# THE MARLO MIRACLE
### aka "The Perfect Stop Trick"

When someone like Ed Marlo, who is legendary for his advanced sleight of hand card magic, puts his name to a self-working card trick – you know it must be good. What follows is, in essence, what many consider to be, "The Perfect Stop Trick." A trick where the spectator arrives at the card he selected earlier simply by dealing out the cards and stopping at any point he desires.

Unlike many versions of this effect, the outcome of this one does not depend upon psychology for a successful outcome. Nor does it require you to influence the spectator or force him to deal out the cards in any special way. He simply deals out the cards face down, one at a time, and stops at any point he wishes. The value of the card he stops at is used to count down to a second card, and the value of that card – to a third card. Ultimately, the spectator arrives at his chosen card.

There are no moves to learn, nothing to memorize and no special decks are involved. In fact, you can even borrow the deck. Before we reveal the modus operandi, let us first see how the effect looks to your audience.

## THE PRESENTATION

You remove a deck of cards from its case, saying, "I'd like to show you something you are going to remember for a long time to come. And while we do use a deck of cards for this little experiment, it isn't the typical kind of card trick you're probably familiar with. You'll see what I mean in a moment." As you are talking, you riffle shuffle the deck.

"Would you mind helping me out? Please take any card out of the pack and remember it. Don't let me see it. Is the card's image be firmly imprinted on your mind? Good." You place the deck on the table. "Please place your card face down on top of the deck." As soon as this is done, you cut the deck in half saying, "Let's bury your card somewhere in the middle of the pack. No tricky business, we just cut it to the middle so no one knows its location."

"People never trust magicians, so let me confirm your card really is lost." You pick up the deck and show a few of the cards on the bottom, before replacing them. Next, you take a dozen or so cards off the top and show them as well, before placing the deck aside. "As you can see, the card you selected is not on the bottom or the top, but hopelessly lost somewhere in between. Would you mind shuffling these?" You hand the dozen or so cards you are holding from the top of the deck to a spectator to shuffle. "When you are satisfied the cards are thoroughly mixed, please place them back on top of the deck."

After the spectator adds the shuffled cards to the deck, you hand the entire deck to the spectator who chose the card. "Somewhere in the middle of this pack is the card you selected earlier. Neither you or I know its position, so let's see if the deck will reveal your card to us. Please deal the cards face down onto the table, one card at a time. You may stop dealing at any time. Please let nothing in my manner, gestures or speech influence you in any way. The choice of where to stop is entirely yours and yours alone."

The spectator now deals the cards and stops at any point. Once he does, you say, "Would you prefer the card on the table or the one still on the deck? Please turn over that card and note its value. A seven? Please count down and turn over the seventh card. A three? Please count down three more. What is that card?  A jack? Okay, jacks are eleven. Please count down 11 cards and place the card you arrive at, face down in front of you." You now look the spectator directly in the eye. "For the first time, please tell us the name of the card you selected. The Four of Diamonds? Please turn over the card in front of you – a card you arrived at seemingly by mere chance. It is the Four of Diamonds!"

## HOW IT WORKS

Remove all 13 cards of any suit from a deck and arrange them from face to back in "ace to king" order (the ace counting for one and the king for 13). Place this packet on the bottom of the deck – the ace will now be the bottom card of the pack if you have set-up the cards correctly. Remember the suit used. For the sake of this explanation, we'll assume you are using hearts.

Begin by giving the deck a riffle shuffle, but let the bottom stack (the 13 hearts in order) fall first – so they are NOT mixed with any other cards. Next, have a card freely selected by a spectator from anywhere in the deck – EXCEPT THE BOTTOM STACK OF 13 HEARTS.

