



# Inside Ed's Head

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## The Backwards Card Trick, by Peter Kougasian (Invisibility Isn't Always Permanent.)

Last November, I presented my handling of Richard Kaufman's "Impromptu Blankwave," wherein two cards produced from a blank-faced deck turn into cards named by spectators.

This month, Harry Lorayne has (once again) generously allowed me to use a trick he published, so I might continue my exploration of all these blanking tricks. This one is from *Best of Friends III* (2002). For those of you who might be too young to remember, *Best of Friends* was published in 1982. At that time, I wasn't aware of any magic book (with the exception of *Greater Magic*) that had so much great material in one place. Then, Harry went ahead and added two more volumes!

All three of these volumes contain over *fifteen hundred* pages of close-up magic. Harry has republished all these books as eBooks, available for \$24.99 each on his website:

[http://harryloraynemagic.com/store/c2/Magic\\_e-Books.html](http://harryloraynemagic.com/store/c2/Magic_e-Books.html).

These days, considering the prolific spread of expensive one-trick DVDs, can you afford *not* to buy a set of these books?

Peter Kougasian contributed the trick to Harry's book. Peter is an attorney and, as far as I can tell, is still performing at Monday Night Magic. Peter designed this trick to play while standing in front of an audience, with the accent on comedy. I see no reason why it couldn't be done at the close-up table as well—with appropriate changes in handling.

Harry uses Peter's performance and patter to illustrate the trick. If you want to explore Peter's ideas more thoroughly, you'll have to buy the book. There is but one sleight in this trick; it's a Top Change, which I've never performed in front of real people. In the Afterword, I'll present some alternatives that eliminate the Top Change. One of these makes the trick stronger as well.

### Effect

The magician says he will do a trick backwards. First, he'll find the

card—then a spectator in the audience will select it. The magician removes a card from the deck and holds it up—the back facing the audience. He now asks an audience member to stand and name any card. (In today’s example, the Two of Hearts.) After a card is named, the magician turns his card to the audience—it’s blank!

The magician insists the card is indeed the Two of Hearts. He asks his spectator to come forward to assist him. He shows the card to the spectator again and tries to get him to verify the card is really the one he named earlier. He is asked to hold onto the card while the magician shows him all the other cards to “prove” it’s a regular deck. *All* the cards are blank!

The magician, unfazed by the audience’s hearty booing, takes the selection and places it into the middle of the deck. He says he’ll make it rise to the top of the deck. With a snap of his fingers, the magician shows the top card—still blank.

Sensing hostility welling up from the crowd, the magician utters one final incantation and the card becomes clearly visible to all. It’s the selection!

## **Set-Up**

You’ll need a *blank-backed* (BB) deck with three blank-faced cards. The last time I bought a BB deck, it came with four additional cards, three blank facers and one double blank. If these decks are still sold this way, you’re in business. Place the fifty-two BB cards blank side to the table. Place the three blank-faced cards *face-down* on top of these. If you spread through the deck, you’ll see fifty-five blank cards from one side and three backs plus fifty-two faces from the other.

## **Method**

Remove the deck and explain how you’ll do this trick backwards. (As explained in the effect.) Remove the top card, holding its back outward as you ask an audience member to name any card. You may now either feign amazement that the spectator got it right or ask the spectator if he wants to change his mind, etc. There’s a lot of room to add your personality here. Eventually turn the card to face the audience.

Ask the spectator if, perhaps, he’s having trouble seeing the card from his position in the audience. Invite him to join you up front. Once he’s arrived, have him hold his hands, palm up, in front of him, as if they’re a table. Place the card face down on top of his hands.

Comment that you don’t understand why he’s having difficulty seeing his card; after all, “It’s an ordinary deck, just like you have at home.” As you say that, spread the deck faces outward, so the audience will see a spread of blank cards. You will, of course, see the real faces. As

you spread the cards, make comments such as, “Look, this one’s the Three of Diamonds. This one’s the Ace of Spades.” As you do this, remove one of the cards from the spread, display the blank side, and replace the card on the *face* of the deck. (The left-hand side of a right-hander’s spread.) When you come to the Two of Hearts say, “Oh, this one’s a Joker.” Place this on the face also. If you’re near the end of the spread, you can stop; if not continue with a few more cards but *put them back into the spread, not on the face.*

Tell the audience you’ll now do an amazing trick with the Two of Hearts. Place it outjogged, face down in the middle of the deck. Point out that you haven’t switched it, and it’s clearly in the middle. Push the card flush, do that Voodoo that you do, and turn the top (blank-faced) card face-up, jubilantly claiming the Two of Hearts had returned to the top.

