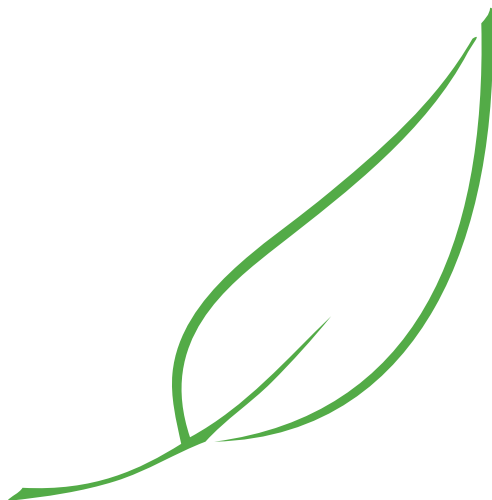


Something Fishy This Way Comes

By Ray Sheers



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**SOMETHING FISHY THIS
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SYNOPSIS: Buford is a man unlucky in love and dreadfully unlucky in business. Deeply in debt to his mobster landlord and close to losing a few fingers over the deal, Buford begs the landlord and his feisty friends to spare his tiny fingers. With the words, “I’ll do anything,” Buford’s luckless life is now charmingly lucky. The Bottachi boys exit happily with rent in hand, and Buford relaxes on the couch with everything still attached. Only now he is indebted to the clan of magical gnomes who generously grant him his every wish. In turn, the gnomes send Buford to the Blue Hour Nightclub, where up-and-coming magicians like Micky Kowalski get their start. Unfortunately, Micky is an inept magician, and it’s Buford’s responsibility to get Micky’s name up in lights. When mob boss Rudy Bottachi and family arrive to catch the act and recognize Buford, it’s up to the gnomes to blow their cover and save the day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 male, 8 female, 7 either, 1-10 extras; gender flexible)

BUFORD T. WAGSPETER (m) A man unlucky in love and business.
A rather ridiculous and cowardly fellow who is deep in debt to his gangster landlord. He’s ready to make any kind of deal to get out of his financial problems. *(Buford is transformed into a ventriloquist’s dummy for part of the play, so the actor playing him needs a strong voice in order to project from his “hiding place.”)* (172 lines)

HORTENSE JESSUP (f) Wagspeter’s well-meaning, but gullible secretary. (49 lines)

MONICA (f) A soon-to-be former girlfriend of Wagspeter’s. (10 lines)

- RUDY BOTTACHI (m) A no-nonsense gangster who wants his money (with interest) from Wagspeter—or else! *(121 lines)*
- GINO (m)..... Bottachi’s bodyguard. *(12 lines)*
- GNOME 1 (m/f)..... Creature who enjoys making deals with mortals. *(78 lines)*
- GNOME 2 (m/f)..... Another *(63 lines)*
- WALT (m) Owner of the Blue Hour, a nightclub specializing in magic. He’s a very nervous type, with good reason. *(79 lines)*
- SECRETARY (f) Walt’s rather ditzy secretary. *(9 lines)*
- MICKY KOWALSKI (m) An inept magician working at The Blue Hour. She comes from a long line of magicians, but has never quite gotten the hang of it. She’s about to be fired—again. *(Though intended for a female, the name was deliberately chosen for its indeterminate gender. Just a few lines would need to be changed for a male to play this part.) (89 lines)*
- MAGICIAN’S ASSISTANT 1 (m.f).... Micky’s bizarre assistant *(26 lines)*
- MAGICIAN’S ASSISTANT 2 (m/f).... Micky’s bizarre assistant. Assistant 2 will control the dummy throughout much of the play. Assistant 2 has very few lines, but needs to know all of Wagspeter the Dummy’s lines. *(No ventriloquism required, just the ability to make the dummy come to life and coordinate the dummy’s mouth with the actor playing Wagspeter.) (2 lines)*

