

Volume One

The Paper Slips

The Parable for Becoming
a Better Magician



by
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Introduction

Scott gathered his trick and walked back to his seat. The polite applause came from the other magicians. The applause was there, but it wasn't enthusiastic.

A few more magicians performed tricks in front of the magic club. None of the performances were spectacular — a crystal silk cylinder, a bill tear routine, and a drawn out four ace routine (entirely too long).

Then it was time to close the show with a final routine. Scott saw Peter stand and make his way to the front.

Peter was an older man. He didn't always attend the magic club, and when he did, he rarely performed. Scott knew who he was, but hadn't really paid much attention to him.

Scott focused on Peter, as he pulled out a deck of cards. *Oh no*, thought Scott. *Not another card trick. Ugh.*

“*Lady and Gentlemen,*” began Peter. Tonight, I am not going to have anyone pick a card. Neither will we be doing any gambling. And I think we have all seen enough botched faro shuffles for one evening.”

Scott leaned forward. This was getting interesting.

“You, stand here, please. And you, here. No, no not here. Here!. Wait, if you stand here, and he positions himself like this ...”

Everyone laughed. The slapstick was very funny. Peter had a way of making his participants feel comfortable, while milking just the slightest glance of understanding patience or confusion for a lot of humor.

“Finally, if you’ll count the cards one at a time into my hand ...”

And the trick was over.

The room broke into a loud round of applause. There were even a few cheers.

Amazing.

Scott thought about it. Peter’s performance had been flawless. The technique was invisible — utterly amazing. Scott didn’t know how the trick was done. But that wasn’t the half of it. Peter’s presentation impressed Scott the most. He was funny. The trick held everyone’s attention. It was perfect.

For the rest of the evening, Scott asked other magician friends of his about Peter.

Scott was able to find out that Peter wasn’t a full-time magician ... anymore. He was independently wealthy, but nobody knew the source of his money.

They knew that Peter had worked trade shows. Someone had known that he occasionally did a show here and there. And everyone knew he was an expert *coin snatcher*. Peter had fast hands.

And that was about it.

On the drive home, Peter thought about the night. His card trick hadn't gone exactly as planned, but everything worked out in the end. No harm done, and nobody seemed to notice.

Curious that Scott had approached him for lessons. The young man had attended the club for a couple of years, but had never talked to Peter before this evening.

Peter was willing to teach; he was sure of that. He believed in giving back to the magic community. Helping newer magicians get up to speed was his contribution to the art.

Even though the performance lacked personality, it had been smooth. The execution of the trick showed Peter that Scott had talent. Peter also saw lots of areas that needed improvement. Nothing that a few good lessons couldn't improve.

Peter didn't want to rework Scott's tricks for him. Instead, he wanted to teach some important, but not always apparent, principles.

He was glad that Scott approached him, since he wouldn't have been the one to suggest the lessons. (Seasoned teachers know that the student has to approach the teacher for the lessons to really take hold. A coerced student is not a good student. Much better to allow the pupil to see the need, first.)

As Peter turned into his driveway, he wondered which lessons he should share with Scott. In the end, he decided ... not to decide.



1

The Second Slip of Paper First

Peter sat across his dining-room table from Scott. Between them, there was a large coffee cup.

Peter was busy cutting a handwritten list into slips of paper. He said to Scott, “These slips contain random principles specific to great magic performances, and in some cases *general* principles for a good performance.”

Scott, having practiced and read about some martial arts asked, “Are you going to make a point about emptying my cup of random principles, before I can learn good magic?”

Peter chuckled, “That’s a great metaphor, but no, I hadn’t planned on it. Actually, I am going to put the principles into the cup, mix them up, and allow you to randomly choose our lesson for the day. We’ll let fate decide.

With that, Peter finished cutting the last slip of paper. He mixed them up and put them in the oversized coffee mug. Then, he mixed them some more.

“Take one!,” said Peter.

Scott reached to the middle of the cup and grabbed a piece of paper. On it were the words *No Errors ... 100%*. He read it to Peter.

“Uh oh,” said Peter. “Could we beg off that one for the time being? We won’t discard it. I just don’t want to start with that principle.”

“Why not?” Asked Scott.

