

The Secret Key



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Routine

The performer tells the story of his great aunt, who used to be a fortune teller. He tells the story of how she used to keep a hotel room in a different town and while there, she would tell fortunes using only a few simple items, her hotel key, a wooden box it was kept in and a cloth chart.

He shows the audience the chart and the key to her room that she used as her fortune telling parlor. The performer asks the spectator if he or she has any questions they would like answered. The performer ties a string around the key and shows how to use it as a pendulum to answer the question.

Next, the spectator is treated to a numerological reading after freely choosing a number on the chart. It is then determined that the choice of numbers was not random. In fact, the chosen number was the room number of her parlor.

Finally, the performer explains that sometimes he feels that the spirit of his great aunt is still with him. He explains that it is through her that the future has been foretold. He then asks her to make an appearance. He asks her to turn the key, allowing access to the spirit world. The key then turns in his hand.

This is a multiphase routine, using the Haunted Key as the focus of the routines. The key will be used as a pendulum, used to select numbers in a magic square, and used in the traditional Haunted Key routine. They can be done separately or all three can be combined in one performance. This allows several different paths for presentation and allows you to get the most out of one prop.





Overview

What I have prepared is a multiphase routine that gets more than one “trick” from the Haunted Key. I like props and I like to make things. I wanted to make something to hold my haunted key, but I wanted it to be relevant for some reason as well. This is what lead me down the path to this routine. I really enjoy things that allow you to involve your spectator and do some reading as well. All of this is incorporated into this effect.

At the beginning, I want to state that I have provided some suggestions for routines. However, hopefully you will view this as a tool. The key, the use of it as a pendulum, the divining and numerology cloth, these are all tools. You can take this routine into much darker territory if you prefer. You certainly don’t have to work with my script. Speaking of presentation, let’s address that.

When you present this, I would suggest that you do so seriously. If you try to put this over as just a magic trick, you will lose most of the impact. At its heart, this routine is about a haunted key. Therefore, you need a reason why it is haunted. You will see that the presentation that I provide is light on the haunted side. It focuses more on the divination side of things. However, I still have an explanation of who it belonged to and it ties into the use of the key for divination.

There does need to be some background for the use of the key. I have enjoyed presenting my background. I use the story of fortune teller great aunt for many routines. I find that it gives a good explanation for old looking props and allows me to get into fortune telling routines. Also, I like to incorporate actual locations and events when possible. You will see in my story I used the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. My local audiences are likely familiar with the hotel (which is haunted) and they can look it up online if they would like to research it themselves. This adds a touch of reality to the routine. You can also use this hotel, or you can find one in your area.

Obviously, since you purchased this routine, you can feel free to use my background story and my presentation. However, I would strongly encourage you to develop your own story and use your own locations. Also, if you use a different person, give her a name, consider finding a picture, make her real. It makes the story more believable, and that is what we are going for here.





Presentation

The storyteller had something with him. It looked like some cloth and a small box. He pulled his chair up to the table and ordered his first beer. He never would share any stories until after he had a couple of pints. Eventually, one of the friends was brave enough to ask what was in the box. Everyone knew how the storyteller worked. You have to ask if you want to see. The storyteller never forced his unique items on the group.

“Are you sure you want to know?” he asked. “Even if it means you learn something you may not want to know?”



The group urged him to continue.

“I had a great aunt by the name of Lucretia Parker. Aunt Lucretia was a fortune teller in Boston. In fact, she was well known and highly regarded. However, she was from Arkansas and loved this state. In the summer she would come back here to visit. When she was here, she would stay in Eureka Springs. This town was always

known for its unusual characters and was an artist community from the beginning. Therefore, Aunt Lucretia was not only accepted there, but celebrated. When she went there, she always stayed at the Crescent Hotel, which was and still is one of the grandest hotels in Eureka Springs. I kept a postcard that she sent to my grandmother from when she was there.”

The storyteller passed the postcard around.