SID WEISS (m)	A critic who shows up to review Micky's show at The Blue Hour. (5 lines)
MRS. WEISS (f)	Sid's wife. (3 lines)
SERVER(S) (m/f)	Waiter or waitresses at The Blue Hour. The server should be costumed in very unusual attire. If a rabbit suit is available, that would be perfect. Nothing at The Blue Hour is quite normal. (<i>Non-Speaking</i>)
ANGEL MALONEY (f)	Rudy's very attractive new girlfriend. She appears naïve and rather shallow. (72 lines)
BILLY HAGGERT (m)	Another gangster, Rudy's rival. (15 lines)
BORIS (m)	Billy's bodyguard. (<i>Non-Speaking</i>)
ROSE BOTTACHI (f)	Rudy's mother. She's a domineering woman fond of putting her big-shot son in his place. (36 lines)
AUNT CAMILLE (f)	Rudy's aunt. She's another domineering type. (19 lines)
UNCLE LOUIE (m)	Rudy's hen-pecked uncle. He's not at all impressed with his nephew. (21 lines)
FBI AGENTS (two or more) (m/f)	(<i>Non-Speaking</i>)
LOLA (f)	Patron at the Blue Hour. (23 lines)
ASSISTANT (m/f)	Patron at the Blue Hour (2 lines)

EXTRAS (m/f).....Add patrons at the Blue Hour. Also, you might want to add another act to precede the magic show if you have someone with a particular talent, musical or otherwise. The director of the original show used mimes to precede the magic act. MALE OR FEMALE ROLES

SYNOPSIS OF SCENCES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1:Buford's run-down office.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2:Blue Hour Nightclub.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1:Blue Hour Nightclub.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2:Blue Hour Nightclub.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3:Buford's run-down office.

PROPS

- ☐Desk(s) and chairs
- ☐Sofa
- ☐Telephone
- ☐Desk/office supplies
- ☐Cardboard box or shopping bag
- ☐Ring
- ☐Large hand bell
- ☐Envelope with stage money
- ☐Magician's cape, hat, and wand
- ☐Pill bottle
- ☐Small bandage
- ☐Brightly colored pair of socks and boxers
- ☐Magician's table*
- ☐Ventriloquist's dummy or large puppet*
- ☐Large trunk*
- ☐Magic tent*

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- ☐ Magician's tricks*
- ☐ Large plastic fish
- ☐ Cage (or large cardboard box covered with a cloth)
- ☐ Rabbit (strictly optional)*
- ☐ Handkerchief
- ☐ Decorative fish pillow
- ☐ Small garbage can
- ☐ Several large colorful scarves tied together
- ☐ Brightly colored boxer shorts
- ☐ Two small tables with chairs
- ☐ "Reserved" signs for tables
- ☐ Rabbit costume (optional)
- ☐ Bottle and wine glasses
- ☐ Box of chocolates
- ☐ Diamond necklace
- ☐ Large framed mirror (*a frame with shiny wrapping paper works well*)
- ☐ Makeup compact
- ☐ Hair curlers (using a wig with curlers already in place is ideal)
- ☐ Purses
- ☐ Kazoo
- ☐ Two identical fancy gowns* (Vanishing Woman Act)
- ☐ Large fish head or mermaid costume*
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Lady's coat
- ☐ Bananas (plastic or real)
- ☐ Four wallets
- ☐ Handcuffs
- ☐ Tins of sardines and cracker box
- ☐ Bag for rolls and carryout coffee cups
- ☐ Jacket with "Micky's Corner Deli" on the back
- ☐ Legal papers
- ☐ Pen and paper
- ☐ Large trash can (on wheels)
- ☐ Rags, feather duster, mop, etc.
- ☐ Alarm clock
- ☐ Coat rack (optional)

PRODUCTION NOTES

MAGICIAN'S TABLE

The magician's table is basically a frame of a table, measuring 8 x 4 x 4. The sides are covered with bright pieces of fabric. (The back can be left open since no one in the audience can see it and it makes it easier for the actor to get in and out.) Using fabric makes it lightweight. The table must be large enough to accommodate the actor playing Wagspeter, since it is from here that he speaks for the dummy. Fabric covering will allow the actor to project from his "hiding place." (Check to make sure that he can't be seen through the fabric with a spotlight. If he is visible, use another piece of fabric or a dark plastic table cloth as a backing. Lights may be hung from the table. (Christmas lights work well.) Fabric paint may also be used to decorate it.

The top of the table frame is a board with a rectangle cut out so that a "trunk" or box may be placed on top and the dummy can appear to come out of the trunk. This table is where Micky will perform most of his or her tricks. Consequently, the top of the table should be pretty sturdy. The actor playing Wagspeter may also assist her from inside the box, depending on the tricks.

