”

(Client leaves the stage as silly clown music plays. After 30 seconds or so, the crowd grows restless, wondering where the entertainer is. Finally, a voice is heard and Cris walks from the back of the room in a huff.)

CRIS

Stop! Turn off the music! Turn off the music! Ladies and gentlemen, I’m very sorry, but there has been a terrible accident. Binky the clown will NOT be able to perform for you tonight.

(Crowd “ohhhh’s” in mock disappointment.)

CRIS

I know, I understand how you feel. I’ve been working with Binky for 5 months, ever since he began his house arrest and boy, you were in for a great show. He can fling a whipped cream pie

40 feet. Those of you in the middle sitting where you thought you'd be safe, Binky could've hit you.

(Cris walks over to a table where a bell, a Styrofoam cup and a bottle of chocolate milk are resting.)

CRIS

This is the exact spot where he was going to make chocolate milk fly out of his nose. You would have loved it.

(Cris picks up the cup.)

CRIS

He always tried to nail someone in the face with the milk and if he could get them to swear out loud, he would ring this bell and yell, "That's another one!"

(Cris picks up some chalk and slates.)

CRIS

This is the chalk boards he was going to use to play Dirty Mad Libs with the audience...Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot lie to you. You deserve to know the truth. There was NO accident. No...Ladies and Gentlemen, Binky the Clown was...MURDERED.

(Cris walks toward the front row of people.)

CRIS

Yes, I said MURDERED. Murdered while practicing an incredible magic trick that Houdini himself was too scared to try. On top of that, after speaking with the authorities in Binky's hotel room, it appears that the perpetrator was one of YOU! One of you was sick enough, depraved enough, twisted enough to kill Binky! Some of you were going to get hit by pies. Some of you were going to get squirted in the eye by water – or lemon juice, sometimes Binky can be cruel – but the point is, with that kind of laughter and merriment waiting for you, which one of you was cruel enough to kill a clown?

(Cris waits a few seconds as he scans the room.)

CRIS

That's all right. I didn't expect you to fess up. Tonight, as the police complete their investigation, I was sent on their behalf to keep all of you busy. As Binky's closest friend, I will not rest until the killer is brought to justice.

Tonight, we will recreate circumstances of the crime, with various roles played by you – forensics experts, police, various roles. By recreating the clues, circumstances, and other details, maybe together we can discover the truth and discover why, on tonight of all nights, we have a case of...Murder by Magic.

(Cris uncovers a table revealing a sign which reads Murder by Magic.)

Contact With Binky

Spirit Slates, Entity

CRIS

I suppose I should properly introduce myself...my name is Cris Johnson and in addition to helping Binky coordinate his children's entertainment and his projects in the adult film industry...

(laughter)

CRIS

Yes, Binky is diversifying – I am also a psychic investigator.

(Cris holds some wooden slates out to someone in the front row to look over. The slates are clearly blank on both sides.)

CRIS

Since we will be doing our best to bring Binky's killer to justice, it's only fair that Binky himself is invited to join us. In years past, mediums, or **those sensitive to the spirit world**, have often used different ways to contact the dearly departed.

One method involved spirit writing. The departed would be given slates and a piece of chalk and they are invited to write a message.

(Cris sets the slates, with the chalk between, down on the table.)

CRIS

We shall try to contact Binky now. For this to work, we must be as one. That means join hands with your neighbor. Join hands with a friend. Join hands with a complete stranger. We will call for Binky.

Yoo-hoo, Binky! Of course, Binky always was a showman. Binky, give us a sign!

(Cris starts some mysterious music. After a few seconds, the cup next to the milk bottle starts to move, as if pushed by an invisible hand!)

CRIS

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are not alone. Binky is with us! Let's see if he gave us a message.

(Cris separates the slates and turns one toward the audience. It reads, "DEATH SUCKS".)

(The audience laughs.)

CRIS *(blinking away tears)*

That's so beautiful...but wait, there's more...

(Cris displays the second slate. It reads, "IT'S HOT DOWN HERE.")

(The crowd laughs and erupts into applause.)

Analysis

OK, let's look at this routine in detail. First, although it is no longer in the main script, this is how I actually opened the show many times when the show was first developed. In my first "vision" for the show, I actually wanted the show to be a cross between a murder mystery and a spook-type show with several quasi-comedic 'spirit occurrences.'

