

Murder

By Magic:

Script & Analysis

Introduction

Thank you very much for investing in Murder by Magic: The ULTIMATE Corporate Magic Show!

I have to be honest...part of me is feeling very conflicted. On one hand, I'm thankful for my customers' support and trust by investing in my products. On the other hand, The Murder Show as I sometimes call it was something I was never sure I ever wanted to release. With that being said, what you now have in your hands WILL set you apart from other performers. I've priced this package very high because I don't want thousands of magicians or heck even 100 magicians doing this show!

The next section that follows this introduction is a complete script of the show as I perform it most often. The key words there are "most often," as I do change up the trick selection depending on performing conditions. Nevertheless, what follows is the version I performed the most often. One effect, the Human Phone Number, is something I no longer perform for Murder by Magic, but I leave it here so you can see the show in its "original state."

Be sure to check out the Suspects Psychological Profile routine in the Alternate Routines booklet as that's what I now use. With this newer routine, the show flows better, there's more of a logical progression, and it's funnier!

A few other quick notes...The way the script is written is just that, in script form, written from the perspective of how the audience will see and experience the show. This is a scripting technique I learned from the awesome book on scripting magic titled, appropriately enough, "Scripting Magic."

Writing a script from the perspective of the audience will allow the reader to get an idea of how the show flows without getting hung up on the technical aspects of the show itself.

The liners spoken are headed by who's speaking them in ALL CAPS. Most of the time it's me, identified as CRIS, but there is a fair amount of speaking by volunteers (usually answering questions and such) so I have written fairly mundane responses for those audience members, too. In truth, sometimes their responses can be quite bizarre, so I'll share a few stories in the "Analysis" section of this book.

The dialog spoken will be written just like this...no change.

The physical actions witnessed by the audience will be written in *italics, like this*, so it will help the eye keep track of what's going on, again from the audience's point of view.

Before each section of the ‘plot,’ I will have that part of the story in **big and bold, like this**, with the name of the effect/routine below it also *in bold, like this*.

Again, full analysis will come later. By the way, if you’re put off by some of the props I use because of the expense, don’t worry – there are ‘shoestring budget’ ways of doing the whole show. I like my fancy stuff so that’s what I use, but as promised, you could do the whole show ‘on the cheap’ out of a briefcase if you like.

Finally, as you go through the script, there will be certain actions and/or lines of dialog in **red, like this**. I did that to make sure these sections stand out as I have specific analysis about those lines. I originally put them in red just to remind myself to include those as I made my later comments but decided to leave them in red for you to be able to find easily.

Here we go...

The Setting...

To set the scene, here is how the stage or performing area looks. **In an ideal setting**, the show will be performed on a raise platform, about 20 feet wide by 12 feet deep.

There is a tall black backdrop about 12 feet wide, 8 feet tall decorating the back of the stage. The material is black crushed velvet, which looks lovely on stage.

Center stage, there is a performing table or case. I use a case built by David Charvet, which is mounted to a Eureka table base, but you could use a roll-on table or anything you currently own.

Resting on the table are three brown paper bags, lined up neatly in a row, which the openings folded over.

Directly in FRONT of the center table/case, some red satin material is crumpled on the platform, neatly gathered, forming a kind of red ‘hoop’ on the platform.

To the audience’s right, there is a side table – again built by David Charvet – his wonderful ‘10 Second Table,’ covered by crushed red velvet, which serves as a nice contrast to the black elsewhere.

To the audience’s left, pushed right up against the edge of the backdrop, is an ornate wooden table, like one might see in an antique shop.

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A Change in Plans...

The "False Start"

(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 pauses, clearly conflicted. Finally, he shakes his head as though making a decision.)

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.

(People gasp in mock horror....it really is funny!)

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.)

Choosing The Chief of Police and Detectives...

Fire Flash, T-3

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...a magician.

(A flash of fire appears at Cris' hands. There are startled ooh's and ahhh's from the audience)

I am also a psychic investigator. Since we will be doing our best to bring Binky's killer to justice, we will need to choose a chief of police, but it must be random. Therefore, I have a foolproof way to select someone...

(Cris reaches into his table and struggles to pick up a heavy object. The audience can see it's a very large rock, roughly a foot in diameter. Cris struggles to speak under the weight of the rock.)

CRIS *(gasping)*

What I'm going to do is heave this rock into the audience...

(Laughter)

Whoever it smashes in the head....

(Laughter)

(Cris then tosses the rock into the air. It's very light after all.)

I'm just kidding – it's very light. And I'm not going to toss it. Here, you hold it...

(Cris hands the rock to someone in the front row. The crowd laughs and erupts into applause.)

But that's okay, I just want you to pass it to someone near you...and pass it to someone else...and to someone else...

(The rock is passed from person to person until Cris finally says "STOP!")

CRIS

Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, please give it up for our Chief of Police!

(More laughter and applause as the woman holding the rock stands up.)

CRIS

Ms. Chief of Police, you also need to select for us two detectives to help with the investigation. You get to pick any two men – pick two BIG guys for us!

(Laughter starts again and eventually cheers as the Chief of Police picks two men. All three make their way to the stage.)

CRIS

Thank you, all three of you, for helping the investigation. What are your names, please?

CHIEF OF POLICE

Barb.

DETECTIVE 1

Coy.

DETECTIVE 2

Vance.

CRIS (*taking the rock*)

Well, we won't need THAT anymore. Folks, I'd like to direct your attention to these three paper bags...

(Cris gestures toward the table that is center stage and to the three identical paper bags sitting on top of the table in a row.)

CRIS

Helping out in this murder investigation is a very important job and I want to know what kind of person each of you is, so I've got a little test. Inside each bag is a weapon. One bag has a gun, another has a hatchet, and another has a bottle of poison.

In a moment, I'm going to turn my back, then I will ask each of you one at a time to reach over and pick up one, and ONLY one, bag. After you pick up the bag, keep it tightly closed, and put it behind your back. I'll then ask each of you to stand on one of these numbers here –

(Cris indicates on the floor where three numbers are resting.)

CRIS

I only ask you to stand on the numbers so I will know where you are when I turn around. I don't want to catch a glimpse of the bags and have people accuse me of marking the bags.

(Cris turns around and walks to the right side of the stage.)

CRIS

Barb, as the chief of police, you get to go first. Just pick up one bag and one bag only...

(Barb picks up one of the bags.)

CRIS

If you have picked up a bag, I'd like you to stand on number 2.

(Barb walks over to number 2 and stands on it, holding her bag behind her back.)

CRIS

Coy, now it's your turn...pick up just one bag...

(Coy picks up one bag, holds it behind his back and waits.)

CRIS

Coy, if you've picked up a bag, please stand on number 3.

CRIS

Vance, not much of a choice for you. Pick up the final bag and stand on number 1.

(Vance does so, holding his bag behind his back. Cris turns to face the three.)

CRIS

All right...now it's time for me to reveal who has which weapon – a gun, hatchet, or poison. Each of you just look into my eyes...

(Laughter as Cris studies each for a moment.)

CRIS

Coy, I sense that you have an explosive temper, and because of your explosive, hostile nature, I believe you selected the gun. Take out your bag and remove the gun.

(Amid the laughter at Coy's description, Coy takes out the gun! There is applause as Cris takes the gun and bag from Coy.)

CRIS

Coy, don't go anywhere just yet.... Barb, I sense that you're more of a sneaky sort, and because of that, I believe you have the poison while Vance, your do-it-yourself low tech nature caused you to take the hatchet.

Barb, show us the poison and Vance, show us the hatchet!

(Barb removes the poison while Vance takes out the hatchet! There is more laughter and applause.)

CRIS

Of course, I used toy weapons because I certainly don't want to give REAL weapons to YOU!

(Laughter as Cris removes a large FedEx envelope from his table.)

CRIS

Barb, you've done a wonderful job selecting for us two fine, strapping men to serve as detectives. I need to train them in the apprehension of suspects, however, Barb, I have something very important for you to hold onto. Please keep this with you, keep it sealed...and when I need it, I will call for it, okay?

(Barb is escorted back to her seat.)

Training The Detectives...

Anthony Lindan's Suitjacket Escape

(Cris directs Coy to his right and Vance to his left so all three men are in a straight line facing the audience, with Cris in the center. Cris is also standing right in the middle of the crumpled red cloth center stage.)

CRIS

Guys, as the detectives, there may come a point during the proceedings where we need you to wrestle a suspect to the ground and restrain him, so that's the skill you will learn now.

You see, we have reason to believe our suspect was trained in escape techniques by Harry Houdini himself. Of course, Houdini has been dead for over 60 years and as a result, people may wonder how Houdini could have taught a modern suspect anything. The answer is...**I don't know.**

(Laughter as that line settles in.)

CRIS

For those of you who don't know, Harry Houdini was and is regarded as the greatest magician in history. He was most known for escaping from things. He could escape from a jail cell, escape from chains, a locked trunk, anything. He was most famous for escaping from straitjackets.

Houdini was in such peak physical condition that he was able to dislocate his shoulders and escape from those restraints. Now, I'm not in as good of condition as Houdini, so to help train our detectives here, I will instead escape from my own jacket.

(Laughter)

Apparently, you're not as impressed with the idea of this as I am. Now to make the challenge even more difficult, I will have my hands handcuffed behind my back.

(Cris picks up a small red bag. He also stands at a spot on the floor where he is exactly in the middle of the bunched up red cloth on the floor.)

CRIS

Now Vance, I tried to get handcuffs like the ones you have at home. How did I do?

(There is laughter as Cris reaches into the bag and removes a pair of shackles from the bag and hands them to Vance.)

CRIS

Just examine those cuffs and make sure those chains won't come apart or anything. While you're doing that, Coy, I also have a pair of brass padlocks. I got them from the Home Depot. They don't realize I have them, but that's okay.

(Cris has turned by this time to Coy and handed him the locks.)

CRIS

Just check out those locks carefully...

(He turns back to Vance.)

CRIS

Those handcuffs look okay? Good...

(Cris takes the shackles and puts one of the pairs of chains around one wrist.)

CRIS

Coy, go ahead and use one of those locks to lock me in.

(Coy locks one of the locks around Cris' wrist.)

CRIS

Good, now you're going to do the same thing with my other wrist, but behind my back. Vance will help you by pushing my sleeve up...

(Cris places his hands behind his back and Coy and Vance lock his other wrist in the restraints.)

CRIS

Beautiful...now, notice the red cloth. No self-respecting escape artist would reveal his methods, so I will make my escape behind the secrecy of the Curtain of Death. You'll notice that on each side, there are two white rope handles. If you would both lift up the curtain of death, up and down on my command...

(Both men pick up the rope handles and lift up the Curtain, forming a sort of cloth red 'box' around Cris.)

CRIS

On my command, you'll raise and lower the Curtain, in unison with each other. Let's try a test run. Go ahead and lift it up, over my head.

(Coy and Vance lift the Curtain over Cris' head. Immediately, Cris' hands, suddenly in front of him but still shackled, rise up to pull the Curtain down.)

CRIS

Yes, that will do just fine. I think we're ready to begin the escape...

(There is laughter and gasps of amazement at how quickly Cris got him unlocked, had his hands out in front of him, and re-locked again!)

CRIS

Raise the curtain...

(After the curtain goes up, sounds of struggling occur and a few seconds later Cris says to lower the curtain. The curtain is lowered, and Cris' hands are still shackled, but now his jacket is half on, half off!)

CRIS

I don't know about you, but I'm excited – I'm half-way there! This is a record-setting pace we're on! Let's keep the momentum going, shall we?

(The Curtain is raised again and there is more struggling. Cris asks for the curtain to be lowered and when it comes down, this time Cris has the jacket on completely backwards!)

CRIS

Okay, I've hit a snag. Things were going great and then I don't know what happened. Let's try to salvage this shall we?

(The Curtain is raised, there are now yelps of pain and when Cris asks for the Curtain to be lowered, he once again has the jacket half on and half off, but now his hands are still shackled together...with the shackles running painfully between his legs!)

CRIS

OWWWW!! This really hurts! Raise the curtain!

(The Curtain goes back up amidst the laughter. More struggling and this time when the Curtain is lowered, Cris' hands are once again shackled behind his back, and the jacket is completely off, but the jacket is hanging off his head!)

CRIS

This is about the best I can do right now. Would you take it off, please?

(Coy removes the jacket as the audience applauds. Cris then then has Vance inspect the shackles one last time...then Cris reaches out an instantly free had to shake hands first with Vance and then with his other hand, Coy! More applause as the two are escorted back to their seats as Cris puts his jacket back on.)

CRIS

That went well – I believe the two of you not only have the skills to lock up the suspect when we find him but also, you now know what to look for in terms of sophisticated escape techniques.

A Psychic Helps...

Osterlind's Watch Routine & Psychokinetic Touches

CRIS

Not long after Binky the Clown was murdered today, the police were on the scene, led by the police chief, played tonight by Barb. Unfortunately, at the scene of the crime, there wasn't a lot to go on. As luck would have it, a Psychic happened to live nearby. The

psychic offered her services, but of course the police were skeptical. The police told the psychic to prove herself.

This resulted in an unbelievable demonstration of psychokinesis – well, rather than just tell you, we’ll recreate it. First, we need a psychic. Barb, as the Chief of Police, it’s YOUR job to find us a psychic. Go for it, Barb!

(Barb points to a co-worker, a woman. Amid the laughter, the woman joins Cris on stage.)

CRIS

Your name, please?

PAULINE

Pauline.

CRIS

Pauline, you will play the role...of the psychic! Exciting stuff, huh?

PAULINE

Sure.

CRIS

Of course, the police required proof. At this point, the coroner entered the scene. The coroner’s job that night was to establish the time of death. Pauline, we’ll need a coroner. I’d like you to find us a coroner to establish the time of death...

(Cris hands her the bell.)

CRIS

Whoever you choose to will be the coroner.

(Pauline picks a smiling co-worker.)

CRIS

You, sir! You have been chosen! Please join us up here.

(A man joins Pauline and Cris on stage.)

CRIS

Thanks for joining us. Your name is--?

JOHN

John.

CRIS

Thanks, John. John, you are now the coroner! We'll get to the time of death in a moment, but first, the psychic. As a man of science, a coroner, I have to ask you John...do you believe in the abilities of psychics?

JOHN

No.

CRIS

Of course not! They're all frauds.

(After a moment, Cris looks at Pauline, chagrined. He scurries over to her.)

CRIS *(to Pauline)*

Except for you. You're doing just fine.

(Cris runs back over to John.)

CRIS

John, I know you're skeptical. Pauline, John is going to require proof! I anticipated this, so therefore, what we're going to do is open up between the two of you...a Mental Corridor. John, please stand on my left.

(Cris directs John to stand on his left.)

CRIS

Pauline, I'd like you to stand on my right.

(Pauline stands on Cris' right.)

CRIS

I'd like both of you to close your eyes. It will help you concentrate better. **I'm being very serious when I tell you I will not embarrass you or do anything stupid to either of you.**

Pauline, we're going to be opening between the two of you a **Mental Corridor**. It means we are going to try and connect your mind with John's, John's mind with you. I want both of you to keep your eyes closed and do not react to anything, do not say anything, until I ask you. Do you both understand?

