

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for August 2020! I hope everyone has been staying safe and staying cool! After deliberating for a while, I have decided this month to NOT publish part two of the *Rubinstein Coin Magic* book and instead I will post that to the website as a supplement to the July article.

This month, we will focus on a book called ***MACHINATIONS: Explorations Through the Trapdoor*** by **Ben Harris**. It is a 100-page hardcover book published in 2019 by **Vanishing Inc. Magic** and illustrated **Ever Elizalde**. One unique thing about this book: every item uses the same method. Once you learn the method at the front of the book, you know how everything else works. In fact, some of you might even already know the method.

This book is an exploration of the *Trapdoor Card*, an old topological puzzle where a piece of paper with a door flap cut near one end, the paper being red on one side and blue on the other. One person holds the door with the *red side* of the paper facing them, the paper is then folded up and then unfolded, but the *blue side* now faces them! Again, the door is never let go of! This is a mind-bending puzzle, but at its core it is exactly that – a *puzzle*.

Ben Harris explores a great deal of ways to turn the puzzle into a magic effect, including using multiple cards, turning it into a penetration effect, transformation effect, etc. First you learn how the puzzle works, and then how to construct the necessary props. Each handling uses cards printed with specific images to fit the included scripting and the plot. Plots include time travel, Houdini escaping chains, images changing orientation, etc. Some of these are very magical looking! You will probably not use everything in the book - it depends on your taste.

The graphics necessary to print and make these cards are included in each section, and in the back of the book they provide ready-made, heavy-duty cards so you can follow along with the instructions, or in case you do not want to go to the trouble of printing and cutting your own cards.

If you ever tried doing this topological puzzle, you probably stopped exploring way too soon - I highly recommend getting this book because you will discover some excellent, newer ideas for this and as you will find out, some of them are just plain fun!

That is all for this month folks, join me again next month for a look at another contemporary tome. Stay safe and keep the magic alive! – **J. M. A.**