Later, after running the show for a while, I decided that, although the opening was playing just fine, that I wanted to tighten the focus of the show, making it just a murder mystery, realizing that if I wanted to, I could create a 'comedy spook show' later.

This first routine has a lot of set up in the "A Change in Plans" section. The lines in red in which I make mention of the spirit slates being used for Dirty Mad Libs and the whole 'chocolate milk through the nose' bits were designed to justify why these props were on stage in the first place. The same thing with the bell – by using that line about Binky ringing the bell triumphantly, it justified, in my mind at least, why a bell was onstage – it was all part of Binky's show and in the course of this supposed "murder investigation," I simply appropriated these props into the fabric of the investigation. All of it was designed to at least try and justify the existence of everything.

Obviously in the version of the show in the main book, all of this went out the window in favor of a faster paced opening in which I get volunteers onstage a LOT quicker.

Another key line in red is where I mention the idea of a medium being "sensitive" to the spirit world as a way of quickly defining what a "medium" is. That line is brief enough in that it explains something that usually takes a lot of exposition and drags on in other scripts I've read.

The chalk boards were made by Bazar de Magia and are of good quality. Mine are locking, though for this routine, I never got in the habit of handing the slates to an audience member for intense examination or anything like that. The bit is mostly played for comedy.

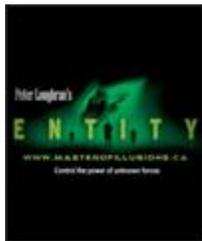
The double-reveal of “DEATH SUCKS” on one slate with the “IT’S HOT DOWN HERE” on the other always got a BIG laugh. I think it’s because so many audiences are familiar with the concept of spirit writing either from books, movies, or even other magic shows, and it’s usually played so seriously that these comedy bits serve as terrific “releases” in terms of emotion.

I’m not a big fan of spirit slates – never thought of them as terribly magical – but the routine always played VERY strong for me.

The moving of the Styrofoam cup was accomplished by using Peter Loughran’s “Entity” effect, available from many magic dealers. This is an electronic device that is a completely hands-off way of moving an object without being anywhere near it. There are no strings, and the effect can be surrounded. It looks great onstage and though I bought it specifically for the Murder show, I now use it in one of my school assembly shows in a completely different context.

It retails for about \$400. Here’s Peter’s website: <http://www.masterofillusions.ca>

Here’s a pic of the “Entity” ad:



Peter’s a great guy and is really easy to work with.

Going back full circle the dialog at the beginning which justifies the props, I thought the concept of ringing the bell whenever Binky made can audience member swear was really funny...but it fell flat every time I said it. So, I cut the line, and just let the spirit bell stand by itself in the end routine in which Binky points out his own killer. Ultimately, all of this was dropped, but now you can consider it for your own use.

Alternate Props for This Routine: Once, before I bought the “Entity” trick, I was still struggling to find a use, any use, for (in my experience) the truly dreadful “Real Ghost” by Christopher Taylor. For a few shows I used it in this routine as a way to show Binky’s influence. It was horribly unreliable and after a few particularly rough practice sessions, I found a temporary substitute – for a house party of 12 people, to show Binky’s influence, I used the Okito Voodoo doll, a marvelous little prop I still use in my corporate strolling shows. Basically, the doll stands up in your hand. No threads or wires, so lighting is not an issue.

The little guy runs \$10 and is available from many dealers. Here’s a pic:



It looks fantastic and is visible for a surprisingly large group – at least 20 or so. I ultimately cut it from this routine as thematically a voodoo doll did not really fit!

For the chalk board routine, if I had a small group, I would often just use the “Out to Lunch” principle to show the “DEATH SUCKS – IT’S HOT DOWN HERE” spirit writing, making it a smaller effect for smaller audiences. Magic shops sell all kinds of props for the Out To lunch principle.

My friend Paul Romhany has an entire book of ideas for this principle. Here’s the ad pic for it:



The book is called “Lunch is Served” and retails for \$24.95. It’s available from Hocus Pocus, among others.

One last thing: I also sometimes used the Losander Floating Table to show Binky “making contact,” and this too always played REALLY well. I LOVE my Floating Table, but in creating this show, I set for myself very strict guidelines and one of them was I simply did not want a cluttered stage.

