

## A MONSTROUS LITTLE VOICE

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DIAGRAM 12.2 | <http://thediagram.com>

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Dear **HECTOR**:

We would like to congratulate you on making the significant (and brave!) decision to uncover your REAL voice, and also to thank you for soliciting our Voice Discovery Service Package. What follows is our storied method, guaranteed to match ventriloquist dummies with just-right independent voices so that they can live more fulfilling lives “off the knee.”

Automaton no more; you’re now on your way to autonomy!

**HECTOR**, we understand that finding your own voice can be a daunting task, especially for those dummies who have been “spoken-through” for decades-long careers. We also understand that discovering your voice is an emotional journey, one that can leave you with many doubts. Some questions cycling through your head right now might include:

- *Will my jokes still be funny in my new voice?*
- *How will I know how to “work” my voice? Will I need to take a training course, like Toastmasters?*
- *Will my new voice get me more dates, both professional and romantic?*
- *What if my new voice gives me seizures, like that lady’s from Entertainment Tonight did to her biggest fan?*

We implore you, however, to push those thoughts from your mind, as they will all be addressed at the appropriate juncture. The first step of this exciting process is simply admitting that you *have* a voice...or, at least, that you *deserve* one. Do you feel prepared to do that, **HECTOR**? Can you let yourself have a voice of your own?

Good. Then you’re ready to begin.

Now is where we take over, with our PATENTED QUESTIONNAIRE that is GUARANTEED to pinpoint not just the *type* of voice that suits you best, but the myriad little details (rasp, resonance, dialect) that will make your new voice the unique snowflake it deserves to be. Then, all you have to do is pick the voice from our catalogue, pay a fee for installation, and you’ll be “in good voice” forever (as long as you refrain from smoking, cheerleading, careless karaoke, and extensive work with harsh industrial chemicals)!

Okay, **HECTOR**: Are you ready? LET’S GET STARTED. Answer each question honestly, but without too much hemming and hawing. You’re only 45 questions away from a new sound and a new life!

(NOTE: Your first invoice is included in this mailing. Payment is due immediately.)

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Your Full Name: **HECTOR THE DUMMY**

Your Handler's Name: **T. Foley**

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### PART ONE: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1) What are you made of (check all that apply)?

**X\_cloth** **\_X\_wood** **\_\_paper composite** **\_X\_plastic**

2) Which parts of your body can move?

**\_X\_eyes** **\_\_brows** **\_\_ears** **\_X\_arms**

3) What is the name of your "Act"? **Ventwittoquisms, or "Hector Can't Talk"**

4) What sorts of things does s/he make you say? Please quote him/**her** a few times here:

- **Put me down! Stop putting words into my mouth!**
  - **Wanna see the sexiest part of me?**
  - **I am a 53-year-old male looking for a lady to ride in my truck on short trips.**
  - **I find kissing a great way to reduce stress.**
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### PART TWO: MULTIPLE CHOICE

5) Where do you think your handler's voice comes from?

- a) his/her heart
- b) his/her throat
- c) his/her terrible childhood
- d) somebody else**
- e) all of the above

6) Which "dummy trope" best describes your persona?

- a) The Cheeky Boy
- b) The Hayseed Soldier
- c) The Grumpy Old Man
- d) The Lecherous Spinster
- e) OTHER (please elaborate): None. [I don't care for dummy tropes.]**

7) Which voice do you feel is your closest ancestor?

- a) A Greek Sybil, drunk on fumes and spilling the secrets of the Fates**
- b) A pika, the North American rat known to ward off prey by throwing its voice
- c) Mister Potter's Humble Voice-in-a-Trunk
- d) Punch
- e) Judy

8) Which classic on-screen plot feels closest to your own emotional landscape?

- a) An obsessive vaudevillian, desperate to give his crowd the perfect performance, practices so much with his dummy that he loses sight of his own personality and goes insane.
- b) Because of lousy report card grades, a cheeky boy dummy is forbidden to go on a vacation to Sweden with his handler. He stows away on the ocean liner anyway, but he is just too sassy and cute to stay angry with for long.
- c) The papers for the world's most dangerous nuclear weapon are sinisterly stashed in the head of a nightclub act dummy. The dummy's unsuspecting handler is then set on a madcap transcontinental caper full of song and dance.
- d) A shy ventriloquist uses his dummy to get girls—and to kill those girls' jealous husbands when they find out the ventriloquist is schtupping their wives.
- e) A curly-haired ventriloquist named Dave and his dummy, Danny, land a slot on the Flip Wilson Show. Dave buys them matching red jackets and bowties, but forgets to rehearse. Throughout the act, when Danny speaks, Dave's lips move. When Danny says "no," Dave shakes his head. When they try the ol' cigarette bit, Dave drops Danny while fumbling in his pocket for a lighter. Danny's plastic body hits the stage floor with a thud.**

9) Which famous dummy catchphrase would sound best in your throat?