“Because there are several sub-principles involved. We’ll get to it next. Just not as the first one. Choose another slip of paper.”

This time, Scott’s paper read **Punch Once, But Not All The Time!**

Peter said, “Ah, much better. Yes, we can begin with that one. It fits — we’ll begin by talking about the end.”

“I don’t understand,” said Scott. “What does punching somebody one time have to do with magic? And how does this relate to the end of my performance? Or is it to the end of a trick?”

“To answer your last questions, either or both,” replied Peter. “And I am not talking about literally punching out your audience.”

Peter continued, “I am referring to a principle of surprise within a routine. Harlan Tarbell wrote about it in Volume 3 of his course in magic. He called the principle Nonsensical De-nouement.”

Scott looked a little puzzled. “I can’t say I have heard of the principle.”

Peter went on, “Maybe not by name, but you definitely know the concept. It’s the idea of adding a surprise ending on your trick. It’s often done on the third beat or in the third phase of the trick.”

Scott asked, “Is it like the punch line of a joke? The funny twist always seems to happen on the third person in the story.”

“Exactly,” exclaimed Peter. “Only this time it’s with magic. Imagine a stage magician. He puts a woman in a box. Poof, she vanishes. He goes to the cabinet on the other side of the stage, opens the door, and there she is ... she reappeared all the way across the stage.

“Next, he take a second assistant. He puts her in the box. She, too vanishes. And when he opens the cabinet, both women are seen there.

“Finally, he takes a third assistant, puts her in the box, vanishes her. He looks at the box. His eyes twinkle at the audience. He runs across stage to the cabinet. He opens it, and ...

instead of three assistants, there are three live tigers! Bam! Surprise! Nonsensical Denouement in action.”

“That sounds great. A fine routine,” said Scott.

“Yes, to a point,” responded Peter. “The principle that I want to share is to punch *once*. That means make sure that all of your tricks don’t have kickers. A few would probably be OK, but not all of your act.”

“Why not? It sounds like a great technique. Keep your audience guessing. Surprise them every step of the way. Isn’t that desirable?” Scott asked.

Peter said, “Too much of a good thing ... don’t overuse a principle. It’s like doing the same trick more than once for the same audience. Not usually a good idea.

“The beauty of a kicker at the end of your routine is that you surprise the audience. If you get the audience accustomed to a kicker at the end of every trick, they’ll learn to expect a surprise.”

“An expected surprise is no surprise, I guess,” concluded Scott.

“Well put,” said Peter. “You’ll add a lot more punch, by limiting the amount of kickers. Catch them off guard. And that’s the first principle.”

Scott thought of something. “Peter, when you did the transposition of the cards the other night at the magic club, you didn’t have a punch. No Nonsensical Denouement at the end. You could have, since you only did one trick, right?”

Peter was quick to reply, “I thought about it at the time. I had a good trick with a surprise ending. But it wasn’t the right time. Even though I only did one trick, a bunch of the performances before mine had punch endings. Sucker effects, where the participant erroneously thinks the magician has goofed are also considered punch endings.

“I decided I’d get a better response if I gave everyone a direct effect. The strength was in the astonishment factor and the humor I was milking.”

Peter and Scott talked for a few more minutes. Then he left Peter with the agreement to return in a week.

Scott had a lot to think about on the drive home.

He considered one of his close-up routines. He started with a kings and aces routine. At the end, the expected kings had changed back to aces. Punch number one.

Then he went into a color changing routine, but instead of the backs of the selected cards changing, the entire deck changed color. Punch number two.

And at the end of his routine, he closed with a matrix effect with coins transported across the table underneath playing cards. At the end, a giant coin appeared instead of the four gathered half dollars. Punch number three.

And on it went.

He definitely needed to take some punch out of his routine, in order to add more punch. Ironic.

He also decided to make sure that he had different effects within his act. His close-up routines were OK. But as it was, his stand up routine had too many transportation effects — too many objects or assistants moved from here to there. That needed to change.

*His mind drifted. He imagined the **no error lesson** would be about being well practiced. A basic lesson, but he liked Peter. He'd be polite and listen to the advice, even if it ended being extremely basic....*



2

A Magician of Infinite Dimensions

Even though Scott generally avoided junk food, he brought doughnuts to their next meeting.