VENTRILOQUIST'S DUMMY

Sometimes the dummy is controlled from inside the magician's box (Wagspeter), at other times it is controlled by Micky or her assistants. The voice always comes from the table, so it is best to position the actors manipulating the dummy as close to the box as possible. The person playing Wagspeter must have a strong enough voice to be heard from the box, which, if placed center stage shouldn't be a problem. It takes a little practice to make the dummy come to life. Obviously, the person manipulating the dummy must know those lines so the movement of the dummy coincides with the voice. Make sure the dummy's body and head is animated as well as the mouth; this makes him seem more life-like and less doll-like.

It would be nice if the dummy was dressed like Wagspeter. This makes Wagspeter's "transformation" more believable. (The director of the original production used a Groucho Marx dummy and made Wagspeter resemble him.) A dummy is a fascinating addition to a play and they are extremely easy to operate. Most importantly, it is a favorite with all audiences, especially young children. This is a feature that will make your production truly unique and well worth the extra effort. Try to keep it a secret until opening night, and never reveal how you make it talk! Also, dummies can break if mishandled, so limit the number of people who have access to it. Dummies can be purchased from a number of sources: Maher Studios is a reliable source: P.O. Box 420, Littleton, Colorado 80160. It is well worth the money (under \$100.) See if they will give you a discount if you're doing a school production. Before purchasing, ask around. It's amazing what people have in their attics and basements. NOTE: A dummy is also used in the full length play "For Whom The Tinkerbells Tolls," also published by Heuer.

TRUNK

The trunk or box needs to be able to fit securely on top of the magician's table. Wagspeter climbs into it at the end of Act One, Scene 1 (it is set on the floor), but a blackout will eliminate the need to close the trunk. If the actor can fit into it completely, all the better. The trunk has no bottom because Wagspeter needs to work the dummy from under the magician's table with the trunk on top. If you can, find an old trunk. If one isn't available and you don't want to purchase a new one, it could be constructed very easily using lightweight wood or other material.

MAGIC TENT

The magic tent is a wooden platform five feet square with holes drilled into it for PVC pipe to fit into them. A hoop fits over the top and fabric is hung over the whole structure. The fabric in front and back should be divided for people to enter in front and vanish in back after Micky uses her wand. There needs to be a way for people to exit from the back of the tent unnoticed, so there has to be something blocking them. A wall of opaque balloons extending from the tent to the wings works wonderfully. In fact, balloons make a great and unusual set (especially for this play), and they can be purchased relatively cheaply. The businesses specializing in this work fast and are very reasonable. The play lights on balloons is remarkable. One drawback; they only last for a few days, and they can only be put up a day or two before the show. However, anything large enough could be used to shield the exiting actors. Alternatively, a large screen could be used instead of a “tent.” The screen could be carried in by the magician’s assistants. How elaborate you want to get is entirely up to the director.

MAGIC TRICKS

Magician’s tricks are easy to obtain at magic shops or they can be made. Make sure the tricks are large enough to be seen by the audience. Card tricks are easy to do and you could even plant someone in the audience to help. The act that really baffles audiences is a coloring book that has color that vanishes and reappears, cheap and widely available at magic shops. There is absolutely no skill required! At the beginning of the play, Walt says, “...magic is tricks and illusions, the hand being quicker than the eye,” and that’s exactly what it is, especially when everything is carefully scripted ahead of time. If any of the tricks don’t work, that’s okay. Remember, Micky isn’t much of a magician anyway. (If something goes wrong at any time during the production, Assistant 1 should be prepared to say, “My fault?” It’s in keeping with her character, and the audience doesn’t know that it wasn’t part of the show!) You only need a few magic acts as a prelude to the Vanishing Woman Act. They don’t have to be elaborate. (Note: books on magic are available at most public libraries if you want more ideas.) Lighting and music add a great deal to this part of the play.

RABBIT

The rabbit is strictly optional. It never actually needs to be seen. Only a cage (or cardboard box) with a cloth covering is necessary. The rabbit is never used in any of the magic acts. Using live animals in any production is risky! The rabbit in this play never leaves the cage, so it's a relatively safe situation. It makes a nice addition to the play, but if a school is producing the play, check first to make sure it's allowed. Some school districts ban all live animals in school. Also, make sure none of the actors is allergic to it! Use very special care if you opt to use the rabbit.