In my version of the show, you’ll recall I have a “main” table set up center stage and a side table/ditch place to my left. On my right was the little table with the bell and other props for the spirit bell routine late in the show.

This means for the Losander Table to be used, I had to walk behind the black backdrop, bring out the table, make it float, and put the table behind the curtain again. I did not like the idea of bringing out the table just for one effect. I also did not like the idea of having the table out there for the whole show because, in my mind, the show starts to look like a garage sale with a mish-mash of tables everywhere.

A magical purist would mention the idea of using the Losander Table as a place to have other props, so it had another 'purpose' for being on the stage, and the table is too delicate for many of the Murder show's heavy props, so for me it's a moot point. Ultimately, the table had to be cut from this routine, and ultimately, the whole routine was cut.

Here's another routine where parts of it played really well and it helped set up the end of the show...

The Psychic Detective Raccoon

Rocky & Homicide

CRIS

In the 1950s, police detectives in New York City were given a notebook filled with unsolved murders. The detectives were expected to keep the notebooks with them, study them, and be on the lookout for breaks in these cold cases.

I have one such notebook here. It was given to me by a relative. I also have with me an associate friend of mine who will help us find two people of incredible importance.

This associate is...unique. We'll get to him in a moment.

(Cris hands the bell to a man in the front row.)

CRIS

Sir, if you'll just pass that bell to anyone next to you...

(The bell is passed.)

CRIS

And if you'll pass the bell to someone next to you...

(The bell is passed.)

CRIS

Please join me onstage. Everyone please give her a round of applause!

(The two reach the stage.)

CRIS

Your name is---?

SHIRLEY

Shirley.

CRIS

Please take the notebook and flip through it. You'll see that there are literally hundreds of different cold cases in there, with different crimes, different victim names and even the murders themselves are very different. You can see there are hundreds of different cases, right? I'd like you to settle on just one entry. Do you have it? Don't lose your place. I'm going to ask you to write the name of the victim you've selected on the back of this business card, just so you can't change your mind later and make me look stupid.

(Cris hands her a business card and pen.)

CRIS

When you're done, just turn the card face down.

(To audience.)

While she's doing that... **You've heard of drug-sniffing dogs? You've heard of psychic investigators who assist the police? Well, tonight, Ladies and gentlemen, I give to you...the world's first Mind Reading Raccoon!**

(Cris introduces a stuffed raccoon.)

CRIS

This is Mr. Bigglesworth. He's psychic. Really! I will demonstrate his abilities.

(Mr. Bigglesworth has scurried up Cris' shoulder to whisper in his ear.)

CRIS

Oh, OK. Ma'am, he has a sense about you. Would you scratch him under his chin?

(As a spectator in the first row reaches out to scratch the raccoon, it suddenly leaps into the air, landing several feet away! Cris hurries over to pick up the animal.)

CRIS

I'm terribly sorry, he's a little excitable. With the bell, Mr. Biggleworth chose YOU and YOU alone! Isn't that EXCITING? How does that make you feel?

SHIRLEY

Uh, I don't know.

CRIS

I understand. You're skeptical, aren't you?

SHIRLEY

I guess so.

CRIS

Well, you should be! I mean, I don't even know how he jumped at all because he doesn't even have any legs!

(The crowd laughs as Cris displays the bottom of the raccoon. No legs.)

CRIS

. Oh, wait...

(Mr. Bigglesworth scurries up Cris' shoulder again to whisper in his ear.)

CRIS

Folks, I only have Shirley do this experiment with the notebook and the name because, well, Mr. Bigglesworth feel she isn't trustworthy. Now, I'll prove to you Mr. Bigglesworth can sense things no one should be able to sense. First, I'll put the card into my wallet where no one can tamper with it or change the name you've written.

(Cris puts the card into his wallet and sets it down on the table.)

CRIS

He is going to reach into your mind, Shirley, but first, I have to put him into a deep, very deep, trance.

(Cris whacks the raccoon's head on the table. Cris stares at the lifeless body for a moment and finally gives it mouth to mouth. The audience can see the tiny body rising and falling with Cris' breaths.)

CRIS

He's ok...Shirley, this may seem weird, but I'd like you to look into the eyes of the raccoon.