“Sometimes a piece of fried dough is just what’s needed to make a meeting a little more special,” said Peter.

“I especially like the Bavarian Creams,” said Scott.

“Hmmm. I like a good jelly-filled, but only if there is lots of goop. If they skimp on the filling, then I’d go for your Bavarian Cream, or maybe a large apple fritter. Thanks for bringing these. Very thoughtful of you,” said Peter.

After turning down the offer of a hot beverage, they both polished off two donuts each, in silence.

It was Scott who started the conversation, “No mistakes. 100%. I assume that means you want me to practice my heart out. Be able to perform each trick in my sleep. Know the trick so well, that I can concentrate on the presentation, and not worry about the mechanics. Am I right?”

Peter said, “You are right about that being an important principle. I may even have a slip of paper devoted to the subject. But that’s not what *this* slip of paper covers.

“This *no errors* means that your audience should perceive that the show is going the way it’s supposed to at all times — unless your style is to occasionally sucker them into thinking you made a mistake. Remember, go light on the punch endings.

“You want the audience to know that you are the performer, and you are in control.

“There are two parts to this rule: first, they should always perceive that everything is going as planned. The second part is that when the unexpected can’t be camouflaged, it doesn’t phase you.

“You are so professional that you deal with the SNAFU in an entertaining fashion. The audience goes away feeling almost privileged to witness you deal with a performance vicissitude.

“They got to see you in action. You dealt with the unexpected.”

“That sounds great in practice,” said Scott. “But I have no idea how someone practices for emergencies. You’re either good at that type of impromptu response or you aren’t. All magicians probably think they are decent at off-the-cuff remarks. Yet few are good at that kind of repartee. I know I am not the best at dealing with the unplanned.”

“Then plan for it,” said Peter. “Learn to expect the unexpected. Really. It’s possible.”

“I don’t see how,” replied Scott. “How can you plan for every contingency?”

Peter liked that Scott was thinking. He understood the need for thinking on one’s feet. Scott needed some confidence ... and a game plan. Peter said, “Think of this like a science fiction television show. In the show, there are many dimensions —

different planet Earths, where everything is almost the same except for one changed variable.”

“So, what changes about my magic act?” Scott asked.

Peter thought for a few seconds, before responding. “You are preparing for the unplanned. Remember, you want to expect the unexpected. So, you take each trick and imagine performing it. Better yet, actually practice the trick. But each time you practice, you practice as if something went wrong.”

“How do you know what could go wrong?” Asked Scott.

“You don’t know,” said Peter. “Make educated guesses ahead of time. My advice is that you take pen and paper to each trick in your act. Then play the *what if* game. What if the spectator accidentally drops the coin? What if nobody has a dollar bill to borrow?

“What if someone interrupts your trick? What would you say? How would you regain the pacing of the effect?

“What if a heckler tries to expose the trick?

“You make a detailed list all the way through the trick of all of the possible interruptions, lacking proper materials from audience members, audience clumsiness, props breaking, incorrect lighting, heckler possibilities, electric outages, and any other SNAFU you can imagine.”

Scott looked daunted, “That sounds like an awfully big list. What do I do with it?”

Peter responded, “It won’t be as big as you think. After you make the list, try to group items. Many of the heckler possibili-

ties can be handled with one or two memorized comebacks. Three or four snappy, but reassuring, remarks should cover all clumsiness or mistakes on the part of a participant.”

“And I suppose that some of the remarks will be the same from trick to trick. For example, dropping an item is dropping an item, no matter which trick is being performed,” commented Scott.

“Make sure you have different gags, so you don’t sound repetitive. Or have a progression of remarks. The first time someone drops, you say one thing. If it happens again, you have a funny remark that calls back to the first drop.” Peter continued, “This is a practiced art that takes work, but it’s worth it. It will separate you from 90% of the other performers out there.”

“I was just thinking it was a lot of work,” said Scott. “But you’ve convinced me to make a list.”

“Good.” Peter added, “Once you make your list, and after you group like items, I have another suggestion.”

“Yes?” said Scott expectantly.

Peter advised, “Prioritize your list, by the likelihood of the emergency happening. Put the most likely to occur first. Then work on your responses in order of importance.

