MAKING MAGIC MATTER · MEMBER TOOL

The Story Quad: a one-sheet reference

The four points of view, the Home Point, and the questions that use them, on two sides of one page.

	STARTING STATE	CHANGE
EXTERIOR *the physical world*	**Situation** The world before anything happens: props, the space, the conditions, and the performer: appearance, status, claimed identity. What the audience can see and touch.	**Action** The visible doing: the handling, the sequence, the effect itself. The convincer, the apparent fairness, the climax. The routine as the audience watches it.
INTERIOR *the audience's mind*	**Mindset** The fixed belief the audience holds before the effect: the certainty it will violate. Inherited (common sense they bring) or engineered (surfaced and reinforced before it breaks).	**Shift** The change they carry away: the revision in understanding or feeling. Awe, laughter, quiet unease. The resolution always happens here, whatever the routine is about.

A complete story addresses all four. Remove one and the audience feels the absence, even when they can't name it. The exterior row is what the audience sees happen. The interior row is what happens to them, and it is the row magicians are trained to leave to chance.

1 · THE TWO QUESTIONS

Is it a story at all?

1. **What does the audience believe before the effect?** Not in general. The one certainty this effect is going to break.
2. **What do they believe, or feel, when it's over?**

If you can't answer the first, no belief was at stake, and the audience was left with a puzzle. Start there; the rest of this sheet assumes it.

2 · GENERATING

One trick, four stories

Start with the trick, not with a story. Ask what is already in it from each point of view, and let each generate a premise:

- **Situation:** what physical reality is here?
- **Action:** what ritual or doing?
- **Mindset:** what certainty of the audience's could this test?
- **Shift:** what feeling could this leave them with?

Then choose the one you have something to say about.

3 · THE HOME POINT

What the routine is about

The one you chose. One of the four carries the central tension; the other three exist to prepare it. The Home Point is a design choice, not a property of the trick.

> **The Home Point Rule.** Everything in the routine either serves the Home Point or prepares the audience to experience it. Anything that does neither is a candidate for removal, however much you like it.

4 · THREE TIEBREAKERS

When you can't tell

- **The revelation test.** What is the last thing the audience truly understands before the routine ends? That's usually where it lives.
- **The disappointment test.** Imagine each point of view failing in turn. The one whose failure would most ruin the routine is the Home Point.
- **The about-ness test.** What does the routine *mean*, as opposed to what it *demonstrates*? When those diverge, meaning wins.

Using the quad

Routes, diagnosis, and the terms you'll meet across the site.

SIGNPOST ROUTES

The order is expressive

The other three points of view are signposts on the way to the Home Point. Each has a default route: the order routines take when nobody has thought about it. Know the default to decide whether to depart from it. Linear feels like a demonstration; non-linear feels alive.

HOME POINT	DEFAULT ROUTE	WHAT THE ROUTE BUILDS
Situation	Action → Mindset → Shift → Situation	Make the constraint feel permanent before you transform it
Action	Situation → Mindset → Shift → Action	Ground the world, surface the expectation, then deliver the doing
Mindset	Mindset → Situation → Action → (Shift left open)	Name the belief first; leave the reckoning to the audience
Shift	Mindset → Situation → Action → Shift	Set the emotional frame; let the resolution arrive, often in silence

1 · DIAGNOSING

Four questions, in order

1. **What is the Situation, and does the audience understand it?** Props, conditions, who you are.
2. **What is the Action, and is it clean?** Does the audience know what happened before they have to respond to it?
3. **What is the Mindset, and was it surfaced?** Did the routine make them hold the certainty, or merely assume they did?
4. **What is the Shift, and was it designed?** Did you build toward it, or did the routine simply stop?

A sentence you can't write is the point of view you've been leaving to chance.

2 · READING THE SYMPTOM

What the room is telling you

IF THE ROUTINE FEELS	THE LIKELY GAP
Dry, mechanical	Mindset and Shift underdeveloped
Confusing, ungrounded	Situation and Action not doing enough work
A puzzle, not an experience	Mindset absent; no belief is being tested
Ends without meaning	Shift neglected; the effect landed, the change did not

3 · THE ERRORS WITH NAMES

Three structural faults

Missing Mindset. The belief the effect would violate is never surfaced. The result is surprise, which fades, rather than changed belief, which lasts. The audience reaches for method because they were given nothing to be moved by.

Premature resolution. The meaning is announced before the Action delivers the evidence. The effect must land before its meaning is available, or the meaning is a lecture and the effect is its slide.

Undesigned Shift. The effect lands and the routine stops. Nothing was decided about what the audience should carry away, so they carry away the method question.

4 · TWO TESTS

Before you add anything

The removal test. Perform the effect in silence. Better: the presentation was subtracting. Worse: your words are structure, and the question is which of them are load-bearing.

Omission or gap? An unaddressed point of view is design if you can say what the audience will fill in and the other three aim them at the absence. If the ending feels arbitrary and they default to *how?*, it's a gap. Complete means all four accounted for, not all four stated.

GLOSSARY

Terms used across the site

Inequity. The imbalance or wrongness that makes a performance necessary; what is wrong in the audience's world when the routine begins. Every routine has one.

Inherited vs. engineered Mindset. The common sense an audience brings without being told, vs. a specific certainty the routine surfaces and reinforces before breaking it. There is no audience with no Mindset, only one whose Mindset hasn't been engaged.

Retroactive reframe. The instant replay the audience runs after a strong effect, reordering what they saw in light of its ending. Why the best effects feel surprising and inevitable at once. Interrupt it by speaking and the moment lands thinner.

Story Goal. At set or show scale, the one large claim the whole performance makes and spends once. What a set is about, as the Home Point is what a routine is about.

Exposition Residue. Words doing the Shift's job: telling the audience what they are already experiencing. Distinct from narrating visible action, which is a lesser fault with the same cure.

Performance vs. drama. Drama structures a change the audience watches happen to someone else. Magic is a change the audience undergoes themselves, which is why the quad has an interior row and story theory does not.