By this time, the audience is either worrying about your sanity or wondering why they paid you to perform for them. It also leaves you in relatively good position for the ensuing top change.

Flip the deck face up with your left thumb, so the blank face with the **Two of Hearts** on its reverse is now upward. Position the card in your right hand for a top change. Banter a bit with the audience and then turn your attention to your spectator. As you begin speaking, turn toward him. (As you shift your gaze from the audience to the spectator, the audience will shift their attention from you to him. The turning of your body toward the spectator will be the large action that helps cover the change. I’ve been fooled several times by top changes executed when the magician makes a ninety degree turn from the audience to a spectator or vice versa.)

Drop the card, still face up, back onto the spectator’s hands. Turn back to the audience and say, “I know, you think they’re all the Two of Hearts, but look, they’re all *different!*” Run through the pack one more time showing the blank faces. “But wait! There’s more!” Pick up the selection, make a magical gesture, and snap the card face up, showing the Two of Hearts for a real miracle.

### **Afterword**

The first thing that Harry mentions about this trick is that it is *not* an opener. Unless you’ve established a rapport with the audience, and gotten them expecting to be astonished, this could easily fall flat. I know I can use it when performing. The people who’ve watched me perform over the years know my style and sense of humor—this trick fits me to a tee. You’ll know if it fits you.

If you like the general idea, and can do a top change, there’s one suggestion I have for a better ending. I don’t like holding a single blank card and having a face suddenly materialize on it. Someone is

bound to think the other side is blank. Since you can't prove them wrong with this handling, I wouldn't use it.

What I would do is: At the end of the "Ambitious Card" sequence in the trick, turn the top card face up on top of the deck—and leave it that way. Now, after showing that "there are no other Twos of Hearts in the deck, you can side-slip the bottom card of the pack (with the Two of Hearts on the face) into your right palm. You are now ready for a color change that turns the face-up blank card into the Two of Hearts, and you've eliminated the need for a top change to boot!

As an added bonus, you can now double turnover the top two cards, showing a back, and re-case the deck for the next time.

Finally, for those of you who like neither the top change nor palming a card from the bottom of the deck into right-hand palm—we have the Jinx Change, by Ted Annemann. I've written this up before, once in the March 2013 issue (P. 3), and more briefly in the January 2014 issue, (P. 4). Here it is in the context of the trick. You must be sitting or standing behind a table to use this sleight, so your spectator management will have to change somewhat—not important.

The first time you display the cards to be all blanks (when you are showing a "regular" deck of cards), instead of moving the Two of Hearts to the face, do nothing. After you've brought the Ambitious Card to the top, show that all the cards are different as follows. Spread the cards and upjog a random card and separate your hands leaving the upjogged card at the right end of the left-hand portion. Say, "This one's the Nine of Diamonds . . .," as you flick the upjogged card with the cards in your right hand. Take the upjogged card *under* the right hand cards and spread to another random card, upjogging it, etc., as before. When you come to the Two of Hearts, upjog it but then take it back on *top* of the right-hand cards. (It doesn't matter where in the spread the selection lies. Take it to the top of the right-hand cards; take the others underneath them.)

As you close the spread, turn the cards *face up* and get a break under the Two of Hearts at the bottom. Retrieve the blank card from your spectator and place it, face up, on top of the face-up deck. Ask him if he's amazed that you found his card before he even selected it. As you finish the sentence, take all the cards above the break from above with your right hand and table them. Reach back and grasp the card in your left hand with your right hand, thumb on top, fingers at the bottom, at the lower right corner. If you timed this right, the audience's attention will go to the spectator as you make the change. I've never been caught—no one notices the discrepancy.

There's one more thing you should know: with fifty-five cards in the deck, it might be harder to get all of them out of the box. Several

times, during my practice runs, I found I didn't take all of the cards. If you accidentally leave one of the blank-faced cards behind, you'll be in big trouble. If you're unlucky, you could be in trouble if you leave one of the blank-backs in the case. Your practice routine should include a quick check that you have all the cards.

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