“Another possibility could be to prioritize your list by level of embarrassment. Work on the most embarrassing SNAFUS first. This way, you’ll never look bad on stage.”

Scott thought he was up for the task, but he commented, “This could take hours and hours.”

Peter said, “Days, would be my guess.”

Before Scott left, Peter had him draw out the slip for the next lesson....

Peter thought about their lesson. It went well. If Scott really does practice for the unexpected, he'll get an added bonus. He'll be more prepared to deal with life's little emergencies that he hasn't taken into consideration.

He'll get better at truly impromptu responses ... if he puts the time in.



3

On The Edge of Their Seats

“Why don’t you want me to perform tonight?” asked Scott.
“And why aren’t you on the lineup to perform either?”

Peter smiled, “Tonight, we’re doing a little detective work. Our magic club will provide the clues. We’ll be filling in these 3 x 5 slips of paper I made. We’re doing this because the last time we were together, you drew the slip that said **“On the Edge of Their Seats.”**”

Peter handed Scott a pen and a small stack of paper slips. Scott studied the top slip of paper:

Magician’s Name:
Vocal Style: theatrical __ normal talk __ variations __ shouting __ caricature __ fast __ slow __ garbled __
Audience Interest Level: ignoring performer __ cards/coins in hands __ relaxed __ passive __ actively engaged __ on edge of seats __
Applause None __ Weak __ Polite __ Good __ Enthusiastic __ Hollering/whistles(US) __ /standing ovation __
Trick Performed:

Peter got up and moved away from Scott's chair. He stood in the back. Peter didn't want to influence Scott's scoring.

Everyone watched trick after trick. Almost nobody noticed that a couple of magicians were "taking notes" on the performances. Both Scott and Peter were discreet about their private scoring.

After the performances, the magicians broke into groups to swap magic. Peter approached Scott. "Let's get out of here. We have a lot to discuss."

"How about cappuccinos?" Scott asked.

"How about milkshakes and fries?" Responded Peter. Then he added, "You're my excuse to eat a little junk food. Those doughnuts the other day were tasty."

They left the magic club and walked a few doors down to a locally-owned burger shop. They stood in line, ordered their food, and then sat down.

"OK, let's compare notes," said Peter. "I especially want to discuss vocal style used."

Scott looked at his slips of paper. He started counting. "I have, let's see ... four magicians who projected their voices, almost shouting. Definitely theatrical. One person adopted a foreign accent for his routine. So, I guess that counts as a caricature. Five guys spoke in a normal voice, and I have three fast talkers, all of the teenage performers. What about you, Peter?"

Peter had finished counting his slips. "I have six theatrical voices. I counted one of your fast talkers as a stage-presence-projecter. I, too, marked the German accent as a caricature,

since we both know that's not Joe's normal voice. Other than the one teen, I think we agree on everything else."

Peter continued, "I was hoping for more variety for our discussion, so you could see a broader range, but this will do. First, let's talk about the voice level."

"What do you mean?" Asked Scott.

"Did you notice whether the performers sounded quiet or loud? And, did you notice *when*?"

Scott thought about it, before answering Peter. "Only the shy guy who did the trick from Paul Harris' *Art of Astonishment* sounded too soft. I could barely hear him. Everyone else sounded loud and clear."

"And that's the problem," concluded Peter. "Most of the performers shouted. I am sure they think they are being theatrical, but to the audience, you have ... well ... shouting. An annoying voice. Works for street magic, but other than that..."

Scott added, "Come to think of it, I remember two of the magicians tried to get control of the audience by shouting above them. The audience members were talking among themselves, so the magicians tried to talk above the noise."

Peter said, "This isn't unique to mediocre magicians. Beginning teachers also try to shout above the noise level in the classroom."

"So, what are you supposed to do?" asked Scott.

Peter paused, because the waitress had returned with their order. He took a moment to dip a french fry in some ketchup. Then he continued. "This lesson maybe be worth the price of admission. I am about to point you in a direction that will make you sound much more professional when you perform."

Scott said, “The price of admission? Your lessons are free, aren’t they?”

Peter chuckled. “Yes, they are free in that they don’t cost money. But they cost time, both yours and mind. And they take mental effort on both our parts. Isn’t time worth something to you?”

He didn’t allow Scott time to respond. Peter continued, “Are you ready to learn one key secret to holding an audience’s attention?”

