



Captured

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# Introduction

What are pictures, if not a story? They are a book and one worth telling. A picture is worth a thousand words so they say, and so here you have a ten-thousand-word novel. Ten separate images at different locations with different scenes. However, they all depict one tale. The tale of a man's life obsession and his attempt to document it.

Since the time of the invention of photography, and particularly with the availability of the Kodak Brownie camera, photography has long been a common and popular hobby in America. Now, as film is virtually gone, and cellphones and DSLR has taken over, people often long for the days of film and physical photos. Indeed, physical photos are now often anachronistic, a relic of a bygone era.

As such, you start your routine with using something seen as an antique, something old and different. Then, the images in the photos themselves are quite different too. They are unusual locations and unusual images. I am particularly happy with this routine as well, because these are all pictures that I took; admittedly with a cell phone. These pictures are from all over the world.

The photos you have in your hands allows you to see through the viewer's eyes. They allow you to channel spirits and feelings. These cards allow you to describe what is on the card, without even seeing any marks. You can use fishing to get more information. What you do with them is entirely up to you. So, start dreaming up your perfect routine and you can do it with these images.

# The History

When James Mason was a kid he had his first experience with a ghost. He was eight years old to be exact. His grandfather had died the day before his eighth birthday. In the grief and pain over the death of his grandfather, everyone completely forgot about an eight year olds birthday. Well, almost everyone. His grandfather didn't forget. He paid him a visit that night, in spectral form. His grandfather's ghost visited him and told him not to be afraid, that he hadn't forgotten him and that he was proud of him.

The next morning, he told his mom and dad about grandfather visiting, but they didn't want to hear it. They didn't believe him, they wanted nothing to do with those stories. This was obviously the rambling of a grief stricken kid, just making it worse for anyone else. They forbade him from talking to anyone about it anymore. If only he had some type of proof. This started James Mason's lifelong obsession with ghosts.

When he was ten he got a Kodak Brownie camera for his birthday. James had fallen in love with photography, which was still relatively new, at least for the masses, but Kodak had made a camera affordable.

James had not yet forgotten that late-night visit from his grandfather and now he had a way to make the world believe. James was going to photograph ghosts. He had heard all about orbs and spectral energies. He knew that if he had pictures of ghosts, then everyone would have to believe.

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James had a relatively normal life. He got a job processing photos, a job that was perfect for him. He never made a lot of money but he was happy doing what he loved. Plus he got discounted film and could



develop it all for free. And, he never quit using that Brownie. He could take the best pictures with that camera.

James never married and never had kids, so all of the money he made was saved. He tracked down all of the haunted locations all around the world and traveled there and captured images. Sometimes he caught ghosts, sometimes he captured orbs, sometimes he captured nothing but interiors or landscapes, but these were all places of great spirit activity.

James knew he was not the only person who would love the photos of ghosts. There were other ghost enthusiasts. They would love what he produced as well. Surely he could make money with his ghost images. He decided he would sell them. He took out ads in magazines that catered to ghost hunters and their ilk. He carefully assembled the best photos he had, ten of them, and developed each by hand. He typed out labels and attached them to the back of each of the photos noting the location and what happened at that place. He put them in the bags from work and shipped them out. However, he was disappointed. Not that many people seemed interested.

More than anything else though, he wanted his parents to believe. He had the pictures that proved ghosts existed. However, his training in photography and job developing pictures led to many detractors. People started to believe that it was all trick photography, or lens flairs, or just dust particles. What about the ghosts captured? It was just done in the lab, double exposures, that what was said. His parents would never believe. Not only did they not believe but they told James that he was a fraud.

It was all too much for James. He took, his own life, the last photo was of his own face with a gun to his head. He opened up the lab, took the photo and placed the negative in the machine. When the other employees arrived the next day they found him dead and that negative

waiting to be developed. After his death, his parents found stacks of the ghost photos, packed in the glassine bags that came straight from the photo studio.

As is the case with so many people who are misunderstood, after James' death people started collecting the photos. They actively sought them out as macabre mementos, but then something else happened.

People started to believe. Some people said that the photos not only captured proof of spirits but acted as a doorway. That somehow, those pictures could transport the viewer to those locations. That they could see and feel and be present at the locations where those photos were taken.

Those people were few, but they started rabidly collecting the pictures of James Mason. James' lasting gift to his parents was the considerable amount of money they were able to make, at least in those times, from the photos of ghosts, the very thing they thought was fake, helped make their son immortal in a manner of speaking. Keeping his ghost always present.

They are still available from time to time, and for believers they still have a power to transport, to take you to that place.