- a) "On a stick!"
- b) "S'alright." [I'm pretty agreeable]**
- c) "Tim-berrrrrr!"
- d) "I'll clip ya! So help me, I'll mow ya down!"
- e) "Diff-eee-cult for you; eeeee-zeee for me."
- f) OTHER (please elaborate):

10) Which of the following speeches most intrigues you?

- a) Richard Milhous Nixon's "Checkers" address
- b) Sally Field's 1985 Oscar acceptance speech
- c) The list of the possible side effects of Cialis
- d) "Friends, Romans, Countrymen"**
- e) Vincent Price's rap at the end of "Thriller"

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### PART THREE: TRUE OR FALSE

- |  |   |   |                                |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 11) When I close my eyes, I hear a voice inside my head. | T | F | <b>[I can't close my eyes]</b> |
| 12) Often, that internal voice is making fun of me.      | T | F |                                |
| 13) I would like to have a dummy of my own.              | T | F |                                |
| 14) I would dress my dummy exactly like myself.          | T | F |                                |
| 15) I would never, ever show the dummy to my handler.    | T | F |                                |
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#### PART FOUR: THE VOCAL SPECTRUM

Rate your feelings regarding each statement, 10 being “strong agreement” and 1 being “total disagreement.”

16) I enjoy being looked at by large crowds of people.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

17) I enjoy speaking to them (through my handler) while they look at me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

18) I agree with the sentiment “loose lips sink ships.”

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

19) I often fantasize about calling in to those radio political talk shows.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

20) I get emotional during the musical numbers of all four Muppet movies.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

21) Classical soliloquies have little to no real-life use.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

22) I envy talking dolls, even though they can only say a few phrases again and again.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

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#### PART FIVE: FILL IN THE BLANKS

23) When I give a performance, it makes me feel **manipulated**.

24) When my handler speaks for me, the sensation is most similar to **plagiarism**.

25) If I were to enter a televised singing contest, my song of choice would be **”I Can’t Even Walk Without You Holding My Hand.”**

26) If my handler were a dummy, his/**her** catchphrase would be **“Ventriloquism is dead!”**

27) My favorite instrument is **A GPS system**.

28) If my handler knew that I **hated the Muppets**, s/he would never work with me again.

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## PART SIX: VISUAL ASSOCIATIONS

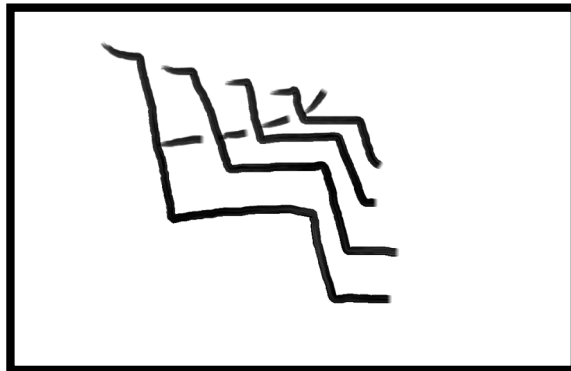
29) What do the following images remind you of? Write short descriptions beneath each one:

A:



Description: **This is a silhouette of a puppet preparing for a French kiss. People aren't generally aware of this, but most puppets do NOT have movable tongues, which is unfortunate.**

B:



Description: **This is just meta-ventriloquism.**

30) What is going on in the photograph below? Write a small story detailing the scenario:



(photo of Doug Nearpass)

Scenario: “The *ventriloquist* internalizes pliable representations, manipulates them, and interacts with them—not with the originals. The *ventriloquist* is entirely immersed in his world, talking to these ‘figurines,’ arguing with these substitutes, contracting with these surrogates, being admired by them. Hence his dismay when confronted with real people, their needs, feelings, preferences, and choices.

Thus, the typical *ventriloquist* refrains from any meaningful discourse with his spouse and children, friends and colleagues. Instead, he spins a narrative in which these people—represented by mental avatars—admire him, find him fascinating, fervently wish to oblige him, love him, or fear him.”

*Proctor’s Note: the quotation marks here are mine.*

*In response to this question, the subject seems to have rejected the idea of telling an actual story. Instead, he has directly lifted text from a book called MALIGNANT SELF-LOVE: NARCISSISM REVISITED, published in Macedonia by a “Sam Vaknin, PhD.”*

*He then replaced every use of the word “narcissist” with “ventriloquist.” Fascinating.*

—EMP

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## PART SEVEN: SHORT ESSAY

31) What, in your opinion, are voices for?

**To express a need—anguish, isolation, hunger; to cry out for mother’s milk. Spanish speaking people have a nice expression, “El que no llora; no mama.”**

**Vents would argue differently—voices are for throwing.**

32) What is your first memory?

**Being pulled out of a box, unwrapped from layers of plastic bubble wrap, and taking my first breath.**

33) What did it sound like?

**It’s kinda like when you’ve been swimming underwater, holding your breath for a while and then you finally reach the surface. You hear yourself gasping for air and then the whole world opens up to your ears! Have you seen The Little Mermaid?**

34) What do you enjoy about your handler’s voice?