JOHN & PAULINE

Yes.

(Cris waits a few moments for the silence to take hold. Then he walks over to John and taps him on his right shoulder twice. As John reacts, so does Pauline!)

CRIS

Pauline, you felt something touch you? Was it one of your shoulders?

(Pauline nods.)

CRIS

Which one?

(Pauline touches her right shoulder with her left hand.)

CRIS

How many times?

(Pauline holds up two fingers.)

CRIS

Amazing.... I did NOT touch you. I did, however, touch John. You must have sensed what he felt! Give them both a round of applause!

(Everyone applauds.)

CRIS

John, your skepticism as the coroner has been shaken. However, back to tonight's murder. You will need to establish the time of Binky's death. Do you know how this is done?

JOHN

No.

CRIS

John, you'll need to take a core temperature to determine the time of death.

(As Cris explains, he pulls out of his pocket two rubber gloves. He snaps them to emphasize what they are. The audience laughs again.)

CRIS

Actually...that's pretty gross. I'll tell you what, you can just make up a time! I want you, in your mind, to choose any time at all in a 24-hour period. It can be as specific as you want. In other words, don't just think 5:00 for example. It can be 5:13. It can 12:56. it can 7:23, literally any time in a 24-hour period. Have you got it?

JOHN

Yes.

CRIS

Excellent! Now, I don't want anyone thinking that you're just playing along, so what I'd like you to do is write that time down on the back of one of my business cards. Write it down and turn it face down.

(Cris hands John a Sharpie and a business card. He then turns to Pauline.)

CRIS

Pauline, you're doing a wonderful job! Now, while John is doing that, I'd like you to look at my watch. It's a LOANER so I'm going to want it back!

(Cris hands Pauline his watch.)

CRIS

Look it over very carefully. John, do you have the time written, and the business card face down?

JOHN

Yes.

CRIS

Perfect! Once again, we'll just hide the card in here under the credit cards. **Don't get excited, all the credit cards are maxed out!**

(Laughter as Cris tucks the card in his wallet.)

CRIS

Pauline, how's that watch look, is it ok?

PAULINE

Yes.

CRIS

Terrific. I'm going to pull the stem out and spin the hands. See, you can spin the hands fast in either direction like this, or you can even spin the hands slowly, see that? I don't want you to be influenced, so I'll have you hold the watch face down and spin the dial...keep spinning it until your psychic powers tell you to stop!

(Pauline begins spinning the watch hands.)

CRIS

John, while she's doing that, I want you to concentrate on that time and send it to Pauline, using only your mind...Pauline, how are you doing?

PAULINE

I've stopped.

CRIS

Perfect. Push the stem in.

(Pauline pushes the stem of the watch in.)

CRIS

Did you feel it click in?

PAULINE

Yes.

CRIS

Good. Let's see where you stopped.

(Cris looks at the watch. He takes out a chalkboard and chalk. He begins writing something on the board.)

CRIS

I want as many people as possible to see this and the watch is too tiny.

(Cris hands the board to Pauline.)

CRIS

Pauline, is that the time YOU yourself stopped at?

PAULINE

Yes.

CRIS

You decided how far and how fast to spin the dials...it was all up to you, correct?

PAULINE

Yes.

CRIS

John, would you do us all a favor? Would you for the first time, tell everyone what time you were just thinking?

JOHN

4:45.

CRIS

Pauline, would you turn the board around and show everyone the time you stopped at?

(Pauline spins the chalk board around to show the time she stopped at was 4:45!)

CRIS

Incredible! Give them both a round of applause! John, as the coroner, I need you to keep this card identifying you as the CORONER until the appropriate time, OK?

(Cris escorts John back to his seat.)

CRIS

Pauline, you have done an outstanding job! But your duties are not quite finished yet!

(Everyone laughs, realizing Pauline is still 'stuck' up on stage.)

A Break in The Case...

Human Phone Number

CRIS

At this point, the police were impressed and so, they decided to ask for the psychic's help...

Pauline, here's where it gets FUN. I want you to go into the audience and find for us the EIGHT most GUILTY looking people! Those eight people will form a straight line right here, shoulder to shoulder, facing the audience. Go for it, Pauline!

(Pauline goes into the audience and rounds up 8 people as that song "Oh Yeah" from Ferris Bueller's Day Off plays. The whole selection process is very amusing as the audience giggles and laughs at those people selected. Pauline escorts them to the stage and lines them up next to each other.)

CRIS

Perfect! Now I'm going to give each of you an envelope. Please do not open the envelopes just yet, as we'll all do it together at the end. Don't trade envelopes with your neighbor.

(Cris passes out a large bright envelope to each person waiting in line.)

CRIS

When I ask you to, you'll all hold your envelopes at chest level. Try to keep in line with the person next to you. Then you'll take out what's inside. The writing is the same on both sides so you can read it and the audience can read it, so you don't have to worry about flipping it over or anything like that. Everybody got it?

(The “envelope committee” nods.)

CRIS

Pauline, I have a phone book here, from this area. As you know, the police are having a heck of a time getting any real leads in this case. You’re going to help them out using your psychic powers! I’d like you to open the phone book and just flip through the white pages. See all those different names and numbers? Thousands, right?

PAULINE

Right.

CRIS

Pauline, open to a white page at random.

(Pauline flips the phone book open to a random page.)

CRIS

Great. You’re going to be drawn to a number on this page, but psychology has taught us that we can be influenced by certain numbers, so I’d like you to hold your left hand over your eyes and then put your right pointer finger at the top of the page you randomly opened to. Then you’re going to drag your finger back and forth down the page and you’ll stop wherever you feel like stopping. OK?

PAULINE

Okay.

CRIS

Cover your eyes with your left hand...

(Pauline covers her eyes with her left hand.)

CRIS

Put your right pointer finger on the top of the page...

(Pauline puts her finger on the top of the page.)

CRIS

Now, start slowly dragging your pointer finger back and forth down the page.

(Pauline starts dragging her finger slowly down the page.)

CRIS

And stop where you feel like stopping...

(Pauline stops as her finger is roughly halfway down the page. Cris places his finger near Pauline's to mark the spot.)

CRIS

Keep your finger right where it is. Open your eyes. I've marked the spot where you stopped.

(Pauline opens her eyes and looks where she has stopped.)

CRIS

Read that number. Since I have a microphone, I'll read it out loud. 775-0145. Is that correct?

PAULINE

Yes.

CRIS

775-0145...hey, that has a nice ring to it. Everyone, say it with me: 775-0145. Again!

AUDIENCE

775-0145

CRIS

Open your envelopes and remove what's inside!

(The committee of 8 opens their envelopes. Each holds a large black card with a large yellow number....spelling out 775-0145!!)

CRIS

Give them a round of applause!

(The audience applauds as Cris collects the envelopes and numbers.)

CRIS

Pauline, you've done an incredible job. But your work is not done just yet!

(The audience laughs at Pauline's situation. Cris removes four 6 x 9 envelopes from his table. He hands them to Pauline.)

CRIS

Pauline, I'd like you now to reduce the possible number of suspects from eight...to four. Each of these envelopes has the word SUSPECT printed on the outside. If Pauline hands you an envelope, you will be one of our final four suspects, and will be called upon later. If Pauline does NOT select you, then it means you are off the hook!

(Pauline hands the four envelopes to four people. Amid laughter and applause, all eight people return to their seats.)

Looking For Clues...

John Archer's Blindfold Routine with Richard Osterlind's Stainless-Steel Blindfold

CRIS

At this point, the police took the phone number given by the psychic and used computer technology to find an address. At this address, they found a run-down house, and inside the house they found some strange clues...

Now, it was very dark in the house...pitch black, **like the inside of a cow**. To illustrate how difficult this search was, I am not going to turn the lights off, but instead I will have myself blindfolded and then three of you in the audience will create drawings of items found in the house. I'm going to pass out paper and markers to three of you. If I give you a paper and pen, don't draw anything just yet. I'm not blindfolded yet, and we do want to make this difficult for me.

(Cris passes out three pieces of paper and three Sharpies to members of the audience. He returns to the stage.)

CRIS

Now, to have myself blindfolded, I'll need the help of two people who have experience blindfolding people.

(The audience chuckles at this line.)

CRIS

Not the sort of thing you want to admit at a public event...you sir, will you help me?

(The gentleman Cris indicates joins Cris on stage.)

CRIS

Thanks for playing! What's your name?

STEVE

Steve.

CRIS

Steve, thanks! Ever blindfold anyone before? I guess not! I'll need the help of a lady as well...Ma'am, would you help me please?

(A woman Cris indicated joins him on stage.)

CRIS

Thanks! And you are?

ROBIN

Robin.

CRIS

Thank you so much for playing. Now, I promise not to do anything terrible to either one of you, although I'm going to wind up looking rather stupid.

Now, to blindfold myself, we're going to do it in stages. First, I'll close my eyes. Steve, close your eyes. Can you see?

(Steve closes his eyes.)

STEVE

No.

CRIS

See how well that works? But some people think I might cheat, so the next thing I'll do to block my sight is put half dollars over my eyes. Steve, Robin, take a coin and examine it. Can you see through it?

(Steve and Robin examine their coins.)

STEVE & ROBIN

No.

CRIS

Good! Of course, we need something to hold the coins in place, so that's where the duct tape comes in. We'll put duct tape over my eyes. Some people might still think I'll be able to cheat, so I have this hunk of stainless steel.

(Cris shows a stainless-steel mask.)

CRIS

Pretty ominous-looking, isn't it? I bought it online and it came in a discreet brown wrapper, though I'm not sure why.

(Cris hands it to Robin.)

CRIS

Check it out – put it on. Can you see through it?

ROBIN

No.

CRIS

Good! Actually, I just did this as an excuse to get close to you. Am I freaking you out?

ROBIN

A little.

CRIS

OK, I'm done.

(Cris then puts the mask over Steve's eyes...actually he comes up short by about a foot.)

CRIS

Steve, can you see...correct.

(Cris then rips three strips of duct tape. He gives one each to Robin and Steve.)

CRIS

Both of you, please put your coin dead center in the middle of the tape, using the sticky side, otherwise it's just going to fall off and hit the floor.

(Robin and Steve each put their coins on their tape.)

CRIS

Robin, you also get an extra piece of tape.

(Cris sticks the extra piece of tape to Robin's shoulder.)

CRIS

Steve, you get the stainless-steel metal thing.

(Cris hands Steve the mask.)

CRIS

Robin, you get to go first. You're going to place the tape over one of my eyes at an exact 45-degree angle, not 46, not 44, neatness counts! Away you go...

(Robin sticks the tape over one of Cris' closed eyes.)

CRIS

Really stick down, making sure no light can get in around the edges or anything.

(Robin starts pushing down really hard, even smacking Cris a few times.)

CRIS

That's great. **If you see any white jelly-like stuff squirting out from the edges, it means you hit my eyes just a bit too hard.** Steve, now it's your turn. Put your tape and quarter right over my other eye, opposite direction.

(Steve covers Cris' other eye with the tape. Cris now has an "x" of duct tape over his eyes.)

CRIS

Steve, if you push any harder your finger is going to hit the back of my skull! Robin, you've got an extra piece of tape. Yu can put that tape anywhere you like, however –

(The audience laughs.)

CRIS

The mouth is funny, but I need to be able to speak and breathe, so I'd like you to put it across here where my eyes used to be. Away you go...

(Robin puts the last piece of tape across Cris' eyes.)

CRIS

Steve, you still here?

STEVE

Yes.

CRIS

Great – would you pick up the roll of duct tape and peel the end off a little so I can find it easy?

(Steve picks up the roll of tape and peels the end back and hands the roll of tape to Cris.)

CRIS

All right. I have my eyes closed, quarters over my eyes, duct tape over the quarters and my eyes. Some people STILL think I can't see, so I'll do this.

(Cris then wraps his entire head with several layers of duct tape! The audience gasps.)

CRIS

Those of you who just reacted that way? You're all enablers!

(More laughter.)

CRIS

Steve, hand me that hunk of metal if you would.

(Steve hands Cris the steel mask. Cris then puts it over his head.)

CRIS

See, I have to put this on myself. I have this fear **if I let anyone else do it, they'll push too hard and slice off my nose!** But it's been cut to fit my face. I want both of you to look carefully – are there any openings, any ways I could peek?

(Both Steve and Robin examine Cris' face carefully and ultimately say "no.")

CRIS

Robin, by now, people realize that I cannot see, so they believe that I have a listening device of some sort strapped to my body somewhere...

(Cris spreads his arms, legs, and waits. The audience laughs.)

CRIS

Could be anywhere, Robin... Okay, it was worth a shot. Obviously, I cannot see at all. Everyone, please give Robin a huge round of applause as she returns to her seat.

(Everyone applauds as Robin returns to the audience.)

CRIS *(spreading his arms and legs)*

Steve, it could be anywhere, anywhere at all...

(laughter)

CRIS

The three of you who have paper and pens, I'd like the three of you to each draw a picture very large on your paper. Make it as big as possible so everyone can see it. I'll ask you to draw things that are unique. Don't draw the obvious, don't draw the expected. I'll ask you to do this very quickly and just as quickly when you are done to join me on stage on my left side if you would. Please do this quickly. The last time I did this, when I took the tape off, the audience had left. As they join me on stage, if the rest of you could give them some applause to encourage them.

(Cris begins cautiously walking out toward the audience.)

CRIS

OK...while they're drawing...whoever is directly in front of me, please raise your right hand!

(The person in front of Cris raises a hand. Cris waits a moment.)

CRIS

Have you done so?

FRANK

Yes.

CRIS

Who are you?

FRANK

Me.

CRIS

Oh, that helps! OK, "Me," just hold up ONE finger of that right hand and keep it steady.

(Frank holds his finger steady. Cris begins getting closer to him and as he does so, extends his own right forefinger. Slowly, he approaches Frank's finger.)

CRIS

OK, Frank, just mentally guide me in, like air traffic control.

(Cris eventually touches his finger to Franks. Everyone applauds!)

CRIS

Thank you! How are we coming with those drawings?

(One by one, the three audience members finish their drawings and join Cris on stage. They each line up on his left side.)

CRIS

Are you all here?

(The three nod.)

CRIS

Okay, you gotta SAY if you're here. I can't see!

(The audience laughs as the three each verbally confirm that they are on stage.)

CRIS

If one of you would hand me your drawing face down so when I hold it up for the audience, they'll be able to see it...

(One person puts his drawing face down in Cris' hand. He holds it upside down.)

CRIS

Am I holding it right?

(The audience shouts NO until Cris holds the picture properly. It's a picture of a shot gun.)

CRIS

I'm getting the impression this is a man-made object...a weapon of some sort...a shot gun?

(The audience applauds wildly.)

CRIS

The person who drew this, I'd like you to KEEP your drawing WITH you as you return to your seat. It'll be important later.

(The owner of the drawing takes it and returns to his seat.)

CRIS

If the next person would put their drawing in my hand...

(Cris is handed the next drawing. He holds it up correctly this time. It's a picture of a tire.)