“Yes, please.” Scott answered.

Peter lowered his voice. He almost whispered. Scott had to lean in a little, to hear Peter more clearly. Peter made eye contact with Scott, and then said, “The secret strategy for getting your audience to lean on the edge of their seats ... has just been executed on you.”

Scott seemed confused, “I am not sure I understand what you are trying to say.”

Then Scott thought some more before continuing, “Are you talking about the fact that you made eye contact with me, before you spoke?”

Peter said, “I wasn’t referring to making eye contact, although it is important to make that type of connection with your audience. Call the eye contact bit a free tip, that you figured out on your own. I like the way you are thinking.”

“Then what’s the secret to getting your audience to listen to the magician?”

Peter was having fun with this. “The secret is ... that you ... just leaned in again. You are paying attention to every word I utter.”

Scott said, “Of course, I am paying attention. You are talking about a subject of great interest to me....”

Peter interrupted, “I sense you just uncovered one of those free tips. If you can talk about something your audience is very interested in, you have a much better chance of paying attention. If more magicians understood this principle, we’d have a lot less boring, artificial patter stories accompanying our magic.”

Scott said, “But that’s not what you wanted to say. You’re right, talking about what would really interest my audience is something I should always keep in mind. I already see that some of my patter will have to go.”

Peter and Scott both paused to sip their shakes. Scott had a peanut butter - banana shake, and Peter had an egg nog shake.

Scott put his shake down and asked, “So, what is the principle you wanted to teach me? And how did you get me to lean on the edge of my seat?”

“By lowering my voice.” Peter continued. “Each time I wanted you to lean in, I almost made you strain to hear my words. I’ll bet you even missed the first word or two that I said. I had to draw you in.”

“How does that apply to an audience?” asked Scott.

Peter finished another fry. “Whenever the audience’s attention starts wandering, whenever the noise level of the room starts to rise, and whenever I want to emphasize a certain point, I lower my voice. This seems counterintuitive, but it works. Try it.”

Scott's mind was going a million directions at once. "Where did you learn this?"

"Not by watching local theater actors." Peter answered. "Actually, I analyze master speakers. Professional keynote speakers are especially adept at almost hypnotizing their audiences. When these pros talk, the room quiets down. Even the clinking of glasses and silverware stops."

Scott started taking notes in his notebook. Peter had suggested that Scott chronicle their lessons.

He scribbled some more.

At first, Scott didn't know what to make of tonight's lesson.

He liked the field work of observing magicians at the club. And he felt that Peter was teaching him something special.

Obviously, most magicians weren't adept at using vocal variation to influence an audience. He thought back to the barkers during tonight's performance.

Every time they wanted to emphasize a point, they emphasized the key word ... just like the cheesy car and appliance commercials on TV.

And when the noise level rose, they tried to shout above everyone else to be heard.

Scott was going to try the opposite. He would try lowering his voice a bit, to get the spectators to lean in.

And he was going to start researching techniques of professional speakers.



4

Will the Lessons End?

“Isn’t random supposed to be ... well ... random? Why can’t we discuss this slip?” Scott wanted to hear what Peter had to say about the slip they had just drawn out. He was unhappy that Peter was going to skip it completely.

Peter said, “We already talked about eye contact a little. Enough to get you going. If you ever want to pursue the discussion, I know people who are experts on the subject. They know more than I do. Besides, this is our last lesson, for awhile.”

”What do you mean our last lesson?” Scott liked the lessons. He was learning subtle tips that he thought would improve his performances immensely.

“I have to go away soon,” said Peter. “I have other obligations. Now, please choose another slip.”

Scott read the slip. **“Choreography isn’t only for dancers and action movies. No fumbling allowed!”**

“Good choice,” said Peter.

“It does sound interesting,” admitted Scott.

Peter said, “Before we dig into the topic, I’d like to preface it by saying there are at least two instances where you’ll want to break this rule. And even in seemingly ignoring the principle, you are actually following it more closely. We can discuss those two *exceptions* in a few minutes.”

Scott knew better than to second guess the lesson. He had tried that, without luck, before. “So, how do we begin the discussion?”

Peter thought a minute. “Scott, do you choreograph your performances?”

