

[The doorbell rings. Andy, with exaggerated puzzlement, wonders aloud who it could be and opens the door. Standing on the porch under a light flurry of freshly falling snow, bearing an armload of gifts and a bottle of eggnog, and wearing a festive reindeer cap and a hideous red and green sweater emblazoned with large, tacky, cross-stitched letters spelling out the words "NAUGHTY (MENTA-) LIST," is yours truly.]

Andyyyy! Happy holidays! So great to see you again! Yes, it has definitely been too long. Wow, looks like a great party! You got a bunch of heavy-hitters here, nice going! Michael Murray, awesome elf costume! Hey, Chris Rawlins, have you broken last year's record for the number of Christmas tree drawings you've duplicated this season? Is Weber here? He didn't wear the mistletoe hat again, did he? Whew, good.

What's that? What have I been up to? Well, you know it's funny, I got completely away from mentalism for quite a while there. But over the past few years I started getting back in the game, and I actually have a new book coming out early in the coming year. Yeah, I'm pretty excited about it! It's turned out to be way longer than I expected, and it's got a ton of stuff that I'm really proud of. It's called *Immaculate Misconceptions*. Why yes, I do still love my wordplay.

What's that? Could I show everyone something from it right now? Oh Andy, you card, you flatter me! I mean, I didn't really come prepared for anything like that, but sure, I think I can make something work.

Let's see, the most important thing for this is to find the right person to help me out. And I believe that person is... *[scans the room looking for the right combination of interest, intelligence, good looks and general awesomeness...]* you. Yes, you there, the person reading this on The Jerx right now. Hi! Could I try something with you? Excellent, thank you.

Let me ask you something: Do you believe it's possible to literally steal a memory out of someone's mind, without touching them and without saying a word? No? Perfect! Then you won't mind if I try it with you, right? Don't worry, I won't steal any important or treasured memories. I would never do that. Instead I'm going to have you create a new memory that will be completely meaningless and stupid, so you won't miss it once it's gone. And then I'll bet you a whole dollar I can make you forget it. What do you say?

You're in? Excellent. So here's the new memory you'll create. The average number of random things that people can remember is seven. That's why phone numbers are seven digits long. But to keep this easy, we'll only use five. So I'm going to text you a list of five words. They won't go together or form a sentence, because that would be *too* easy; they'll be unrelated, with different parts of speech, and with no pattern for you to latch onto. Then I'll give you ten seconds to silently recite them in your mind over and over as many times as you can, and by then you should have them down. Make sense? Great, here they come...

Aisle
Pickup
Hey
Purple
Lane

Have you got them on your phone? All right, you've got ten seconds. Yes, you should really memorize them now, as you're reading this. Ready, go!

[Tick-tock, tick-tock...]

Time's up. Close your eyes and say the whole list in order. Yes, really do it out loud, right now!

Nicely done. See, I told you you could do it. Now keep going over those words in your mind just like that while I tell you this next part...

You created that memory in ten seconds. I'll bet I can steal it in five. And the way I'll try to do it is just by showing you a bunch of other words on my phone. That's it. They won't be gross or violent or anything; they'll just be a list of random things. There's only one rule: you can't just close your eyes or look away. That would be cheating. You have to actually look at the list of words I'm showing you. But what you *can* do, and what I invite you to *try* to do, is just try not to pay attention to them; just mentally tune them out and keep reciting your own words to keep them in your memory.

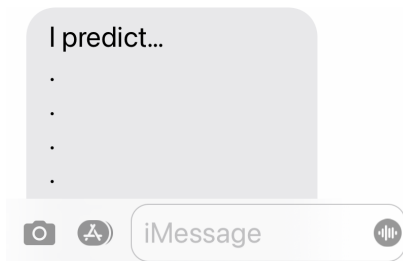
After five seconds of that I'll say 'now,' and you'll try to repeat all the words you just memorized. Like I said, I've got a dollar that says you can't. You probably won't forget all of them, but you'll forget some. And in fact, I'll up

the ante: I'll bet I can even predict exactly which words you'll forget. And I'll text you that prediction right now, but obviously you can't look at it yet. So go ahead and look over your words for a few more seconds while I get ready to send you this... All right, now please hold your phone out and turn the screen toward me.

