



PANTHER

ACROSS

THE SKY

**T**his effect is called Panther Across the Sky. I need to lay some groundwork for what this effect is, but to do so is going to kind of spoil the experience of the effect for you. So, a couple times during this write-up I'm going to ask you to wipe your mind of what you've learned so far. When you see the image below of Criss Angel and "rocker" Tommy Lee about to make-out, I want you to let everything you've heard so far seep out of your head. Become a blank slate. If you have a hard time doing that, then really let that picture of Criss and Tommy marinate in your mind. Allow it to become more than a picture, let it morph into a movie where Criss and Tommy are 69'ing each other. Their balls smacking each other's noses as they thrust in and out. See? Now doesn't that image make you forget everything else in your mind? Doesn't it make you want to jam an ice pick through your ear into your brain erasing everything? Perfect.



**T**his effect is called Panther Across the Sky. Panther Across the Sky was another name for Tecumseh who was the leader of the Shawnee Indians during their battles with the US Army during Tecumseh's War and the War of 1812.

Tecumseh also means **shooting star**.

An **iridium flare** is when sunlight reflects off a satellite orbiting the earth. When seen at night this looks like a shooting star.

Iridium flares are predictable down to the second. Search the app store for an iridium flare app and you'll find ones that tell you exactly when they'll happen and will guide you to precisely where to look, the angle to face, and how far above the horizon it will appear.

About a year ago, Joe Mckay mentioned the idea of using an iridium flare in a magic trick to mimic a shooting star and he directed me to a publication called the [Journal of Magic Research](#) and the October 2012, Issue #3 which contains an effect by David Prouty where he does just that. This is how the effect is described in that issue:

Imagine yourself with a group of friends enjoying an after-dinner cappuccino in the backyard, marveling at the stars slowly emerging from the darkening dusk. With your dinnertime discussion about Harry Houdini's life and death still fresh in everyone's mind, you suggest an experiment in communication with the deceased showman. You look heavenward, scanning the field of stars.

"Houdini!" you loudly beckon. "Spirit of Harry Houdini... if you are present, please show us a sign!" Transfixed, you extend your arm, pointing skyward. "Up there! Everybody look there!"

Your friends, somewhat taken aback, look in the direction you're pointing. A light is apparent, moving in contrast with the other

stars, and the moment you focus on it, the light suddenly becomes brighter and brighter. It is more brilliant than anything in the sky, even brighter than Venus! Then, just as fast as it came into view, the apparition fades like a dying spark as it continues its path...

Now, Mr. Prouty and I clearly live different lifestyles. I've never enjoyed a cappuccino in the backyard with a group of friends. Nor have I ever engaged in "dinnertime discussion about Harry Houdini's life and death." And I also don't think getting into this effect with a "magic-y" rationale is the best way to do it. Houdini's spirit? Ehh... I'm not really feeling that. Rather than blurring the edges of an effect into the real world as I've been writing about a lot recently on *The Jerx*, that seems like trying to cram this incredible moment *into* a magic trick.

And, as much as I like the idea of making a shooting star appear, there is one significant problem with it in this form. My friend Mark tried it out and to quote his text to me, "It got a good reaction, but I consider that to be a bad reaction. You shouldn't get the same reaction manipulating the cosmos that you do with a coin trick. So I think there's something wrong with the shooting star trick."

He's right. And you can see this problem by explaining the effect to someone. Ask them if they'd be amazed if you took them outside, pointed to the sky and a shooting star appeared. They'll say yes. Ask them if they would have any idea how you did it. They'll say no. But if you press them a little, eventually they'll say, "Well, there must be some way to know when a shooting star will appear."

And I think that's a reasonable assumption. I'm relatively scientifically literate and if you had asked

me a couple of years ago if I thought science could determine when and where a shooting star would appear, I would have said, "I don't *think* so." But I wouldn't have had much confidence in my answer.

And if you think, *Well, I'll just point out to my audience that you can't predict when a shooting star will appear.* Then you're just making this an issue and kind of encouraging them to question that. And a really engaged spectator may end up doing some research and stumbling across the method for this effect.