“She not only stayed there, but she had a dedicated room that was always ready for her. She used this room as her makeshift fortunetelling parlor while she was there. It was her home and business away from home. Therefore, her key was important to her. She kept in a wooden box which was given to her by the owner of the hotel for keeping that room.”

“She didn’t want to carry a large amount of items, so she used only a few simple items when she told fortunes in Eureka. She had a strip of printed cloth and a small box.





The storyteller unwrapped the cloth and all could see it was printed with a circle and a grid of numbers.

“This cloth had a simple circle. This circle is used for pendulum reading. Then there was a collection of numbers. Aunt Lucretia was a fan of numerology. The box... this contained the most important thing of all; the very key to her fortunetelling sessions. You see this box contained...her room key.”

The story teller opened the box and removed the key. He passed it around for all to look at.

“As I said, Aunt Lucretia didn’t like to carry around things, so she would tie a string to her room key and use this for a pendulum. Steve, you asked me about the box, so I will have you assist. Have you ever used a pendulum before?”

Steve shook his head “no.”

The storyteller instructed Steve on the proper use of the pendulum.

“Now Steve, I want you to concentrate on a question. An issue you have been dealing with. Please write it on the back of this card. I will place it face down in my wallet and put it away.”

“Now concentrate on the issue and frame it as a “yes” or “no” question. Then just hold the key over the chart. Just continue to concentrate on your question.”

The pendulum started swinging towards “yes.”

“Steve, does this answer your question?” the storyteller asked?

“Yes, it does,” Steve responded.

“The pendulum reading is one of the first ways that Aunt Lucretia would do a reading. Sometimes this is all she would do, but sometimes, her sitters wanted more. She also had a numerology chart.”

“Steve, please look at the board and pick a number that appeals to you. Once you have that number, please look at the board and concentrate on a number. One may appeal to you more than the others. You may not know why, but it will. Which number appeals to you the most?”

“Seventeen,” Steve replied.





“Ahh, seventeen, your favorite age for girlfriends,” the storyteller replied.

The group of friends enjoyed the cheap laugh at Steve’s expense.

“In doing numerology readings, we need a primary number. We get that by adding the two numbers, so one and seven gives us eight. Steve this number represents your present. This is where you choose to be right now. You are ambitious and have desires and goals that you would like to fulfill. You have the ability to make those things happen. Does this make sense to you?”

“Now is the time to act on those goals. Approach them practically and with the attitude of getting things done and you can make things happen. However, be wary in your approach as well. Don’t be too narrow in your approach and don’t be forceful. You can be firm without being forceful. You know that this is an area in your life that you could apply this to, correct?”

Steve nodded in agreement.

“Now, take that number and look at the column or row that it is in. In other words, since your number was seventeen, you can use this column or this row. Now, just place the key over the column or row that you would like.”

Steve placed the key over the horizontal row.

“This choice represents your future. You made a conscious decision in selecting your path, but you do not know where it will lead or what may come of it. Please add the numbers in your selection and tell me the number when you have it.”

“The number is 140,” Steve stated.

“To do this reading, we need to get a life path number. One plus four plus zero gives us five. In the future, you need to be open minded in regard to new ideas and new people. There are already areas in your life where this can happen, but you have been closed off somewhat. Do you understand?”

Steve was thoughtful for a minute and then nodded his agreement.

“You will have a lot of energy and drive and you need to allow outlets for that energy. Being too rigid in your routines or approach to things will only make you feel trapped. There





could be a creative spark that will lead you to a new path. This could happen in the very near future. Is there anything happening now?”

“Well, yeah, I have been thinking about changing jobs,” Steve replied.

“Great, then now is the time to examine that. I am not saying to quit your job you have now but start searching. Be persistent and talk to everyone you can. I think that you will find that you will make the right contacts and that the job will open up.”

“Your original number was 140? Is that correct? Does that number mean anything to you? Your choice was not merely random. You see Aunt Lucretia maintained that one room in the Crescent Hotel. That room was room 140.”

The storyteller opened the box and showed a label inside that showed that the key belonged to room 140.