(Shirley locks eyes with the raccoon. Everyone laughs. After a few seconds, Mr. Bigglesworth scurries up Cris' shoulder once more to whisper in Cris' ear.)

CRIS

OK, Shirley...he wants you to look at the same entry from which you wrote the first name. Are you looking at it?

SHIRLEY

Yes.

CRIS

Study the entry...Mr. Bigglesworth is telling me...that the victim in the entry you're concentrating on was female, is that correct?

SHIRLEY

Yes.

CRIS

Good boy!

(He gives Mr. Bigglesworth a treat which the raccoon "eats" out of Cris' hand.)

CRIS

Not too much! Get the rest of it!

(The raccoon scurries back up Cris' shoulder.)

CRIS

Keep concentrating on that entry, Shirley...he's sensing that the woman was older, probably in her 50's, is that correct?

SHIRLEY

Yes.

CRIS

He's sensing that the victim was killed by gunfire, is that correct?

SHIRLEY

Yes.

CRIS

You, of course, didn't write any of this down...finally, he's sensing that the victim's first name was Francine, is that correct?

SHIRLEY

Yes!

CRIS

That's all he's picking up right now. How about a little applause for both Shirley and Mr. Bigglesworth?

(The crowd applauds enthusiastically.)

CRIS

Later on, Mr. Bigglesworth will help us reveal the killer. But first, more of the investigation...

Shirley, Mr. Bigglesworth selected you, but he felt you were untrustworthy. So, naturally, we're going to have you assume the role of the chief of police! Since you will be playing the role of the chief of police, I'd like you to hold onto this sealed FedEx envelope. This is crucial evidence to our investigation. **And hold onto this business card. On the back it has the title POLICE CHIEF on it. Please keep it until...the end.**

I also have another job for you. Since you are the chief of police, it is YOUR duty to identify our suspects!

(Cris takes out a portfolio. Inside are pockets stuffed with business cards.)

CRIS

Do me a favor and just take a pile of those business cards there.

(As Shirley takes the cards out of the pocket of the portfolio, Cris retrieves a group of pens from his table.)

CRIS

Now go around the room and give out a business card and a pen to anyone who looks GUILTY to you!

(The audience starts giggling.)

CRIS

If you don't know who is guilty, one easy sign is guilty people are usually smiling and laughing! Go ahead, pass those cards, and pens out.

(Shirley begins passing the cards out to various people.)

CRIS

Folks, if you happen to get a card and pen, here's what I want you to do. We're going to need some information from you to create a personality profile. When you get your card, write your name on one end of the card. Just at the END. Then, write down a few details about yourself. It could be your street name where you live. It could be your phone number. It could be the name of your kids, your birth date, anything personal. Try writing down more than one thing. We'll have those cards collected in a few minutes. Go ahead and start writing the info NOW.

Shirley, one last duty for you...pass the bell to anyone!

(Shirley passes the bell to a co-worker and sits down.)

CRIS

Hold onto the bell, we'll deal with YOU in a moment!

(The audience laughs.)

Analysis

That routine was, for a while, in the second spot in my Murder show. For a while I had this weird fascination with trying to get Rocky Raccoon into as many shows as possible, whether a kids show or adult show.

Why?

Audiences laugh! Magicians often look at props like Rocky in the same way they look at a Dove pan, but the fact is, it works!

Plus, the age-old bit of making the raccoon jump onto someone is a funny bit but be careful...some people are truly scared of little animals, so they really are shaken up...another reason why I eventually dropped it from the Murder show.

Other than being an amusing bit of business, my other motivation for using Rocky was to provide a vehicle for Outlaw Magic's Homicide book test. Homicide is a book test in which the "book" is actually a suitably aged notebook made up to look like the notebooks people carry with them.

Outlaw Magic makes really beautiful props, and this is no exception. Each page has many, many different unsolved "murders." I gain the information by using a simple peek wallet. Last time I checked, Homicide was not offered anymore at Outlaw, but they have a number of other really cool book tests.

Be forewarned, though – as of this writing, Outlaw Effects has a well-deserved reputation for not delivering goods that have been paid for. You're better off looking for used copies on the magic auction sites.