[I hit Send on my phone, then reach out to your phone and scroll up slightly.]

There it is. Now be sure not to bump the screen, but just lay your phone here facing up so you can see it.

[You see the following message, with the bottom part cut off by the bottom of the screen.]



We'll look at the rest of that later. But now, it's time. Remember, just keep repeating your words in your mind, and try not to be distracted for the next five seconds while I show you this.

[I open my phone to a lengthy note in my notes app, and show it to you while scrolling up and down and counting down from five. When I get to zero I close out the notes app and turn the phone back toward me.]

Okay, name as many of your words as you can remember, NOW! Yes, actually do it now, as you're reading this!

Wow. *Very* good. You managed to remember them all, and frankly you've made me look kind of foolish in the process. But that's okay! Almost no one does that, and well, it's definitely not what I predicted you'd do. So that means you've earned every penny of this.

[I hand you your \$1 prize.]

But before we complete my humiliation by looking at what I *did* predict, do me a favor: name a number from 1 to 50.

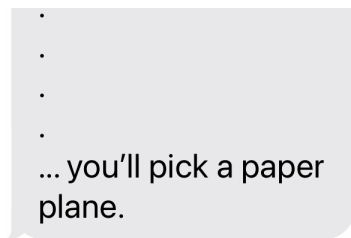
[You name a number. I smile enigmatically.]

Interesting. So, this note I was trying to distract you with? It's a list of 50 different objects that are easy to visualize. You can see it's things like a scarf, a ladder, flowers, a coffee mug, raindrops... you get the idea. When people see these kinds of visual prompts going by, usually that's enough to interrupt their thought process and make them forget what they were thinking. Obviously you're an exception. Do you happen to remember what object is at the number you just named? No? Take a look and tell everybody.

[You say it's a paper plane.]

Right. Now here's why I smiled when you picked that one. I may not have predicted that you'd remember all five words, but take a look at what I *did* predict.

[I motion toward your phone. You pick it up, scroll down past the "I predict" part, and see...]



.
. .
. .
. .
... you'll pick a paper
plane.

[General consternation and amazement ensue.]

Okay, now I know you weren't expecting that curve ball, but stay with me for a second. You see, we've just reached a critically important point in this process: *the point where I stop bullshitting you*, which is what I've been doing this entire time. The truth is, this was never really about me trying to steal a memory out of your mind. That was all a giant distraction. What this was really about was a slightly sneaky way of getting you to demonstrate *to yourself* that your mind is capable of way more incredible things than you think.

You see, the reason I was able to make that prediction wasn't because I'm "so amazing" or I can see the future or whatever. In fact, you're the one who did all the work here; all I did was notice that you have the kind of mind that can make incredible connections that you're not even aware of; that you have it within you to accomplish things you wouldn't think were possible. And proving that to you is worth way more than the dollar it cost me.

Do you know how I can prove it? By showing you how I had you internalize my prediction way back at the beginning, in a way that you wouldn't consciously notice, but that your subconscious would recognize and act on. The words I had you memorize and repeat to yourself? Say them one more time. Yes, dear reader, I mean actually say them out loud right now as you're reading this. You can scroll back up to refresh your memory if you need to.

Good. And what's the thing you picked from that list? Actually say it out loud again now.

And say your list of words one more time?

And once again, what did you pick?

And the words, a little faster this time?

And what did you *pick*?