“You see Steve, I don’t think that your choice was random. I have always felt a power in this key, like Aunt Lucretia was still around. Like maybe she was tied to it.”

“I want to do something a bit odd. I need everyone to buy in because we need dedicated will and thought. Does everyone want to see if we can summon Aunt Lucretia?”

The storyteller looked around the table. People weren’t sure whether to believe him or not. The waiter showed up.

“We are good with the spirits,” the storyteller said, giving a wink to the table. A few people groaned.

“OK, I need everyone’s buy in. Will everyone try this?”

Everyone agreed and so the storyteller laid the key across his palm.

“I need everyone here to help me. Please everyone, call out for Aunt Lucretia, and ask for her appearance. I just want everyone to do this mentally. We aren’t going to vocalize our request. I will be the only one speaking.”

The storyteller closed his eyes and breathed in deeply.

“Aunt Lucretia, we come to you in peace. We can feel your presence in this place. We want a sign of your presence. Give us something to show that you are here.”

Nothing happened.





“Aunt Lucretia, I have your key here. This is the key to your room at the Crescent. The one you kept in the box. Can you see it? Can you feel it?”

“Do something. Can you move the key?”

Nothing happened. The group and the storyteller stared at the key and then ever so slowly it started to rise.

The storyteller now whispered, “Is that you Lucretia? Can you move it some more?”

The key moved a little more and then slowly turned over and came to a rest in the storyteller’s hand.

“Thank you for blessing us with your presence, Aunt Lucretia.”





The Pendulum

As a bizarre performer or magician, I am going to assume that you are familiar with the workings of the pendulum. I will not go into a lot of detail, but I will provide you with a brief background and how it works, as well as some alternative suggestions for use.

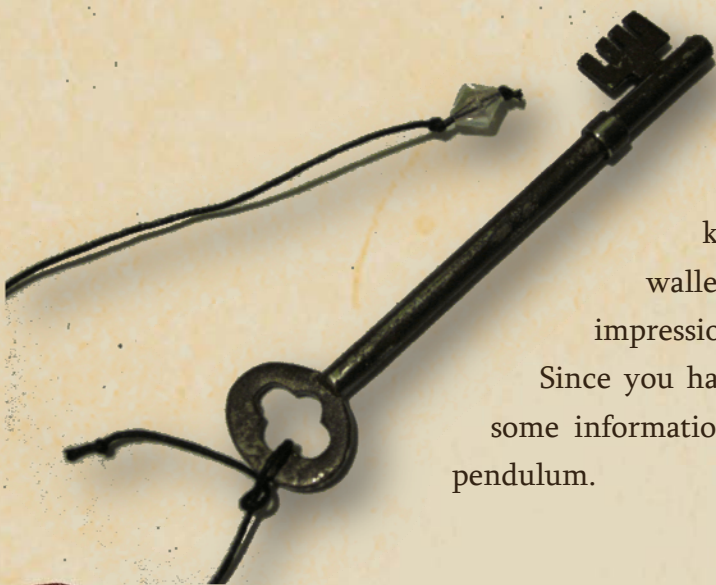
The pendulum, like the Haunted Key works on the principle of ideomotor response. This is the idea that tiny, imperceptible muscle movements cause the movement of the pendulum. If you have never done any pendulum work, take the key, tie the cord to it and concentrate on making it move a certain way. Make sure to keep absolutely still. If you tell the pendulum to move over and over, it will start to do so. This is how the pendulum works. I cover some more information and a routine with the pendulum in “Swing My Way,” a routine in my book *Maleficium*.

Now, let’s address the application of the pendulum in this routine. There are basically two ways to handle this. The first is the completely clean, no tricks way. This is interesting and fun to observe. To go this route, you let the person mentally consider their question and then instruct them in the use of the pendulum and see where it leads them. There is no “trick” here. This lets your participant do their own divination. You won’t get any information from them, but they may not really matter.

