

Hidden Thoughts

Part V

By

Tom Phoenix

Introduction

Greetings!

This volume is a bit short in comparison to the others, but I trust you'll enjoy it regardless. The next volume will not take nearly as long to compile, as this one only contains a small bit of what I've been thinking about over the past several months. Consider this a "Part V, Section 1". I haven't typed out everything yet, but wanted to get something sent out, as that motivates me to *sit down and just do it*.

"I looked to the West and saw a thousand suns setting."

- Sidivar Trelus

Stephen Erikson writes about a really interesting system of magic. Normally, spells are cast with wands or reading magic words from books, or setting candles in the ground, but in his stories, magic is drawn from other worlds: the mage opens a gate to another dimension and pulls power through the gate, through his body, and channels it, shapes it, and unleashes it into his present dimension. Too much magic flowing leads to death, madness, or transformation, or all three. This magic isn't something to play around with, as some dimensions have a chaotic flavor, which can lead the mage into insanity, while others bear power over winds and water, potentially bringing a maelstrom through a desert or village.

Reading about the physical effects of such power on the wizards has forced me to think about how *magic* is perceived. Can anyone learn it? Is it something anyone could pick up, given time and a mentor? Would someone really want to be able to harness this mystical force, or would it lead to undesired side effects?

From the heart of the forest
the darkness has spread
ravaging the land
and awakening the dead.

Leaves are withered
wood turned to bone
many seeds of evil
the Necromancer has sown.

If you slightly moisten the pad of your thumb, a card will stick to it. Applying this, have a card selected, control it to the top, and then do a double-lift to show the wrong card. Turn the double face-down again, push off the top card, hold it vertically between your thumb and fingers, and stick the card to your thumb. Now, move your hand up and down, eventually letting go of the card (still keep your fingers in front, but clearly not touching the card). The result is the illusion of the card floating in the air. "Catch" it, turn it around, and show it has changed into their selection.

Rallic the firey white dragon
Breathed a mighty searing white flame
And if you ever felt it
You would be fatally maimed.

But all of the other dragons
used to laugh and call him names
they never let poor Rallic
join in any dragon games.

Then one dark sacrificial eve
the high priestess came to say:
"Rallic with your flame so bright,
won't you fry the orcs tonight?"

Then all the dragons loved him
And eviscerated survivors with glee (YIPPIE!)
Rallic the white-flamed dragon,
you'll go down in history!

Finding Ideas for Presentations

Magic books and dvds are great for learning mechanics and bare-bones presentations. But what is a great resource for finding *presentations*? Before I get into that, here is a routine I enjoy, and you are welcome to use it.

Imagine this:

You address the audience: “The great question of traveling as fast or faster than light has had scientists and physicists scratching their heads and engaging in heated debates for well over 100 years. And the mysteries surrounding the relationship between light, space, and time itself, are baffling. For instance, if one were to travel forwards in time, they then would have to travel faster than light. And if this was so, where, in space, would they be?”

“For this, I will need a volunteer, you ma’am, what is your name?”

“Tracy.” She says.

“Wonderful. Tracy, if you could, take this paper and pencil and take a seat here. I am going to count backwards from five, and when I get to one, you will slowly close your eyes. Take a deep breath in. Five. Slowly let it out. Four. A breath in. Three. Focus on relaxing. Let it out. Two. Breathe calmly now, you’re doing very well. One. Your eyes are closed, you are fully relaxed, and all the stresses of the day have melted away. In your mind, you are sitting in a white room, in front of you, there is a table, and on that table, there is a deck of cards. Watch as this deck spreads itself on the table. A single card slides out, rises off the table, and you see which card it is. The card floats back onto the table, slides back into the deck, and the deck fades away.”

“Now listen closely, when I snap my fingers, slightly open your eyes, and write the card you saw. Fold the paper once you are done, and do not show it to anyone. As soon as you have done that, close your eyes once more.”

(Snap) (She opens her eyes, writes the card, and closes her eyes again.)

“I am going to count backwards from five. When I say ‘one’, you will open your eyes and come back to us. Five. Four. Three. Two... One. Welcome back Tracy. How do you feel?”

“Very calm.”

