

Magic Man (working title)

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1

INT. BATHROOM - BAR

1

Victor, an aging, out of shape magician, stands at the bathroom mirror, holding a full deck of cards in front of his reflection.

At the top of the deck is the 10 of Clubs. With a simple flick, the card turns into the Ace of Spades. Another flick, and he drops a card. He tries to pick it up, until suddenly he grabs his chest and stumbles backwards.

A trail of cards follow him as he slams against the back wall, sliding to the ground.

A spotlight snaps on, devouring Victor in light. We hear the sound of another spotlight. Across the bathroom stands a group of men and women, each smiling and clapping and looking among one another in awe of Victor.

One woman tosses a congratulatory flower to Victor. The spotlights disappear- and the people, and the rose.

Victor slowly recovers and begins scooping up his fallen cards.

2

INT. BAR

2

Victor exits the bathroom. Harvey, his employer, walks with him briefly to deliver a quick message.

HARVEY

I don't pay you to piss, Victor.

VICTOR

Sorry, was just practicing.

HARVEY

How about you practice working?

VICTOR

Yes sir.

Harvey leaves. Victor walks over to a family at a nearby table - a couple in their mid-thirties and their son.

VICTOR

Hey, guys, care to see some magic while you wait?

FATHER

Well we're waiting for our food to come out.

MOTHER
That's the point, *dear*.

SON
Show us magic - clown.

VICTOR
All right, here we go.

He sets three cups on the table and holds three balls in his hand.

VICTOR
Three cups, three balls. Keep your eyes open -

SON
I've seen this one! What are you? Retarded?

VICTOR
Alright - how about this?

He reveals a yellow scarf, stuffs it in his fist. Victor reveals that the scarf is gone.

VICTOR
Ta-da!

BOY
What?

VICTOR
The scarf - it disappeared!

BOY
So?

Victor looks at the father. The father reaches into his pocket, pulls out a crumpled one dollar bill and some change, and hands it to Victor without looking at him.

FATHER
(unenthusiastically)
Thanks.

3 INT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

3

Victor sits alone at the bar. He absentmindedly performs the cups and balls routine on an open copy of "The State" newspaper. Behind him walks Ned, paramedic, thirty-five.

Ned notices a fake thumb on the floor, picks it up, and turns to Victor.

NED
This yours?

VICTOR
Yeah, it's mine.

NED
You a hitchhiker? (holds thumb up)
A movie critic? (holds thumb down)
Thumb wrestler?

Victor grabs the thumb. He pulls the scarf from it.

VICTOR
Magician.

Ned's beeper goes off.

VICTOR
Haven't seen one of those in
forever.

NED
Yeah - it goes once, someone's
hurt. Old lady falls or fender
bender. Beep me twice - probably
dead.

VICTOR
Wait, stop. Don't say another word.
(squints his eyes, puts out his
hand) You're a... Doctor!

Ned's beeper goes off.

NED
(matter of fact)
Paramedic, actually.

VICTOR
Really? Look, I've been having this
trouble with my heart lately -

Ned's beeper goes off.

VICTOR
Hey - that's three beeps. What does
that mean?

NED

Someone's really fucked. (gets up, leaves, turns back) Give me a call if that heart gives you any more trouble.

Ned gives Victor his card. He exits.

Harvey walks over to the bar smoking a cigar, holding a small wad of money.

HARVEY

What is this Victor? Are these tips or rat shit?

VICTOR

I'm sorry sir. I just - I don't know what to do. They're just not impressed anymore.

HARVEY

(pause)

Fuck, I knew it. You're done. Get the fuck out of here.

VICTOR

No wait Harvey please, if you get rid of me you might as well kill me.

HARVEY

Don't call me Harvey. I'm not your best fucking friend. Get out. This is a goddamn joke.

VICTOR

No wait Mr. Whales please, I've got bills and well... (grasping) and bills. (beat) I'm an artist! I need some time, that's all.

HARVEY

You're not *doing anything*, Victor! The idea is, you do something, I give you money.

VICTOR

I know, I got it. I'm just trying to think of a new illusion.

HARVEY

Think on *your* time. What am I supposed to do with ten fucking dollars?

VICTOR

Just let me perfect my trick, just give me some time.

HARVEY

Is it like the balls and cups thing? This restaurant is a classy establishment, Vic. Don't forget. I don't want us looking cheap.

VICTOR

Oh, no - this is a first-rate trick...illusion.

HARVEY

When'll this illusion-trick be done?

VICTOR

Soon...

HARVEY

(flat)
Tomorrow.

Harvey turns briskly away and Victor watches him leave.

VICTOR

(hesitant)
OK.

Victor stacks his three cups, revealing a front page story by Michael Lerner.

4

EXT. STREET - PAY PHONE - NIGHT

4

Victor walks up to a pay phone illuminated by an overhead streetlight. He scans the newspaper for the office number.