"Look where I tell you to, when I tell you to, and you'll see a shooting star." That doesn't necessarily feel like you're manifesting something, but more like you're pointing out something which was going to happen anyway (which is, of course, exactly what you're doing).

But what if you could let the spectator choose where the shooting star would appear?

Well, then I think the effect becomes genuinely mind-blowing again. You might be able to know when a shooting star would appear, but you couldn't just make it appear at the point of a spectator's choosing. In fact, even if they knew about iridium flares, this would still be a crazy trick. You make an iridium flare appear where they choose. It doesn't have the romance of a shooting star, and I doubt I'd bother with it, but I'm just saying we're getting into levels of deceptiveness beyond just "iridium flares look like shooting stars."

Enter Tomas Blomberg and his suggestion to me that perhaps we can allow the spectator to choose where the star appears. Or at least make it seem that way.

What you're about to read is *not* the presentation I use, but it will be a more understandable one to digest the details of the effect. After you've got that down, I'll end this article with the version I've been performing.

Forget everything you've heard so far.



**T**his effect is called Panther Across the Sky. Here's what it looks like. It's a late summer evening. You notice what a clear night it is and you tell your friend there's something you always wanted to try.

You go to your room and come back with a small folded piece of paper that looks like it was torn from an old book. On it are faded notes that were made, seemingly a long time ago.

"This will sound crazy," you say, "but you know I have an interest in magic, and old mystical rituals, and weird ceremonies and all that, yes? I'm not sure if I mentioned it before but a lot of this stems from my great aunt...."

And you go on to tell this story of this woman who

isn't related to you by blood and you only met a couple times in your life before she died when you were 8 or so, but you have vivid memories of her because she was so lively and strange.

And you tell how she was a Ludar gypsy from Romania. And back in the 50s she had a business (as many gypsies did at that time) of wish granting. Not like a genie from a bottle. It was more like a variation on a fortune teller. But instead of being able to communicate with the universe in such a way that they could *see* the future, these women claimed to be able to communicate with the universe in such a way that they could *influence* the future. They could literally be a conduit to grant wishes.

Of course this was all very sketchy. Yes, they claimed they could help you get what you wanted, but it might not be now, it might be 40 years from now. And eventually these little "businesses" were shut down by the police, while fortune tellers were allowed to thrive. Saying you could predict the future wasn't a crime, but saying you could influence it was, for some reason.

But your great aunt found a way around it. She would no longer take money to grant wishes. But, she *would* take money to manifest shooting stars for her clients to wish upon. And apparently this was something she gained a reputation for. Eventually the sheriff where she lived tried to shut her down again, but, as the story goes, she went through this ritual with him, a shooting star appeared, and within a week, his daughter recovered from some medical issue that was supposed to be fatal, blah,

"blah, blah," you say. "I don't believe any of the crazier stuff. This story was told and passed down over decades. And by the time I met her she was just a crazy old broad. But there was definitely

something unique about her.”

“After she died we went to her house to clean everything out and get it ready to be sold. And we all took a little memento to remember her by. I took a book that my mom says was on her nightstand for years. The binding was totally loose and the pages were falling out. I held it together with rubber bands and kind of forgot about it. And then recently I was moving from stuff around and I found the book. I don’t know what it’s about because it’s not in English, but for the first time I noticed the last page in the book had my aunt’s handwritten notes about how to conduct her star ritual. I’ve been carrying them around with me. And I’ve been waiting for a clear night and the right person to try it with. Are you willing to give it a shot?”

The two of you go outside and follow the steps in the ritual which involve some movements and breathing. During this ritual your friend freely turns anywhere to identify an area of the sky to concentrate on, and from that area she selects a specific location to concentrate your energies on.

“I hope you have your wish ready, on the off chance this works,” you say.

A few moments later a bright star flashes across the sky, exactly where your spectator chose.

“Holy sh... make your wish!” you say.

You both stand in silence and stare at each other, eyes wide.

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So, the heart of this is forcing the location in the sky.