“Go ahead and place the paper here on the table, and you may take a seat, thank you very much.”

(Later in the show....)

“I will now need another volunteer, you sir, what is your name?”

“Robert.”

“Robert, here, we have a deck of playing cards. (Remove them from the box), We can see they are indeed all different. I will spread the cards here, and I want you to touch one card on the back. This one? We’ll leave that face-down on the table. A mystery to everyone.”

“Earlier, Tracy entered what is called a ‘trance-state’, a very calm, almost hypnotic state. She imagined a more surreal version of what occurred here... Tracy, what card revealed itself to you? What card did you write?”

“The Seven of Hearts.”

“You saw this in your mind twenty minutes ago. Robert has here a card he selected. Is it possible that you saw something before it happened?”

“Maybe... sure, I don’t know.”

“Seven of Hearts? Robert, please turn the card over.”

(It’s the 7 of Hearts.)
(Take that moment.)

“Perhaps this was just coincidence, and nothing more. The Seven of Hearts is the card you wrote on the paper?”

“Yes.”

“If something physical is created in the future, can it exist in the present? Or must it remain hidden, existing only in a time which has not yet occurred? Do you remember writing the Seven of Hearts?”

“Yes.”

“Material things which happen in the future, must stay in the future. Perhaps you did write it. But not in the present.”

(Gesture to Tracy to turn over the paper, and show that it is blank.)

(Take your applause, and move on.)

The above presentation relies simply on a billet switch, a peek, and a classic force.

The bare-bones outline of the method looks like this:

They imagine the card

They write the card on a billet

You switch the billet for a blank one

You peek the original billet to get the card

You find that card in the deck and move it to the top/bottom

You force the card.

You can accent the notion that only one billet is used, by writing the current time + a couple minutes on a billet (example: current time =

2:45, you write: 2:47). Then after those couple minutes, you take another billet and write the current time (2:47) on it right before you start the “trance” section. You now have two billets with the same time written on one side.

The premise was inspired by Stephen Hawking’s book, *“The Universe in a Nutshell”*, in which he writes about the concept of time travel, and how one might achieve the feat.

For developing engaging premises, I recommend song lyrics, fictional books, scientific books, psychology essays.... Essentially, go read anything which sparks your interest, and read a variety of subjects and genres within a short period of time. For instance, read an essay on astrophysics during the day, and then before bed, read a chapter in an art history book. The next morning, take ten minutes before breakfast to read a chapter in a sci-fi book. And then repeat the process that day.

The idea is to feed the brain with otherwise disconnected bits of information, and in the minds’ effort to find order, you’ll find yourself coming up with abstract connections between subjects. For the artist, this often leads to tying these connections together and expressing them through a medium (magic, in our case). Write down those connections, with a brief explanation of how they relate, and then find a way to model/illustrate this new concept, using magic.

For example, here is a quote from “Reaper’s Gale”, by Stephen Erikson – *“There’s only so much mortal flesh and bone can take. The oldest rule of all.”* That quote, combined with this song: “Torn Beyond Reason”, by Woods of Desolation, resulted in my creation “Rebirth”.

The idea of restoring a card without remnants of harm, seems too perfect. Too perfect for our world. Wounds always leave scars, and though the card is ‘reborn’, the memories of our past will ever remain.

Evil will be razed to ash
The darkness will subside
Gods of old will rise again
And Spirits of the land will be revived.

But until that day can come,
Until the new sunrise,
We march through this time of sorrow,
Fighting for our lives.

With bloodied swords and aching limbs
And heavy hearts of forsaken dreams
We carry with us thoughts of terror
And memories of dying screams.

We yearn our long-lost friends
Who have ascended to the sky
They await us now beyond the dawn
Where the fallen heroes lie.

Mentalism/Bondage Gag... It's sort of what it sounds like.

This is an amusing idea I had a couple weeks ago: tell the participant to write the name of their best friend on a billet, and put it face-down on the table (they're sitting across the table from you). Now you put on a blindfold, and you ask another participant to tie your hands tightly behind your back, and use the remainder of the rope to tie your hands to the chair. You then turn your chair (and yourself, consequently) to face away from the table, and you ask the participant to do the same.

