

February Trick of the Month

The Cannibal Cards

This trick was a favorite of mine for many years. It's from Jon Racherbaumer's book, *The Ascanio Spread*. Racherbaumer teaches the sleight and uses it in all the tricks in this book.

The Ascanio Spread

Assume you are holding a face-up packet of cards, from face to back AC, AH, X-Card, AS, AD. The packet is held in Biddle grip in the right hand. Your right middle finger is at the front right corner, and the right thumb is at the rear right corner.

The palm-up left hand goes under the packet, and the left index finger presses up along the width of the bottom card of the packet. The right hand moves to the right, so the index of the AD is visible, and down about an inch.

Your left thumb will now press down on the AC, and your right hand will continue pulling its block to the right, uncovering the AH. The right hand moves its block back up, so its top is even with the AD.

The left middle finger now presses up on the bottom of the block as the right hand moves directly to the right, showing the AS. You now have the indexes of the AH, AD and AS above the index of the AC. Your right hand now controls a double card. Depending on the trick, the double will likely be taken from among the three cards controlled by the left hand, and moved to the top or bottom of the packet.

Stencil Display (Bob Stencil)

This displays four cards, hiding the cards at the rear of five or more face-up cards.

Hold the cards in left hand Mechanic's Grip. Push off the Top three cards to briefly display a fan of four cards. A block of two or more cards is held firmly in Mechanic's Grip.

Take the rightmost two cards of the fan into your right hand, thumb on the back of the top card, fingers on the face of the bottom card. You will now *wiggle* the cards in each hand like this: With your right hand, you will move your thumb forward and fingers back, and then move your fingers forward and thumb back, moving that hand's cards forward and backwards

somewhat rapidly. In the left hand, just move your thumb forward and back while keeping the block in Mechanic's Grip.

At the same time you're moving the cards, your hands move back and forth as well. This chaotic motion makes it look very unlikely that you could be hiding anything.

Effect

You show four aces. (The mobsters.) The spectator cuts the deck, and you display the top card. (A snitch.) The snitch is placed between the aces and is disposed of. You display the cards and only the four aces are seen; the cards are counted—there are only four.

You have the deck cut again, and you find another snitch. You place him among the mobsters, as before, and he is also disposed of. You display the four aces as before but hand the four of them to one of the spectators to confirm the vanish.

First, a word of caution

In the age of Google and YouTube, I think it's a bad idea to let people know the *name* of a trick, or give them clues that might help them find out what you're doing. I have had spectators ask me the name of a trick. Being of a suspicious nature, I just told them I've been doing the trick for a long time, and don't remember the name. Since then, I don't do "cannibals" anymore. I don't even refer to "eating" cards. If you Google "Cannibal Cards" you get a link to a (poorly done) YouTube video that exposes the method. There are a lot of those videos.

Method

Remove four of a kind you wish to be the "eater" cards. Marlo uses jacks or kings. I now use the aces, saying these were the "big guys" in the mob who know how to make their opposition disappear.

This is a quick, silly trick. I have heard that there are magicians who don't like to personalize cards. (I am not one of them.) There is no need to worry about this. You can just say that the aces in this deck have a magical property that lets them make cards vanish.

Here's how to do it: Explain that the aces are "*...four enforcers for the notorious Bicycle gang that terrorizes the neighborhood. They go around looking for snitches to make sure the gang's activities aren't known to any of the cards that work for the local courts.*"

Ask the spectator to give the deck a complete cut. As she does this, take the aces into a right-handed, face-down Biddle grip (also known as End Grip.) Ask the spectator to give you the deck which you take in your left hand. Use your left thumb to push the deck's top card about one-half inch to the right.

You will now emulate the moves of a "Drop-Change" (aka "Drop-Sleight") to turn the card face up. If you already know that move, you can skip the next paragraph,

Use the left sides of the cards in your right hand to lift and turn over the card on top of the deck. You should use a broad action to do this—the right-hand cards start from below the protruding card and rise quickly straight up, until the side of the "snitch" card is at about a forty-five degree angle. At this point, the right hand and left thumb move to the left, until the right-hand packet strikes the base of the left thumb. This turns the card over, but momentarily obscures its face, until you move your right hand back to the right.

Point out the name of the card, and then turn the card face down the same way you turned it face up.

Say, *"Once they met the stoolie, they invited him to a brief conference."* Thumb the top card of the deck on top of the four aces. Place the deck on the table and say, *"Two of the thugs jumped the stoolie from behind."* With that, take two cards from the bottom of the packet and drop them on the top. Then take the packet at the upper left and lower right corners, with the thumbs on top and fingers below and flex the cards, in order to make a snapping type of sound. Accompany this action by saying, *"They broke all the guy's bones...then they made him disappear."*

Now, turn the packet face up and do an "Ascanio Spread" to show only four cards. Separate your hands to take the two-card block in the right hand and place it under the left hand cards as you square them up; the X-card is now at the rear of the face-up packet.

You may now do the Stencil Display if you wish.

Turn the packet face down and do the following false count from the left hand into the right hand. Deal the first card into the right hand. Deal the next card on top of it, slightly downjogged. For the third card, push off a double and take it into the right hand, even with the first card. Finally, take the last card into the right hand, somewhat upjogged. As you square the packet, use the downjogged card to get a right thumb-break over the bottom two cards.

You now ask the spectator to cut the cards to help find another snitch. Ask her to hand you the cards after she's done.

Turn over the top card of the deck with the right hand packet, as before. Patter briefly about the snitch. Next, use a "Drop Change" to switch him for the cards below the break. If you already know how to do this, you may skip the next paragraph.

Push the face-up card somewhat to the right and begin to turn it over with the cards in the right hand, as before. However, as the card begins to turn face down, and the right hand comes over the deck, squeeze your right middle finger and thumb together a bit; this will snap the cards below the break onto the top of deck, leaving you with only three aces in you right hand, and one ace on top of the deck.

You now begin to "disappear" the second snitch. Put him on top of the packet, have the two bottom thugs move to the top to start breaking his bones.

Then turn the packet face up and do an Ascanio Spread with only four cards. Pause, then hand the spread of four cards to the spectator. You'll love the look of amazement you'll get.

As the two "snitch" cards are on top of the deck, you have options. All I do is thumb off the cards into my lap, so they won't be found accidentally during the performance. If you have a better ending, please leave a comment.