He drops in the coins he received earlier as a tip and dials the number.

A secretary picks up.

VICTOR

Hi.

SECRETARY

Yes, hello.

Pause.

VICTOR

Is this The State?

SECRETARY

Yes.

VICTOR

I need to talk to a reporter.

SECRETARY

Which one?

VICTOR

(reads paper) Michael Lerner.

SECRETARY

Why?

VICTOR

Well, see, I'm a...doctor -

SECRETARY

(pissed off)

Hold on, let me get a pen.

Victor fishes in his pockets, finds Ned's card.

SECRETARY

Alright, what was your name?

VICTOR

Ned.

SECRETARY

And you're his doctor?

VICTOR

Well you see, I'm kind of -

SECRETARY

OK, Dr. Ned. Hold on a second.

She connects Victor to Michael. Michael chews gum.

MICHAEL

Hello.

VICTOR
You write entertainment stuff,
right?

MICHAEL
(offended)
I do profiles. (pause) Are you the
doctor?

VICTOR
Listen, I know this guy that does
magic. He's a magician. He does
magic.

MICHAEL
Uh-huh.

VICTOR
I saw him today -

MICHAEL
(cuts him off)
Hold on.

He puts Victor on hold.

A car drives up behind the phone booth, its headlights
blinding Victor. The driver of the car smokes, blows it out
window.

Michael is back on the line.

MICHAEL
Alright, so you got a magician?

VICTOR
He works at D.L. McLaughlins. He's
really just fantastic.

MICHAEL
Yeah, I'm sure. Copperfield got a
home phone?

VICTOR
Yes, it's 81 -

The car leaves.

VICTOR
-3-7755. You should seen this thing
today, he -

MICHAEL
 (interrupts)
 Alright, yeah. I'll give him a
 call.

Michael hangs up. Victor hangs up. He looks around for the car. Victor suddenly grips his heart. He falls against the payphone. Light disappears, spotlight appears. A woman approaches, with notepad and pen.

YOUNG WOMAN
 (frenzied)
 Oh my god! Are you Victor King? The
 magician Victor King?

VICTOR
 (difficult to speak)
 Yeah, me.

YOUNG WOMAN
 I've, like, wanted to see you, I
 mean meet for the longest time! I
 mean I've seen you, of course, but
 we've never met!

VICTOR
 Nice to meet you. Not many fans
 these days.

YOUNG WOMAN
 Oh, Mr. King. You don't need to be
 humble. Everyone knows who you are!
 (beat)
 Hey, would it be too much to ask
 for an autograph?

VICTOR
 'course not.

YOUNG WOMAN
 OK! Look, I have this... here -

She hands him the book and pen. In his pain, his signature looks like a scribble. Giving it back to the girl, she doesn't notice.

YOUNG WOMAN
 Oh, thanks, Mr. King. It's an
 honor, really!

He acknowledges this with a flat smile and a wave of his hand. She walks away and suddenly the spotlights disappear, color returning to the world and the girl gone from it.

5 INT. VICTOR'S ROOM

5

Victor's box of magic tricks clanks onto the floor. He drops his jacket on top of it. He slips his shoes off and kicks them under the sofa.

His place is adorned with magic memorabilia - posters for magic shows, movies, colored scarves, a set of fake thumbs, a ball for levitation with a stick jutting out of it.

He retrieves paper, a pen and takes a seat.

The phone rings. He answers. It's a telemarketer, Martha.

MARTHA

Hello, this is Martha calling from the Joyce Stanley Group for the Democratic National Party. We would like to get your opinion on a few key issues.

VICTOR

(excited)
My opinion?

MARTHA

Yes sir.

VICTOR

Great, OK. I'm just working on a trick here...

MARTHA

Do you feel that the government is obligated to allocate funds to a national school system?

VICTOR

Sure, but let me get your opinion on something - would you think that fire is better or something with silks...?

MARTHA

(confused)
Sir, the Democratic Party requires that every school enact a mandatory fire drill twice -

VICTOR

No, I mean for like an illusion.
What if I could disappear in a ball
of fire?

MARTHA

I'm not sure what you're referring
to here?

VICTOR

Well, I need a trick that's
spectacular (pulling back) but
original...and...and...something
they've never seen!

MARTHA

Yes sir, well thank you for your
time.

Martha hangs up. Victor puts the phone down.

Time shift: Victor is scribbling on his pad, looks through
magic books. Phone rings. He answers. It's the Credit Card
Guy.

VICTOR

Hello?

CREDIT CARD GUY

(violent cough)

Victor King? I'm calling regarding
your outstanding balance on -

VICTOR

Do you think trap doors are
cheating?

CREDIT CARD GUY

What? (violent cough)

VICTOR

Wait - do you happen to know how to
build a trap door?