And by this point, dear reader and fellow partygoer, one of two situations will have just unfolded: either you've had the "a-ha" moment and realized the connection between the words you memorized and the item you picked; or you haven't caught on yet, but most of the people watching have, and one of them has helpfully pointed out to you that the words "Aisle, pickup, hey, purple, lane," are phonetically equivalent to "I'll pick a paper plane" – i.e. that from the very beginning you were actually subconsciously priming yourself to make the choice I predicted. In either case, you are gobsmacked, the audience is awed, and I bring the proceedings to an end by calling for a festive round of applause for you. And as the applause fades, because we're at a party full of mentalists who are obviously already familiar with the method I just used, I close with the following zinger line, which I also include in the writeup in the book:

But sure, kids, keep using DFB for card tricks.

So yeah, that's a little thing I use a good deal. I call it "Drink At Moe's," because it was pointed out to me that it's basically Bart Simpson crank calling Moe's Tavern, turned into a piece of mentalism.

What's that? Have I come up with other phrases you can use with it? As a matter of fact, I have! "Aisle pickup" can sound like "I'll pick a..." followed by anything that starts with a letter P. So it can give you any of the following to work with:

"Aisle pickup..."

- "last ticked all" (plastic doll)
- "inn yacht duh" (piñata)
- "lace day shun" (Playstation)

Another good root phrase is "Aisles elect" for "I'll select." It's extra versatile because "elect" can become "elector" if the next word starts with R, "elected" if it starts with D, or "electable" if it starts with BL. For example...

"Aisles elector..."

- "edible lock" (red block)
- "eye know" (rhino)
- "edger rainy hum" (red geranium)

"Aisles elected..."

- "eye nose sore" (dinosaur)
- "all fin" (dolphin)
- "own nut" (donut)

"Aisles electable..."

- "loose tape allure" or "loose day puller" (blue stapler)
- "lacked eye mend" (black diamond)
- "lank kit" (blanket)

I've got a bunch more listed in the book, but you get the idea.

So this concept of the "hidden-in-plain-sight" prediction is pretty much my favorite device in all of mentalism, and my new book opens with a whole chapter on it. It's got like a dozen different ways to hide or encode a prediction that people later won't believe they didn't notice until you

pointed it out. And there are a ton of presentational options and ways to use different forces or free choices. So while they're presented as complete routines as I perform them, a lot of the individual components are modular, and readers can put them together in whatever combinations they like.

What's that? What *else* is in the new book? Why, I'm glad you asked! There's a chapter on binary codes, with ways to make them easier to use and more deceptive than they often are; a really fun chapter called "Cards Against Telepathy," with a bunch of different mentalism principles applied to Cards Against Humanity cards, just because I find them more engaging than playing cards; a chapter on equivoque, full of different approaches I use with different situations and different numbers of objects; a chapter on my "chunneling" technique, with basically all the new wrinkles and uses and improvements I've come up with since I first wrote about it; a chapter of original utility techniques and props that will make your life easier in a bunch of situations; the obligatory chapter of individual routines that don't fit the theme of any other chapter, but are nonetheless really good; and I close the book with a chapter dedicated to truth and lies in various guises.

In fact, you know what? This party has put me in such a good mood, I'd like to offer you, dear reader, an extra little gift, even if it'll be a belated one. Here's the deal: I don't yet know exactly when the new book will be out, or what the price will be, or how I'll distribute it. But there will be an option to get it directly from me, which I'll make easy to find if you search for "Immaculate Misconceptions Joshua Quinn." And whatever ordering system I have set up, it will allow for coupon codes. So I'd like to give you a code for 10% off the book whenever it comes out, if you get it directly from me. Let's make the code JERXPARTY. That's easy to remember. It'll be good for, say, the first month after the book comes out. That'll give you time to check the reviews and whatnot, and see if it's something you'll enjoy. But, spoiler alert: it will totally be something you'll enjoy.

Whoa, what the hell was that crashing sound? Don't tell me Elsdon was trying to levitate the punch bowl again? At any rate, I think it's time to refill my eggnog. Nice chatting with you, and happy holidays!