The second application of the pendulum work isn’t clean, but it could be very effective. In this application, you need to secretly obtain the question which was written by the participant. There are entire books devoted to this so I won’t cover all of it. However, when I have performed this, I have used a peek wallet. It is a simple card wallet with the back cut

out. The participant writes the question on the back of a business card and then it goes face down in the wallet.

I then have the participant tie the string on the key, and that is when I do the peek, as I put the wallet in a shirt pocket. You can also do a center tear, impression pad, whichever method works best for you. Since you have the information, you can use this to determine some information about your sitter while watching them use the pendulum.



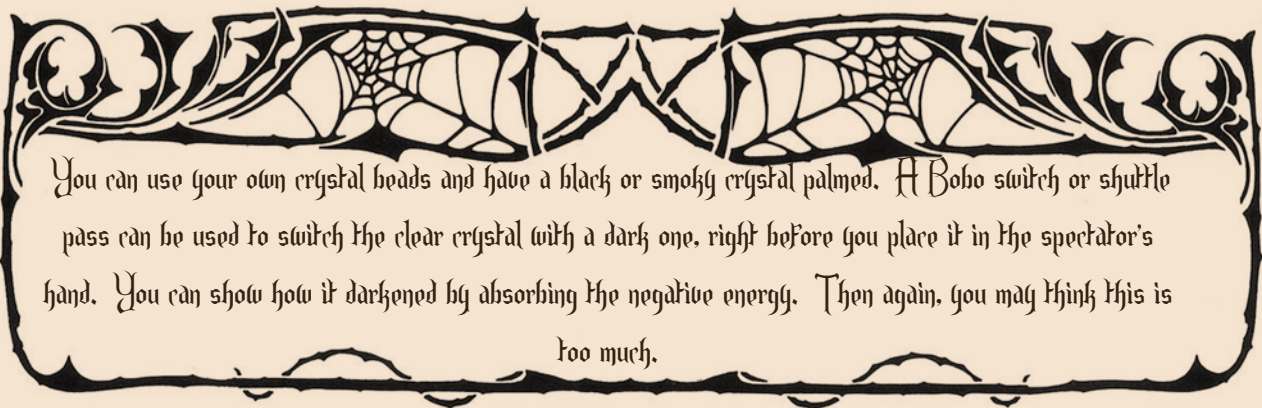


Now you will need to instruct your participant in how to use the pendulum. I thought that it made more sense to include the instruction here, rather than in the scripted section. I didn't want to break the continuity of the story and I thought it would be helpful to look at the wheel, while I was explaining it. Below are my suggestions for instructions.

"Take the thread and tie it in a knot around the key. Notice that there is a crystal at the top by which to hold the key. It is believed that crystals can be used for purification. Please hold the crystal in your hand as you concentrate on it. I want you to picture all of the negative energy flowing from your body into the crystal."

"Now, please tie the string onto the key." This is the part where I take a peek at the writing, if I choose to do so.

Now, assuming that you obtained the subject of the question, you now have some useful information. You also can now watch your participant's use of the pendulum to see how it responds to the question. Assuming you have this information, you can now feed some of the information back to them when you do the numerology reading. Let's suppose that their question was "will I find a new job?" I will use this sample question when I address the numerology reading.



We need to continue addressing the use of the circle and the pendulum.

"After you tie the string to the pendulum, you will rest your elbow on the table, keeping the key over the circle. Then you can ask your question. You do not need to do so out loud. Simply ask the question in your mind. Concentrate on it, asking it over and over. Keep your hand absolutely still, but allow the key to move."





How exactly do they do read the answer? Take a look at the pendulum circle and it should be self explanatory. You can see that there are lines that go to “yes” and “no.” There are also the words “Maybe” and “Not Now.” So, if the pendulum follows the lines for the “Yes” then the answer is yes, if it follows the “no” it is no. If the pendulum moves in a circle in the direction of “maybe,” then that is the answer, and if it goes in the direction of “not now,” then that likewise provides an answer.

I included the picture of the chart below just for fun. This was the first incarnation. There is a problem. See if you can find it. I’ll give you a hint. Which direction means “maybe?” Ahh the joys of trying to remember to carve your blocks backwards and get everything right.



