

WHAT LIES INSIDE



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When a 

STRANGER

Calls

SHOWTIME

After some thunderous applause, the Great Abracadelli takes his bow and puts the Hippy Hop Rabbits aside. Once again, he has successfully deceived the rabble with a sucker trick.

“Finally, we reach the incredible climax, the astounding peak of this fantastic show of marvelous wonders: I will see into the future!”

Disbelief starts to spread through the doubting audience. “Huh? That guy? He knows the future? He doesn’t even know that his shirt doesn’t match his suit.”

The magician tosses a notepad into the audience and asks various spectators to jot down random, multi-digit numbers. While they do this, The Great Abracadelli presents a telephone book, full of thousands of phone numbers.

He invites a spectator to join him on stage. Like a well-mannered performer, he asks for the spectator’s name. Surprisingly, he also manages to remember it for the rest of the show.

“Peter, this is a regular, normal, everyday telephone book, right? There are thousands of pages. On every one there are different names, and each page bears a unique number...”

(Does what you just read boil your blood? Thought so. It’s intentional, and I’ll discuss it afterward, on page 68.)

Peter thoroughly checks the phone book and confirms that it is an ordinary one. Abracadelli retrieves the notepad and asks him to silently decide on one of the three numbers written on the pad. Peter is then asked to open the phone book to the corresponding page.

Meanwhile, the magician opens a large envelope with a promising question mark painted on it. He withdraws another envelope and hands it to a enthusiastic, front-row, audience member. Then, he addresses Peter again.

“Please read aloud the first name on that page!” — “Schmock.” — “And the name at the bottom of the page?” — “Strobel.” — “Good. Now, please, close your eyes and move your finger randomly on the page. Stop anywhere you like, and then open your eyes.”

The spectator’s finger races over the double page. Abruptly he stops and opens his eyes.

“What’s the name under your finger?” — “Shumway.”

The front-row spectator opens the envelope. Another envelope falls into her lap. In it there is an over-sized slip of paper. The tension is almost unbearable. Something is written on the paper.... “Shumway”!

Magic Abracadelli bows, jumps up, and flies off into the sky. He has just started a new world religion.

BACKSTAGE

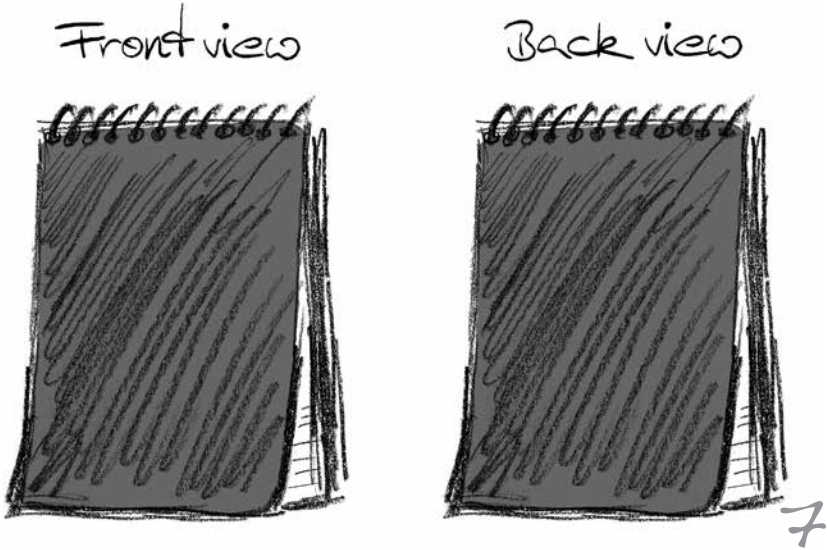
There is nothing particularly new here. It’s a classic; but contrary to more repulsive versions of Add-A-Number pad trick, we do not add up numbers. The spectator never even names the page numbers. He merely thinks of one, and his decision is an absolutely free one. The performer never comes close to the spectator, and the envelope is handed out long before the name is announced.