“If you mean, do I walk through the magic show as I practice, yes, I do. Doesn’t everyone?”

Peter answered. “You’d be surprised. You are already better than a third of the magicians in our area, just by walking through your act. But let’s take it to the next level.”

“How so?” Asked Scott.

Peter continued. “In an ideal magic performance, you’d know exactly where and how to stand at any given point in the show. You’d know where to position yourself when eliciting applause. You’d avoid standing in front of other people on the stage. Each position would showcase the prop of the trick.”

Scott wondered out loud. “Does this apply to close-up magicians, too?”

“Sure.” said Peter. “Close-up performers need to examine where they hold their hands in relation to their bodies. They have to plan when to touch the spectator’s hand. Looking at the hands in relation to the table is important. You don’t want to cover a card or a coin on the table, when you don’t have to.”

Scott was lost in thought reviewing what he had read about framing a trick or performance. Body position and hand position could be used to direct attention and showcase highlights.

Oops. Scott had missed Peter's last comment. "What was that again? Sorry. I was thinking about what you had said."

Peter paraphrased what he had said and continued. "One of the most important aspects of planning each and every movement of your performance, is that you'll seem smooth as a performer."

"How should I plan? I mean, what's my goal with the choreography?" asked Scott.

"You don't want to fumble around for anything during the performance. Everything is at the ready, where props are supposed to be. You don't waste any time reaching around in the magician's bag for the next trick. It's right there ready to go."

"In a perfect world." Scott mumbled.

"Yes, exactly." Said Peter. "You have the opportunity to create your world, on stage, or wherever you are performing. All of your tricks are ready. No, just-a-second-while-I excuses. Remember, you control the efficiency of your performing world. Your world should have no movements that lack purpose. No wasted motions."

"Didn't you mention there were exceptions to smooth choreography?" Scott asked.

"Yes, but I want to make sure you understand the concept of no fumbling," said Peter.

“I think I do. But don’t close-up performers have to go to their cases or reach inside their pockets for the next trick?”

“Try not to *pocket dive* between each effect. Occasionally, produce the next trick. Also, do more than one trick with the same props. It’s what we in the magic circles call ... a routine.” Peter winked at Scott.

“Let’s talk about the exceptions to the rule. They sound interesting.” Scott said.

“Okay. You convinced me.” Responded Peter. “The first exception is when you want to appear to be a bumbling, eccentric magician. When your character is to putter around, then by fumbling for your tricks, you are staying in character.”

Scott asked, “So, how does planning and choreography come into play in this instance?”

“Simple.” Answered Peter. “You have to plan to fumble. You plan exactly how long you will stall when trying to find things. You’ll use the repetitive clumsiness to mask some smaller, secret motion.”

Again, Scott asked a question. “Won’t it appear fake if you search through your magic bag, when the prop is in order, on top?”

“Good point, Scott. So, don’t put the next trick on top. Put it fourth down. This way you really will have to rummage around to get to it.”

Scott stopped asking questions, in order to take notes. He scribbled quickly. Again, there was a lot he was going to have to do to incorporate this current lesson.

When Scott stopped, Peter got up. “Scott, let’s go get some lemonade from the kitchen.”

Scott wasn’t sure why, but Peter almost looked to have a mischievous smile.

They left Peter’s magic study, and headed toward the kitchen. When they reached the living room, Scott saw a group of people.

“Scott, this is my wife, Rachel. She is on a parent committee this year. And these people are also on the committee.” Said Peter.

Scott didn’t know that Peter was married or that he had children.

After introductions were made, one of the fathers present addressed Peter. “Peter, I have heard that you are quite the magician. In fact, a reliable source says that you have very fast reflexes. Care to give a demonstration of how the hand is quicker than the eye?”

“Well,” responded Peter. “Actually, the hand is not quicker than the eye. That’s a misconception. But yes, magicians do tend to develop a higher level of coordination, as the result of practicing the same technique over and over again.”

The wife to the left of Rachel said, “Oh, this sounds fascinating could you really give us a demonstration?”

“I’d be happy to.” Said Peter. “Hmm, Let’s see. Does anyone have a coin I could borrow?”

One woman handed Peter a U.S. quarter.

“Perfect,” said Peter.