Here's their website: <http://www.outlaw-effects.com>

My whole idea of using this book test was to introduce a prop in which the actual subject matter was about murders, obviously a GREAT tie-in to the Murder show. The other idea was to set up for later in the show the idea of recording the details of Binky's murder. I would start recording all of the choices made in the show (Who was the chief of police, the three drawings, etc.) and while doing so, remind the audience of the unsolved murders notebook from earlier, helping to justify why I was writing everything down. Ultimately, I jettisoned the concept, but like many good book test presentations, this played quite well.

Additionally, I used Rocky late in the show for the big reveal of who the murderer was...just causing Rocky to leap onto someone in the audience. It was definitely a bit anticlimactic in my mind, but it allowed me to "control" who the murderer was!

Scripting Notes: You'll notice that instead of a big rock, here I would pass the bell around to select a person. Again, I was going for consistency. I eventually changed the selection process to using the foam rock for the chief of Police because it was funnier and after that, I had one of the other 'characters' select another 'character' to speed things up!

The next script point in red is my introduction of the raccoon...first, I'll answer your question. Yes, the raccoon is named after Dr. Evil's cat! Second, by mentioning both drug sniffing police dogs as well as 'psychics' who help police, I'm comparing those to the raccoon, so this little animal at least makes SOME storyline sense...though I admit it's a helluva stretch!

The next red script line is where the raccoon leaps into the audience and I've already written my thoughts on that...followed by the section where I whack the raccoon by 'putting him into a trance,' and the subsequent mouth-to-mouth. This exchange, as old as the hills, is very funny. So also is the following bit, when the volunteer "locks eyes with the raccoon! It's one of the bits I

miss most out of my current Murder show, but in my quest to tighten up the whole show, the raccoon had to go!

I also want to point out the idea that I hand the Chief of Police a business card that said “Chief of Police” on it. This came from my fear that at the end of the show, I would forget who was who during the whole ‘re-capping’ process. After my fear that I’d forget everyone’s name, I was then afraid that no one would want to identify themselves once again, leaving the ending of my show in deep danger! Fortunately, in all the years I’ve done the show, this simply does not happen, so after the first few shows, I learned that I did NOT have to hand these little “ID cards” to the volunteers.

Another key point in this script is the fact that I ask the volunteer in this section to take a stack of business cards and hand them to “guilty looking” people in the audience. This is very funny, and also sets up my Q & A Act later on! I’ll cover this next...

Personality Profiles

Q&A

CRIS

Remember our psychic pet, Mr. Bigglesworth? It’s time...for him to unmask the killer! Here’s what’s going to happen. Mr. Bigglesworth will interview several of you. I will serve as his interpreter since he has no mouth...no vocal cords.... or anything.

(Cris picks up his portfolio and sets Mr. Bigglesworth on his table.)

CRIS

Yes...you see that tiny body movement? No? It’s subtle...He’s giving me info...Where is Jake?

(Jake stands.)

CRIS

Have we met before?

JAKE

No.

CRIS

Mr. Bigglesworth is sensing some details about your life...like the fact that you have THREE children, correct?

(The audience gasps as Jake nods.)

CRIS

Your birthday is in...March, correct?

(Jake nods as the audience gasps.)

CRIS

You're a suspect! Now...Where is Phil?

(Phil stands.)

CRIS

Phil, you have a tattoo, right?

(Phil nods.)

CRIS

Of a horse?

(Phil nods as the audience gasps!)

CRIS

A horse means YOU'RE a suspect! Where is Tom?

(Tom stands.)

CRIS

Tom, is it true that you...live in a greenhouse with white shutters...on Maple Street?

(The audience applauds as Tom nods.)

CRIS

You're on my list, buddy! Where is Jack?

(Jack stands.)

CRIS

Jack, your favorite team is the Buffalo Bills, right?

(Jack nods.)

CRIS

That makes you VERY suspicious in my book! Ladies and gentlemen, we have four possible suspects!

Analysis

For those of you who may not want to invest in Bob Kohler's Human Phone Number, you may find the idea of a Q & A Act very satisfying.

Essentially, in my current version of the show, I ask the psychic to go gather 8 possible suspects for the phone book test. For my style, I feel this is very economical – by using the 8 suspects in the phone book test, we are advancing the plot (the 'psychic' chooses the suspects, the 'psychic' uses her "mojo" to gain information in terms of the phone number and put forth an amazing effect) so that's the direction I ultimately chose, but the idea of having the 'psychic' select the suspects and then having them fill out the cards as "personality profiles" gives a lot of justification for the Q & A typical procedure.