SHOPPING LIST

We need three things: an Add-a-Number Pad, a prepared envelope, and a special pen. This last item was omitted in the effect description, but that’s okay, since its use is optional. You should only use it sparingly and on rare occasions anyway. Let’s start with the Add-a-Number Pad.

ADD-A-NUMBER PAD

This classical utility enables you to switch the numbers written down by the audience for numbers that you need. In its basic form, it is a simple notepad that looks the same from the front and back (fig.7). Similar to a Humber Wallet, it can be opened from either side.



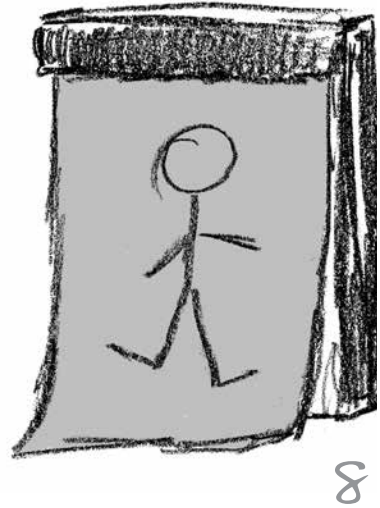
Open the notepad, write down your three page numbers, close the pad and turn it over. Now let the spectators come up with their own numbers. When they open the notepad, they will see an empty page to write their numbers on. On your way back from the audience to the stage, you simply close the pad and turn it over. When the spectator on stage opens the notepad, he will find your numbers.

In the beginning I was afraid that my numbers look different from the numbers the audience writes down, therefore I even drew lines on the page where the numbers should be written. I wanted to ensure that the real numbers and mine were in the same place. Trust me: this is not required; the spectators' scribbling and mine will never be seen at the same time for comparison. The only one who is going to see my numbers is the friendly spectator on stage, and he will see *only* my numbers.

Most magicians who use an Add-a-Number Pad make their helper add the numbers, and the result is used as the page number. These cowards are scared that Peter might later convene with the other members of

the audience, and together they might find out that he saw different numbers than those written. Wow—that’s even too paranoid for me! The only thing I do is to write each number in differing handwriting, as they will be written by different people.

I used to construct specially-designed pads that look the same from the front and the back, but thanks to Simon Lovell’s book *Simon Says* and a routine by David Oliver, I now use a completely regular one. One that has a distinctive cover and a cardboard back. I initially open it on the “wrong” side. I let the spectators jot down the numbers, and while walking back to the stage, I shut the pad and hand it to the helper who is waiting there for me. If you use a scratchpad that is glued on top rather than spiral bound (*fig. 8*), it will even close by itself. Then you can even toss it to the spectator. He naturally opens the pad from the front side, and the numbers are switched out. There is nothing unusual about the notepad to the helper; it’s the old tactic of handing out gaffed props in order to subtly imply that they are innocent.

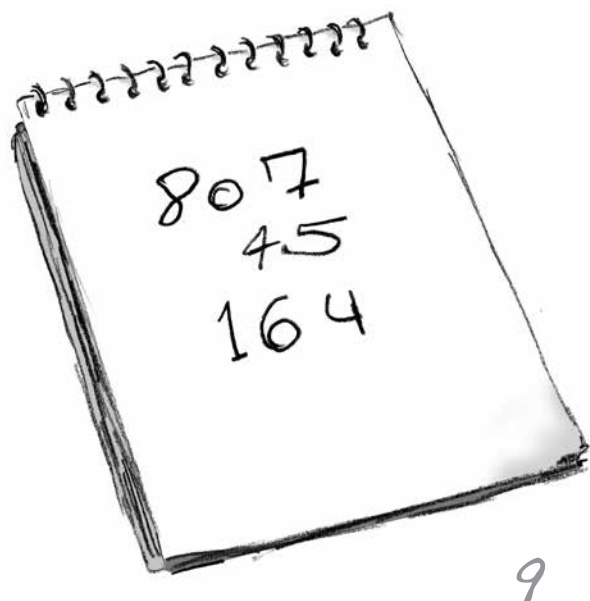


THE ONLY THOUGHT-OF PAGE NUMBER

We know what numbers will be written down by the audience—because we wrote them down ourselves beforehand. But how do we know which of the three numbers the helper will choose? He never calls it out. Well, he does not have to. We just take three very different numbers. One from the beginning of the book, one out of the middle, and one from the very end. As soon as the spectator opens the book, you can see which “area” he is at. This is the reason for using a phone book from a big city. If the book was too thin, it might be hard to distinguish where the book is opened.