We want the person to pick where the star appears. We, unfortunately, can’t just have them choose any random place in the sky, so there has to be some kind of process. And my theory—as espoused on my site—is that you’re much better off highlighting a process and making it the heart of the routine than not giving any rationale for it and hoping people ignore it. This is the idea behind the Engagement Ceremony style of presentation.

Let’s get into the specifics. You download an app that tells you where and when the iridium flares will appear. The app I used is called Sputnik. These flares are relatively common. In the next 7 days there are 14 flares to be seen around me. You want to look for iridium flares, not the International Space Station (which these apps also track). The ISS looks more like a plane or something.

You find out the time of a flare that you can take advantage of to perform this and then go out to the area where you’ll do the trick.

Use the app to find the exact location you need to be standing to see the flare and the angle in the sky where it will be. Find something in that area you can use to orient yourself later that night when you perform. For example, maybe there’s a tree off in the distance, or maybe you put a rock somewhere. Whatever it might be so you can find that location again easily when you return there later.

Here’s how you force the area in the sky. This is a combination of idea from Tomas and myself. It’s actually pretty easy and feels fairly free, I think.

Take a look at the picture on the next page that looks like to spaceships or something. Is it a face or two people kissing?



It's neither, actually. This is an overhead view of you and your spectator. (You on the bottom, your spectator on top.)

This is the starting position that's going to be covered in the instructions you're following with your participant. That is to say (in this version) the instructions that are on the ripped out page of the book. I will tell you what some of those instructions are, and why they're important. You can add some more meaningless actions to flesh out the instructions.

**Step One: Stand under the night sky facing the person who wants the universe to grant their wish.**

This is the start of the force. Take a look at this image. What we're going to do is force them to stand in any direction in the red area, point somewhere in the blue area, and concentrate on the green star. Here's how we do each of those things.



FORCE THEM TO FACE IN SOME DIRECTION IN THE RED AREA

**Step Two: Press your palms flat against theirs for ten seconds. Then lower your palms and have them slowly rotate away from you in either direction. At any point they should stop their rotation so they are facing a new direction.**

There's a reason for having them place their hands against yours that I'll get into in a moment.

When you go outside you're going to stand directly facing where the "star" will appear. So your friend has their back to that area.

If they follow the instruction they will almost assuredly end up looking in some direction covered by the red arc in the image above. The instructions tell them to "slowly rotate" and stop somewhere when they're facing a "new direction." This is going to prevent them from doing a full 360.

So now we've forced them into a position along that arc.

FORCING THEM TO POINT IN THE BLUE AREA

If I tell you to "point out with your right hand," I suspect that half of you reading this would raise your arm and point out in front of you with your right hand, and the other half of you would raise your arm and point out to your side with your right hand. Both of these are 100% logical interpretations of that statement. And if I were to demonstrate how you should point as I said this, I think you would just mimic whatever I did and not even think about another interpretation of what it means to "point out with your right hand."

This is how we're going to get people to point into the blue area.

Let's say the person rotated around and is now facing "9 o'clock" in the image above. We want them to point into the blue area, so I read the next instruction.

**Step Three: Raise your right arm and point out with your index finger. This will identify the area of the sky we'll focus on.**

If, as I read this, I raise my right arm to my side in demonstration, you will do the same thing, and end up pointing at 12 o'clock. Pointing to directly where the star will appear, as a matter of fact. Although we don't need you to point directly where it will appear as long as you're pointing in the blue area.

On the other hand, if you're facing 11 o'clock, for example, you're already very close to where I want you to be looking. So when I say "raise your right arm," I will demonstrate by raising mine to point right in front of me, Uncle Sam style.

"Yes, but what if they're facing 3 o'clock?" you ask.

Let's go back for a moment. In step two it says they should press their palms against yours. To do so, of course, you'll have to set your instructions aside for the moment. Maybe you put them in your back pocket. Then, as the person is turning, you pull out the instructions again. Depending on where they stop you'll pull out the instructions where step 3 tells them to raise their right arm, or their left arm.

Yes, there are two sets of instructions. But this is the easiest, most motivated switch you'll ever come across, happening at a time when their back is towards you and nobody is even thinking of a

switch yet (or ever, during this effect).