CREDIT CARD GUY

Mr. King, your last payment was due
October 30th...of last year.

Victor stands up, gets excited.

VICTOR
Maybe I should get assistants...no,
maybe showgirls! You think that's
too flashy? It's too flashy.

Victor stumbles backwards and falls to his knees, gripping his chest.

He is curled in the fetal position, his head resting on the floor. The light fades away and we hear the familiar snap of the spotlight.

The lens of a news camera descends in front of his face. A microphone follows, and with that a News Reporter.

REPORTER
Mr. King, a few words, please?

VICTOR
OK.

REPORTER
According to recent reports, you
are preparing your final trick?

VICTOR
No, final? No. It's my masterpiece.

REPORTER
A masterpiece? Could you elaborate?

VICTOR
A memorable work. Something to be
remembered by. Something to keep
them guessing.

REPORTER
And exactly *how* will you make this
memorable?

VICTOR
I'm not quite sure, really. Still
working on it, to be honest.

REPORTER
Is it some sort of illusion or
sleight of hand?

VICTOR
It's everything. Nothing you could
expect though.

REPORTER

And will this be better than that
cups and balls thing?

The lights return and the Reporter and the camera disappear.
A dial tone cuts through the silence. He stays on the ground
and hangs up the phone.

The phone rings immediately. It's Michael, he's chewing gum.

MICHAEL

Hello, my name is Michael Lerner,
with The State. You the magician?

VICTOR

I am.

MICHAEL

You any good?

VICTOR

I am.

MICHAEL

What kind of tricks are we looking
at here?

VICTOR

I got this great, a good one I'm
working on. It's done.

MICHAEL

I'm gonna come by - the restaurant -
D.L. McLaughlins. Let's see...
seven... Alright? To see it.

VICTOR

Sounds good. This is for a story?

MICHAEL

Uh-huh.

Michael hangs up. Victor hangs up. He fishes in his pocket
and finds Ned's card. He calls Ned.

VICTOR

Hey, no, yeah, I was just having a
bit of heart...you know what, I
just want your opinion on something

-

6 INT. BAR

6

Finishing up his act at a table, Victor graciously takes a tip and begins to walk away. He is stopped by Harvey, who is with Michael Lerner, a man in his earlier thirties with a camera strapped to his body. Hectic mood starts.

HARVEY
(to Michael)
This is him. The great Victor.
He's been here forever, customers
love him.

VICTOR
Oh, Mr. Lerner! Yes, we spoke.

MICHAEL
I'm gonna follow you around for a
bit, then we'll sit down for some
questions.

VICTOR
That'll be tremendous.

Michael gives Victor a look.

We follow the pair to a table. The customers are two drunk guys, but not belligerent drunk.

VICTOR
Hey, folks. Care to see some magic
while you wait?

Blank stares from drunks.

VICTOR
Well, first we'll need a coin.

He reaches out and reveals a quarter from behind Drunk #1's ear.

VICTOR
Ah, there we are. You should wash
your ears some time, little...sir.

DRUNK #1
We paying for this?

VICTOR
Oh, it's free of charge, sir. Free
of charge. See?

He makes the coin disappear.

VICTOR
Absolutely no money necessary!

The drunks stare, Victor bows. Drunk #2 passes out.

CUT TO:

7 INTERVIEW

7

Michael and Victor are seated across from each other at a table and are in the middle of an interview. Michael is preparing his camera, an old SLR.

MICHAEL
What's you...(clicks open cover)
uh...what's your inspiration?
(Snaps in film)

VICTOR
What do most people say? (Michael
pulls film across)

MICHAEL
What was that? (Snaps camera back
closed)

VICTOR
Um - (Michael pulls lever) Houdini.

Victor loses his concentration. Michael takes a test shot.

CUT TO:

8 RESTAURANT FLOOR

8

Victor is performing at the bar for a guy who's trying to hit on a girl. Victor doesn't pay attention to Michael, who looks on, disenchanted.

VICTOR
How would you like to see some
magic?

GUY #1
No.

VICTOR
Just a second - I have a special
trick.

GUY #1
Dude, I'm working on something
here.

Nearly 360 Pan to The Credit Card Guy entering D.L.
McLaughlins. He walks past Victor, goes up to Harvey.

CREDIT CARD GUY
Are you Victor King?

Harvey gestures in Victor's general direction. The Credit
Card Guy coughs violently.

CUT TO:

9 INTERVIEW

9

MICHAEL
(writing)
How did you get started?

VICTOR
Well I've been doing this for a
long time you know? You never saw
my shows?

MICHAEL
What shows?

A busboy comes over to sweep under Victor's chair. Victor
stands up awkwardly.

VICTOR
Well there's one in the Jones
Theatre, I had another at Norton
Dale Elementary, I mean three or
four, you know, like seven of 'em.

