

# MAC KING AND HIS THUMB TIP

**By Mac King**

The scissors are really sharp, the ones I use in my show. I suppose that you could call it a pet peeve that I have, magicians and their chintzy scissors. The high and mighty wizard struggles as he tries to gnaw through the thin rope with a rusty pair of cheap blades. Nothing looks worse to me.

There is only one disadvantage that I know of to having really sharp scissors. They are indiscriminate. They cut everything with the same ease that they melt through magician's rope.

I have been doing a version of the "Cut and Restored Rope" since I was 16 years old. I can do it in my sleep. A couple of times it might have seemed that I did do it in my sleep. The most interesting of those times was one evening at The Comedy Club in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I open my show with my version of the rope trick. That night I introduced a brand new variant of the classic. I was, as I say, just sort of unconsciously going through the physical actions of the initial cutting of the rope, when I was awakened and brought back into the here and now by the unusual feel and sound of the scissors' cutting action. The scissors had sliced through my left thumbnail. The end of my thumb, the last eighth of an inch, had been neatly severed and was flying — "bip" is the sound that comes to mind — out toward the audience. It landed in the middle of the table closest to the stage amidst the cocktails and ashtrays of the four patrons seated there.

Blood began to gush forth from what used to be the end of my thumb. I had no bandages of any kind with me. I picked up a napkin from under a customer's drink and tried to get that to stop the blood flow. All I succeeded in doing was inadvertently discovering a new method for the color-changing napkin. I quickly discarded this method in my mind as too much of a sacrifice. But I digress from my tale of blood.

With the napkin soaked, I tossed it aside and made a frantic search through my prop case for some suitable remedy. I used to do a trick that utilized Band Aid Brand Adhesive Strips and I was hoping that there

was one last Band Aid hidden down amongst the rubbish that lines the bottom of my case. The rummaging yielded only clear scotch tape. I bandaged the member with the tape and it seemed to work — for about five minutes. That was long enough for me to get through the rope trick, but I still had 40 minutes of show left to do.

Following the rope trick I usually invite a woman from near the front of the audience to come on stage and we do a card trick together. Instead, I addressed the

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audience as a whole. "At this point in my show," I was thinking quickly now, "I usually get a random woman from the audience up on stage to help me with my next trick. Tonight, I think it would be better, under the circumstances, if I got a nurse up here to help me. Are there any nurses in the audience?" Turns out that it was my lucky night.

A nurse came on stage. I asked her to inspect the bloody carnage that was my thumb. She undid the scotch tape and a new wave of blood spewed forth. At this point her nursing training took over and she took charge of the show. She stepped to the microphone and asked that the bartender send up their first aid kit and glass of their cheapest vodka. I was instructed to dip my thumb into the vodka. I held my breath and plunged in. The vodka instantly was

shot through with the blood red color. "Hmmm," I thought, "water to wine." I felt as if smoke was going to come shooting from my ears like in some goofy Tex Avery wolf cartoon. I set the vodka down onto the lucky front table. "Since you folks have been nice enough to look after my dearly departed thumb piece, I am rewarding you with this free Bloody Mary."

The nurse bandaged up my thumb (I am deliberately trying to avoid the use of the words "thumb tip"), and we continued on with the card trick and the rest of the show; which I managed to get through pretty well, leaving only a few blood spots on my shirt and tie.

Conveniently for me the show took place in the hotel where I was staying. When I returned to my room, my wife, Jennifer, who was traveling with me but was not at the show, panicked when she realized that I wasn't just joking about having cut off a portion of my thumb. I explained to her that I couldn't possibly go to the hospital "right this very minute," because I had a second show to do in half an hour.

I was very proud of myself for getting through the second show without any real mishap, other than getting a little more blood on my shirt. After the show, I was on my way out of the club and to the hospital when a customer came over to speak with me.

"Hey, Mac King, that was great! You're a really funny guy!" said the short scraggly haired old man. I thanked him as politely as I could while still rushing to get out the door. He just kept going, "This is the second time I've seen you. Yeah, I was here for the first show earlier tonight too. Hey, what happened the second show?"

I stopped with my hand on the door. "What do you mean," I asked.

"How come you didn't cut off your thumb the second show. I thought that was the most hilarious thing in your act! I came back just to see that again." ●