With the two sets of instructions and the equivocal nature of what it means to “raise your (right/left) arm,” you can get them to go from looking out anywhere along that red arc, to pointing somewhere in the blue area.

You don't want to physically switch a set of instructions? There are other options.

- Tomas' original idea was to have it say “Raise your non-dominant hand.” If you write the instructions so “non” is the last word in the line, then you can cover it with your thumb so one set of instructions can say either “raise your dominant hand” or “raise your non-dominant hand.” The reason I didn't go with this method is I prefer just saying right or left hand (not dominant/non-dominant). And my feeling is that people might want to look at the instructions when you're done, at which point you want to let them handle them freely.
- Similarly, you could just have it say “Raise your hand.” And then just insert right or left when you read it aloud. If you want, you could then pencil in “right” or “left” at a later point and leave the instruction laying around.
- If you have the instructions on your phone, say in the Notes section, then you can just swipe to the one you need.

But honestly, I think just switching the entire set of instruction is the easiest, cleanest, and most direct thing to do in this effect. And it's completely motivated.

FORCING THEM TO CONCENTRATE ON THE POINT

WHERE THE STAR WILL APPEAR.

**Step Four: Beginning where the participant is pointing, and staying within that quadrant of the sky, trace an arc with your hand and allow the participant to stop you at any point as you go.**

You turn to your spectator and say, “Okay, say stop at some point.” You then have them stop you right where the star will appear.

This is just a timing force. As you hear the spectator start saying stop you will time it so your hand is pointing in the area the flare will appear. It's simple. The instruction gives you a lot of freedom as far as what it means to “trace an arc” in the sky. So if you're just at the edge of the blue area you can trace a wide arc from left to right in order to get to where you need to be. If, however, the spectator is already pointing pretty much dead on to where the star will appear, then you can just slowly trace an arc vertically up in the sky along where they're pointing. It's very easy. You have a lot of leeway when you're forcing an object (seemingly) light years away than a card in a fan, with the timing force.

Originally Tomas wasn't using the two forces together. He would use either the turn and point force, or the timing force to identify a point in the sky. But I think they work best in concert. Utilizing the timing force allows you to get closer to where the star will appear than if you just used the turn and point force. And while a timing force like this can sometimes seem a little imprecise or inexact, I think it's under less scrutiny because it's happening in their “freely” chosen area of the sky.

So they've turned and selected an area of the sky to work with, they've then chosen a specific point within that area to concentrate on. Now it's just a



matter of waiting for the star to appear.

**Step Five: Take a few deep breaths and allow the star to manifest in they sky. When it does the participant is free to make their wish.**

The hardest part about this is getting the timing right. You really want to have a watch you can read so you can keep things on track. Practice a few times yourself and get some idea of how long the process should take and work back from there. I would say you want to get to step five with under a minute left. The last step talks about taking “a few deep breaths” because that’s a very unspecific activity. I can take “a few deep” [heavy] breaths in 6 seconds or I can take a few deep breaths over the course of a minute. Give yourself more time than you need. You don’t want the star to appear before you’re done with the process. If you end up with a lot of time then you can turn this last step into a longer process. “Oh right, I think there’s a very specific breathing pattern we’re supposed to do. In for a count of five, hold for a count of five, out for a count of five. And then repeat that.” You’ll think of something to fill up the time.

I would recommend being surprised when the star shows up.

That’s how you do it. But that’s not how **I’ve** been doing it.

Forget everything you’ve heard so far. Really try and put yourself in the situation of viewing what’s to come as a spectator that knows nothing about iridium flares, forcing positions, engagement ceremonies etc.

Here’s the pic...



**T**his trick is called Panther Across the Sky. Imagine you and I are enjoying an after-dinner cappuccino in the backyard, marveling at the stars slowly emerging from the darkening dusk. With my dinnertime discussion about Harry Houdini’s life and death still fresh in your mind you say, “Hey... no offense... but could we talk about something else?”

“Oh, sorry,” I say. “Oh, hey, there’s something I want to try. Just a sec.” I go back in the house and come back a moment later with a letter. I toss it on the table.

You pick it up and read what’s written there in this strange, tiny handwriting.