I first encountered this cunning concept in Diabelli’s *Allerlei Experi*mentales*, and it was a revelation to me, especially in contrast to all of this adding-up-numbers poppycock.

Also, I would not write the numbers in their numerical order. Perhaps the largest first, then the smallest, and finally the middle one (fig. 9). This creates a random feel, reinforcing the illusion that the numbers are freely chosen.



ENVELOPE

The three predictions matching the page numbers are all stored in one big envelope, each outcome in one of three different-sized envelopes. The prediction belonging to the smallest page number rests in the smallest envelope, and so on accordingly for the other two.

As soon as you know to which page the book is opened, you remove the relevant envelope. Hand that out *before* Peter says anything.

I like to insert yet another envelope within each of the three prediction envelopes. In this final envelope, the prediction is waiting for its grand entrance. For me, it makes more sense to nest the envelopes. Otherwise, the prediction could merely have been in the first, large one. If there are more envelopes nesting in each other, I think it feels fairer to the spectators; it is as if you nested your prediction to prevent any tampering. Also, the spectator takes out the final envelope by himself, and this is the picture I want to paint in their minds.

THE CHOSEN ONE

Peter's finger lands freely on any name. Even though there are several different names on that page, you know in advance where Peter will stop.

This is an idea from Robert Cassidy's *Art of Mentalism*. It's utterly sneaky. There *are* different names on that particular page, but only different *first names*. The last names are all the same, and that's the one you predict. If you take a look at phone books of bigger cities, you'll be surprised what kind of names fill entire pages; not just the Smiths and Browns. In his book *Theatre of the Mind*, Barrie Richardson attributes this force to Joseph Dunninger.

Don't worry. You do not have to find a complete page entirely filled with the same name over and over again. It is even better when the first and last few names are different. Then, Peter can actually read a few of these diverse names. The force still works if there is only one column with the same names. By taking a glimpse at the position of Peter's fingers, you are able to spot whether the correct column, and thereby one of the force names, is selected. Otherwise, simply prompt Peter to keep "cruising" until he hits one of your usual suspects.

It may be that your phone book does not contain three pages of this kind. Or, maybe it does, but these pages are not located in the necessary areas of the book. Don't despair. Pages consisting of different names only are fine. Omit the free finger cruising, and simply ask him to think of the first name on the page. The effect is still pretty amazing.

THE SHAPESHIFTER PEN

A nice subtlety to eliminate the idea of the possibility of an Add-a-Number Pad is "Florian's Great Shapeshifting Chameleon Pen." Imagine the following scenario:

The first two spectators write down their numbers, and pad and pen are handed to the third person. Annoyingly, the pen has run out of ink. You have no spare pen with you, thus you take any pen from the audience. That pen might even be of a different color or of a different kind. Felt, ink, pencil—it doesn't matter; the numbers will still be switched out by your reliable Add-a-Number Pad.

Due to this "accident," it now appears to be impossible to switch the numbers. The last figure looks different, and if the numbers were

exchanged, it would be noticed. Of course, it is no accident. Everything is set up. The pen stops writing on demand.

The pen itself is one of those multi-pens that feature two or more different kind of pens fused into a single chassis. With a simple push of a button, you can change between the writing styles and inks.

You need a multi-pen that features at least two ballpoints. One of the ballpoints has to be dried out. The fastest way is to take the refill tube out of the pen and to grant it a bath in the sink. Then, you take a small florist's wire and insert it into the top opening of the tube. By moving the wire up and down, you rake the ink out of the tube. The water will turn blue, and so will your hands, but the ink will be removed from the refill tube. To finish, you would only need to write with the pen for a few minutes to get rid of the remaining ink.