The spectator now places his card on top of the pack, which you proceed to cut to the center. This brings the 13 hearts, in order, directly above the selected card in the middle of the pack. Square up the deck and turn it face up. Take a few cards off the bottom and show them to highlight that the selected card is not there. Replace these cards on the bottom of the pack, and then turn the deck face down and deal off about a dozen cards. Show these cards, before handing them to another spectator to shuffle. After mixing the packet from the top of the deck, the spectator is asked to replace these back on top of the pack. You'll note all of these actions help to emphasize to your audience that the cards are not arranged in any special order.

You now hand the entire deck to the spectator who originally chose the card and have him deal out the cards – stopping at any point. Once he stops, you offer him the choice of the card just dealt or the one still on the deck. In any event, if he turns up a heart (or whatever other suit you are using for your stack), you know whatever the value – the selected card will be that many cards down. You direct the spectator to count down and place the card he arrives at; face down, in front of him. You already know this is the selected card. While you are talking and reviewing what has happened, you take the rest of the deck and shuffle it. In so doing, you destroy any evidence of the earlier stack (unless you intend to repeat the effect). All that remains is the dramatic revelation.

What if the first card stopped at, is not a heart? In that case, you take the value of the card stopped at and count down. Repeat this, as necessary, until you finally do reach a heart. Ed Marlo recommended cutting off 20 cards or less from the top, when initially burying the selected card. This helps to ensure that the selected card is at least 32 cards deep into the pack – making it unlikely the spectator would ever go past it before stopping.

Take our word for it – it just never happens. Even so, it never hurts to be prepared if there ever is a first time. In that case, don't panic – just work backward using the card he just turned up to count down into the packet just dealt. This will bring up a heart on the last count. The value of the heart is then used to count in the original packet and arrive at the selected card as described before.

This trick never fails to get a great reaction. Try it for yourself just once and we guarantee it will become one of your favorite self-working card tricks. With regard to the initial set-up, the easiest way to work is simply to have the deck in its case with the bottom stack pre-arranged. The opening riffle shuffle should help to alleviate any underlying suspicion that you're working with a stacked deck. You can also quickly set up the deck in the course of a different trick, such as one where you run through the cards to find a selected card. You must follow this latter approach if you plan on working with a borrowed pack.

## REPEATING THE TRICK

The Marlo Miracle is one of those rare tricks that lends itself to, and often becomes even more baffling with, repetition. The major challenge is restoring the stack and getting it back to the bottom of the deck.

One way to do this is to first locate the original stack and cut it to the top of the deck. Since the cards are reversed when dealt, you must run (milk) all 13 cards singly from the top to the bottom of the deck using an overhand shuffle.

An even easier and more subtle method was used by close-up magic great, Bert Allerton. After the dealing was finished and the chosen card placed in front of the spectator, Mr. Allerton would pick up all of the cards that had just been dealt. The topmost cards in this pile being, of course, the stack in reverse order with the cards used to count down scattered face up throughout. Under the pretense of correcting the deck and turning the face up cards over, he would reverse the order as he ran the cards from hand to hand. Whenever he reached a face up card, he turned it over. This course of action was continued until the deck was righted. Any cards the spectator was left holding were just added to the top. Thus, the stack was returned, in order, to the bottom of the pack and he was ready to repeat the effect with no one the wiser!

## FOOLING MAGICIANS

Another wonderful Allerton touch was camouflaging the stack to "throw off" magicians and others who might be wise to the possibility of a stack. This approach also allowed him to spread the cards face up to show that there was no preparation. While this may be overkill for a lay audience, it is guaranteed to drive magicians crazy. Allerton's stack is virtually undetectable unless you know the secret. Here is the 13 card sequence (ace on bottom, king on top as with the regular stack): AS, 2C, 3S, 2D, 5S, 3H, 7C, 5D, 9C, 5H, JS, AH, KS. The key to using it is you must memorize ALL of the black cards in the stack, because when you hit one of these (club or spade), the selected card will be arrived at next when dealing its value. You'll note, the red cards in the sequence direct you not to the selected card, but to a black card, that takes you there. Now that's diabolical!