

ED SOLOMON'S
**MEANINGFUL
CONJURING**

Written by
ED SOLOMON

Compiled & Edited by
ROLANDO H. SANTOS

Cover by
AKEMI YOSHIDA



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INTRODUCTION



Many people know me as a close-up magician who has released hundreds of close-up and parlor magic routines. So why am I publishing a book about a subject that is considered part of the Bizzare Magick movement?

As we mature as magicians we start to move away from tricks and puzzles and try to make our magic more relevant to our audiences. Some people move to mentalism, gambling routines, gospel magic, and other presentations that audiences can relate to.

What all those genres have in common is the art of storytelling. If you can theme your magic to a story, or concept that your audiences can relate to, it will elevate your magic from being an interesting trick/puzzle to a meaningful experience.

What this book contains is Ed “DeNomolos” Solomon’s collection of columns that he wrote in *The Linking Ring* over a twelve-year period. The column was called *Storytelling Is Magic* and included more than a-hundred-fifty story ideas you can experiment with, by either using the routines he recommended or try to apply the stories to your existing routines.

In addition to the 125 columns, we included some bonus articles and a full *Hocus Pocus Parade* with some very interesting magic and presentations.

Of course, you will not be able to relate to all the stories and concepts, but you should choose the ones that closely fit your performing style and personality.

I do need to thank some friends that helped make this book possible. First, and most importantly, I would like to thank Rolando Santos who entrusted me with preserving the legacy of his friend and making this book come to life.

Sammy Smith, *The Linking Ring*, *The International Brotherhood of Magicians*, Bill Kalush, and the *Conjuring Arts Research Center* who gave us access to their archives, and of course Akemi Yoshida who continues to design our great covers.

You will also find some photographs throughout the book and those came from the collections of Rolando Santos, Joe Cabral, Doug Gorman, and Gregory Solomon.

Throughout the book we also included many extra photographs, from Rolando's collection, of the props and tricks that Ed marketed and used over the years. We hope that these photographs will inspire you to brainstorm some ideas by asking yourself: What would I do with those props?

I hope reading this book will inspire you to begin your journey into meaningful conjuring.

Meir Yedid
July, 2023

FOREWORD



In January 2004, I got a call from the then Editor of The Linking Ring, Phil Willmarth, “Hey Ro, I want to add a new column to the magazine.” He was so excited he completely skipped his usual; How are you doing, and did you have a good Holiday greetings.

Phil said that the Parade on Bizarre Magick that I helped him put together by a fellow Texan named Ed Solomon had gotten a lot of positive reactions. I told him that I thought the Parade worked, even though the content was spooky and occult-themed, because Ed’s storytelling made the effects a magical experience instead of something sinister and disturbing.

“So, you like the idea?” he asked. I said, “of course, as long whoever is writing doesn’t make the column too dark.” Phil said, “Good, Ed Solomon has agreed to do it and I want you to help him get it started. Let’s call it the Magical Experience of Story Telling and I want it for August. Call me when you have it worked out.” Then he hung up.

I had no idea that a three-minute phone call would lead to a 12-year apprenticeship/friendship nor the seismic impact the column would have on the evolution of Bizarre Magick.

Ed was one of the founding elders of the hardcore Bizarre Magick movement. It was reviled by other magicians as Magic’s version of B-horror movies characterized by gore-filled storylines, satanic imagery, and nightmares that come to life. It still amazes me that a soft-spoken, mild-mannered music teacher could create such disturbing presentations when he wanted to. And yes, back then Ed owned and wore several floor length hooded robes to events and performances.

Ed performed and lectured worldwide on storytelling, séance performing methods, techniques for aging paper, making handcrafted props, and especially connecting with an audience. He was considered a master

of all aspects of traditional Bizarre Magick. He would help anyone who asked for advice. Ed was more than respected and well-liked. He became a revered and beloved icon in the Bizarre Magic world. Ironically, he was uncomfortable with all the attention it brought.

Ed was so humble and unassuming that he didn't even make himself the center of his stories; instead, he created one of the most well-known alter egos in Bizarre Magic, DeNomolos. (The name is his first and last names spelled backwards).