There are a gazillion ways of doing the Q & A act out there. Osterlind offers several different ways of accomplishing the effect, some of which are practically gimmick-less. I'll refer you to his entire "Mind Mysteries" DVD series and you can check out his offerings.

In Banachek's "PSI Series of DVDs, he explains his Q & A method as well, and it's a good one.

I also offer my own Q & A Act, called appropriately enough, The Invisible Q & A Act, and it retails for \$125. Email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net for details.

Of course, different versions of Q & A are so widespread in magic literature that some workings are practically public domain!

One nice thing about Q & A is that it can fit in a briefcase (or in your pocket in some versions!) making it a pack flat, play big effect and you can burn a lot of stage time that way. I don't do Q & A much anymore, but when I do, the whole routine runs around 12 minutes, so I get a lot of time out of it.

Script Notes: The only real scripting mention in red is where I make the remark that the raccoon is continuing to move even after I set him down. It's amusing, at least to me, and it gives me a chance to set the raccoon down and work Q & A without holding him. The entire idea is that the raccoon is the one supposedly sensing the thoughts of the people in the audience, making the use of the raccoon necessary and consistent through the show.

The other thing I'll point out is that the script I've provided is very short, as anyone who performs Q & A knows that it's very "jazzy" or improvisational by nature – it needs to be – so providing a solid script is not realistic or possible.

When I use Q & A during the Murder show, it also allows me to "chastise" the volunteers a bit, as I'm supposed to be quasi-interrogating them. It's fun!

Finally, once I'm done "interrogating" the suspects, it's a simple matter to whittle down the suspects to eight and hand them the "Suspect" envelopes as detailed in the main script book, so the way I use it, a Q & A Act fits in great with the structure. In fact, if you wanted a longer-than-60-minutes show, you could do the bit where the Chief of Police passes out the slips of paper, do the Q & A Act, have those same 8 people come up, do the Human Phone Number, and ultimately "whittle" them down to just 4 suspects. It's a thought. Another thought is passing the slips to more than 8 people, 20 or so, and doing Q & A for some of them and whittle the bigger group down to 8 and ultimately down to 4.

A Few Other Routine Ideas...

There were a few other ideas I experimented with but never actually put them into the show. Here they are...

The Dead Body – With this idea, I had the outline of a body drawn on a piece of paper on a clipboard. A duplicate is handed to the Chief of Police, the Coroner, psychic, whomever. We both draw an "X" over the spot of the body that suffers the lethal injury (hand, foot, head, etc.) and when we turn our clipboards to the audience, they match.

The Dead Body Secret – The answer of course is a nailwriter. Get the volunteer to show hers first. Simple.

Add-A-No Phone Number – An alternate way of getting to the phone number is using the Add-A-No principle to have several people in the audience suggest numbers and write them down, and ultimately, they add up to the phone number. Add-A-No props abound, or you could use a simple Out to Lunch switch, etc. This idea is great for a very small group where you wouldn't want to have 8 suspects out of a group of 10 people in a small house party!

Watch Steal – what better way than to reveal the killer than to do a watch steal early in the show and at the appropriate time, reveal the "evidence" found at the scene of the crime! I never developed this because, though I really wanted to, watch steals intimidate me! (Just bein' honest!)

Nailwriter Time: As mentioned on one of the videos, if I'm doing a BIG group, I no longer use the Osterlind Watch Routine. Instead, I introduce a drawing of a clock face on an 8x11 piece of paper. I have the coroner (from his seat in the audience) think of a time and I "read his mind" and draw the time on the clock, hidden from his view. He reveals his time, and I reveal my

drawing, where the hands match his time. I simply use a Listo nailwriter to fill in the hands. From a distance of just a few feet, a Listo nailwriter passes as a Sharpie. This allows everyone in a bigger audience to see the result as opposed to the tiny watch face.

Closing Thoughts...

As you can tell, both from this book as well as the main book, ideas abound in terms of what kinds of effects/routines can be incorporated into the Murder show. Let your imagination go wild!

If you have any questions or comments, please email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net.

Best,

Cris Johnson