CRIS

This is also a man-made object. It's circular...it's a tire!

(The audience applauds wildly again.)

CRIS

The person who drew this, please KEEP your drawing with you as you return to your seat.

(The person takes the drawing and leaves.)

CRIS

There's still one more to go...Please put the drawing in my hand...

(Cris holds up the last drawing. It's a beer bottle.)

CRIS

I'm sensing this is a POPULAR object! Also man made...it's a beer bottle!

(The audience applauds once again.)

CRIS

Thank you! Please keep your drawing with you and rejoin the audience. Thanks!

(The last artist returns to his seat.)

CRIS

And now the most entertaining part of this demonstration...the removal of the blindfold.

(Cris removes the metal mask and peels back the duct tape, yelping all the way. The audience grimaces. He pulls the "X" off his face, and everyone grimaces even more as they hear the adhesive being ripped off his skin.)

CRIS

If I look really surprised when the tape is off, it's because I've got no eyebrows left.

(Cris finally removes the last of the tape, opens his weary eyes and bows. The audience applauds again.)

CRIS

Well, the three objects that were drawn, the shot gun, the tire, and the beer bottle, were pieces of evidence the police found in the old, dark home. It's leading them ever closer to...the killer. But to finally unmask the killer, we will need the assistance of an old friend...Pauline, the Psychic!

Four Suspects...

Whoisit & The Tim Wisseman Spirit Table

CRIS

If Pauline would join me once again, that would be great...and I'll need the four people who were given SUSPECT envelopes to join me up here, too, that would be great.

(There is laughter as Michael Jackson's song "Smooth Criminal" plays to accompany the arrival of the four suspects. Cris escorts the four people indicated to the stage. He gestures Pauline to stand near an ornate, wooden table which has a Ouija Board and wooden planchette on it.)

CRIS

Earlier tonight, Pauline gave the four of you each an envelope that says "Suspect" on it. Inside three of the envelopes is the word "INNOCENT" printed in large letters. Inside the fourth envelope is the word "GUILTY" in large letters. I believe that Pauline's superior psychic mojo allowed her to give the guilty envelope to the correct person...without her evening knowing it.

We'll test it. Pauline, as you may or may not know, for years psychics have done their thing using crystal balls sitting on an ornate wooden table such as the one you are standing nearby. Or sometimes they've used Tarot cards and performed a 'reading.'

Tonight, we're going to use a Ouija Board. Often, a Ouija Board planchette, which is this,

(Cris holds the planchette up for the audience to see.)

CRIS

...Will move by itself. Spirits? Psychics? I have no idea, but it's what we're going to use tonight.

I am going to ask each of our suspects, one at a time, if he or she is guilty. Of course, each will say "no." After each person says "no," Pauline, I want you to wave your hand like this –

(Cris waves his hand about a foot over the table.)

CRIS

When we get to the guilty person, I believe that Pauline, you will see that planchette move, slightly, maybe a half inch, maybe even more! The rest of the audience won't see it, but for Pauline, it will be very exciting indeed!

(Cris looks at each of the suspects.)

CRIS

All right, I'd like each of you to hold your suspect cards out, so we can all see you as clearly marked! You sir, what is your name?

PETER

Peter.

CRIS

All right, Peter, are you GUILTY?

PETER

No.

(Cris looks at Pauline and gestures for her to wave her hand over the table. As she does so, nothing happens.)

CRIS

Peter, it looks like you're off the hook. Quickly, open your envelope. What does it say?

(Peter tears open his envelope and holds up his sheet of paper. It reads INNOCENT.)

CRIS

Peter, you're free to go. Take the paper with you as proof that you are in fact innocent!

(There is applause as Peter takes his seat.)

CRIS *(to the second man.)*

You sir, what is your name?

SEAN

Sean.

CRIS

Sean...are you guilty?

SEAN

No.

(Cris looks at Pauline, who gestures with her hand. Nothing happens.)

CRIS

Looks like you're off the hook, too! Open your envelope! Quickly!

(Sean opens his envelope and reveals his own INNOCENT paper. The audience applauds as Sean returns to his seat.)

CRIS *(with a devious smile)*

And then there were two...You! Right there! What's your name?

BOB

Bob.

CRIS

BOB...you know the drill. Are you guilty?

BOB

No!

(Cris looks at Pauline, who waves her hand over the table. Suddenly, the planchette flies through the air, landing on the floor! Pauline shrieks and leaps back, laughing! The audience is amazed!)

CRIS

I think we found our murderer! Bob, open your envelope! Other Guy, I didn't get your name, but that's okay. Open yours, too.

(Bob and the other guy open their envelopes. The other guy's reads INNOCENT while Bob's reads GUILTY!)

CRIS

GUILTY! GUILTY! Ladies and gentlemen, we have found our murderer!

The Method of Execution...

Velocity

CRIS

Okay, Bob, in the grand tradition of Scooby Doo and Austin Powers, I will explain to the viewing audience exactly how you perpetrated this horrific crime.

First of all, a bit of explanation. Folks, earlier, I mentioned that Binky was going to attempt a dangerous feat that Harry Houdini himself would not try. It is this:

(While speaking, Cris has removed a few other items from his table and now he removes a gun!)

CRIS

That's right, the feat Binky was going to try was catching a bullet. Of course, using a real gun would have violated Binky's parole agreement, so he elected to use a replacement. This is a paintball gun.

Paintball is a sport where players fire gelatin-filled capsules at each other. If you're hit and the paintball splatters, you're out of the game.

(Cris removes a container of paintballs. They are bright orange and easy to see from stage.)

CRIS

Bob, I know what you are thinking. 'That's absurd! A paintball cannot kill anyone! It's not lethal!' Well, I'll explain how Binky was killed with this very gun in a few moments. Under most circumstances, a paintball will not kill...but it will hurt like hell. They go REALLY fast. I'll demonstrate.

(On his table, Cris sets up a round paper target.)

CRIS

Bob, I'm going to load one paintball into the chamber and fire it at the target. Those of you in the audience, please cover your ears as this will be pretty loud.

(Cris steps in front of the target and backs up about 15 feet. He squats down and fires. The gun is loud and the paintball bursts through the paper, tearing the target.)

CRIS

Now, in part to honor Binky's legacy, and in part to prove to you exactly how Bob took out Binky, I will attempt, tonight, to stop a paintball in its tracks.

(Cris motions to guide the audience along. They all say "Ohhhh!" and "Ahhhh!")

CRIS

I can see you're impressed. Because I do not want anyone to think this was a silly trick or stunt, Bob, I'm going to let you select any paintball from the container.

(Bob picks one of the orange paintballs out of the container.)

CRIS

Hold the paintball firmly in your hand...and turn your head and cough.

(The audience laughs.)

And I'd like you to take this Sharpie marker and write your initials on the paintball.

(Bob writes his initials on the paintball.)

CRIS

If you'd like, you can also write a small design or special mark of some sort, because I definitely want you to recognize that paintball when you see it in a moment.

(Bob adds an identifying mark.)

CRIS

Ladies and gentlemen, I can stop this paintball in one of two ways. I can either catch it in my hand or...I can catch it in my teeth. If you want me to catch it in my hand, please applaud.

(No one moves.)

CRIS

Well that's terrific. And I was just starting to like you guys. How many of you want me to catch it in my teeth?

(There is thunderous applause.)

CRIS *(waving the gun toward people)*

You're all SICK! Don't you know how dangerous firearms are?? Let's get back to Bob...What are your initials?

BOB

B-O-B.

CRIS

You're kidding. And what mark did you add?

BOB

A smiley face.

CRIS

Great! An assailant with a sense of humor! Bob, what I'm going to do in a moment is ask you to stand right about here...

(Cris walks to one part of the stage, to the audience's left. In addition to the gun, he holds up a small yellow ring.)

CRIS

In one hand, you will hold the gun. In your other hand, a few inches in front of the gun, you will hold this target. It has clear plastic over it with crosshairs drawn in black. The idea is that you will aim the gun, lining up the cross hairs. I will stand across the stage and line myself up with that target. Hopefully then we will both be dead on, and I won't meet the same fate as Binky. Got it?

(Bob nods.)

CRIS

First, I need you to load the paintball into the gun.

(Cris holds the paintball gun out to Bob.)

CRIS

Just drop it into that chamber.

(Bob drops the paintball into the chamber.)

CRIS

You can see it in there, right?

BOB

Yes.

CRIS

Now I'm going to cock it and send it home, ready to fire.

(Cris cocks the gun and hands it to Bob.)

CRIS

Take the gun, take the target, and take your place.

(Bob walks over to his place.)

CRIS

Now, before you take aim, I want to ask you a SERIOUS question...do you hear voices in your head? No? That's good news. **You know, you're pretty calm about the idea of shooting someone. You ever serve time? I mean BEFORE today?**

(The audience laughs as Bob shakes his head.)

CRIS

Good news for me. OK, when I say now, I will count to three, then you fire...or maybe we should count to two, then fire on three...I don't know...wait, let's make this REAL easy...

(Cris picks up a white hanky and unfolds it.)

CRIS

This is important. You need to listen carefully. I want to make sure you know EXACTLY when to fire. Therefore, we'll use a simple signal.

CRIS

When I'm ready, I will put this hanky in my mouth. When I want you to fire, I will open my mouth, allowing the hanky to fall out.

(Cris demonstrates by putting the hanky in his mouth and letting it fall out.)

CRIS

When you see the hanky fall, that is when you fire, and not before. Do you understand?

BOB

Yes.

CRIS

You're so calm about this, but then again, you've killed before!

(The audience laughs. Cris takes his place to the audience's far right.)

CRIS

Bob, are you ready?

BOB

Yes.

CRIS

Get your target ready and get the gun ready.

(Bob takes aim with the gun and puts the target in front of the gun.)

CRIS

I will now put the hanky in my mouth. When you see it fall, you fire. If I get hurt, don't worry, you're already going away for a long, long time!

(The audience laughs. Cris puts the hanky in his mouth. He waits a few seconds. The tension builds. Cris takes a deep breath...and lets the hanky fall out of his mouth.)

Immediately, Bob fires the gun. It's loud! Cris' head instantly snaps back...and when he turns his head to again face the audience, there's a paintball between his teeth! The audience applauds wildly! The theme from "Indiana Jones" starts playing. Cris walks over to Bob, with the paintball in view the entire time. As he nears Bob, Cris removes a clear plastic baggie from his pants pocket. He carefully spits the paintball into the baggie.)

CRIS

Bob, examine that closely. Do you see your initials? Do you see your smiley face?

BOB

Yes!

CRIS

Ladies and gentlemen, let's hear it for the memory of Binky the clown! Bob, I'd like you to take this card. It says KILLER on the back of it so we can identify you easier in a lineup. And you can return to your seat. When we're through with the show, some gentlemen in uniform will be waiting for you outside to take you to a different kind of show.

Of course, as I said, a paintball is not normally enough to kill a man. I submit to you, the audience, that Bob was counting on two things to kill Binky with this feat. First, Bob was hoping to fire when Binky wasn't ready and that the paintball would go down the back of his throat and become lodged there and he would choke.

Secondly, the paintballs are, as the name implies, filled with 'paint.' Ladies and gentlemen, there's LEAD in the paint, so Binky was obviously killed by LEAD POISONING!

The Plot Twist...

Prediction

CRIS

Ladies and gentlemen, we're not quite finished yet. Every good murder mystery has a plot twist and here's this one.

(Cris removes a small notebook and pen.)

CRIS

I gave nearly everyone who helped tonight a card with a name of some sort on it. Would you stand, please?

(Several people stand up.)

CRIS

And the three of you who contributed drawings, would you stand up too?

(Three more people stand.)

CRIS

Wonderful...Now first, we had the Chief of Police, who's been holding onto that envelope. And that was Barb, right?

BARB

That's right.

CRIS

Barb, what's your last name?

BARB

Jones.

CRIS

Barb Jones...was our Chief of Police for tonight. Then, we had our two detectives. What were your names?

COY

Coy.

VANCE

Vance.

CRIS

That's right. Next, we had our psychic, who was, for tonight, played by Pauline. Pauline, what's your last name?

PAULINE

Smith.

CRIS

Pauline Smith was our psychic. And of course we had John as our coroner. John, what's your last name?

JOHN

Doe.

CRIS

John Doe the coroner...and John, what was the time of death you determined?

JOHN

4:45.

CRIS

And we had three drawings made while I was blindfolded to recreate the search for clues in the old dark house. What were those three drawings again?

(The three people hold up their drawings.)

CRIS

A shot gun...a tire...and a beer bottle. Great! You can all sit down. And finally, we unmasked Bob as the killer. Bob, what's your last name?

BOB

Bigalo.

CRIS

Bob Bigalo, our killer...Bob, just because I'm curious, what was your motive for taking out dear Binky? Just make something up!

BOB

He smelled like onions.

(Laughter)

CRIS

Okay, I can understand that. Now, we've recorded everything for the record. Barb, the chief of police, you've been holding that SEALED envelope since the show began. Would you join me up here, please!

(Barb joins Cris on stage. She's carrying the envelope.)

CRIS

Barb, is that envelope sealed?

BARB

Yes.

CRIS

And you have not tampered with it since I gave it to you in the beginning of the show, correct?

BARB

Correct.

CRIS

Would you please open the envelope.

(Barb opens the envelope by ripping its 'rip cord.' She removes a smaller manila envelope from inside the larger FedEx envelope.)

CRIS

Before you open that envelope, I'd like you to look over the list I made in this notebook, listing everyone who helped out with our recreation tonight. **Everyone who played a role, I should remind, was picked at random, either with the foam rock or by our psychic or chief of police. I did not pick a single character in tonight's performance.**

(Barb looks over everything.)

CRIS

Barb, inside this envelope are two things. The first is a note from Binky, written before this tragedy. Would you read it into this microphone?

(Barb nods.)

BARB *(reading)*

“I, Binky the Clown, have been MURDERED. I died on the date of November 20th. To aid in the investigation of my murder, I have written the details of the reenactment of my death and the names of those who will assist on an index card. I then sealed this card between two pieces of cardboard with a ring of staples so nothing could get in or out.”

CRIS

Nice job, Barb. Ladies and gentlemen, what this note means is that BINKY knew he was going to be murdered! And we’ll prove it. Barb, I’d like you to reach inside this envelope and remove that sealed package. I do NOT want to touch it.

(Barb removes the stapled package from the envelope.)

CRIS

Look at it...is it sealed all the way around?

BARB

Yes.

CRIS

Good, now tear it in half right down the middle...

(Barb tears the envelope in half.)

CRIS

Now remove from it the folded ‘something’ you can see in one of the halves...see it?

(Barb removes a folded note card and unfolds it.)

CRIS

Now, I do not want to touch it, but I will read it out loud. Remember, everyone who helped tonight was selected completely at random. If I say anything that is not written on this card, stop me, okay?

BARB

Okay.