He continued. “Now, I need someone who has fast reflexes ... and fairly good hand-eye coordination. Anyone fit the bill?”

In the end, the father who had started the topic of conversation volunteered. Peter put the quarter on the man’s outstretched right hand. Peter held his hand about a foot or so above the man’s. Peter’s hand was also open, palm down.

Peter addressed the man. “Here. Uh, let’s see. I think, if you’ll just come over here, and ... yes, that’s it. Turn this way, and I think everyone will be able to see the coin better. Yes, like that. Thank you.”

“The object of the game,” continued Peter, “is to close your hand before I can grab the coin. I hold mine above yours. All you have to do is to close your hand, to prevent me from snatching the coin. But you have to be quick.

“Do you understand?”

“Yes,” responded the father.

Everyone was silent. Then the man was ready. Suddenly, like a cobra striking, Peter’s hand lashed out. He reached down quickly for the coin in the man’s hand.

It all happened so fast, that Scott wasn’t sure who had the coin. The man’s hand was still closed.

Scott wasn’t sure. Then he saw the confident smile on the father’s face. The man said, “Well, Peter, I guess you weren’t that fast tonight. I still have the quarter held tightly in my hand. No way for you to get it. You weren’t quick enough.”

Scott felt sorry for Peter. It must be a double blow to fail in front of me, his new protégé’. Scott decided to avoid the

subject later. No need to make Peter feel worse.

He tuned back to the conversation....

“And it’s really quite strange,” said Peter, “that a magician develops incredible speed, like that of a master martial artist. I think you’ll find that I was, indeed, fast enough ... today. I have the quarter right here.”

Peter showed a quarter in his hand.

Scott was sure it was a duplicate. Nice try saving the trick, but it didn’t work.

”Go ahead and open your hand,” said Peter.

The man slowly, opened his hand. In place of the quarter was a Mexican Peso.

The room burst into applause. Scott joined the rest. He was amazed.

Peter took his bows, grabbed the lemonade, and then ushered Scott back to the magic den.



“That trick was amazing,” said Scott.

“It wasn’t a trick. It wasn’t presented as magic. I was just showing them a side benefit, a skill, of being a practiced magician,” said Peter.

“You fooled the pants off of them.” Scott said. “They loved it.”

Peter said, “I have to admit, that was a set up.”

“What do you mean?” asked Scott.

“I knew my wife’s group would be meeting in the living room. I had heard from a friend that my name was mentioned in the context of quick hands by someone in my wife’s PTA committee. So, I took a chance that the subject would be mentioned. I was prepared.”

Scott was a little puzzled. “Why did you want to do the trick, at that particular time? Were you trying to impress me? Which, by the way, you did.”

“No, I wasn’t just showing off. Though you have to admit that performance not only enhanced my reputation, but they now think that all magicians acquire such speed.

“My reason for that performance had to do with the last point of our lesson. I thought I could spice things up with a little demonstration.” Peter paused and took a sip of lemonade.

Scott said, “I had forgotten about our lesson.”

“Well, I hadn’t.” Peter said. He smiled. “We were going into the last point of when the choreograph should look unplanned.”

“I remember,” said Scott. “So, how did your coin snatching, or should I say switching, demonstration relate to this lesson?”

Peter took one more sip of the lemonade before setting the glass on a coaster on his desk. “Did you notice how I asked if anyone had a coin? It implied that I didn’t have one. Yet I did. My quick pat of my pockets, the way I looked from person to person, sold the performance of me needing a coin.

“Then I used a longer eye contact on my participant. I also moved near someone who was too meek to help out. I made it seem, just with body posture, that we had a choice between the father that I chose, and that mousy lady on the couch.”

“Hold on. Hold on! I am writing as fast as I can.” Scott wrote absolutely as fast as he ever had. This was good stuff. He could generalize these principles to some of his tricks.

Peter took a sip of lemonade, put his glass down, and fiddled with a deck of cards. Though his flourishes weren't as fancy as those of [The Buck Twins](#), he still had a smoothness about his movements that would definitely impress.

When Scott came to a pausing point, Peter continued. “Every move in the trick, from asking for the coin, to positioning the volunteer so everyone could see, was carefully planned. I just made it look impromptu with my hesitation and patter. I needed the presentation to look impromptu — off the cuff. I think that's what really sold the routine.”