These multi-pens exist in multitudinous forms. Try to find one that looks as innocent as possible. The one I use is labelled "Essential" and manufactured by Sanford. It utilizes a pencil and a blue and a black felt tip. If you can't find a suitable pen, you could also improvise by using a pencil, and you secretly crack and restraighten its tip with your thumb before giving it to the third spectator. As soon as he starts to write, the tip of the pencil will break off. Of course, feel free to use sleeving or a topit to switch out the pens, if you are so inclined.

"Florian's Great Shapeshifting Chameleon Pen" is much more than a switching device. For example, it easily enables you to do a sleightless "Dead or Alive" test. You simply make the "deadly" spectator write in a different color. No matter how painstakingly the slips of paper are now mixed and shuffled, finding the correct piece should be easy.

This distinction is more noticeable than secret marking on the slips themselves. Furthermore, you don't have to pay attention to the order the slips are handed out. Just take care that the spectators fold up their billets, so no one but you can see the different colors.

If you use this idea, you need to write the last force number in a different color. That way there is a change in the writing's appearance, as there should be. What if you're offered a completely different pen? For example, you wrote down the third number with a red felt tip pen, and you're handed a pencil. Or a thick Sharpie? It is only

important that it's a *different* pen. You are in the audience, probably with your back toward Peter on stage. From his vantage point, he cannot determine what kind of pen you're dealing with. Even if you're given the exact pen as before, it will make no difference to Pete.

Another sneaky subtlety would be to scratch some lines and circles with the empty pen on the page with the force numbers, so it looks like the spectator who received the empty pen tried to make the pen write again.

POSTSCRIPT

INNOCENT AND REGULAR

Maybe you noticed the part in the The Great Abracadelli's marvelous patter when he asks the spectator to verify that the phone book is a regular one. Probably the little mentalist inside you was screaming with pain: "Why run when not being chased? You are a psychic. Never shall thou speak of gaffed props! Isn't this counter-productive?"

It would be, if the audience never thinks of a prepped book. The truth is it happens to me all the time that spectators approach me after a show and "explain" that the book must be a special one made up of identical pages. Therefore, I like to mention the innocence of the book to nip this suspicion in the bud before it arises. Even if their "solution" of a gaffed book is incorrect, I don't want them to get a chance to come up with any explanation whatsoever. I purposely choose this up-front approach to eliminate these assumptions. I might even say, *"After the show, some of you may think that each and every name in this book is the same. This is not the case, so please check that the book has no pages repeating over and over again."*

I know that later on when I ask the spectator to call out the first few and last names on the particular page I obviously cancel out the possibility of having a specially-printed book consisting of only one name, but sometimes spectators have a tendency to be distracted at crucial moments in the show. Since I don't want them to miss the important fact that the book is innocent, I clearly point it out right at the start. Otherwise, a miracle could be reduced to a lame trick.

I only state this because I've been repeatedly confronted with this possible, though false, solution by the audience. This happened not only within the context of my free "survey show," but after regular

performances. Trying then to convince the spectator that the book is normal is futile. I still wouldn't tell spectators that a deck of cards is "normal and ungauffed" when using double-faced cards, but in this instance, I can tell you it's helpful to point out that the directory is normal.

TOTAL CALCULATION

I like the apparently uninfluenced choice in this version of the Telephone Book Test. It feels so free as the spectator doesn't say anything and really selects a number in his mind only.

Still, the best feature is that no arithmetic has to be done. Unlike the versions where the audience writes down numbers, which when added lead to a page number and finally to a predicted word.

What is the presented *phenomenon* in these versions of the trick? What is my *ability*? What is it that I can predict? Is it the *final* number or every single number? Or do I influence people to write down certain figures? Why am I predicting the *result* and not the single numbers? Wouldn't it be more impressive to predict three exact numbers instead of the total?

Why doesn't the prediction feature the *number*, instead of a name written on the corresponding page? It doesn't change anything. If I know the total, then *of course* I know the name on that page, too! The prediction just gets forwarded.