**That it changes, and so I change.**

35) If s/he were a dummy, what would you make him/her say?

**“Waah! Waaaah! Where is everybody? Feed me!”**

36) Describe the last dream you had. Did you speak? If so, what did you speak?

**Oh, gosh. It was a nightmare. I was talking to James Lipton on *Inside the Actor’s Studio*, and I was petrified, as usual. Couldn’t speak at all. I had to engage with Lipton and the audience via text messaging. Foley was there. She read my text messages aloud. We totally sucked—ruined the whole fuckin’ episode.**

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## **PART EIGHT: WORD ASSOCIATION**

Read the following words. As you read, quickly type the first word that comes into your head

37) secret: **DESIRE**

38) strangle: **ME**

39) gimmick: **NO!**

40) orphan: **ME**

41) soft: **LAP**

42) headache: **NO!**

43) Pinocchio: **DADDY DADDY**

44) tether: **POLE**

45) suitcase: **(ho)ME**

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## **PART NINE: CATCH-ALL**

Is there anything else we need to know about you? If so, please write it in the space below.

**According to Foley, I have a severe anxiety disorder—selective mutism, so I don't like the idea of speaking in public and/or around strangers.**

**END** of questionnaire!  
Congratulations, **HECTOR**. Great work!



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Thursday, December 8, 2011

Dear **HECTOR THE DUMMY**:

After painstaking analysis, our experts have reached a conclusion regarding your vocal needs. Based on your answers, **HECTOR**, you require a **Thy-Ro-Id**, or “Thirsty-Romantic-Idealist” voice. This is one of the most complicated vocal types in our catalogue, as it is rife with contradictions.

In our experience, Thy-Ro-Id voice types speak with both a lust for life and an overarching wariness toward it. They are curious and independent thinkers that often find themselves silenced by stronger personalities or by self-doubt. To compensate for this contradiction, they will hide behind the voices and identities of others in both personal and professional capacities.

**FAMOUS THY-RO-IDS INCLUDE:**

- Frederik, Crown Prince of Denmark
- Tenzing Norgay
- Mel Blanc
- Motown bassist James Jamerson
- John Cazale
- Gerald Ford

We specifically suggest you consider the Thy-Ro-Id voices in our catalogue that blend bombast with meticulousness (catalogue numbers TRI33-50). This will allow you to express your psychic reluctance to perform, while still giving your sound enough razzle-dazzle to land a memorable punch line.

Details and add-ons that will optimize your speaking power:

- 1) We recommend a baritone voice that ends its consonants softly, in the back palate, which will compliment your diminutive stature.
- 2) A melodious dialect (like our “Country Gentleman” (TRI51) or our “Casbah Millionaire” (TRI35.5) add-ons will give you a bump in status, sonically speaking. This upgrade can also address both your confidence issues and your interest in French kissing!
- 3) To compensate for your urges to self-strangulate, we believe the less throaty the resonance you choose, the better. Opt for a chesty or nasally voice, depending on the type of stage work you’re interested in pursuing.
- 4) Your (alarming) hatred of Muppets suggests that a cartoony voice will not work for you. For this reason, we strongly suggest finishing off your Thy-Ro-Id catalogue selection with our “James Earl Jones Varnish” (see “Finishing Touches” in the back of the catalogue), a protective vocal coat that will give you gravitas and much-needed confidence.

All-in-all, **HECTOR**, we are looking forward to helping you blend all these elements of speaking into a perfect vocal cocktail—a voice you can call your own. We do, however, have one small caveat, which we extend to all our clients.

We assume that you view your years on your handler's lap, forced to live in what you call “selective mutism,” as the ultimate in manipulation. You probably also feel that, once you have a voice of your own installed into your throat, you will finally be in control of how the world hears you. You're probably thinking that you will never feel puppeted again.

Unfortunately, though, **HECTOR**, a man's voice is his *ultimate* puppeteer. If we have learned anything from our decades of vocal study, it is that when you abide such a complicated organ, you are more likely to fall prey to it than you are to master it.

Sometimes it will be an unruly little man on your knee, undermining your patter and stealing your best jokes. Your listeners' attention will gravitate to it, even though you are the one who wrote the material. But other times, *you* will be the unruly little man, and it will feel as though the voice has its hand up your back and is jerking your body into places without asking permission.

But oh, it will sound very pretty at times. It will be able to leap farther than you yourself can leap, and it will draw people close to you from unimaginable distances. You will see people's eyes widen with alarm when it sends out a vigorous yell.

And we must insist that you at least try to trust your new voice, as often, it will know better than you do. You should listen to it heckle from within, and you should follow it when it pulls the strings of your body in unexpected directions. For its choices are usually deep and telling, even if they trouble you as they manifest themselves. Whether you admit it or not (and some never do), the voice is the closest you will ever get to showing an audience what you are truly made of. The two of you—body and sound—will undoubtedly make quite a pair.

But make no mistake about it, **HECTOR**: in this new act of your career, that voice inside you will always be the straight man, and you will forever be its yutz.

GOOD LUCK!

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