CRIS (*reading*)

“On November 20th, 2008, I, Binky the Clown will be murdered. During the re-enactment of my murder, the chief of police will be played by Barb Jones. The two detectives will be played by Coy and Vance. The psychic who helped the coroner determine the time of death will be Pauline Smith. The coroner will be played by John Doe. The two of them will determine the time of death as 4:45. Three clues, a shotgun, a tire, and a beer bottle, will be found, which will lead to the arrest of Bob Bigalo, who will claim that my stench of onions was the motive behind my murder. In the end, it beats the five more years of probation I was looking at. Love, Binky the Clown.”

Barb, you can take that with you to show everyone. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you’ve enjoyed Murder by Magic. Thanks so much and have a great night!

(Cris leaves the stage to thunderous applause.)

fini

Murder

By Magic:

Analysis of the Script & Equipment

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Introduction

In this section, I'm going to go through the show point by point, section by section, breaking down the show so you understand what my reasoning was for everything. When I get to the actual effects I use, I will list the cost of each along with where I purchased everything.

PRO TIPS: I will also give tips, techniques, and thoughts on my way of performing them...without tipping the 'working' of any marketed effects.

ALTERNATES: Finally, in each section, I will also list other props and effects I have used in the past as well as other effects that would work.

Finally, I will also touch upon sound equipment. It will not be exhaustive, as I will assume those of you who invest in this course already have your PA system, microphone, etc., but I do want to touch upon how I perform for completeness' sake.

After this lengthy section, I will get into a separate book of additional full scripted routines that I took out of the show structure, either because they did not fit into the structure I wanted, or because of aesthetics (which is why I took out my Floating Table) and more. This will give you additional ideas to either lengthen the show or if you don't like using a 'danger' trick (such as Velocity) you can take that section out.

Therefore, after reading this book, I recommend turning to the "Alternate Routines" booklet with this course.

This analysis is going to be in depth, so let's get to it.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Overall Concept

Okay, now that you've had a chance to digest the script, I want to explain the overall structure of the script and why I went in the direction I did, then we'll break it down section by section.

First of all, this program for me runs between 50 and 60 minutes. I've found that the majority of my clients want a show that runs about one hour. Offering the show at 50-60 minutes is just right for me as it gives me the flexibility of stretching the show to the full 60 minutes or I can pull back and just run the show at 50 minutes. By explaining to the client that the show has this 'wiggle room' in terms of running time works out well for me. Most corporate events run long (the president goes on forever, the meal is late, etc.) so when a client calls me and says they want an hour-long show, I offer them Murder by Magic. We'll touch more on booking and different options later.

You'll notice that when I start the show, I talk about the fact that the murder has already happened (which saves a lot of headaches in many ways) and explain that we are going to re-create the murder investigation thus far, with people in the audience stepping in to play 'roles.'

This is highly important, as it is wayyyy beyond my own comfort zone to try and get people at a corporate event to "act" and really "become" characters. Stating that the whole show is a re-creation of the investigation allows us to have a more relaxed 'feel' for the show.

Also, you'll notice that several times in the script I say something like, "At this point in the investigation, this happens..." and then I set up the next routine to 'tie in' to the overall script. Essentially in the show, while I claim to be a magician, friend to Binky the Clown and a psychic investigator, my chief role in the show is the narrator.

Setting myself up as the narrator allows me to go from referring to the past to moving things along in the present and also predicting the future. Controlling the 'timelines' as I do allows me to 'play God,' in a way, allowing much more freedom in the proceedings.

PRO TIP: A key point I kept in mind the whole time I was developing this show was the idea behind the writing of the long-running show "The Simpsons," in which parents Homer and Marge raise their three kids in Springfield.

Early in the run of the show, the producers and writers began to adopt an idea that would become known as "Flexible Reality," meaning they could bend physical laws as much as they wanted so that any gag or joke was never off limits. It's a concept that helped the show become so incredibly varied in its approaches to comedy and it's this idea that I thought of while developing the show.

The "Flexible Reality" concept also helps protect me from the fact that, if a clown was supposed to perform and he's dead, why was it there's a sign that says "Murder" on it for the show? And why do I just happen to have all of these magic props?

When I first wrote the show, I used to drive myself bonkers thinking about such things, but finally decided that if the show was initially set up correctly and was entertaining

enough that the audience would just come along for the ride – and they do, especially in certain instances that I’ll point out.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Show Outline

So the show plot, as it were, is very simple so everyone can follow it. The show breaks down to this structure:

1. Introduction
2. Revelation of the murder
3. Introduction of “characters”
4. The investigation: time of death established, psychic helps ‘find’ the phone number, leading to...
5. Identifying suspects
6. Finding clues at the house
7. Narrowing the suspects down
8. Revealing the murderer
9. Revealing how the murderer ‘did it’
10. The “plot twist” finale

That’s a pretty simple structure for any audience to follow and one that is easy to ‘hang’ certain effects on, making it very easy to swap out certain effects if you have stuff in your own arsenal you’d rather use.

To break the ‘plot’ down even further, it can be reduced to these elements:

1. Introduction
2. Revelation of Murder
3. Introduction of Characters
4. The Investigation
5. Revelation of the Murderer
6. The Big Plot Twist

Any good story has to have an introduction. Any good story needs to have the characters introduced. The characters need to propel the story through actions of some sort, then there’s the revelation.

A note about the revelation – it’s at this point where we then show how the murder was committed. I chose a variation of the classic Bullet Catch because it’s an effect that plays incredibly big and incredibly strong. In essence, it’s the climax of the whole show. It’s like the end of a horror movie where the horrible supernatural Bad Thing is dispatched...

...and then comes the plot twist, in which the Big Bad is not really dead at all, or as in a regular mystery story, there very often IS the ‘plot twist,’ in which the audience is spun on its heels.

I'm very proud of the structure of the show and feel it really works this way. (*Keep in mind other routines and variations on the structure will be presented in the Alternate Routines booklet that came with this course.*)

Keep that simple structure in mind as we go through the script as well as the major 'beats.'

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Setting

You'll notice that in my description of the show setting, I mentioned **in red** the fact that in an ideal setting, I would have a raised platform or "riser," as they're often referred to by hotels.

When I do have those risers, it's a great thing. Everyone can see me, it's easier to catch and hold everyone's attention and so on.

PRO TIP: Once you get your deposit, call the hotel/banquet facility yourself and request a riser if the group is 100 or more people. It's one less thing you have to pester your client for and the easier you are to work with, the more they will recommend you to other clients. Sometimes your hotel/banquet contact will mention a surcharge for use of the risers. Clear it with your client first, but do not take the charge yourself – you'll look like a pushover.

If the client questions whether you really need it, simply say, "Yes. For your size group, having the show 'elevated' will drastically increase visibility and increase everyone's enjoyment...maximizing the effectiveness of your investment.

The reality is that roughly 50% of the time, I do NOT get risers. Even with a group of 200 or so people, I will have no riser. I'll call the hotel before the show (several weeks), and they will apologetically say they have nothing like that. In those instances, there's not a lot I can do but do the best I can.

PRO TIP: The folks who make the 'spider' backdrops also sell portable risers that you can invest in if you really want to be self-sufficient. It's more than I feel like hauling around, but it is an option for you.

Here's their website: <http://www.spider-evoflex.com>



In the setting, I describe the backdrop as 8 feet by 12 feet. It's the standard size of a photographer's backdrop system. They're available online for around \$140. Mine is made by a company called PhoTek and it's holding up great, even after around 2000 shows since 1997.

PRO TIP: Having a backdrop allows all of the stage equipment to be drawn together, 'framed,' as it were, rather than just having a group of random tables and cases onstage.

It's not necessary, and for some very small shows (in restaurants, for example) for small corporate groups, I leave the backdrop in my car.



Here's where I bought mine: <http://www.adorama.com>

I bought crushed black velvet cloth and got my wife to sew 'sleeves' at the top so the cloth just slides on. The crushed velvet looks great onstage, adds texture, and does not wrinkle. I carry the cloth itself in a 'stuff sack' from a hiking supply store.

Here's where I got my bags: <http://www.ems.com>



Once I stuffed the cloth into the bag, I transport it to the show in a David Charvet '10 Second Table.' When I ordered the table, I specified that the opening be on the TOP. This allows me to use the table as a 'ditch table' throughout the show.

On the website, the 10 Second Tables are around \$300 or so, depending on the model, but since I wanted a wider one (with the 2 legs) I paid extra, around \$350 if memory serves.

PRO TIP: When I do a show, I like to have a neat stage – therefore, when I'm done with a pro, I put it in my 'ditch table' to my right (audience's left), keeping everything neat and tidy and pleasing to the audience's eyes.

My 'main' table, where most of my props are stored, are in either a David Charvet '10 second table' that is wider (more storage) with two (instead of one) support legs or other times I will use a special flip top case from Charvet mounted on a Eureka Table Base. It retails for about \$275, and while not on the website, give David a call.

Here's David's website: <http://charvetmagic.com/index.html>

Here's a pic of one of David's tables:



Of course, a standard suitcase roll-on table works just as well:



You can get them from most magic dealers for around \$350-\$400 bucks.

...or if you're doing a smaller version of the show, a briefcase make work, depending on the effects you select.

Sound System Thoughts

Unless I'm flying to a gig, I always bring my own sound system with me. Even the best hotels often have horrendous sounding PA systems. If you fly a lot for gigs, chances are you already know how to handle sound system issues for your show.

If you're a working pro, you probably already have your own sound system. Over the past 10 years, these are the two I've used.

Both are great systems, although I currently use only the second one as it's so portable and so light.

The Peavey Escort Sound System – Google the name just as I have it typed here, and it will come up.



It's a great system that packs into one unit. If you use a backdrop, the 'mixing board' is hidden behind the backdrop, keeping your performing area tidy.

My second sound system is a Bose Compact L1, available at Guitar Center, from Bose direct, etc. Here's a pic:



It's light as hell and really puts out the sound. I've used it for 500 people before! It retails for \$995 and is worth every penny.

Here's the link to Bose: <http://www.bose.com>

Microphones

Everybody has their favorites, but I personally prefer a wired headset mic like this:



It retails for about \$400, made by Shure, pretty much the industry standard. It allows me unlimited mobility and it allows me to perform hands free. Some performers like to use a mic on a stick and that's a personal choice.

Music

Much of the music I use is copyrighted, so to truly do this as a "good boy" or "good girl," you'll need to file the proper paperwork and pay royalties for usage. Or you can use royalty-free music.

Regardless, if you're a one-man operation, you'll need to control your music remotely. I currently use Audio Ape as a remote with Show Cues as an app along with my iPhone.

There are other systems out there, however. One of which is this - I've heard good things about Kerry Pollock's Wireless Wizardry products. Here's a pic:



According to the website, it retails for about \$1400. I haven't used it myself, but Pollock has a killer reputation.

You can also skip the music all together, as there are no manipulation segments in the show, but I feel music really enhances certain segments of the program.

Or you can have a second person to run your sound, if you don't mind a second person accompanying you..

The Sign

On my side table, I have a small black sign with the “Murder By Magic” logo similar to how the artwork for the logo looks on this course. It’s roughly 24 inches square and mounts to the side table with velcro. I had it designed and made at a local sign shop for around \$40. It ‘frames’ the show nicely.

The “murder” font is called “chiller” if your sign guy can’t find one to match.

I considered putting something like “Binky Fun Wow Show” with balloons on it instead, but just decided to stick “Murder By Magic” to promote my show.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: My Character

As I said, I identify myself as a magician, psychic investigator and as Binky’s friend...although my real role is the narrator who propels the plot.

That’s the approach that I took for myself because I did not want the burden of wearing a police uniform (illegal in some countries) or a Sherlock Holmes-type outfit...although these options may be something you want to consider for yourself. (My friend Jim Kleefeld often wears different costumes for many of his themed magic shows.)

So I just wear standard business apparel – black jacket, black slacks, dress shirt, etc. It’s what I’m most comfortable wearing and, oddly enough, there are times where I’ll perform a school assembly show in the morning, maybe conduct a clinical hypnosis session in the afternoon and then race off to do a Murder show at night, so my apparel is something that is appropriate for all different kinds of work.

Also, I like the idea of business attire because it helps ‘sell’ the fact that I’m just a guy, one who was not planning on getting in front of the audience that night.

But really, let your mind run wild! If you like the clown idea, you could dress as Binky the Clown and play his ghost conducting the investigation! That’s WAY too far out there for me, but it IS an option.

Another note on my character – I will freely admit that I am not too consistent with my character, meaning there are times during the show that I laugh and banter with people when appropriate. Realistically, if this was supposed to be a ‘real’ investigation, I would be serious as hell the whole time, but I’m not.

There are two reasons for this. First, I like to ad-lib too much. It’s just my nature. Secondly, I firmly believe that unless you are a ‘name’ like Max Maven, you can’t be so serious for your average corporate after dinner event. So, my character laughs and jokes with the audience...with one additional perk.

The ‘perk’ is simply this: Because my character is ‘supposed’ to be outraged at the murder, even on a comedic level, it gives me some freedom to ‘badger’ volunteers a bit, such as when I have the ‘murderer’ onstage. I can make cracks about how his family won’t see him for many years, etc.

If you really want to stretch your acting chops, you can take the show in a different direction, but experience has taught me that funny works best!

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Murder Victim

This key concept was the thing that was keeping the show from fully taking off until finally, after sharing the overall idea with my friend Rodney Rash from Austin, TX, he came up with a BRILLIANT concept. His breakthrough idea allowed the murder to happen before the show begins.

Until he shared that idea with me, I was considering such bizarre ideas as having someone from the audience play the victim, but the obvious problem was that I simply could not realistically expect someone from the audience to play a victim properly – laying down, quietly, for the show...so the option there was for them to be identified as the victim...but then the person would be sitting up, smiling and laughing...I just hated it.

The other (obvious) idea is hiring a second person to do the show with me, but I really wanted my show to be a one-man ordeal, which meant I was stuck til Rodney suggested the concept he identified as ‘The False Start.’

As you read in the script, the hired entertainer never shows up, and I make my interrupted entrance and abruptly change the apparent direction of the show. Occasionally, almost 50% of the time, my entire show is a surprise and other than a few key people planning the event, NO ONE will know what’s going on, so when I “interrupt” the show, it’s very surprising to the audience!

As an aside, when I know when I will be a complete surprise, I’ll get the people who hired me to drop little nuggets of “worried dialog” to the other guests. In most cases, a company will have some form of entertainment each year, so there will be questions. Under my direction, the few key people are told to tell the curious guests things like, “Well, I don’t know where the hell our entertainer is. He’s late,” things like that.

To keep this pretense alive, if other guests see me milling around (more on this later) I will say that I’m the entertainer’s assistant, making me ‘unimportant’ in their eyes.

For other clients, everyone knows there will be a murder mystery and that’s fine too. For those groups, the curiosity factor is how everything will unfold.

So, by having the ‘victim’ dispatched before the show starts, we eliminate a lot of ‘set up.’

Next, after having performed in corporate events for 15 years, I know that what those groups are looking for is primarily laughter and a good time. If you are amazing, they will enjoy that too, but the premium is on laughter. (The quickest way to turn a corporate audience against you, in my experience, is to do anything too serious, like a manipulation act and so forth. Just my experience.)