Now, assuming you know their question, you can feel free to let them do the divination part on their own. Watch how the pendulum responds and you will get some insight into your participant. For instance, if the question is “will I find a new job” and the pendulum answers “no,” that tells you that your participant probably doesn’t have much confidence in themselves. If it swings to “not now” you have something you can tell them about their future as well.





Numerology

Numerology is a form of divination that goes back a very long way, but like many forms of Western divination it really obtained notoriety in the hands of the Greeks. Numerology is often associated with mathematicians such as Pythagoras. Please notice what I said. I did not claim that Pythagoras invented numerology. It is older than the Greeks and actually based on Gematria, which is part of the cabbalistic system of Jewish mysticism.

As an aside, numerology is still practiced today by people who do not use it for divinatory purposes, but nonetheless, fail to see that numbers do not always provide solid bases to predict future events. For instance, when people think that betting on the same number over and over (i.e. a lucky number) is an effective method of betting, this is really no more than a form of numerology. For another example, a mathematician named Underwood Dudley wrote a book in 1997 titled *Numerology: Or What Pythagoras Wrought*, in which he compares numerology to the practitioners of the Elliott wave principle of stock market analysis.

The basic tenet of numerology is that certain numbers can predict the life path of a person. In fact, a central practice of numerology is getting a prime number which is called the "life path number." Typically this is obtained by combining the dates of the birth. For instance my birthday is November 26, 1974 (feel free to send me birthday wishes.) So combine $11+26+1974$ and you get a sum of $37+1974=2011$, which incidentally is the year this is written, mystical or coincidental? Then add the two, the zero, the seven and the four and you get 13. Combine these numbers and you get 4. This is my life path number. So what is my life path number exactly? This gives an overall reading of who I am and where my life will take me. I cannot provide a complete description of all life path numbers. This alone can take up an entire book. However, I will provide the basics of the meanings of the numbers. I freely admit this information came from Wikipedia. If you want to research more on numerology, the internet is filled with websites to help you out.

1. Individual. Aggressor. Yang.
2. Balance. Union. Receptive. Yin.
3. Communication/interaction. Neutrality.
4. Creation.
5. Action. Restlessness.
6. Reaction/flux. Responsibility.





7. Thought/consciousness.
8. Power/sacrifice.
9. Highest level of change.

You can start the reading by getting someone's life path number if you would like to spend more time on this aspect of the presentation. You can then incorporate this life path number information into the reading.

Now we come to the point of the routine where we use the numerology chart. Start by asking the participant to choose a number on the chart. You can now get a prime number and do a reading based on the meaning of that number. This is the "present" reading. Assuming that you did not peek their question, it is probably a good idea to brush up on the basic meanings of the numbers in numerology. However, assuming that you did peek their question, you now not only know their question, but you also now know what they think the answer is going to be based on the outcome of the pendulum.

Let's continue to use the example we were using before. If the participant wants to know if they will get a job and the pendulum said "no," you now have enough information to provide a reading that is fairly accurate. Let's say they also picked the number 33. This brings us to the number 6 ($3 + 3 = 6$). Looks back at the meanings provided above and follow the reading.

"Right now, you feel the need to make a change of some kind. Does this make sense? You are feeling somewhat trapped however. Like you want to make this change but it doesn't seem like it is going to happen for you at this time. However, you have to take responsibility for the situation. Things never just fall into your lap. You have the power to create your own path, you know this right?"

As you can see we took the information that we had and fed it back. However, we don't directly say, "Hey, you are looking for new jobs aren't you?" I am shooting for believability, not something that looks like a magic trick. Keep it subtle.