The same "flaw" can be found with the clever but ridiculous "Diary Trick." A spectator calls out a date, preferably his birthday. Instead of having predicted this date—which would be totally great—a playing card is shown that can be found at the date in the calendar.

Sorry, what?!

Aside from making no sense at all, the effect is also weakened. With this approach, the 365 days are reduced to only fifty-two cards (in Germany even thirty-two cards). Worse, at the same time, something as personal as a birthday is redirected to something as blatantly insignificant as a bloody piece of cardboard. We can even make desperate attempts to justify the use of this weird calendar by means of patter that is pregnant with meaning, but the calendar instantly sets off "trick alarms" to the audience. Have you ever, ever come across such a thing as a calendar with *playing cards* written on each day?

If you actually want to use this ploy, at least use a “Joke-A-Day” calendar so that you can predict the joke or cartoon that is connected to the spectator. The trick would be a bit more personal, and you’d increase the apparent number of possible outcomes from fifty-two back to 365. Furthermore, by using cartoons, you’d have the potential to use a graphic, a highly visual prediction.

An interesting sidenote: the “diary trick” seems to have its roots in a pseudo-memory demonstration called “The Weather Test” by Roy Walker using a weather calendar with the performer being able to recall the weather on every day of the last year. The playing cards and the prediction were added later.

PERFECT MATCH

I claim that I can influence spectators to write down certain figures. The smart spectators might easily come up with the assumption that I simply switched out their numbers for ones I wrote down beforehand. And, indeed, they did. After a show, I repeatedly got approached by spectators who had no clue how I restored the burning tiger that I sawed in half while it was levitating, but the thing with the numbers—well, that was easy: I simply switched out the figures the audience wrote down for ones that I had prepared before the show.

Many other magicians have reported the same. If you have a similar calculation effect in your show and you ever had honest spectators whom you listen to, you probably have heard analogous remarks.

The accusation of a switch is not too far fetched for spectators; it is simply the most straightforward and direct method they can conceive of to achieve this effect. Even if our spectators are not into magic, this conclusion is pretty logical. Sadly for us, in this special case their assumption is exactly the way we operate.

If your audience comes up with any solution for how you achieve an effect, it’s a bad situation. If your audience comes up with the *right* solution, it’s even worse. If your audience comes up with the right solution *immediately*—because it’s the most obvious one—this totally

sucks. In my experience, this tends to be the case with Cigarette Thru Coin, Floating Bill, and (sorry) the Add-a-Number Pad.

If they see a bill flying, spectators immediately think that it is probably suspended by wires or string. Guess what? It usually is. Even if you were not a magician, that's probably how you would do it. Thus, we have an unfortunate match between the actual method and the most obvious method to our spectators. This undesired situation is what I like to call the "Perfect Match Problem."

If some random numbers add up to a predicted one, the easiest explanation would be to switch the numbers.

What can be done about this? How can we make the audience dismiss their assumption that the numbers have been switched out?

In "When a Stranger calls" two subtleties help us. Besides the fabulous "Florian's Great Shapeshifting Chameleon Pen" we dodge any notion of a switch by adding the wrinkle that Peter is to *think* of one of the numbers, not name it. After all, what help would it be to switch the numbers if he doesn't tell me of which number he is thinking?¹

Personally, I feel that to be deceiving it is imperative to dispose the "Perfect Match." Otherwise we won't be fooling anyone, but only ourselves!



1. Another clever way to apparently cancel out the use of switch can be found in the instructions of "Master Addition Slate" in *The Secret Ways of Al Baker*.