Knowing that comedy is a premium, I decided to do whatever I could to make the show funny, right down to the murder victim.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Introduction

Writing this introduction to the show was for me a LOT of fun. Knowing the fictional entertainer was never going to show up, I decided to make his introduction outrageous... a complete ass, the kind of entertainer NO ONE wants to show up!

This served two things – one, it made the show funny and entertaining right from the start, even BEFORE I came into view and secondly, it gave a quick ‘thumbnail’ characterization of the murder victim (which I continue to do in the early stages of the show).

The thing I like about the characterization of the fictional Binky character is the fact that for audiences who are unaware that the show will be a murder mystery, hearing that intro definitely causes some audience members to think, “Dear lord, what the hell kind of crap is THIS going to be?”

Then, after I come out, after I introduce the concept of the show, everyone is relieved! They are HAPPY that Binky is dead and did not show up! It keeps the comedy front and center.

Please don’t underestimate the necessity of creating comedy around the idea of the murder mystery. A number of years ago, I was at a corporate event and performing a run-of-the-mill mindreading show (no plot, just a bunch of routines) when, in the middle of performing Bob Cassidy’s “4th Dimensional Telepathy,” a lady with whom I had just revealed a name of a friend, told me with a pained expression that the person had passed away! (Why she selected that person’s name during a show in which I was deliberately trying to keep funny is anyone’s guess.)

The lesson here is keep the show FUNNY. I’ve seen too many Criss Angel wanna-bees or self-assured, uber-serious mentalists and I know that the temptation for some will be to make the show dark and mysterious.

Trust me, corporate audiences want you to bring the funny!!

You can re-read that introduction for Binky the Clown again if you wish.... first, it's short. Corporate audiences, like most audiences of any age and/or demographic, hate long, drawn out intros.

When I went to see David Copperfield live, he had a 10-minute video intro to introduce him. The audience was QUITE restless by the time he finally appeared!

Second point.... I love the name Binky the Clown. Just hearing it makes me laugh, because to me it just screams "bottom of the barrel."

Third point...by mentioning things like "house arrest" and getting hit by pies, I'm setting up this character is truly awful. I love it!

Final point, and this is a big one...having the introduction read by someone from the group eliminates some of the 'plot exposition' necessary to convey the show concept to the audience. This little introduction, running about 30 seconds or so, has your client (or at least someone from the group) doing a little of your work for you!

PRO TIP: Do not use a pre-recorded introduction for Binky's character. No one listens! Corporate groups are often like children – rowdy, talkative, and so on. Having someone from the group introduce the show leaves the "Hey, be quiet, we're about to begin" task on someone other than you!

If you're going to write your own character's introduction, keep it silly. It's so refreshing to have this odd intro read! The first time I was performing Murder by Magic, I handed the intro to the company CEO and stood there, waiting. Just as I expected, he looked at me after reading it and said, "Ummm...you want me to read THIS introduction?"

It was a wonderful moment for me.

Binky's music is some royalty-free stuff a friend sent me one time. It's wonderfully cheesy, with a dramatic build up with a drum roll, plenty of cymbals crashing which sounds like something very cool (or very low rent!) is going to happen.

PRO TIP: When the music starts, I fight the urge to come running right out. I wait about 20-30 seconds, just when I sense the audience getting restless. Then I come out. I want them to have a sense of "What's going on? Something's wrong!"

Also, if I can, I make my entrance from the BACK of the room, which can be very jarring as a normal show expects the entertainer to walk onstage in front of the group. By coming from the back, I'm breaking away from what they expect.

Of course, in some cases, this is not possible, such as in an auditorium, but when I can, I do this. Even if I must make my entrance on the stage in front of the group, I still wait OFF STAGE, out of sight, before that music plays.

A couple of things are in “red” that I wanted to remember to touch upon...you’ll notice that when in the script, I noted that the crowd “gasps in mock horror,” that’s ACTUALLY how they react! Both for when I announce that Binky “will not be here tonight” and later when I reveal he’s been murdered. You have to remember, I am hamming it up, saying “MURDERED” as I chew the scenery. The crowd ALWAYS gives me that reaction.

When I reveal that Binky will not be here, I do cheat a little – I raise my hands in the air and cock my head and look disappointed as I lower my hands. This is a non-verbal ‘hint’ to the audience of how they should react. They all groan in disappointment. It’s a RIOT and IMMEDIATELY the audience ‘gets’ where we are going!

When I reveal that Binky has been murdered, not only does EVERY audience gasp in horror, but I have had on multiple occasions had someone in the audience, right after the gasp, shout out (WITHOUT ANY coaching from me), “Who would do such a thing?” in a mock-horrified voice.

That ALWAYS gets a HUGE laugh and I actually get a chill down my spine just thinking about it because it’s a great way to REALLY get the audience on my side, in a comedic way! I pray for this to happen every time!

PRO TIP: As you deliver those lines, you need to really ‘act’ as though you are horrified at what happened. Think William Shatner-big in terms of acting! This bit of exposition sets up the whole show.

Another point – when I deliver the line wondering out loud who would kill a clown, very often adults will raise their hands and take credit! Or others will point to their friends! I just ride the wave. You can always remove the line to keep people quiet, but personally, I enjoy it because it ‘ups’ the comedy of the show right away and it also allows me to get a good idea of who the ‘showoffs’ are in the audience and whether they will be good for the show or if I should avoid them! (*Remember, I go in front of the crowd “cold,” with no prior knowledge of the audience.*)

From here, we get into explaining to the audience what has happened and getting to the first ‘magical moment,’ the flash of fire.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Flash of Fire

The first ‘magical moment’ happens when the flash of fire comes out of my hand. The prop that I use is a simple flint flasher. Here’s a picture of it:



It retails for about \$20. I picked mine up from Penguin Magic a fears back. Here's their website: www.penguinmagic.com

It uses some flash cotton, sold separately and is very easy to use. I just walk out on stage, and at the appropriate time, lift my hands, cause the fire to appear and lower my hands. It does not allow you to show your hands empty afterwards, but even when using it for teens, I've NEVER had anyone say anything...other than "Do it again!"

I picked this unit because I did not want to worry about pulls or anything like that. The unit is cheap and reliable.

The entire reason why I use this at all is because the first few minutes of the show are fairly "talky," so I want some sort of 'action' to happen early on, and people ALWAYS flip for this. As magicians, we forget the power of simplicity!

PRO TIP: What I do to get a bigger blast of fire is add some flash paper to the cotton. As you can see from the pic above, there's a place to tuck the cotton. I then take a sheet of flash paper about 2 inches square and twist one end tight and tuck that end UNDER the flash cotton, with the rest of the paper sticking out, not interfering with the ignition of the cotton.

Also, another tip, "just because it's flash paper," be mindful of safety! Occasionally I am VERY close to my front row of spectators. If they are REALLY close, I will skip the flash paper and JUST use cotton. Also, I recommend NOT using more than a 2-inch square of flash paper as you could singe your eyebrows! (Lesson learned.)

Finally, I don't worry about leaving the gimmick in my hand for a few seconds, as a natural moment to ditch it comes when I reach for the foam rock in a few moments.

ALTERNATES: If you have a more complicated fire effect that happens quickly, by all means use it. I use the one that I do because Paul Richards, owner of Elmwood Magic, told me most of the other things on the market were not terribly reliable. That being said, if you REALLY want to 'go cheap' with this, you can have a candle lit and just throw a piece of flash paper through the flame.

Personally, I feel \$20 is a more than reasonable price for an opening effect and having that flash of fire come from nowhere really is amazing!

It is also during this sequence that I use my favorite line in the whole show...

It's when I explain that I assist Binky with his work in kids' parties and his work in the adult film industry...I deliver that line casually, in an offhand way. It started as an ad-lib at one early show, and it ALWAYS gets a laugh. First, it sets up Binky's character even more as a filthy bastard and if delivered offhandedly, it does not come across like you're pushing for a laugh. In fact, when I deliver the line, I usually get the laugh a few seconds later as it takes people a few seconds to register. The follow up line about "Binky diversifying" works because it's delivered as though I'm not expecting that reaction, so my character spits out that line as a quick way of acknowledging that 'interruption.'

Don't underestimate that little exchange. Great stuff! It lets everyone know this is a show for grownups that is NOT "blue," another important consideration, as some people do see magic and clowns as for kids.

Now, we move to the selection sequence of three people.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Choosing the Chief of Police

After the fire flash, I explain that people will be needed to fill roles, starting with the chief of police. Since it's crucial to my show that I do not pick any of the "characters" myself (*a point I reinforce for the final prediction plot twist*) I need to pick my volunteers randomly.

Early on when I started doing this show, I used an empty chocolate milk container that would be put into the audience to randomly select a person. The milk container was supposedly Binky's, and I used the container in conjunction with a spirit bell because it set up a comedy line that I personally thought was hysterical but elicited ZERO laughter for the shows in which I presented it. It gave Binky a bit more character development and the spirit bell helped foreshadow the final revelation of the murderer later. (Even though I rejected it, the scripting for most of this will be available in another section of this course for your consideration).

Ultimately, I decided on the foam rock, as the line about heaving the rock into the audience always got a BIG response, loads of laughs. The idea is hardly unique with me, but it's a great old gag.

Foam rocks are available for around \$8.00. Here's mine:



I picked it up from Hocus Pocus: www.hocus-pocus.com.

If you want to go cheap, just use a paper ball.

PRO TIPS: This is key – when you lift the rock, act like it’s really heavy. Some people will look horrified and nervously laugh and mutter to themselves, “Is he serious? It’s great!

Also, I do NOT just throw the rock in the audience as very often audiences figure out that whoever has the rock will be “dragged on stage” so people will bat it around! What I do now is simply hand it to a person and ask them to hand it to a person...and hand it to another person, etc.

The reality is most of the time, adults at a corporate event are reluctant to get on stage for fear that you will embarrass them, so just asking for volunteers never works! (And when they are onstage, do NOT embarrass them!!!)

This also allows me some degree of control over who gets picked for the Chief. It’s still random, but if the rock is handed to a drunk or a “sour puss,” I’m going to keep that rock moving til I get someone I want! Don’t overlook this simple way of controlling a “random selection of a volunteer!”

One final point: I prefer to get a female for the Chief of Police, partly because of the comedy – most audience are surprised when a female is selected for such a role and also because the Chief will be with me onstage for the opening of the prediction and in 15 years, I personally have found females easier to manage as I do the necessary “dirty work” in that sequence.

After this the rock is never used again as we will use previously selected volunteers to pick new “characters.” Number one, the rock method will only work once as the next time everyone will know what you’re up to and second, using the rock technique would be tedious if used during the whole show

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Choosing the Detectives

Once the chief of police is selected, I take the foam rock from her and ask her to select for us “two big burly men” who will serve as detectives.

As when the female was chosen, when the detectives are chosen, there is often a great deal of merriment and joking amongst those in the audience. Moreso than a simple volunteer for a “trick,” people are realizing that the volunteers selected are playing “characters,” even though the reality is that they are simple helping out with a magic trick.

What's happening here is the audience already sees this show as more than a magic show because of the structure and the set-up in the beginning. What all of this means is that the very selection process of volunteers turns into an Event, making even the most mundane activities during a regular show turn into an entertaining interlude!

PRO TIP: The only downside of having the volunteers selected by the chief of police (and later by the psychic) is the lack of control you have in getting the 'right' volunteers. If I sense the volunteer to be selected (follow their gaze!) may be going toward a showoff or sour puss, I will whisper suggestions, like "Maybe one of those tall guys over there" or something like that in order to "guide" the person to a better suggestion.

I have to say, though, I've been pretty luck all these years! Of course, if you elect to NOT have everything predicted at the end as I do, you can simply choose your own volunteers...but that final twist of having EVERYTHING predicted is unbelievably powerful!

Now we go on to "test" the three volunteers, which for me is just an excuse for a really cool magic routine that fits well into the show structure.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Testing the Three Characters

At this point, I've got the three volunteers with me onstage. I then explain the whole 'testing' process from my script and perform Christopher Taylor's wonderful T-3.



It's available from most dealers for around \$270.

Here's the website where Taylor effects are available as of this writing:
<http://www.arcanerelics.com/#ct>

As I'm writing this, it's listed as "sold out," but it's been around for a number of years so I suspect they will be available again.

As you can see from the picture, you get a receiver that you keep on your person. I just drop mine in my pocket. Then, you get three little transmitters which are hidden in objects. When an object is moved by a spectator (while your back is turned) you receive a pulse – either one, two or three vibrations, or three different light signals, depending on which 'mode' you set the device to.

I use three weapons – a toy gun, a toy hatchet and an empty pill bottle that subs for my "poison."

PRO TIPS: Rather than try to get the transmitters hidden into the weapons, I just use paper lunch sacks (\$2 for 50 or so at your local grocery store). I cut off the bottoms of three bags, take three regular bags, drop a transmitter into each bag and cover each with the cut-off bottoms. Nothing could be simpler!

To keep from having to remember which person has what after I get their signals, I ask the person whose bag vibrated once to stand on a big, printed number one, the bag that vibrated twice to stand on the number two, etc.

I justify the numbers because I want to know where everyone is standing so I don't catch a glimpse of the bags (negating any thoughts of bags being marked, as I have the three stand with their bags behind their backs).

Also, keeping the items in the bags keeps the audience from knowing what is in which bag, keeping the suspense alive for them, too. If the audience could see what item was selected by whom, the revelations are somewhat anti-climactic.

ALTERNATES: If you don't want to buy a T3, maybe you already have Bobby Motta's wonderful "Taste" effect which would work here with some modifications to the premise of the routine. It retails for \$1495 and is even more reliable and amazing.

A cheaper alternative would be Max Mavens "Kurotsuke" as explained on his "Videomind" DVDs available from most dealers. You could substitute the marbles for children's toys, such as the board game "Clue" props which include a gun, rope, etc.

Or, another idea, hand each person a sealed envelope. Lay out several weapons and use Equivoque to force each weapon to match what's in each envelope.

Finally, another idea, if you don't mind working with an assistant, is Andy Nyman's Dead Zone presentation featured on his "Get Nyman" DVDs.

From here, I dismiss the Chief of Police, but before I do so, I make sure she takes the sealed FedEx envelope with her. It's still early on in the show and I want her to have that envelope on her person for as much of the show as possible.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Training the Detectives

Once the Chief of Police has left, I then ask the two male detectives to stand on either side of me as I position myself in the center of the bunched up red material I referenced earlier in this book when I described the stage setting.

It's actually the "Curtain of Death" as performed by Anthony Lindan in his wonderful "Incredible Suit Jacket Escape."



The DVD of the performance and explanation is available from many dealers and Bill Abbott himself for about \$60.

Here's Bill Abbott's website: www.billabbottmagic.com

Bill also sells the shackles and locks for a very fair price of \$45, which includes the snazzy, durable bag. I also found I can cram the Curtain of Death into the bag, making transport a snap!



Finally, the DVD gives you all the info needed to make your own Curtain of Death, but if you're lazy about prop building as I am, you can just buy it from Bill for \$250.