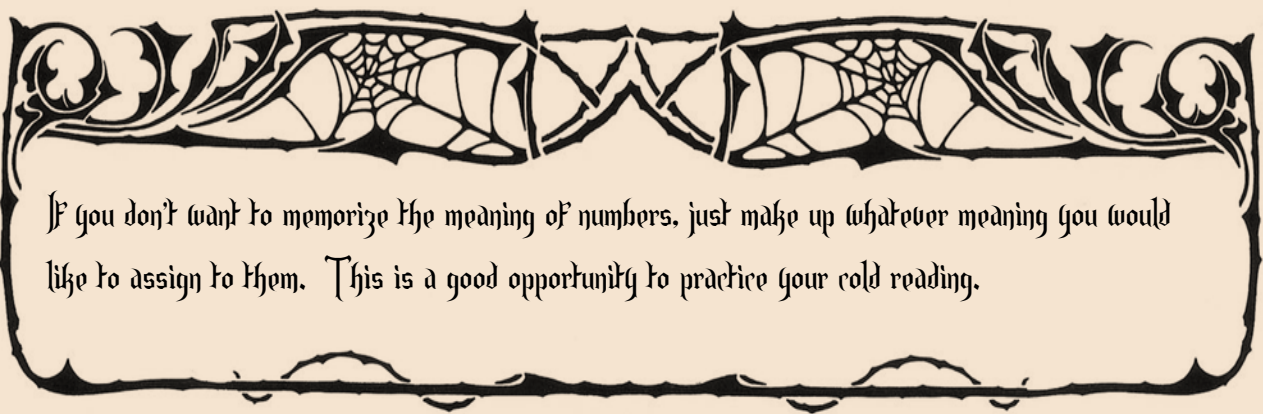




Next, we want to have them choose a column or row. This is where the force comes into play. The square is a magic square. If you aren't familiar with it, break out your calculator. Any row down, any row across, and even the diagonal rows add up to 140. No matter which number they start with, they always get 140 when adding the numbers in that column or row.

So now that we know the "future" number will be 140, which gives us a prime number of 5, we can prepare a reading for that as well. You can memorize a reading for five easily. Since it is "action," this works very well for virtually any reading of the future. I give another example below, incorporating our knowledge about the job question.

"So your number was 140. Does this number mean anything to you? No, well when we combine those numbers, we get the number five. Does this number hold any special meaning? To affect your future, you have to take action. If you do not, you are going to start feeling restless. This is already affecting the present, so I feel that this is your very near future. This is a sign that you must act now to affect your future. Does this make sense?"



This is an opportunity for you to delve into an issue with the participant if you would like. You can do an in-depth reading and explore the person if this interests you. With a little bit of information you can create a powerful reading. In the alternative, if you prefer not to get into the reading, you can just straight to the revelation of the matching number. At least ask if the number 140 is meaningful to the participant. This is a chance to get one of those great random hits if it means something. If they say "no" then you can show how it was meaningful to Lucretia by showing the room number on the inside lid of the key box.





The Haunted Key

You are likely already familiar with how the Haunted Key works. However, if you have never played with it, you may be surprised at how powerful it can be. When I perform it, I legitimately get chills every time. It is incredible how “real” the thing can look. When you finish, you are clean and you can hand it out for inspection. I can’t think of a much better ending.



Just like the pendulum, the Haunted Key works on the principle of ideomotor response. The miniscule muscle movements in the hand make the key roll. However, it isn’t as easy as it sounds. It does take some practice and this practice is for two purposes. First, it is to let you learn how to start the key moving and secondly, it is to try to prevent the “flop.” This is when the key reaches the half way point and just flops over.

The best way to learn how to use your key is to experiment with it. The key I provided is a commercially available Haunted Key. This means that it is properly balanced to allow you to easily perform the routine with this key. However, every key is likely slightly different. Every hand is



One of the ways to place the key.





definitely different, so it will take a bit of practice.



Another way to place the key.

The first thing we will examine is placement. Some people like to put the key across the upper part of the palm and some like to put the key across the lower part of the hand, at the base of the thumb. Either way, you will notice that there is a collar near the bit of the key. This collar is the point on which the key will rotate. It should be obvious, but the flag needs to hang off the end of the end of the hand so that the flag doesn't prevent the key from turning.

Once you get the key positioned on the hand, the next step is to simply concentrate on making the key turn.