# Do You Need a Story?

Let me tell you a story. I love that, starting a section on whether you need a story by providing a story. I was at a flea market and I found a small round cardboard box that looked ancient. I took the top of and inside was a small astrology wheel with information and a pointer that could be rotated around. I have looked and looked and I have no clue what it is. At some point, I will probably use it in a show. I probably won't make up a backstory. I can tell folks I found it at a flea market and have no clue what it is. I can then demonstrate whatever powers, effect or what have you, keeping true to my story of not knowing what this thing is.

It seems like every prop has a backstory. However, I will maintain that it isn't necessary. Strictly speaking, you really don't have to have a story for the photos, though I have provided one above. I don't always tell the story of where things came from. I often just perform. If the props I am using are coherent with the other props then they draw less scrutiny. With that said, often people want to look at the props after the show. I have found that in bizarre presentations this isn't an attempt to catch you at your tricks. It is due to genuine curiosity. People want to look at these cool, weird old things.

At that time they will often ask you where they came from. As long as you have a reasonable explanation, then you are fine. I don't think every prop needs a backstory. However by having one, at least in your head, you know how to answer that question. These photos are unusual. At some point you will be asked what they are or where they came from. If you want to use it, then use the story I provided or don't, it doesn't matter to me!

# Card Orientation

I love the use of orientation to determine things about cards and photos. I have made extensive use of this and I first started doing this with Freaks. I think it can be very powerful. I have used the orientation of a card to divide the images into two different categories. You may not have paid particular attention to the fact that some of the photos are horizontal and some of the photos are vertical. This is purposeful. All of the vertical photos bear striking similarities. Even with all of these similarities, they also bear a few differences that with a bit of fishing can allow you to identify the photos without being able to see it.

Using this method, you can have a spectator do all of the handling and passing out of the photos.

Likewise, all of the horizontal photos also share similarities and subtle differences. This makes it much easier to remember the photos. Rather than trying to remember a set of ten, I have always found it easier to remember two sets of five.

I do believe that with just a bit of time, you will find these cards very easy to remember.



# Horizontal Photos

If someone is holding a horizontal photo, you already have it narrowed down to one of five scenes. That easily, you eliminated half of the options. The easy way to remember this is that outside you can see the horizon, so all of the horizontal photos are outside. The horizontal photos will be:

1. East London Cemetery
2. The Hollow
3. The Moors
4. St. Bernards
5. Whitby Abby

We can now look at the photos for the similarities. There are a great number of similarities in all of the photos, but each one also has a difference that will allow you to be able to identify the specific photos.

The horizontal cards:

- They are all outdoors.
- They all have a ghost.
- They all have flowers.
- There are trees.
- There are birds in the picture.

Now we will move on to the differences:

- East London Cemetery-only one with two ghosts.
- St. Bernards-Only one with a building in it.
- Moors-One of two with child ghost. Only one with low scrub, no trees.
- Alabama Ghost-Only one with no visible sky and no birds.
- Abby-Only one with single tree, bird barely visible in tree. Only one with ruins.

Now we will walk through an example of how this might be handled in a performing situation.

Performer: *I want you to look at that picture and really image that you are there. Imagine that you could step inside that photo and look around, that you could feel the temperature, feel the ground under your feet, that you could feel the breeze.*

*That is strange that I said that. I didn't really mean to, but that came to mind. You are outside.*

Audience Member: *Yes.*

Performer: *I also see trees, correct?*

Audience Member: *Yes.*

Performer: *Yes, and can you see the sky?*

Audience Member: *Yes.*

Performer: *There are low heavy clouds. I can feel their weight.*

Audience Member: *Yes.*

Performer: *And there is a ghost in this one.*

Audience Member: *Yes.*

Performer: *Can you tell, is it a child?*

Audience Member: *No it isn't.*

Performer: I see tombstones, in a cemetery.

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: And there are birds in the sky.

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: I see flowers too, small ones, maybe dandelions. And there is a building, no?

Audience Member: No.

Performer: No, I didn't think so.

At this point, I am going to take a little break. Notice how many yes answers there are. With the no answers as outlined, I know exactly which photo they are looking at now. So, now we can move onto what looks even more impossible, thereby obliterating all of the previous no answers. Did you follow along? Do you know which one they would have in their hand? If not, go look at the pictures and go back and read through it. It should become obvious.

Based on the differences in the scenes on the cards, let's look a little closer at the key questions that are asked and answered.

*And you can see the sky, yes?*

This eliminates The Hollow, so we have four more to work with.

*Can you tell, is it a child?*

With a no answer to this question, we are down to the two cemetery scenes. One has a building, one doesn't. Quite simple at this point.