Tell the assisting participant (the one who tied you) to take a seat.

Tell the participant: "I want you to close your eyes imagine a memory you have with this best friend, really build it up in your mind. Let me

know when you have done this. (They say “okay”.) Remember the sounds, the feeling you had, and the sights, what was going on at the time.”

- Throughout this section, you are kicking off your shoes, pulling one hand free, lifting the blindfold, and putting your index finger over your lips, while regarding the audience to mime: “Shhhh...”
- You get up carefully, tiptoe over to the table, pick up the billet to look at it, set it back down, and tiptoe back to your chair. Slip your shoes back on, pull down the blindfold, and “re-tie” your hands.

Now that everyone knows you have the name, you continue with: “Now I want you to picture this person in front of you, see their face, and imagine saying hello to them. You’re saying: ‘Hello... J, J A, James? No, Jason! Hello Jason!’”

- Pull out your hands and count down from 3 – 1, and then do a clapping motion and give a big smile when you say the name. Quickly stick your hands back into the loop.

After the applause and laughter has died down, say: “When I asked you to think of a memory with this person, did you think of a few different memories before settling on one?” Doesn’t matter what they say. You continue with: “I want you to imagine one of your birthday parties. Remember what kind of cake you had, who was there, and out of curiosity, was Jason there?” “Great, now take a look at the birthday cake, don’t worry, I’m not going to tell anyone your age.”

- Pull one hand out, and mime the number 5, then 3, as you mouth ‘fifty-three’. Put your hand back.

“The cake has a date on it, and I want you to picture these numbers in your mind. There’s a ‘3’ and a ‘2’ and a ‘4’... I’m not entirely sure of the order; I can only see these numbers. Actually, wait. Not a ‘3’, it’s an ‘8’. 4, 2, 8. That’s the order. Is this your birthday, April 28th?” They say “Yes!”

You take the applause, and then say: “Okay, now that that’s over, would you please come untie my hands?”

Method

The billet you hand them has two commands on it: one telling them to write the name of their best friend, and the other one that says: “When is your birthday? (mm/dd)”. But, you of course don’t mention that when you tell the audience what they are writing.

The “knot” your hands are tied with is a real knot, but you use a classic rope escape. This is usually done in a humorous setting of getting tied, then asking two participants to hold a sheet in front of you, supposedly to hide your escape, but you pull one hand out to demonstrate how they should hold it, and how high, etc.

Anyway, reveal the name of the person, and then mime their age. This could be a good estimate of how old they actually are, or for comedic purposes, it could be a gross over-estimate. Either way, you will either confirm with the audience that you know their age or you’ll get chuckles.

After you have correctly divined their birthday, the audience gets the implied effect of “well if he can read minds and know her birthday, then he obviously knows how old she is.”

It’s an interesting idea to say “I can read your mind”, and then demonstrate a joke that shows the audience “never mind, he can’t do it”, and while their guard is down, you *actually* read the participant’s mind.

Force the word “poem” on Person A, and force a different word on Person B. Make a quick rhyme while you’re trying to work out Person A’s word, then say: “I’m a poet and I didn’t know it.... Now let’s get back to your word... was it {some other word}?”

“No.”