An entire ethos emerged with Ed as the scribe while DeNomolos took center stage. Think of it as something like the *Twilight Zone*. Ed plays the role of Rod Serling, introducing the concept. And like the TV series, each story is a morality play, a whimsical observation of the human condition, or an eerie but not demonic tale as seen through the persona of DeNomolos. The beautiful cover of this book designed by Akemi Yoshida is a nod to that concept and the overall DeNomolos experience. For ten years, every writing session or story concept began with the question, how would DeNomolos experience this? Then off we went into the world of DeNomolos.

By 2004, when I called him to discuss the column, Ed's themes and presentation style had evolved away from the sinister and the macabre of traditional Bizarre Magick. Don "Vlad" Deich, part of the original bizarre movement and longtime friend of Ed's, says, "Many use the words master or icon, and those words would only partially encapsulate the impact of Ed Solomon on Storytelling and Bizarre Magick. Each story contained a mini mirror of the universe and what it means to be human."

The first thing Ed did when I talked to him was to change the name of the column to *Storytelling Is Magic* because it reflected what he believed Magic should become. "People don't have to remember my name or the Magic that I performed. I want them to remember how my stories made them feel." That is what I want magicians to learn.

He insisted on using minimal props to focus the audience on the tale. He used basic magic techniques only when he needed to emphasize the point of his story. Everything was handmade or purchased during sometimes epic excursions to flea markets and dives in every part of the world. Some of the more colorful moments of those adventures made their way into his stories.

With a simple title change, his goal of proving Storytelling was Magic, and his passion for teaching mainstream magicians the value of creating a memorable experience based on emotional connections with an audience helped redefine one of the magic community's most maligned genres.

At the time the column debuted Eugene Burger, Bob Neale, Lary Kuhén, Larry White, Dave Goodsell, and many others had already come to similar conclusions. They were moving toward story-centered presentations aimed at mainstream audiences. Many of them regularly corresponded with Ed, exchanged ideas, and critiqued one another's work on an internet platform called the *Shadow Digest* and later the *EG (Electronic Grymoire)*.

Early drafts of Ed's columns often made their way through that brain trust before being published. His willingness to give honest critique and concise suggestions for improvement without spite, malice, or hidden agendas earned him a legendary status. Ed became known as a non-judgmental, discreet safe-haven and sounding board for anyone that wanted to test the story telling waters. His reputation and teaching style helped convert many traditionally hardcore bizarrists to this "new thing" called Story Telling Magic.

In the summer of 2014, I flew in from Chile, where I was working, to visit Ed in San Antonio for a few days because he wanted to talk to me in person. I assumed that he was ready to end the column after ten years.

When I saw him at the assisted living center where he lived, he asked if I remembered our first phone call in 2004. I said, of course, "I was beside myself. You were a legendary figure in Bizarre Magick. I didn't know how you were going to react to working with someone who had not yet earned his place in that world. I thought Phil had lost his mind, you should have been working with Peter Marucci or Tom Craven."

Ed chuckled, "DeNomolos had something to do with that. I guess Phil never told you that DeNomolos called him and requested you." "Seriously?" I said.

He said, "Remember that effect of yours that I added at the end of my parade as a bonus?" I said, "Sure, Give the Devil His Due was the first bizarre-themed story I wrote. I couldn't believe that you wanted to include it in your parade," DeNomolos and I both liked it and decided you understood what we wanted to do. We made a good decision." Then he hugged me and got very serious.

“Rolando, I am worried that when I die, DeNomolos will fade away or worse someone will appropriate the character and abuse everything I created. I said, Ed I will do what I can to make sure that doesn’t happen”.

“I am glad to hear that, because I told my son that when I die, you are to inherit the name, brand and everything that is DeNomolos related.” I was stunned and, for one of the few times in my life, at a loss for words. “Rolando, you know him better than anyone else and you can write in his voice. You need to keep him alive and KEEP HIM SAFE for me.”

I am not sure who started first, but both of us were teary-eyed. I was stunned, but I promised to protect Ed’s legacy and keep it going. Ed died about six months later, on January 4th, 2015; almost 11 years to the day after our first call about the column.

I was privileged to be there from his first to his last column; now you will be too. I hope you enjoy the book.

And Ed, the book with all your columns is done; DeNomolos is safe. Now will you please quit knocking the planchette you gave me off the table in my library every night? Miss you, my friend.

Rolando H. Santos
July, 2023

Publisher’s note: The Parade and the Bonus effect that Rolando referenced here are included in the bonus section of the book.