PRO TIP: No real tips from me other than the fact that I do it just as Anthony teaches. I always try to twist a routine to “make it my own,” but I have yet to add anything of significance to this. In my view it’s perfect – loads of comedy, visual, the red curtain looks BIG onstage and so much more.

ALTERNATES: If you don’t want to spend that kind of money (although I HIGHLY recommend it) you can substitute a handcuff escape, a rope escape, a thumbtie routine or maybe you already have a straitjacket escape of your own! Drop it in here as a way to “train the detectives,” again giving framework as to why in the hell you’re doing all these weird things on stage!

Thumbtie and rope escape routines are available in books, DVDs and more, making this part of the show within reach of anyone from an economic standpoint. What you’re looking for is some kind of escape, preferably one that plays well from stage with a comedic element. (Personally, I LOVE Mac King’s thumbtie routine, but I’m quite sure he has not put it out yet.)

One line of script I wanted to touch upon is the “I don’t know” in red. I “borrowed” that from the Three Amigos, in the scene where Steve Martin tells the bad guy that he goes to fill “fill hi so full of lead he’ll have to use his dick for a pencil.” When the puzzled bad guy asks what that means, Martin admits, in a forceful tone of voice, “I don’t know.”

I use it because I mention the idea that the long-dead Houdini trained our murderer in ways of escape. The “I don’t know” is my own silly way of acknowledging this claim. If delivered right, the line does indeed get a laugh. This allows me to use the whole Houdini background on the effect as Anthony does yet still tie this into the plot of my own show.

Finally, while the two detectives serve no other purpose in the plot other than this routine, it DOES give me two more names that I can show predicted at the end and my opinion is that the more names and things I can predict, the stronger that “Plot Twist” will be.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Choosing the Psychic & Coroner

Once the detectives are dismissed, I ask the Chief of Police to select for me a coroner and the a psychic, leading us to the next section, explaining how the investigation was at a stand-still until the psychic came in.

This keeps the Chief of Police involved in the show on some level and keeps the selection process fair, although I will occasionally pepper the request with subtle suggestions like, “Someone with a good sense of humor,” or “someone who is honest,” etc in an effort to get a fun person onstage...

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Psychic Powers & Time of Death

This is the routine with the watch coupled with the wonderful PK Touches by Banachek. First, a few notes on PK Touches. It's a \$10 booklet, so I'm not going to give any alternates, as the asking price for this brilliant effect is WAY too low. It's still available from many dealers and is just incredible. It's a prop-less effect, can be done in parlor or stage situations and, if you're careful, can be done surrounded (I've pulled it off in tough situations).

Banachek's presentation, as written up in the booklet involves a dead uncle, which, as written, was far too dark. To me, PK Touches lends itself beautifully to a "two minds connecting" sort of presentation, where what happens seems to be independent of Mr. Magic Guy.

I also try to have a man for the coroner, as all he has to do is just stand there for the PK Touches effect. For some reason, I feel the effect works best when a female feels the 'touch.' In my experience, females are much less likely to try and "screw" with me.

Now, onto the watch effect. This comes from Richard Osterlind's wonderful "Mind Mysteries, Volume 1" DVD. Pretty much everything on that DVD is great stuff that you add to any mentalism show. Just about the best mentalism DVD I've ever seen. (I would only put Bob Cassidy's "Mental Miracles" as perhaps higher).

The routine I'm using here in the Murder show is called, simply, "Watch Routine" on the DVD. The DVD is available for about \$35 from many magic dealers. Like so much of my stuff, I got it from Hocus Pocus: www.hocus-pocus.com.

The DVD is a steal at that price and often you can get three or four volumes in the series at a discount as many dealers 'bundle' the DVD sets.

The main crux of the effect, as I present it, is glimpsing the written time and the rest of the effect, how the time correctly winds up on the watch, I will obviously not reveal here...other than to say the effect is brilliant, the work is easy, and it can be done with most analog (NOT digital) watches.

As far as the glimpse goes, Richard teaches a simple way of accessing the information by using a simple business card. The card is not torn, but merely folded. I like it and used it for many shows, then decided to use something even easier – a peek wallet. The peek wallet I settled on is the Stealth Assassin by Peter Nardi. It's a great wallet, very versatile, and employs several different peek styles for different situations. The wallet also has a ton of other uses, making it a great investment. I bought it for \$179, but now I understand Peter has a second version out as well as a completely new wallet.

Of course, any peek method would work that you're comfortable with – another peek wallet, a center tear, or even what's come to be known as the "microphone switch," as

taught by Bob Cassidy in the aforementioned “Mental Miracles” DVD in which Bob did it using a lighter as the paper is burned.

The point is, nearly any peek will work. I like the wallet because it appears very “offhand” the way I do it. Unlike a center tear, the ‘work’ is over quickly. I personally have never liked using a center tear as it seems like such a Procedure, with a capital ‘P.’

Even the great masters of mentalism, on their DVDs, such as Banachek and Osterlind, during the tearing situation, even mention things like, “I’m being careful not to look down as I tear this,” etc., which just seems so hokey to me.

With that being said, I cheerfully admit that there have been a zillion mentalists who have slayed audiences with the center tear, so I happily and quickly admit my views are very much in the minority!

Both of the effects in this larger routine are very economical, so finding something cheaper would be tough – really, with this routine, you need, at most, a business card, a pen, and a watch (yours or a borrowed one). So saving money isn’t much of a factor.

PRO TIP: I prefer to use my own watch for the effect. While borrowing a watch is obviously more “fair,” to me, using my own watch just keeps the pace up. Borrowing one means I have to look at watches, see if they will work, convince the person to let me borrow it, etc., etc. So I just use mine. It STILL slays audiences because the other person is handling the watch in the routine.

ALTERNATES: If you have a different ‘time’ routine, you can certainly do it. This is a nice way to tie into the theme of the show – using a magic effect to determine the time of death makes a LOT of sense to me and to my audiences.

If you want a prop that plays bigger without the addition of the chalk board, there are gimmicked clocks out there such as “Pizza Time” in which the selected time matches the time set on a big watch.

If you want to get REALLY simple and don’t want to fuss with a wallet or watch or anything, just use a nailwriter to ‘predict’ the time the coroner came up with. I do think, however, that the strength of this is the idea that the volunteer ‘psychic’ comes up with the same time as the ‘coroner.’ From storyline standpoint, Osterlind’s routine makes the MOST sense out of all the options I explored.

I should also point out that this routine also serves double-duty, as the time the coroner selected also turns up in the final prediction.

The Real Work During the Show: When I hand the spectator the notebook to write the time, it’s actually the Nomad Pad, which I reviewed in my Trick Talk review blog. It’s a

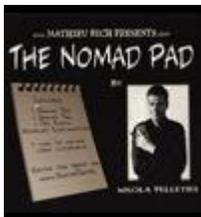
wonderful impression device that gives users a clear ‘impression.’ To see how the thing works, just view the demo video at Hocus Pocus: www.hocus-pocus.com.

The creator has come under a lot of fire for ‘exposing’ his own product, but I don’t get a damn. The thing works and looks like a regular notepad.

Any real-time impression device will work, as would a center tear, wallet, etc. The reason I went with the Nomad Pad in this version of the routine is because I wanted a separation from me and what was written. With a center tear, peek wallet, et al, I must handle the written information. With the Nomad Pad, the volunteer rips off the page (clearly seeing nothing underneath if she flips through the pages) and in the offbeat, I take the pad back and as the ‘coroner’ is going into the audience to pick someone to play the ‘psychic,’ all I have to do is place the pad into my side table, which I’ve previously established as my legit ‘dumping ground’ for props no longer needed. I get my peek, turn the dials of the control box to the proper times and voila! I’m ready for an incredible revelation. ALL my actions in this sequence are completely justified.

I realize that such a set up with a backdrop, running wires, etc. will not appeal to everyone, but I want to include everything. I should also mention that this prop is really suited to stage shows of 100 people or more and I don’t think it would work well in a home party.

The Nomad Pad is available for about \$100. Here’s a pic of the ad:



Quick Script Notes: The little line in red about “Except you. You’re doing just fine” is an example of how this whole ‘back and forth’ action and dialog between two volunteers with the performer in the middle can liven up a rather “talky” portion of the show as we set up the effect for the ultimate pay off. If I have two volunteers onstage, I always try to work out my blocking so one is on either side, which really livens things up.

Another line in red – when I assure the volunteer I will not embarrass them. In actuality I reinforce this throughout the show. Adults in a corporate environment can be EXTREMELY skittish when working with a magician on stage, so I say this line (and others like it) with absolute sincerity.

The red line, the term Mental Corridor, is a cute term I came up with because it sounds like a hokey new-age term for something. By deliberately NOT explaining what it means, I have avoided the boring exposition of what’s going to happen when so many mentalists try to explain what they are doing in quasi-scientific or NLP terms. It plays dry as hell, so

I just say Mental corridor and leave it at that. It comes off as funny to some, mysterious to others, and has enough of a curious sound to it that it activates the curiosity factor in people.

From a humor standpoint, when I tell the coroner they will have to take a core temperature, I'm dropping in just enough info for the audience to get what I'm hinting at yet not going overboard and creating an "ewwww" moment. Likewise, the bit with the rubber gloves is suggestive and amusing, but not terribly "blue." Feel free to leave this out if you're worried. I use the bit maybe 50% of the time.

Another key line is my remark with the credit cards in my wallet. I came up with that years ago and I say it a moment before I get my peek. It elicits a chuckle from the audience and particularly the volunteer, occupying their minds for a brief moment, allowing my subsequent peek to go unnoticed every time without fail.

Another moment in the script worth pointing out is when I take out the chalkboard. I own Osterlind's lovely Ultra Board, but honestly, any chalkboard will do for this bit. I also prefer using a chalk board as the white numbers really "pop" against the black background. I think using a white art pad or worse, yet a dry erase white board (heavy glare!) can make viewing the thin black lines on the white glaring background difficult.

Honestly, the only reason why I write the time down is indeed so the whole can see what time is on the watch, allowing them to share in the moment. On his DVD, Osterlind apparently "deduces" the time and writes it down, getting the audience to applaud for his psychic work and then again for the revelation with the watch. For me, after performing it that way many times, I feel the effect is weakened considerably. For my preference, keeping the crux of the effect as JUST one volunteer deducing the thought-of time of the second spectator keeps the focus away from me and squarely on the volunteers. Just my preference.

The final 'red script line' occurs when the audience laughs, realizing the psychic volunteer is still stuck onstage. Treat your volunteer with respect, as being stuck on stage for two routines is not something many will want to do. The laughter from the audience is partially relief at THEM not being onstage, but honestly, the way I'm building up the apparent abilities of the 'psychic' volunteer, they almost always get massive cheers when they finally do sit down...and again, when I call her back up toward the end of the show.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: 8 Suspects and the Phone Number

Here we move to the segment when the 'psychic' is asked to go into the audience and select the 8 most 'guilty looking people!' Trust me, when she goes and starts selecting people, there will be a great deal of laughter and banter going on!

Once again, this is powerful because the show is crossing the fourth wall, that is, it's breaking the plane and coming TO the audience – very powerful, theatrically.

The other benefit of having the 'psychic' do it (aside from the merriment it generates) is the fact that since one of the group's own is selecting people, there will be a lot LESS resistance to getting hauled up onstage! Don't undervalue this!

As the selection/gathering process takes place, I am 'directing traffic' and getting the committee to line up shoulder to shoulder as I want them arranged. I've also got that "Oh Yeah" song playing from "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" and it really adds to the fun and helps fill the dead time. (I think the band is called Yellow or something like that).

PRO TIP: Having the 'psychic' pick the 8 suspects does indeed keep with the structure of the show – that is, keeping ME from selecting any of the characters and keeping the purity of the prediction at the end intact when the murderer is revealed. From a storyline sense, the 'psychic' really SHOULD be the one to ultimately select the murderer, as otherwise she ultimately serves no purpose.

In this routine, the story idea is that she "is drawn" to a phone number, which is given to the police, which they in turn use to find the house which has clues in it – setting up the blindfold routine. It all connects in a very simple fashion. Of course, the prediction of the phone number serves as "proof" that the psychic is right. Here, suspension of disbelief is required, because why would the 8 suspects help with the prediction?

I used to have this muddy exposition about the suspects, sensing the "tide of the case was turning against them," decided to fess up and give up the phone number to someone else's house. Then, a murderer was ultimately selected from the audience. It might have been a LITTLE more logical, but I like this way better – the psychic selects the 8 suspects, reveals the phone number she senses, the 8 suspects are whittled down to 4 and ultimately one of those four is revealed as the killer. I just think it flows better and is still extremely simple – again, plot exposition is something I really worked hard to reduce wherever I could.

Once we get the eight suspects lined up, I then perform Bob Kohler's Human Phone Number, his take on the classic phone number test, a classic plot in mentalism that always plays extremely strong and if not for the structure of this show, could easily close any show.

Bob's version comes with the big envelopes as well as the numbers, enough numbers allowing you to predict ANY 7-digit phone number. The numbers are extremely tough, high quality plastic cards made of the same material that many commercial signs are made of, so they're made to last.

Bob also gives you, on the CD-ROM that comes with the kit, several different ways of forcing the phone number and different ways to reveal it, although the Human Phone Number way is my absolute favorite.

PRO TIP: One thing Bob does is talk about bringing the whole kit with you, allowing you to do the effect with the client's home city's phone book. While it's stronger to use THEIR phone book by far, I always just use my own because twice while performing in Canada, I was at gigs where the building I was in had NO phone books! I was forced to cut the effect. (This was before development of the murder show.)

Now, I just take my Niagara Falls, NY book with me and if anyone is really skeptical, they can comb through that sucker to their heart's content – they won't find a thing.

Bob's Human Phone Number retails for about \$350 from most dealers. Here's Bob's website: <https://www.bobkohlermagic.com>

Here's a pic of the ad for the Human Phone Number:



As of this writing, Bob has the Human Phone Number listed as out of stock, but it's not an electronic effect or anything like that, so I fully expect it to come back.

Of course, if you do not want to wait or don't want to spend \$350 on the phone book test, there are other options.

Banachek has a phone book test in his PSI series of four DVDs. The phone test is on DVD number 2. The DVD runs about \$35. Of the alternate phone book tests I will mention here, I felt this was the weakest.

Next, Docc Hilford has a phone book test on one of his Monster mentalism DVDs. It's on number 4, called "Killer on Tiber Street." Interestingly, Docc uses a sort of comedi killer theme in this effect. I felt the method was a little better than Banachek's but the presentation was quite cute.

Of course, if I'm not mistaken, Anneman created at least one version of the phone book test, if not others.

Finally, in his Theater of the mind book, \$35 or so from most dealers, he reveals a solution for the phone book test that is close to Kohler's. In fact, Bob credits Barrie, but has added several improvements, making Kohler's the best in my book.

Obviously, there are many more solutions to the plot, but those are some cheaper ideas to get you thinking.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: From 8 Suspects to 4

After the revelation of the phone number, I explain that the ‘psychic’s’ job is still not over yet, which undoubtedly prompts more laughter from the audience at her predicament, but her job at this point is simple – she merely has to hand out 4 6x9 envelopes to the 4 “even guiltier” looking suspects from this group of eight.