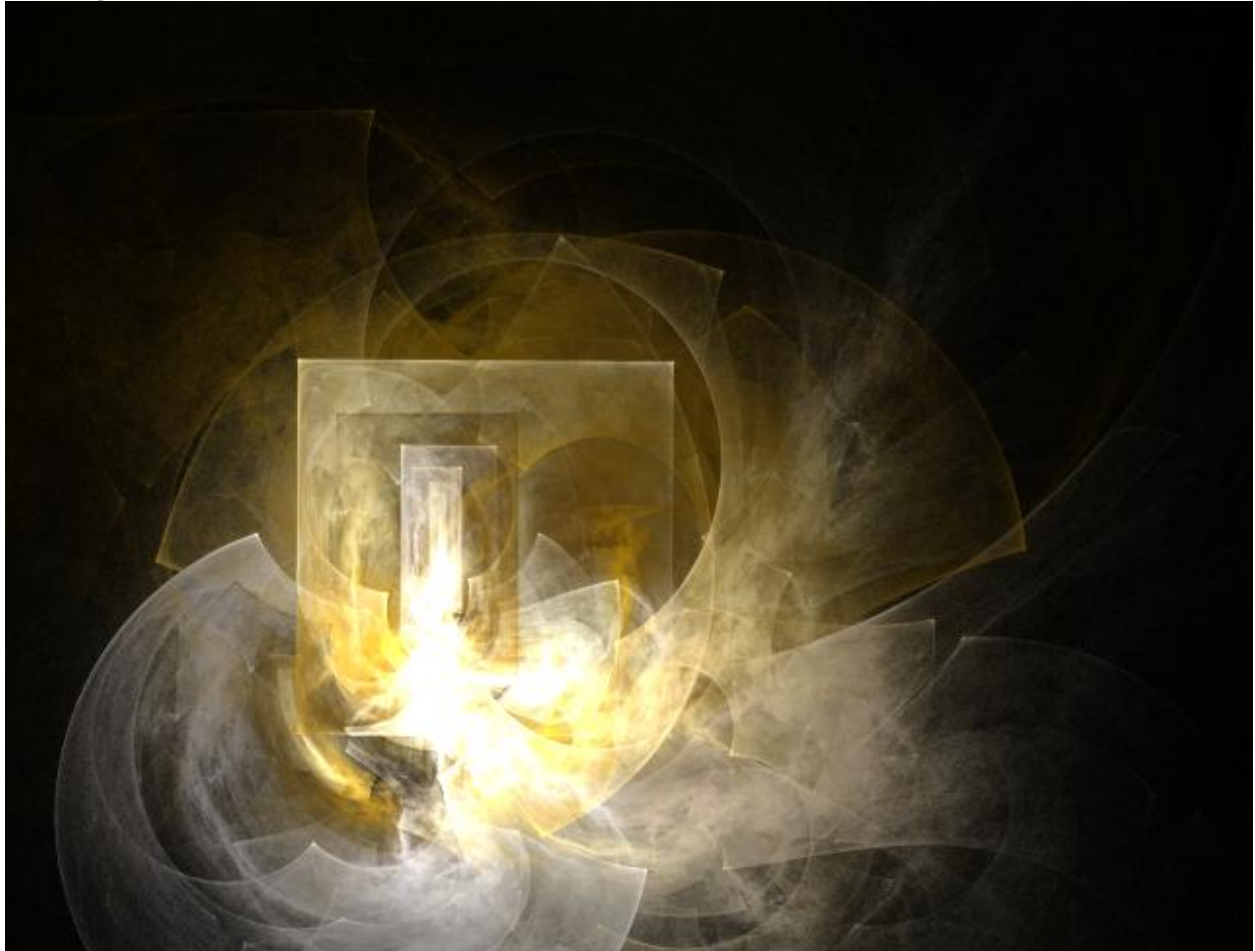
“what was it?”

“Poem.”

“...really?! Alright then.”

Use this “unintentional-miscall-miss” as a convincer that there is no way you could have known what card they picked. Also, it serves as a convincer that you really have *no idea* what word the second person is thinking of... when of course, you do. Because you forced that one too. I do like to rhyme, but not all the... chances I get.

“Enlightenment”



Grendel behind him left him alone

The scarlet of blood

And the black of death.

- Grendel

“There is no value in despair, but plenty of despair in value, once the illusion is revealed.”

- Mael, Elder god

“Tree of Life”



Had an amusing idea a couple weeks ago:

Type up a crib sheet, and print it onto a sheet of paper which looks identical to the backside of a card box. That way, you can set your crib sheet in plain view, disguised as the back of a box. Nobody actually reads the text, so you could substitute it with whatever you want. Now I won't have to memorize star signs or birthstones....

“There is no royal road to geometry.”

- Euclid

“But there is a royal road to card magic!”

- Yours Truly

Goodness, talk about powerful music:

“In a world lost to treason
Shapes of the greater, that dared and who died
Grand giants overlooking the vast never ending
The pillars of the sky
At their feet lie the masses
Those like us, who craved to arise
As they fell all before them
Triumph or death for the pillars of the sky.”