Scott started writing again.

This time, when he looked up, he had a sudden idea. “Peter, would you be willing to teach me your coin snatching routine?”

Peter stood up and went to a bookshelf. “No, as I said I am about to go away for awhile. Sad as it may be, our lessons are coming to a close, at least for the time being. Regarding the coin snatch, I have the ultimate book on the subject. Let's see”

Peter grabbed a copy of [Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder](#) off the shelf and handed it to Scott. “Scott, this book is filled with great coin snatching and switching moves. To be

honest, the entire presentation you saw in the living room was straight from the book. For me, the advice about building your reputation is priceless.”

Scott gratefully accepted the loan of the book.

As he returned home, he wondered when and if he’d get more lessons from Peter.



Afterward

The audience members at the party for bankers and their clients were on their feet. Scott wasn't used to this much applause. He recognized a few magicians in the crowd, as well. They were on their feet clapping, too.

Scott blushed just a little. He loved the recognition, but he really wasn't accustomed to such an enthusiastic response.

He wished Peter could have been here to watch. Scott didn't know that the reason Peter had to be away for awhile was that he had his own magic gig halfway around the world, at an incredible resort.

As Scott packed up his bag, he recalled the lessons with Peter. He had tried to incorporate it all. He still had three punches in his routine. One just wasn't enough. But they were different kinds of surprises. The audience wouldn't see a pattern.

The only error that happened at this show was when he told the audience that the volunteer would cut the rope in half ... the volunteer grabbed the rope from the table early and ... actually cut it in half.

Fortunately, Scott had planned for this. Without pausing, he gave half to the participant, and he kept half for himself. It turned into a "You Do As I Do" routine. Scott's half restored, but the spectator's didn't.

Everyone was laughing at the end of that trick. His patter was tight.

Unfortunately, some pockets of conversation broke out at the end of the rope routine. Fortunately, Scott was able to lower his voice and bring the audience back into the show.

Everything was great. He controlled with eye contact. He was smooth, practiced. He paced the show beautifully. Scott even varied how he segued into the next trick.

Scott put the last trick in the bag. As he turned to go, one of the magicians had lingered behind. He wondered if he could meet with Scott, for some pointers on improving his magic.

Scott was flattered.

Rather than take on the task himself, Scott suggested that they go pay a visit to this guy he knew.

As they walked out the door together, the younger magician commented on how fast Scott's hands were.

Scott smiled. Then he asked the magician if he had a coin on him.

[From Keith \(Kip\) Pascal](#)

Hi,

Keith Pascal here. I hope you got some useful ideas from the magic parable, **The Paper Slips**. If you'd like, I'd be happy to continue the lessons. If there is enough interest, I'll write the next set of lessons.

I have a couple of comments about the story....

First, the coin snatching trick is not fantasy. The book, [Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder](#) really does exist.

The book is filled with coin snatches and switches, and Peter is right. All of the reputation-building advice can be applied to other areas of your magic.

[Click here for more information](#), or go to

CoinSnatching.com/slips

Next, if you are looking for ways to improve your magic, I have two recommendations. Both are absolutely free.

You just have to sign up, and then confirm your subscription by clicking on the link in the email that will be sent to you.

Both of these valuable ezines will show you the best ways to improve as a magician.

And no, they are not one big sales pitch. Each is filled with valuable tips.

Sign up now:

[The Magic Mentor](#)

[Asher's Announcements](#)



One Final Reminder ...

Please do let me know, if you are interested in a next part of this lesson. As I said, with enough interest, I'll get to work on part 2. Write me, info@coinsnatching.com

Thanks again for your interest. Have fun constantly redesigning and improving your magic routines.

Sincerely,

Kip Pascal

This ebooklet was sponsored by:

[wwwCoinSnatching.com](http://www.CoinSnatching.com)



Bruce Lee did it!
Jean Claude did a movie version.
And Carradine snatched a pebble
instead of a coin.

Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder

**NEW
HARDBACK!**

The image shows a book cover for 'Coin Snatching' by Kip Pascal. The cover features a photograph of a hand performing a coin trick. To the right of the cover, there is promotional text in red and blue, and a yellow starburst graphic that says 'NEW HARDBACK!'.