BOOKSHOP

- *Allerlei Experimentales, Diabelli (Harry Meier)* [1991, self published; Switzerland]
Diabelli presents his phonebook experiment not as a prediction but as mind reading. He additionally uses a blindfold to enhance the impact. A damned good idea that you can easily implement in the routine described above.
- *ParaMiracles, Ted Lesley* [1994, Zauberzentrale München; Germany]
I suggest that you'd try out various Add-a-Number Pads to find the one that suits you best. Thus take a look at the "Working Performer's Switch Pad" ("Bussi Bär Gimmick.")
- *Third Dimension, Roy Johnson* [1977, Goodlife Publications; United Kingdom]
The first time I encountered the Add-a-Number Pad was at a lecture by Roy Johnson. The trick was the "Hades Booktest." You can find a further application of the pad in "Switcherama." Johnson uses the Out-To-Lunch principle; similar to Ted Lesley's Working Performer's Switch Pad, but due to the rubber band, there is a diminished risk of accidentally separating the pages. On your quest for the best Add-a-Number Pad, you should stop by to check it out.
- *Secrets No. 1, Alexander DeCova* [1994, Rudolf Braunmüller; Germany]
"Das Transparente Clipboard"—If you are interested in a seemingly transparent Add-a-Number Pad, read the book by Alexander DeCova. Don't be fooled by its English title. It is written in German.
- *Simon Says, Simon Lovell* [1997, L&L Publishing; USA]
"Don't Touch" by David Oliver—Here you will find the completely ungaffed Add-a-Number Pad. Lovell uses the pad to force a line drawing.

- *The Art of Mentalism, Robert Cassidy* [1984, Collector's Workshop; USA]
 "The Phone Book Test II"—In this chapter you will find the method to allow your spectator to seemingly select a random entry, while he is actually settling on a force name; as well as how to prepare a book to make the spectator always open at the desired force page.
- *Theater of the Mind, Barrie Richardson* [1999, Hermetic Press; USA]
 "One in a Half Million"—Richardson's prediction of a phone number. Also very good is a Karrell Fox idea I will leave for you to find there; it's a small detail about displaying the prediction that results in more applause.
- *Scripting Magic, Pete McCabe and 26 other guys* [2007, self published; Canada]
 "It Adds Up"—Though I wrote about why you shouldn't perform calculation effects in your show, sometimes you may have to. Pete McCabe predicts the outcome of a simple calculation, but he doesn't switch the figures. The very numbers the spectators write down are actually totaled. Furthermore, the magician does the calculation and not the spectator, which alleviates any math-induced stress for your audience.
- *Magick (issue #335, 1985), Bascom Jones or The Compleat Magick, Vol. III, Bascom Jones* [1994, Collector's Workshop; USA]
 "Subliminal 2"—This routine by Orville Meyer works perfectly with "Florian's Great Shapeshifting Chameleon Pen." The pen is loaded with black ink and very dark blue ink. He writes words on several blank cards. The word he wants to force on the spectator he secretly writes in dark blue, while all other words are written in black. The spectator is asked to look at the cards and to silently decide on one of the words. Since the force word is written differently, chances are high that he will settle on it.

As with all subliminal forces, it is not foolproof, but definitely worth trying. Rushing the spectator a bit increases your chances of successfully forcing the word. I personally consider this to be

a smart idea, which is why I hid it in the “bookshop” section. You see, it pays off to read the book list.

- *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley - Volume 2, Stephen Minch* [1991, L&L Publishing; USA]
“Fate’s Date”—If you are interested in the history of the “diary trick,” this chapter will serve as a valuable source.

Lottery

LIMB

The mentalist correctly predicts the numbers of a lottery. Then, he teaches a member of the audience to do the same.

You will not be pleased with the method employed.

SHOWTIME

Once again, the performer likes to talk about how to swindle money with the use of his persuasion techniques. Obviously a subject dear to his heart.

“I am constantly asked whether I can predict the numbers of the lottery. As you’ve witnessed, I can influence people with such accuracy that it almost looks like I could foresee the future. There seems to be nothing that I cannot do.”

Modesty is clearly an overrated trait, and should thereby be neglected by the performer.