The janitor squirts cleaning fluid on the table.

CUT TO:

10 RESTAURANT FLOOR

10

Victor fans a deck of cards to a woman sitting by herself.

VICTOR
Any card, pick a card.

The woman picks a card.

VICTOR
Now memorize the card and place it
anywhere within the deck.

WOMAN
OK. Look - this is great 'n' all,
but I 'spectin' someun.

She looks around, expecting someone.

Victor shuffles the cards.

VICTOR
Wait, just watch.

Michael watches, his pad in his hand by his side now.

Victor cuts the deck and drops a few cards by accident. He
picks them up.

VICTOR
Don't worry, that doesn't affect
the trick. Now watch...

He takes a card from the top of the deck.

VICTOR
Is this your card?

WOMAN
No.

Victor expected this - he makes a card stick out from the
deck, showing the side with the number and suit.

VICTOR
(pleased with himself)
But is *this* your card?

WOMAN
No.

Pan to Credit Card Guy at bar, tapping his fingers, checking
his watch impatiently.

CUT TO:

11 INTERVIEW

11

MICHAEL

Right, OK, is there anything else here? (to himself) I don't know about this.

VICTOR

Oh, you see, I have been working, I've been working on this trick, it's -

Credit Card Guy comes over to the table. He coughs violently on his way over. Things move very quickly.

CREDIT CARD GUY

Are you Victor King?

VICTOR

No.

CREDIT CARD GUY

Aren't you the magician?

MICHAEL

(to Credit Card Guy)
You know him?

CREDIT CARD GUY

Mr. King, I'm from the collection agency. We spoke last night?

VICTOR

I'm in the middle -

CREDIT CARD GUY

Mr. King, do you remember me?

MICHAEL

What is this about, Victor?

VICTOR

Nothing. (small beat) Anyway, this trick I've got -

CREDIT CARD GUY

Mr. King, we really need to speak.

VICTOR

Please, can we -

MICHAEL
When can I see this trick?

VICTOR
I'm about to -

CREDIT CARD GUY
(to Michael)
Sir, do you mind if I talk to Mr.
King alone?

Victor stands up quickly, walks towards camera.

MICHAEL
Do what you gotta do.

Victor walks quickly away from the table. Credit Card Guy follows him, catches up, puts his hand on Victor's shoulder.

CREDIT CARD GUY
Mr. King, just a second -

Victor does a 180 and beelines straight to Harvey, who's behind the bar.

VICTOR
Harvey, can you get the music down?

HARVEY
Fuck you.

VICTOR
(loud as possible)
Fuck you!

Long pause. Harvey turns down the music. Hectic mood stops.

VICTOR
(to everyone)
Can I have everyone's attention,
please. Look, I used to be very
respectable, I am a very
respectable magician and this is
something I want to show, and this
is something you should see, and
this is it!

Victor stops. He goes to retrieve a red cloth from his briefcase.

He then holds up the cloth to his side as it unfolds.

VICTOR

No wires, no mirrors, no trap
doors!

(beat)

Now watch very carefully.

(beat)

One....two...

Just as the word 'three' begins to escape his mouth, Victor freezes. His eyes shoot open and he drops the cloth. He grips his chest and gasps for air, then falls to the floor.

He is now laying flat on the ground, his eyes rolled up and shut close.

Michael takes a picture.

12 INT. BAR - LATER 12

Victor is lying on a stretcher and a white sheet is pulled over his head. The stretcher is lifted up and rolled out of the bar and into the back of the ambulance.

13 INT. AMBULANCE - FLASHBACK 13

Ned enters frame, shuts ambulance doors.

NED

Bravo.

Pan to Victor under the white sheet.

The doors shut.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

14 INT. BAR 14

In the middle of the room, there is a stool with an upside-down top hat. People are putting roses in hat - quick glance of a "Roses: \$1.00" sign.

15 EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAR - NEWSPAPER DISPENSER - PRESENT 15

There is a line of people taking newspapers from the dispenser. Harvey is there, chomping his cigar.

He takes a paper for himself. It is folded in half, so he can only read the headline: "Illusionist Victor King Dies Mid-Masterpiece."

16 INT. AMBULANCE 16

Moving inside the ambulance we see slight movement underneath the cloth concealing Victor.

17 EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAR 17

Harvey reads intently, finally unfolding the paper to reveal the words "- AND DISAPPEARS!" He stops - the cigar falls from his mouth.

18 INT. AMBULANCE 18

Victor peeks out from his cover. He sits up, looks around.

19 EXT. ANOTHER CITY STREET 19

A streetlight turns red, and the ambulance comes to a stop.

The back door opens slowly and Victor steps out. He closes the door behind him, the light turns green and the ambulance drives off.

Victor stands watching it for a moment, then walks off.