You need to have your hand at the correct angle. I will try to explain this. You can lift the base of your palm, while still keeping your hand flat. Your hand needs to be flat or your audience will quickly assume you are just angling your hand down.

The amount you lift or lower your palm depends on your key and your hand, but either way the correct answer is "as little as possible." You want to find the point where the key is close to moving but with the bit still on your hand. Then, focus on the key. Really focus on it. Will it to move. You will see the key slowly starting to turn. Now once it gets to the upright position (where the bit is 90 degrees from your palm, you need to slow down the action of the key. You can slightly, very slightly, raise your hand to slow the motion. Also, experiment with slightly flexing or relaxing the muscles in your hands. While the Haunted Key is self working, it does take some practice to get it right.

If you want to expand the possibilities with the Haunted Key consider some other options for the working of the routine. While in San Francisco, I went on a Ghost Tour and watched Jim Fassbinder put the Haunted Key into the hand of a spectator and have it work. Personally, I like to have someone hold my wrist and my fingertips while I have it move. These are additional angles for use of the key.





Also, don't forget my earlier suggestion of constructing your own routines for the key. Who did it belong to? Why is it haunted? Why is it in a wooden box? All of these are questions that you can answer in constructing your own routine. I will also address a few other sources for more information. These may provide you with inspiration.





Brief History and References

The Haunted Key has a somewhat murky history. In *Spirit Theater*, Eugene Burger relates that it was derived from a divination method using a strainer. There are also suggestions that this was an old gypsy trick that was taught to a magician. We do know the first mention of the Haunted Key in magic history. Dr. Jaks' simply titled routine "The Key" appeared in *The Phoenix* in 1952. From there, it has gone on to become a staple in the performance of bizarre magic.

Martin Gardner had some different ideas for handling the key in his book *Body Magic*. Some of these same ideas are also addressed in *Spirit Theater*, which has a small section on the Haunted Key and how to work with it. Both of these texts address more of the technique than presentation.

Since the publication of these two books, a wealth of material has been released on the Haunted Key. Most of the other texts, while perhaps providing some information on technique, really focus on storyline and presentation. While I will address some of these books briefly, I cannot hope to name every presentation or routine that makes use of the Haunted Key. Any neglect to mention a specific text is not intentional. The following are just sources for more information.



Lary Kuehn aka T. Everett Bookings III, has an entire multiphase séance routine that revolves around a Haunted Key and the power that it possesses. You can read this presentation in the *Bigger*

Book of Boo. Dale Hildebrandt wrote *Heavily Haunted*, which is solely devoted to routines involving the Haunted Key. Robert Neale has a nice Haunted Key routine in *Tricks of the Imagination*. Walt Anthony's *Tales of Enchantment* also includes some routines with the Haunted Key. Finally, if you want the real Haunted Key bible, check out Ed Solomon's *What Lies Behind the Door*, a book solely devoted to the Haunted Key.





Conclusion

Thank you so very much for purchasing this key set. I put a lot of time and thought into my props and the fact that they are appreciated by you, speaks highly of your dedication to your craft. Seeking better quality props helps to improve your image and the impact of your stories. Furthermore, your purchases will help allow me to continue to release quality props for the bizarre performer.

Please don't take the Haunted Key for granted. When the time is taken to learn how to control the key and the right story is told, you can get some very strong reactions. I think it is well worth practicing and presenting. I wish you the best of luck!



The Secret Key



Have you always wanted to perform the Haunted Key, but wanted to do more than just the standard routine?

Have you never been able to find the right kind of key?

Have you never been able to find the right type of story or presentation?

The solutions to all of those problems are solved. You receive a properly balanced and aged key, a handmade and aged box that isn't just a prop, but a part of the routine. Also included is an aged cloth. This cloth is hand printed with a circle for pendulum divination and a magic square that can be used for number forces.

This full color, professionally printed instruction book contains a script and background story, detailed information on the working of the effects, suggestions for other uses and storylines and a brief history and sources for more information on the haunted key.