

25. A Card Is Found

Though it amounts to little more than the location of a chosen card, this routine will fool magicians as easily as it will laymen. Save it for those occasions when you want to baffle a particularly sophisticated audience. Do it once and do not repeat it, because it is a beautifully concealed swindle.

Method: This handling of an impossible-to-reconstruct card location was devised by Dai Vernon. Have a borrowed deck shuffled and cut by a spectator. Spread the deck face up on the table as you say, "That was a good shuffle. I've never seen cards so well mixed." Secretly note the value of the top and bottom cards of the deck. Suits are of no importance. Say the top card is a 7 and the bottom card an 8. Silently add the two values together. In our example you would get 15.

Gather the deck, turn it face down and hold it in the left hand. When you gather the cards, be sure not to disturb the top and bottom cards.

Begin to push cards to the right with the left thumb. Do not reverse their order. Silently count the cards until you have reached the total of the top and bottom cards. In our example you would count 15 cards. (If you can, count the cards in twos and threes. The count goes faster and it looks more random.) When you have reached a number equal to the total of the two noted cards, place this packet on the table. The top card of this packet is the original top card of the deck.

Say, "I'd like you to pick a card from the center of the deck." Start pushing cards off the top again. Say, "Just indicate where you want me to stop." Push cards into the right hand until the spectator calls stop. Place the cards in the right hand on the table to the right of the other heap.

There is a group of cards in your left hand. Say, "You stopped right here." Give the spectator the top card of the packet in the left hand. Ask him to sign his name across the face of this card.

While he does this, pick up the right-hand heap from the table and replace it on top of the cards in the left hand. Take the signed card and place it on top of these cards. Then pick up the packet that is on the table and place it on top of all. This is the original top portion of the deck.

Place the deck on the table. Say, "Finding a chosen card is like solving a mystery. The magician follows clues until he gets his man. Please cut off about two-thirds of the deck." When the spectator has done this, take the packet from him and place it face down in your left hand.

There is a small packet on the table. Turn it face up. The face card is, in this example, an 8. "That's our first clue. The card is an 8, so we count eight cards." Count eight cards off the top of your packet into a face-down heap on the table. This heap is formed to the right of the first heap.

Turn this heap face up. Point to the face card. In our example, it will be a 7. "That's our next clue, a 7. We count seven cards." Deal seven cards off the top of the packet in the left hand. Deal them into a heap on the table to the right of the other two heaps.

Turn this heap face up. Point to the face card. It might be a 10. "This is our final clue. We count ten cards." Count a fourth heap, this one containing ten cards.

"If we follow the trail to its logical conclusion, we must arrive at your card." Turn the last dealt heap face up. The face card of this heap is the card chosen and signed by the spectator.