

Shuffle

by Scott Robinson

"You cut it in half," I demonstrated, "then use your thumbs to shuffle them back together."

I slid the worn deck of cards across the desk.

In return, that sharp look. Those young eyes turned downward to guide those tiny fingers.

"How many cards?" "52."

"One. Two. Three. Four."

Christ, they're so literal.

"Not exactly in half." "How much?" "... uhh, about half. Half plus or minus 5." "One. Two..."

I didn't interrupt. It was good enough.

Those two tiny thumbs started letting each card down, slowly, and exactly. One from the left, one from the right, then again the left.

"No. Sorry, no. What I meant was.... you pick left or right. Randomly!" Our eyes meet again. That look. It creeps me out. It's like everything that goes wrong is my fault.

Why? I'm doing my best!

Those thumbs resume their work. The cards hit the desk in a rhythm of unpredictability.

"Done." "No. No, it's still not shuffled. Do it again. Do it... five more times."

I made that up. I do it all the time. I'm sure there's a better way-- a more correct way. But this is good enough and I'm sick of this kid. I'm sick of these kids.

They're broken. Something is clearly wrong with them and we're supposed to socialize them. Teach them how to function in a society that sees beauty in allusion, finds spiritual meaning in symbols.

But when I said it was raining cats and dogs this morning, they all ran to the barred windows looking for pets to love.

Those thumbs are joined by those fingers. The deck has been split in two and each are being shuffled single-handedly by those two little fists. It's like watching a magician's trick. But performed by someone who, until a minute ago, had never seen a deck of cards in their life.

I need to quit. Those eyes are on me again and I can't meet their gaze, so I watch the rivelets flow down the windows.

They're monsters.