*I see flowers too, small ones, maybe dandelions. And there is a building, no?*

This is a technique that I love using, combining a hit with a “no.” The “yes” overpowers the “no” and now you have all you need. You now know which photo they are holding, the East London Cemetery.

But now we get into the part that will eliminate all memory of the no questions and the fishing aspect of the routine. We are going to now refer to the back of the photo.

Performer: Can you please take a look at the back of the photo?

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: I want you to really feel the space, the temperature, the smell, any emotions connected to it. There is a description there of the location, so it should help. I am sensing a location, but it is far from here, correct?

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: It feels like a large city, but it isn't. I'm not in a large city, does that make sense?

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: As I am walking I feel blades of grass against my legs. I see the tombstones, but I can't make out any names. Can you?

Audience Member: No.

Performer: But nonetheless, a name is coming through. Something connected to great horror. A murder. Does this make sense?

Audience Member: Yes.

Performer: Think about the name. The first name. Count the number of letters. I am getting three.

Audience Member: Yes!

Performer: Now go to the last name. Picture the letters, and scramble them all up and then focus on one, now! Is it an “r”?

Audience Member: Yes

Performer: Stride, I am getting the name Liz Stride.

Audience Member: Yes

Performer: A victim of Jack the Ripper.

Audience Member: Yes.

Think about the power of this routine as you perform it. It is inexplicable and incredibly powerful, with only a bare minimum of memory work. Remember the name of the location and what is featured in each set of cards. It is incredibly easy.

# Vertical Cards

If someone is holding a vertical photo, you likewise have it narrowed down to one of five scenes. That easily, you eliminated half of the options. You already know that horizontal=horizon so vertical is easy to remember. They are all inside. The vertical photos will be:

1. The Sunateum
2. All Hallows
3. Reims Cathedral
4. Smith House
5. Einvoll

We can now look at the photos for the similarities. There are a great number of similarities in all of the photos, but each one also has a difference that will allow you to be able to identify the specific photos.

The vertical photos:

- They are all indoors
- They all have orbs.
- They all have a flat surface such as a desk or pedestal.
- They all have animals.

Now we will move on to the differences:

- The Sunateum-only one with rugs on the floor. Snake in lower corner.
- All Hallows- One of two with lots of stone. Only one with crosses and candles.
- Reims Cathedral-Other with lots of stone. Owl in the stone above statue. Flowers at the base. Only one with a figure.
- Smith House-One of two with desk. One of two with window, but can't see out of it. Only one with patterned floor.
- Einvoll-Only one with wooden floor, can see out the window. Garland hanging.



Since we covered a walk through of performance, we won't repeat it here, but I will provide more suggestions for different approaches to performance.

# PRESENTATIONS

I highly encourage you to create your own routines that fit your style, but in the interest of getting the gears turning, I will provide several different ideas and routines.

## Tossed out deck

You can easily do a tossed out deck type of routine. Given the imagery on the photos you don't have to know who has which photo. Consider the performance options that open up. You could do this blindfolded or from another room or over the phone. However, let's consider this from a stage perspective.

I would not recommend that you literally toss them out. These are old images, something of power. You wouldn't just take something like this and throw it. You would pass them out. I would have at last three different people select one of the photos. One of the strengths of tossed out deck is that the deck is out of the performers control. Don't throw that strength away. I would designate someone from the audience to carry them to three different people. Also, you can let the person handing out photos or have the audience members select which three they want. This eliminates the ideas of stooges as well.

One of the aspects that makes this stronger as well is that an audience member can hold onto the photo and look at it. It doesn't have to be a peek. Let's look at the routine.

*I found these old photos at an antique store. They were in this old bag. I had no clue what they were and neither did the storeowner. He said they gave him the creeps and he couldn't sell them. He made me a good deal and I bought them. There are some unusual things that I noticed, however. I could tell you about it, and while I am quite an*

*amazing storyteller, I think you would probably rather see what I am talking about.*

As you are saying the above lines, show the audience the photos, moving them from front to back, so that they can see that they are all different. If you are moving fairly quickly, it is unlikely that anyone will really notice the similarities. Did you notice them when you had time to look at them closely?

*Can I have someone to assist, please?*

You now select your audience member who will help by passing out the photos.

*Please take the photos and give them a good mix. When I first noticed this strange property, I thought that maybe I was inadvertently putting photos in the same order. Therefore, I want you to mix them so that we both know they are random.*

*Now, can you please pick three people in the audience, three people in different areas of the room, and take them the photos. Each person will then get to select whichever photo that they like, keeping it face down for the time being.*

*Now that all you three have each selected a photo, please turn it over and look at it. Look at it very carefully, for the photo you are holding is no mere accident.*

At this point, the chances are that both horizontal and vertical cards are out there. However, make sure to look and confirm that. The line above about looking carefully helps to assure that they don't just glance at the photo. The wording below would be assuming that they are looking at both horizontal and vertical photos.