- Pillars of the Sky, Netherbird

Bill-y McCall

This was originally published in “One Dollar – 2 and a half tricks with a Dollar... for a dollar.”

This isn't a routine or even an effect, but it is a rather sneaky method of verifying a miscalled piece of information. It may be a bit bold for some, but just try it sometime and see what happens.

You'll need to have at least four people in your audience, for purposes of verbal misdirection.

The concept is this: When you borrow a bill (before a switch), you miscall the serial number with the serial number on your own bill (their bill says 12345, but you say 56789, while pretending to read from their bill), AND, you get an audience member to verify the wrong number.

This is done boldly and out-in-the-open. Don't do this with the tough cookie – you will get caught.

- Borrow a bill.

- Look at it, and say: ***“I want you two to memorize a few digits of the serial number: “5678”*** (you’re reciting the numbers from your own bill while acting like those are the numbers on their bill).
- Casually turn to the person next to you and say: ***“Just so no one thinks I’m switching bills, right?”*** While you say this, you are pointing to the serial number and using your other thumb to cover the last few digits. *This is just an off-handed comment/question.* Don’t emphasize it. All you’re doing is making sure that one person has seen part of the serial number and will agree with you when you ask them about it later.
- Move the bill back towards yourself and miscall the last few digits.
- Fold the bill, do your switch, and proceed with whatever routine you choose.
- At the end, get the first group to verify the first few digits, and the second group to verify the last few digits, and casually say to the person next to you: ***“And you saw the serial number, so it could not have been switched at any point, right?”*** They’ll agree. BECAUSE they did see the serial number.... Sort of.... But also because you made it clear to them that you were not switching bills. They’re not necessarily confirming they saw the number – they’re just re-affirming the question you asked before. But to everyone watching, it appears as if they saw the number previously.

Pascal's Triangle has always intrigued me. About 2 years ago, I was messing around with looking for patterns and relationships in the triangle, and I had the idea to combine the Pythagorean's system of reducing numbers to a single digit. This was done as they believed that numbers held great power (from a scientific *and* spiritual standpoint), which is true – mathematics is simply a quantifiable model of Nature's laws. Anyway, their system grew into what we now refer to as "Numerology" and the basis for forming "astrological numbers". The system works like this: take any 2-or-more-digit number, and add the separate numbers together.

- Example: 231 ->: $2 + 3 + 1 = 6$
- Or 999 ->: $9 + 9 + 9 = 27 \rightarrow 2 + 7 = 9$

Anyway, I decided to apply this system to the Triangle. Here is the result:

| Col. A | Col. B | Col. C | Col D. |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 1 1 | 2 | 2 | |
| 1 2 1 | 4 | 4 | |
| 1 3 3 1 | 8 | 8 | |
| 1 4 6 4 1 | 16 | 7 | |
| 1 5 10 10 5 1 | 32 | 5 | |
| 1 6 15 20 15 6 1 | 64 | 10 | 1 |
| 1 7 21 35 35 21 7 1 | 128 | 11 | 2 |
| ... | 256 | 13 | 4 |
| | 512 | 8 | |
| | 1024 | 7 | |
| | 2048 | 14 | 5 |

If we were to extend the triangle downwards (yup, I've done it by many more lines), we of course would have summations equal to twice the line above it, notice in column B, each line is a subsequent power of 2. And

if we continue to add the numbers of each of those summations, we will attain a recursive patten of: 1, 2, 4, 8, 7, 5.

The whole bit about powers of 2 is nothing new, but to the best of my knowledge (from reading math books and speaking with professors), this numerology pattern has never been published before. So here we are, officially out. I'm talking with a mathematician more credible than myself at the moment.

“When you are the last of your kind, and you release that last breath, then it is the breath of extinction. And it rides the wind. Every wind.”

- Stephen Erikson

Magic and mentalism are falling. The responsibility falls to us, the caretakers, to breathe life into this beautiful art, to maintain its splendor and crystalline pavilions, let us not become as the standing Titan, who bore witness to visions of darkness and dread of all his lucent empire. When magic rides the winds, let it be in blaze and symmetry and ever with wings afire.

*In Magic,
Tom Phoenix*