*Andy,*

*These are the instructions to see the reveal. Only follow-thru on this if you REALLY want proof of what is going on. This will work ONE time. In these instructions you are Player 2. Player 1 is the leader, you are the follower. Pick a Player 1 who is both intelligent, intuitive, and creative.*

*Step One: Enter an area where you have a clear view of the night sky.*

I stop you from reading more and take back the letter.

“This is going to be bizarre, but I really want to try it, and I think you’d be good for this in the role of the ‘Leader.’”

“What is it?” you ask.

“Have you heard the idea that the whole universe is a computer simulation?” I ask. “I don’t even really know what it means, but I have a friend who knows this guy, and this guy swears he can prove that it’s true. And that’s where this comes in,” I say, indicating the letter.

“He wrote that to me. And what he says is... well... do you know how in video games there are sometimes little easter eggs built in and if you press the buttons on the controllers according to some specific code, then you’ll see something strange or unexpected? It’s like a hidden way for the developers of the game to acknowledge the users within the game.”

“So this guy says he cracked a code that will allow us to see a similar ‘easter egg’ from whoever is behind the computer simulation that is the world we live in. Will you try the process with me? It takes two people.”

You agree and we head out to a field near my house.

As we go on our way, I say, “So, apparently if we follow this procedure correctly the people who developed this computer simulation will acknowledge us in some way. And apparently the

way they do it is with something called a “live pixel” which is, like, the opposite of a dead pixel. So instead of something going black and dead, we’ll see a pixel get really bright and vivid. It might even move, I can’t remember if that’s what he said or not.”

We get out to the field and follow the instructions on the letter..

**Step One:** Enter an area where you have a clear view of the night sky

**Step Two:** Identify Player One, the leader, and Player Two, the follower.

**Step Three:** Player One and Player Two must face each other.

**Step Four:** Player One must tap their heart a number of times from 1-10, Player Two must tap their heart the same number of times.

**Step Five:** Player One must press both palms of their hands against the palms of Player Two for ten seconds. Then lower their palms and slowly rotate away from Player Two in either direction. At any point, Player One should stop their rotation so they are facing a new direction.

**Step Six:** Wherever they stop rotating, Player One should raise their right arm and point out with their index finger. This will identify the area of the sky you should focus on.

**Step Seven:** Beginning where Player One is pointing, and staying within that quadrant of the sky, Player Two should trace an arc with their hand and allow Player One to stop them at any point as they go. This is your focal point.

**Step Eight:** Both players must tap their feet in the following manner. L R L R R L R R R L R R L R L

**Step Nine:** Sync your breathing, concentrate on the focal point, and wait for a sign.

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I think it should be pretty clear what's going on here, based on the explanation I gave in the previous version. This is just a different set of clothes for the same method.

One thing I like is that the spectator is referred to as “the Leader” in the process of forcing them to choose a specific location in the sky. This is something I've used in other situations where the spectator is being forced to do something, but the language of the instructions we follow are constantly reinforcing the idea that *they're* in charge.

Now, if you were really able to clear your mind of everything you know about this trick, you may have some concept of how much of a mindfuck this is to people. This is a trick that is happening seemingly a million miles away, at a spot in the sky they chose. The backstory—that this is proof of us living in a computer simulation—is absolutely insane. But it's not like they have a ton of other options in regards to what happened. “Ah, no way. That wasn't a ‘live pixel.’ You just manifested a shooting star magically to make it *seem* like we're living in a computer simulation. Wait... no... that's just as insane as the idea we're living in a computer simulation.”

It's a strong trick, and quite possibly *too* strong a trick for certain people. That has been my experience. It's right on the edge where fascinating meets unsettling. But it's almost too good of a method not to use. It's one of the grandest effects in magic, but it's actually pretty simple to pull off. You need an app, two sets of instructions, and a couple minutes to orient yourself earlier in the day.

I will probably change my presentation to a more wishing/shooting star angle. I think that will be slightly less intense for people. I wouldn't recommend performing this version unless you really like messing with people. In fact, even then it might not be a good idea.

Forget I ever mentioned this. 🌸