I hand her the envelopes (each of which says “SUSPECT” in large letters on the outside of the envelope and as she does so, I quickly gather the envelopes and numbers from the previous effect, meaning the ‘psychic’ continues to move the story forward as I “clean up” from the last effect, reducing dead time. (Sometimes I impress myself!)

PRO TIP: Because one of these four people selected will ultimately be revealed as the killer, I do want to give myself the best chances possible for a great volunteer for the big reveal, so I will often whisper to her to “get a big guy” or someone “with a sense of humor,” or “not too drunk!” because I’ve been watching these eight people and while the selections are ultimately her choices, I do try to hedge my bets as much as I can!

Once the final selections are made, I dismiss everyone and begin talking about the blindfold act.

I should point out the fact that I have the psychic up on stage for quite a while, with the Time and Touch routine and then the phone number. After the eight suspects are whittled down to four, we dismiss the ‘psychic’ and suspects and have a break in the show – the blindfold act – before continuing with the ‘psychic’ and suspects.

This breaking up of the suspect process allows the ‘psychic’ to get off stage for a while. I know some performers like The Amazing Johnathon will have a volunteer onstage for 20 minutes at a time, but in a corporate environment, I feel 10 minutes or so is tops. It’s just my own preference.

The other thinking is that I did not want to do the blindfold routine earlier in the show (before the psychic is selected) because the Blindfold Act is so strong. I also did not want the Blindfold Act after the murderer is revealed as once we reveal the killer, we are rushing toward the finale of the show.

Please be aware that these are my own thoughts, and you are free to experiment with the pacing and ‘set list’ any way you wish.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Finding Clues: The Blindfold Act

At this point, I am alone, center stage, and I take the time (just a moment or two) to ‘re-set’ the show or recap what has happened so no one forgets all of this silliness has a point to it!

My justification for the blindfold act being in the show was to illustrate the idea that at the house (found by using the phone number), the police search the house and find clues, which is difficult because of the lack of light.

It’s in this segment where I myself actually select volunteers – three to draw clues and two to blindfold me. Since the names of these five people do not factor into the final prediction, selecting the people myself is a good opportunity to keep things moving from a pacing standpoint.

Besides, the idea of ‘planting’ or ‘pre-arranging’ the idea of drawings with people never comes into anyone’s minds as most often, the people I select are just as horrified as being chosen as everyone else prior to this point in the show. (Here I will often gently – GENTLY – chide anyone still showing reluctance at being selected at this juncture because I’ve got 35 minutes or so of ‘equity’ built up in that I have not embarrassed anyone in the show, so I remind them of this.)

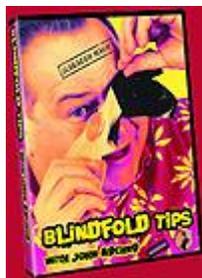
Additionally, after I’m blindfolded, I can often hear audience members muttering and chattering with the three ‘artists’ in the audience, giving them drawing ideas, etc. No one thinks for a minute that any of this drawing stuff is in any way prearranged.

Once the markers and papers are in the audience, I explain that the volunteers will be drawings clues found at the murder scene, giving everyone room for comedy!

I then get the two volunteers onstage who help me get blindfolded and from here, I perform John Archer’s version of the blindfold, using two coins, a roll of duct tape and a sleeping mask.

John Archer’s routine is brilliant in terms of pacing, blocking and even the idea of using pictures that everyone in the audience can see (increasing involvement). I feel it’s so much better than using little pictures, coins, etc.

John’s DVD teaching his marvelous routine is called “Blindfold Tips” and is available from most dealers for about \$40. It runs close to 2 hours long – the 20-minute routine along with 90 minutes or so of analysis. Here’s the ad artwork so you will know what you are looking for:



John's routine runs about 20 minutes but truthfully, the first 10 minutes or so is him ad-libbing with his volunteers, telling jokes and so forth. When I do the routine, it runs 10-12 minutes for me.

With the whole duct tape business, there's a lot of room for comey as I yelp and complain about the pain and so forth. John's gag about inviting the lady to "frisk" him looking for hidden gadgets is very funny, and you'll notice in my script I go one step further – I ask the guy to search me too! Very funny.

If you have a sure-fire blindfold method and don't want to buy another version, feel free to use yours here, but honestly, if you've never done a blindfold act before, it's incredibly fun and once you learn John's fine points in terms of technique and presentation, you can grab a roll of duct tape and have a 10-20 minute act!

Other blindfold routines are all over the magic literature – Anneman, Corinda, etc, etc.

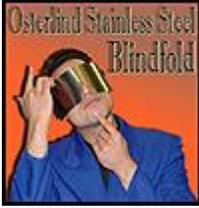
The only other thing to mention in this section is the fact that I also use Richard Osterlind's Stainless Steel Blindfold in this routine. It's not necessary, but to me it adds yet another layer of impossible to the effect.

I was doing my blindfold act years ago (before I created the Murder show) and the show was going along great until I pulled the blindfold act out. I heard a few people mutter, "Oh, the mentalist from last year did this," which bummed me out because I couldn't cut it (client wanted an hour long show) and it usually was and still is a highlight of my act.

Knowing that blindfold acts are popular among mentalists, I decided to add the Osterlind blindfold to the act to make the whole thing seem harder. Again, it's not necessary. But I've gotten used to doing it that way, so I leave it in.

Osterlind's Stainless Steel Blindfold retails for about \$75 from many dealers. Here's Richard's own website: <http://www.osterlindmysteries.com/store/>

Here's what the blindfold looks like:



Script Points: The line in red about black, lack of visibility being like the inside of a cow is something I borrowed from Lee Earle. I don't know if Lee ever used it in his shows, but he said it on his "Manifestations" séance package when describing the ideal blackout conditions necessary. The line stuck with me, so I use it.:

I also make mention of freaking out one of my volunteers (section in red) and often that will get a good laugh regardless of her answer. I never flirt with a lady on stage (bad form, I feel) but I do think it's fun to poke fun at myself and one way is sometimes acknowledging the fact that I may in fact be "freaking people out" just by doing what I do!

Some of the other lines in red are relating to things I say when the volunteers are putting the tape on my head and pushing a little too hard – fun stuff!

The line about 'slicing my nose off' in regard to the metal mask is my comedic way of justifying not letting a volunteer put it on my head. For the handling of the Osterlind blindfold, it's necessary that the performer puts it on his/herself, so that little line justifies it. It probably isn't necessary to justify it at all, but the fact that up to that point I've let the volunteers put it all on does set up a certain lack of continuity in the procedure.

The other reason for the 'clues' is it gives me three more things to show predicted at the end of the show. Again, it all ties in nicely.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Finding the Murderer

After the blindfold act, I then reveal that with the clues found, we were now ready to reveal the murderer!

With that, I call back up to the stage the four remaining suspects who are each holding a "SUSPECT" envelope. As they come up, Michael Jackson's song "Smooth criminal" plays – as appropriate a song as anything!

I then re-call the 'psychic' back to the stage, usually to cheers!

The whole business of reducing the four suspects down to one plays very well as I do it, with the third person ultimately being "it," from a pacing standpoint. Regardless of where the murderer is standing (by this point I know whose envelope says "guilty"), I always have the third selection (as outlined in the script) as the revelation. For me, it all comes down to pacing.

PRO TIP: If it's the first person, there's no dramatic 'build.' The second is okay, but not quite enough of a 'build,' while the fourth is anti-climactic: if I've revealed three of the four envelopes as saying "Innocent," then there's not a lot left to wonder about.

Blocking is important as I have the four suspects lined up in a straight line, facing the audience, with their envelopes' labels of "SUSPECT" facing out. The 'psychic' is on the other side of the stage, standing profile to the audience or standing behind the table, facing the audience. (This depends on how much space I have.)

I am in either the middle of all of this directing traffic or if I have a very large stage, I will move the ornate wooden table and have the 'psychic' center stage as that's where the action will take place once we get down to the murderer.

The way I discover who is holding the Guilty paper is simplicity itself – the envelopes are marked! But they are marked in a subtle, yet bold way if that makes sense. You see, when I designed this routine, I actually had a different effect with a necklace which was quite tedious (no wonder I got it so cheap) and ultimately gave up on it.

I'll go more in depth on this in the separate booklet titled "The Secrets." In addition to the actual marking, there are some other considerations worth discussing from a marketing standpoint. The trick is something I called "Whoisit" (Who Is It?) which is a take-off of the name of another product.

ALTERNATIVES: Since you purchased this package, I will tip my method, which is cheap to put together, so no alternatives are really necessary. With that in mind, perhaps you don't like using marked envelopes for whatever reason or maybe you want a version of Murder By magic that is so small you could perform it around a dinner table.

This would be a great place for Max maven's "Kurotsuke," which, though difficult to spell, is quite easy to perform. It's the routine where several white marbles and one black marble are tossed into a bag, and you are able to reveal who has the black marble. In this case, the person with the black marble is the killer. (Why not use a red marble?)

Great effect, no gimmicks, and can be done surrounded. Once again, it's on Max's Videomind series of DVDs from your favorite dealer.

With the banter and comedic questioning of the suspects, you could easily draw out this segment for several minutes and simply verbally reveal who has the "Guilty" paper (and avoid having the 'psychic' come onstage again), but I prefer to keep the banter to a minimum as this routine is late in the show and people are eager to see who amongst their group will be revealed as the murderer. Instead of extended comedic banter (though I do some), I make the revelation with a "kick" that people will remember!

The way I perform this, the envelopes are marked so I know at a glance who has what, and then it's simply a matter of using some sort of controlled PK device to trigger when the killer's name comes up.

By PK device, I'm talking about something that 'moves' without any apparent involvement on my part. My preferred way of doing this is using Tim Wisseman's wonderful Spirit Table. It retails for \$550 from Hocus Pocus. Here's a picture of it:



As the ad description specifies, you can make a coin JUMP into the air, make the supplied bell ring and make the supplied Ouija Board planchette fly off the table, all remote controlled!

It's a great prop, looks great on stage, can be done closeup and surrounded, is completely silent and is reliable as hell. It's easy, too – all you have to do is push a button (or trigger a toe switch, the choice is yours).

Using this allows me to apparently, from a storyline perspective, allow the 'psychic' to cause the Ouija board planchette to fly off the table, supposedly an indication of her own powers. From the structure of the story, this makes perfect sense.

From the standpoint of the audience, in reality, the 'psychic' always jumps and yelps in surprise. It's a beautiful, magical moment that never fails to get one helluva reaction!

A couple of notes...first, I NEVER use the Ouija planchette in a church – duh! In those cases, I will usually use the bell. If the audience is quiet, the bell can be heard easily by 100 or more people.

Although the (supplied) coin jumping does look great, I tend to shy away from using it as many people may, I suspect, want to keep the coin – “I’ll give you a dollar! I want this coin!”

If you think, as you’re reading this, that I’m being paranoid, let me tell you, I’ve had countless people try to buy my “mismade dollar” from me when I do strolling magic and do the old bill switch – changing a spectator’s dollar into the mis-made bill.

Normally I am against “startling” an audience member in this fashion, but I don’t feel this is crossing any lines because I never talk about the ‘demons’ in conjunction with the Ouija board that so many people associate with the prop. I keep the patter light and quick, only talking about the prop enough to explain what is going on and justify the use of this old wooden table in the setting of the show which is otherwise quite modern.

I should also point out that in my earliest script for the Murder show, I had a lot more ‘spirit effects’ in it, as my original goal was to make the show a combination murder mystery and comedic ‘spook show.’ Most of the routines I developed and tested played quite well and you’ll have access to all of those in the “Alternate Routines” booklet that came with the course.

ALTERNATES: Knowing that some people do not care for the idea of using a Ouija board in any fashion, Ive got several alternatives for this point in the script – once again, an apparent demonstration of PK that from a storyline standpoint, we can attribute to the ‘psychic’ volunteer.

With that in mind, I have used different things myself. If I am doing a small group and I am flying to the gig, my Spirit Table will not fit into an airplane without getting destroyed so I usually use Tim Wisseman’s beautiful Spirit Bell. It looks great and once again, just by pressing a button or toe switch, you can cause a bell to ring mysterously.

It’s called “Dead Ringer,” retails for \$300 and is available from Hocus Pocus. (Not sure if other dealers carry it...like many of Wisseman’s stuff, I think Hocus has the exclusive.)

Ignore the bizarre ad picture and just check out the prop – very delicate and cool looking:



As I mentioned earlier, it's not exactly the loudest thing in the world, so using it for large groups is not the most reliable thing in the world.

I've also used a Losander Floating Table in this spot, which looks great, is silent and extremely visual. I'll talk more in the "Alternate Routines" booklet about why I no longer use my Losander table in my Murder show, but it may be a great alternative for you.

As I understand it, Nick Wenger also produces one helluva spirit bell. It's available from him for about \$440. Here's a photo:



It's got a very unique design and like the Wisseman bell, it's a simple electronic push button prop.

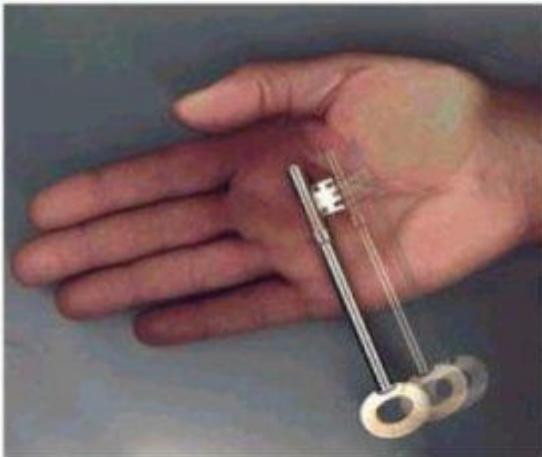
Another "PK" option I've considered for audiences that I fly to is using the good ol' Pro Viper snake basket! (A snake jumps out of a basket winding up with a selected card in its mouth). The basket itself is too big to fly with and as a wicker basket, it would get

destroyed anyway, but when I fly, I just take the snake and motor and put it into a small brown paper lunch sack. In many ways, it enhances the effect as the snake jumping out of the bag looks impossibly large!

The Pro Viper is a great prop, but unfortunately it's hard as hell to get one as even a couple of dealers I've spoken to remark that the creator is very unreliable. I got my hands on one 4 years ago, and regret not buying 5 of 'em in case I have problems!

If I ever use the Pro Viper in my Murder show for this segment, my idea is to talk about witches' "familiar," that is, animal 'mascots,' to be brief – cats, birds, etc....but our 'psychic' here has a familiar that is a little unusual...that's the idea, anyway.

If you're looking for a cheaper 'spirit revelation,' the old Haunted Key, (key mysteriously turns over in the performer's hand – no strings wires or magnets) available for just a few bucks, is a great idea for smaller groups. Here's a pic from Elmwood Magic:



At www.elmwoodmagic.com, it retails for \$7.95

Then there's the reliable 'tip pen' effect. Banachek puts out a great one called the Psychokinetic Pen, for \$14.95, also at Elmwood:



As you can see, it's just a normal-looking Bic pen, totally self-contained.