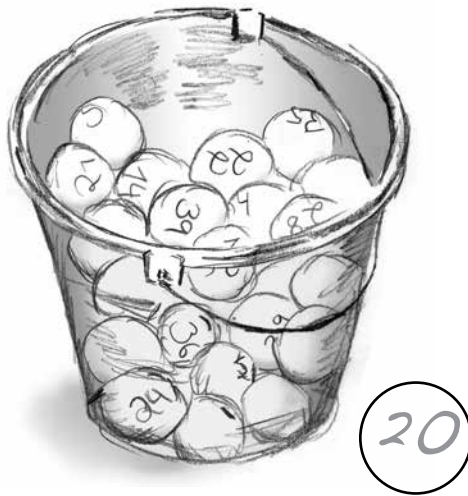
“Nevertheless, in regard to the requested task, I have to admit that I cannot. I cannot predict the lottery since it’s not people who choose the numbers but a machine. Machines can’t be influenced. Or have you ever convinced your coffee machine to do the laundry? The mind of a machine is like fortresses that my magnificent persuasion technique has no access to.”

The T-1000 in the audience beeps in confirmation.

“Thus, I am unable to predict the outcome of the lottery. Otherwise, I would, of course, tell you these precious numbers. Alas, I cannot.

“On the other hand, if the lottery numbers were chosen by ordinary people, it would be a simple task for me to influence their selection. To prove my claim, I have with me forty-nine numbered balls used for a lottery.”

The lottery scammer displays a large, transparent bucket (fig. 20). In it are dozens of little white balls bearing numbers from one to forty-nine. With one hand, he grabs some balls from it and lets them pour back into the pail. Yes, there is a different number on every single ball.



“I would like one of you to come up here and join me on stage. Someone whose will is as steely as the mind of a machine. Someone who cannot be influenced or controlled. Someone strong and merciless like my alarm clock.”

The mentalist either selects a person randomly by throwing out one of the balls or looks for someone who at least has the proportions of a washing machine.

This helping hand comes up on stage and is given the bucket of balls. With much concentration, the performer resists using the awful pun “At first you were scared to come up on stage—but now you have the

balls!” Instead, under lots of choking and gasping, he skips the joke and explains to his helper what is going to happen.

“I will use my secret mind powers to make you take the ball I want you to take.”

The mentalist removes a little piece of paper and scribbles something on it.

“Please take one of the balls, but before you do, take a deep look into my eyes.”

Now, it’s influencing time! The mentalist waves his hands, mumbles some numbers, briefly checks what he has written on the paper, and stares back into the spectator’s eyes. After he is happy with his persuasion-palooza, he instructs the helper to grab a ball. Any ball.

“No matter how hard you try, you, for sure, will select the ball I want you to take.”

He even allows the spectator to change his mind and to take a different ball. Finally, after about thirty minutes, the spectator settles on one ball respectively one number.

“What number did you take?” — “Twenty-two.” — “Twenty-two... and that’s exactly the number I wanted you to choose.”

The mentalist displays what he wrote down. It actually is the number Twenty-Two. The spectators are not very impressed since they have already seen him perform marvelous feats such as the “Frog Catch” or the “Floating Zombie” with a freely-selected corpse.

“Yeah, you all know that ‘Wonder’ is my middle name... but what if I could teach one of you to influence Mr. Machine?”

Well, that would be something totally different!

Thus, the master of manipulation looks for someone in the audience whom he will enlighten and train in the secret art of persuasion. He decides on Brittany, whom he believes to be a manipulative bitch anyway. She can stay seated in her comfortable place in the audience. Persuasion is a long-distance course. He instructs her to focus on the guy with the bucket. She needs to repeat her favorite number over

and over again in her mind and to visualize him taking the exact ball. When she is ready, she is to call out, “Now,” and at this very moment the spectator has to take out a ball.

A few moments pass. A bit insecurely, Brittany says, “Now,” and bucket guy removes a ball. The performer holds his hand out to retrieve the selected ball and asks Brittany what number she wanted to be taken. She replies that she was concentrating on Thirteen. Slowly, the mentalist opens his closed fist to reveal the ball. It is number Thirteen.

The performer thanks his two helpers and assures Brittany that someday, when electricity gets so expensive that the lottery will be done by people instead of machines, she will become very, very rich. Brittany doesn't listen, because she is already busy influencing the people in the audience to hand their credit cards to her.

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