*One of you is looking at a photo that is an outside space. I see lots*

*of trees, heavy low clouds, and birds. I see a ghostly image and a building, an old building. I also see some kind of a flat surface like a pedestal or a desk. This is inside. There is also an animal, maybe a cat? And someone else is looking out of a window. I see stone as well. The final person is looking at....*

Now here, decide how out there you want to be. Do you want to play it safe and give a few more characteristics of the cards or ...do you want to go out there and really make a strong impact?

### **The Play it Safe Route**

*The final person is looking at a photo that contains spirit orbs and there are flowers, small flowers like dandelions or something. If I said anything about the photo that you are looking at, then please have a seat.*

### **The Darker Route**

*The final person is a looking at a photo that really speaks to them personally. This is an image that for some reason resonates strongly. As you look at it, you could almost hear the card whispering your name, calling you, beckoning you. It is lulling and at the same time disturbing. I know you want to get that card out of your hand.*

*You can picture yourself walking through the scene. You can fill the grass brush your pant leg and feel a heavy sense of foreboding. There is death all around you.*

*If I said anything about the card that you are looking at, then please have a seat.*

*I have a confession to make. I didn't really pick up on anything. The weird thing that keeps happening every time is the people are always led to the same three photos. I have done it with more than three*

*and it never works; only, when there are only three. What is the relevance? The trinity, maybe three numbers, like 666? I don't know.*

*And that feeling of creepiness, being watched, being spoken to by the photos? It happens to me every time I look at them. I know it isn't only me.*

If you don't like the last part of the script, don't use it. However, I like how it shifts the working away from a trick to a weird coincidence. If making a connection with the person, or divination appeals to you more directly, you can go to the next routine.

What makes this more powerful to me though, is that you are also describing the thoughts and feelings of someone in the audience. You aren't asking anyone to confirm those statements and the act of them sitting will be the confirmation. I think this greatly elevates the performance.

# Hands off Divination (Pumping Method)

This is the purest and preferred (in my mind) form for presentation of the routine. What is traded off in cleanliness of method, is more than gained through the seeming impossibility of the presentation. I think that this approach is very strong. I will also recommend a few other possible ways to present the Pumping Method. I will not go into a large amount of detail here on the working or scripting, as we have already outlined that earlier in the section on the working of the orientation. Instead, this section on the Pumping Method will address different presentational angles.

- You can have any random person in the audience mix the photos and hand them out. You can then divine who has each individual photo.
- You can be blindfolded to eliminate the possibility of peeks. While this is undoubtedly running without being chased, it may appeal to you if you have a reason to use a blindfold.
- You can do this remotely. You don't have to be present when the card is selected.

## The Audience Helper Angle

The strength of this approach, as with the Tossed Out Deck approach is that you don't touch the photos and you have no control over them. You



wouldn't want to do this type of presentation with multiple photos most likely. If you are trying to hit three different photos but they all sound like they look the same, then the working could become transparent.

However, with that said, I particularly like combining this with the Tossed Out Deck where you describe the last card in great detail. The scripting could go something like the following:

*Now, I have been picking up on some mental images from some of the audience members, but you are sending a particularly strong image. I want you to look at that photo closely and really visualize that place and imagine being able to send that image to me.*

*I do believe that you are looking at...*

Then you simply go on to give a more detailed description of the specific card describing exactly what is on it based on the orientation and information from the person

Remote Ideas:

Let's consider some remote ideas briefly.

- You can be in another room of the house and call a cell phone and describe what they are looking at.
- You could send the photos to a radio or television station or send an associate out. The person can select the photos and you can describe it.
- Maybe one of the strongest ideas is to allow the spectator to look at all of the photos. They can be laid out and you can tell them to get one of them in mind and to focus on it. Now you can do the description of the photos via the pumping method and they have never touched the photos. The important

bit for handling here is that you tell them that it is important that they focus intently on the one photos. By doing so, they really lock the image in their mind. You don't want them looking at all of the photos and noticing the similarities. You want them focused on their photos only.

# **The End**

This is the end of our instructions but not even close to the end of the possibilities with this set. Work with these photos for just a short time and you can likely come up with your own presentation that is suited to your performance style.

If you come up with some new routine, I would love it if you let me know. I hope you have fun with this and I look forward to hearing from you.