There are a zillion close-up PK options out there, and a few cheaper good ones for stage, such as the old "Telekinetic Timber," which is where a block of wood leaning against something mysteriously moves by itself, tipping over. It's self-contained, travels easily, and can be done surrounded, as there's no hook-up to thread, no electronics, nothing.

It retails for \$50 at Elmwood Magic. Here's a pic:



Finally, for ultra-cheap stage PK effects, you can use good ol' Invisible Thread to tip over an ungimmicked bell or some other object.

My friend Ted Peterson, a magician currently living in Connecticut, used to do an extremely spooky routine where he would introduce a gorgeous wooden staff that had a human head carved at the head of the prop. He'd balance the prop on the edge of a table and make magical passes with his hands. The cane would then eerily move, untouched, to point at the next volunteer. It looked great and could not be any simpler.

All of these ideas should get you thinking along the lines of what you'd like to use in your act to 'give the psychic credit' for zeroing in on the murderer, which from the standpoint of the audience, keeps her as the 'star,' which is what I like.

Once the murderer is revealed, I quickly dismiss the last volunteer as well as the psychic, leaving me alone onstage with...the killer!

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: Method of Execution

It's at this point of the script that I announce that, in the best Scooby-Doo tradition, we shall explain exactly how the murder took place. Referencing Scooby-Doo in my own Murder show gives me a source of perverse satisfaction!

Because the method of execution could be just about anything, this segment in the program is wide open with possibilities. You can do virtually ANY trick that appears to have an element of danger to it.

I personally chose to use Scott Alexander's Velocity 3.0, put out by Bob Kohler magic. It retails, as of this writing, for \$699. It is, as the script reads, a signed bullet catch done with a signed paintball and a paintball gun. The original Velocity gun is unavailable, but Bob recently introduced Velocity 3.0 with an extremely menacing-looking gun (paintball "marker" as it's known in the paintball world.) Here's a pic:



I think the new gun looks great!

Scott's method for the routine gives you a great deal of flexibility in terms of the two 'moves' necessary for the trick, allowing you to pick the one that you like best.

The trick is extremely safe – you are NEVER in ANY danger whatsoever. The angles are great, handling is easy, making this the perfect “pack flat, play big” effect.

PRO TIPS: I do want to point out, in my scripting, that I have the ‘test shot’ typed in red. That’s because very often I do not bother with the test shot. Very often, the damn paintball will bounce off of something and fly back at the audience. It’s not dangerous, as despite the patter, the ball is not going tremendously fast (unless you swallow it or it hits your eyes, so ALWAYS use caution!) but it is annoying.

Also, for a small group in a home, sometimes I will, if I’m even in the mood for a test shot, fire the thing into a plastic empty water bottle. The audience can see the ball bounce around or perhaps it splattered spectacularly in the bottle and, on some rare occasions, it will blow through the bottom of the bottle!

Most of the time, however, I will skip the test shot as it seems to just slow the show pacing down. These days, I usually just ‘dry fire’ the gun (firing without it loaded) so the audience can get a sense of how loud that sucker is before the actual trick.

Finally, the main reason I like using this effect is simple: an effect with a gun makes perfect sense in a murder mystery setting.

Script Notes: Written in red is my request to the ‘murderer’ volunteer that, after he picks up the paintball, he holds it in his hand and cough. I don’t think I have to explain that gag! It’s also one you can easily leave out if you don’t feel comfortable with it. Personally, I think it’s hysterical and so do my audiences.

Another remark, written in red, that I enjoy is when I ‘needle’ the murderer about ever having served time before. It makes the audience laugh and it is consistent with the idea that the murderer is a ‘bad guy.’

One thing I do want to draw your attention to is the fact that in my version of the show, as I dramatically, slowly drop my head and turn to the audience (revealing the caught paintball in my mouth), just as it dawns on the audience that I’ve seemingly accomplished the impossible, I trigger the music track of the main “Indiana Jones” theme, which is always a laugh-getter and it increases the applause! (C’mon, what music has ever perfectly captured the mood of accomplishing the impossible in a triumphant way that the main “Indiana Jones” music??)

As the music plays, I take a few seconds to triumphantly march back and forth across the stage and even literally pat myself on the back a few times. It's SO fun and totally fits my (slightly nerdy) stage persona...which isn't too far away from my REAL persona!

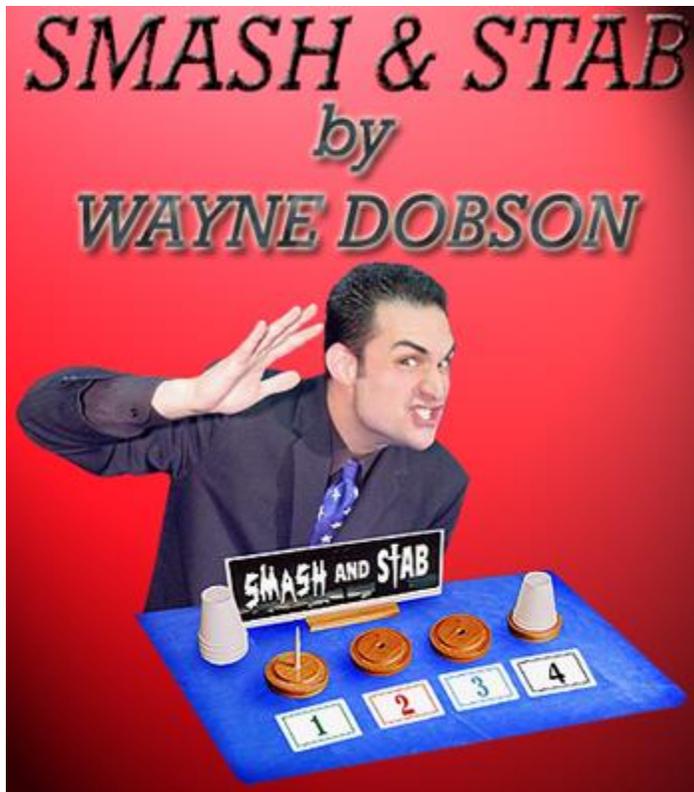
Finally, in red, I give the 'explanation' of how the paintball could have killed Binky the clown with the choking hazard, the lead paint, and so on. That's how I used to explain everything. Recently, when I introduce the routine, I simply say that Binky was going to do the trick with a REAL gun and ultimately that's how he got killed, but I myself will be using a paintball gun because "I'm not as stupid as Binky," which really does make more sense from a believability standpoint, even in this comedic setting.

REMINDER: *I should also break in and remind you that during the original suspect selection process (for the phone number routine) I do subtly try to influence the 'psychic' to pick mostly men and try to get big guys, relatively young, who I can tell can follow my instructions clearly. Once I had a very old guy selected as the murderer and it was a little tough getting him to understand how I did indeed want him to do the routine as scripted!*

ALTERNATES: With all of that in mind, there are plenty of alternatives I will list here, many of them much cheaper than Velocity.

As I mentioned earlier, nearly any 'danger' type trick will work here. Here are a few:

Any type of Russian Roulette or 'smash the sharp object' effect – Although I do not use it in the Murder show, I use Wayne Dobson's "Smash & Stab" which is easy, visual, and fun. I'll be the first to admit this is NOT the safest way to do the trick, as others have screwed up and injure themselves. When you can find them, they retail for about \$200. Here's a pic:



Jon Allen's "The Pain Game," which I used to own, is very good. It's much safer than most other similar effects out there, but the set-up is a bit of a pain and it's pricier - \$500 from most dealers. Here's the ad pick:



Safely presents

THE PAIN GAME

By Jon Allen



Failure is not an option

A cheaper 'stab' kind of effect that you can make for yourself is available in the booklet "Coral Fang," by Luke Jermy. The booklet runs about \$55 from most dealers. Here is the WEIRD ad pic:



Besides the stab-effect in the booklet, there's other good material in there, too. I used Jermy's effect for many years and the reaction is great. Plus, it's safer to use as you can SEE the knife BEFORE you stab it, even though the audience cannot. (It will make sense when you read the book.)

Other 'danger' type effects include: A guillotine or arm chopper (too many to list), a Sword Thru Neck (mine cost \$189 and rocks) or even a card sword effect. All these props

look great on stage, offer a lot of scope for comedy, and fulfill the ‘danger’ aspect of the routine.

Another option, one that is VERY small in terms of space, is the “I’m going to swallow sharp things” type of routine.

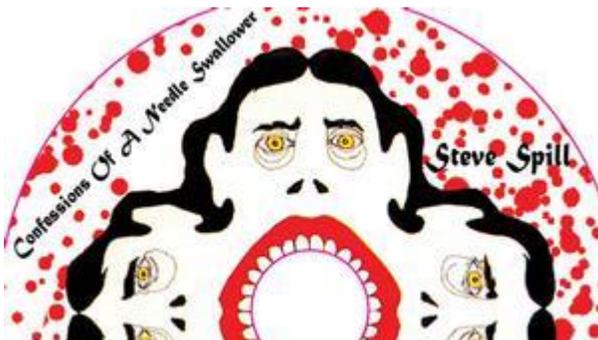
Scott Alexander, through Bob Kohler, has put out a terrific routine called “The Blades.” Apparently, it’s Scott’s closer. Like other routines of its type, it involves swallowing several razor blades, swallowing thread...and when you pull the thread out, the blades are threaded and tied on the thread. It retails for about \$795 from Bob Kohler magic. Here’s an ad pic:



Of course, there are a zillion versions of the razor blades effect, some ranging in price from \$10 (which I used to great effect for many years) and on up in price to \$100 or more. The point is, there’s a ton out there.

For a very economical solution, and this is a routine I’ve used for years to great success, consider Steve Spill’s “Confessions of a Needle Swallower.” It’s a \$50 DVD that includes several performances and the buyer is taught all the nuances of threading the needles, gimmick preparation and more. Steve’s routine is very funny, there are no angles to worry about, and the effect plays big – with proper lighting, I’ve done it for 500 teens in a gym!

The DVD is also available from Bob Kohler Magic. Here’s the ad pic



CAUTION: At this point, I do want to chime in with a strong opinion – for me, this is NOT the time or place to do any true ‘geek’ effect I terms of blood. I know one corporate performer who uses on a regular basis the “Needle Thru Arm” effect, complete with blood. He insists it works great for him, but I feel it’s going too far. Corporate audiences, despite the alcohol and bravado on display, are still one of the most consistently conservative audiences you’ll come across. I think blood is pushing the envelope way too far.

Quite honestly, the Needles and Razor Blades routines do make some people uneasy, so even those are pushing it for some groups.

I think the pantball catch works so well because everyone ‘knows’ it is not lethal, even if something were to go wrong. In my experience, audiences view it as either a trick or a bona fide skill! Amazing...

Other effects to AVOID: things with REAL snakes, REAL spiders, fake limbs, etc. Play it safe and increase your chances to get hired again!

At this point, the murderer is dismissed back into the audience (along with my smart-alecky comment about the police waiting for him after the show) and the it’s on to the big Plot Twist!

SCRIPT ANALYSIS: The Plot Twist

First, I’ll state up front that I have been closing nearly all of my adult programs of any kind for a decade. This plays STRONG!

From a story standpoint, the psychology is perfect – the “big wow” moment comes from the danger effect, making it a great climax to the show, but like most good action movies, after the big explosion/fight/conflict, there’s an “epilogue,” where the hero and his/her sidekicks, catch their breath and walk off into the sunset.

The perfect example of this was, in my opinion, the movie “Psycho,” in which the dramatic arc of the movie built and built and then Bates was revealed as the killer, dressed as his own mother, and then we dissolve to the scene where the psychiatrist explains the weird plot twist we just saw.

In a sense, that’s what’s happening here – we have the big climax and then the plot twist is this crazy prediction that predicts EVERYTHING that happened throughout the show. It always catches everyone by surprise as it’s so amazing. From a storyline narrative, the idea is that Binky knew the details of his own murder in advance, which, even in a movie, would be a pretty cool plot twist! So in terms of story, it makes complete sense.

Plus, the fact that the envelope is in the hands of the “chief of police” for most of the show is a GREAT convincer, far stronger, in my view, of using a wallet as in many traditional ‘Confabulation’ effects.

Here’s the list of things I predict on the index card:

- Chief of Police’s name
- BOTH detective’s name
- Coroner’s name
- Psychic’s name
- Time of Death from Coroner
- ALL THREE drawings
- Murderer’s name
- Murderer’s motive

That is a total of ELEVEN things predicted at the end. Some mentalists may say that’s too many, what about the “Too Perfect” theory and other such quibble, but I’ve been using this method for a decade and, depending on which type of presentation I use, I always predict anywhere from 8 to 12 things! The audience response is unbelievable and it’s a GREAT closer!

The complete method is taught in the separate “Secrets” booklet included with this course, so cost is not a factor. That being said, this method DOES have a few weaknesses, which may cause some of you to switch to something else.

Here are the drawbacks:

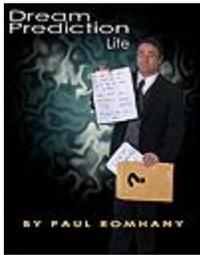
- The writing is very small, meaning only the person onstage with you can read it. For me, this has never been a big deal even with large audiences as the volunteer on stage with me is told to look over my shoulder and stop me if I say something that is not on the card.
- Because there are so many things predicted, to do the effect as I do, there is a considerable amount of double writing. Double writing is NOT a technique thing, more of a guilt thing, so again, for me, no big deal.
- There is a tiny bit of sleight of hand involved – actually just palming. Nothing too difficult but it is there.

ALTERNATES: With all of that in mind, here are a few things to consider for alternate effects:

In terms of visibility, I HIGHLY recommend my friend Paul Romhany’s “Dream Prediction Lite” as a highly visual way to make the final revelation much larger in terms of handwriting. With Paul’s handling, typically only three things are predicted, due to the desire to have the handwriting bigger, but I don’t see this as a negative. There have been

times when I perform for very large audiences of 400 or more and I really want the show to be “big,” so I use Paul’s wonderful effect and just predict a few things – the murderer, time of death, and maybe the motive.

Paul’s incredible effect is available for \$199.95 from the good folks at Hocus Pocus. Here’s the ad pic. It really gives you an idea of the size of the envelope. Also, you can use a bigger paper than what’s pictured here:



If you really don’t mind spending the bucks, you can invest in the famous Malloy Prediction Chest system. Versions run in the neighborhood of \$3000 so it’s not for everyone. Another drawback is the fact that it is NOT a one-man effect. Still, it is a consideration.

Here’s the Malloy website: www.malloymodernmagic.com

Here’s a pic of his prediction chest:



After the entire prediction is read, in my case, I encourage the ‘chief of police’ to take the card back to the audience and show it around. I then conclude the show and than the audience, hitting some fun concluding music to end the show on a high note.

That’s the whole show, analyzed from all angles! There’s three other booklets to go through, so if you read this one first, there’s still a lot to cover.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime via email – crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net.

Thank you again so much for purchasing this course. I wish you the BEST of luck and can't wait to hear of your success!

Best,

Cris Johnson