

# The Illusionist

*by* Michael J. Solender

It was the kind of occasion where if you blinked, you surely would miss the sleight of hand he employed to achieve the illusion.

All week my crew and I waited for the snuff party. An obscure fete where someone gets killed strictly for the entertainment and viewing pleasure of others. Before you judge us know this, people die every day for no reason at all. The arrangements made in these underground "snuffs" were such that all were willing participants, all played a role, all were compensated in one way or another.

That's why we paid so much money. He said we'd not be sorry, "Your money's worth and then some, memories that will excite you for a lifetime."

Rich and bored is a deadly combination for thrill seekers. We were all fortunate that our fathers were born before us. We'd had it with coke and girls and gambling and other vices we could very easily manipulate, we needed more, perhaps more than we could handle.

Murder, and one staged on our behalf at that for us to witness was something else again.

His apartment was as we expected, clean lines, brass and glass and all sorts of magic paraphernalia. Photos of Houdini, David Copperfield and others hung on his walls. We were about to witness the greatest magic of all, the extinguishing of a life.

We were to know nothing about the victim. For our own safety he said.

Upon collecting the cash, he gave us each a cocktail and told us the show would begin in a moment.

My throat immediately began to tighten, not from any apprehension but from the strychnine in my drink. The inferno in my throat was laying waste to my esophagus and my lungs were burning as I gasped for air.

My friends did nothing in assisting me, my last view was the glee on their faces. They each stood over me as the blood spit from my eyes streaking red a sun that would rise for me no more.

"Oh yes," the illusionist said, "A brilliant performance for you gentlemen."

As I lay dying I had to admit, I was no longer bored.