VANISHING WOMAN ACT

The Vanishing Woman act is deceptively simple and extremely effective. It requires two identical gowns. Angel enters the tent wearing one of the gowns. (Bridesmaids gowns are perfect and people generally have no use for them after the wedding. Ask around!) After a few waves of the wand, Angel reappears but she is invisible . . . but actually, a second (shorter) actor is inside the second gown in her place. Her arms and hands are concealed, as is her head, within the gown. The gown should be long enough to cover her legs. You might need to put a wire or plastic support in the shoulders of the second dress to keep the form, since the actor is not actually "wearing" it. The shoes should also be identical or similar to Angel's if they can be seen. When done right, she does appear to be invisible, and there will be an audible gasp from the audience. The voice of Angel comes from behind or within the tent. The actor in the dress doesn't speak at all, just move around a bit and coordinate her body movements with Angel's voice. Again, try to keep this and all the magic tricks a secret until opening night. Never explain how they're done! The answer to, "How did you do that?" is always, "Magic!"

FISH HEAD

A large fish head may be purchased as a mask or it could be homemade. If making one, use a hat as a foundation and build the head from Styrofoam or cardboard. Then decorate it to make it look fish-like. It needs to completely cover Angel's face. Keep it lightweight and make sure the actor playing Angel practices wearing it. Some fabric looks like fish scales and is very realistic. Using fabric on the front also allows Angel to project better. NOTE: Instead of a fish head, Angel could be transformed into a mermaid, if you find this easier. Either way, the fish references in the play will work.

GNOMES

The Gnomes might be dressed in tattered gowns or hooded robes. Dimming the lights and using blacklights for their entrance makes them more dramatic and other-worldly. Music can also announce their entrances. (See the notes on Sound Effects.) For the last scene, they appear as cleaning women, so their costume will change. Their demeanor and voices need to remain the same, however.

SOUND EFFECTS AND SUGGESTED MUSIC

Music adds a great deal to this play. I used a variety of jazz pieces to capture the spirit and mood. The following are merely suggestions and are all widely available at most large music stores. The public library is also an excellent (and free!) source.

The Best of Sidney Bechet, Blue Note (CDP 7243 8 28891 2 0)

Essential Sidney Bechet, (Masters of Jazz Series), Proper Records (EMCD 10). Track 14 is ideal for the Magic Show.

Otis Spann: Best of the Vanguard Years, Vanguard, (79537-2) Instrumental tracks only.

Blue Boogie, Blue Note Records, (0777 7 99099 2 6)

Mystery Sound Effects, (RTV Communications, (CD 4617). The gong (Track 11) is great to announce the arrival of the Gnomes, followed by Track 42.

SUGGESTED STAGE SETS

Wagspeter's office is shabby and dark, in contrast to The Blue Hour, which should be extremely bright and colorful. Fabric is a very cost effective way to add color to a set. Suspending long panels of colorful fabric can quickly bring a dull stage to life, as can Christmas lights (which now come in many unusual colors). A large sign may be easily constructed and suspended. Strands of Christmas lights inserted through holes in a lightweight art board (3' x 5') can be used to spell out "The Blue Hour." We used blue lights for the words and white chase lights as a border. It gave the set a dynamic look throughout the entire show.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1**SETTING:**

Wagspeter's office. This scene may be played in front of the curtain. Only a desk or two and some chairs and a sofa are required to give the semblance of a cheap office. There should be a phone and office supplies on the desk and in the drawers.

AT RISE:

WAGSPETER is asleep on the sofa as HORTENSE enters with a cardboard box. SHE starts packing up everything in sight, throwing it into the box. SHE slams desk drawers and WAGSPETER stirs as if dreaming, but does not awaken. As She pulls the fish pillow out from under WAGSPETER'S head, He wakes with a start.

WAGSPETER: What?! What's happening? Miss Jessup, what are you doing?

HORTENSE: *(Emptying out a desk drawer and putting the items in the box.)* I'm sorry, Mr. Wagspeter, but I have to find another job.

WAGSPETER: *(Rising.)* Another job? You're quitting?

HORTENSE: I don't want to, but I have to, Mr. Wagspeter.

WAGSPETER: But why? You can't quit! What will I do without you? Aren't you happy here, Miss Jessup?

HORTENSE: Oh, the work is find, but you haven't paid me for three months. My landlord is going to throw me out of my apartment if I don't pay the rent this month.

WAGSPETER: Oh, so that's all it is! Well, that's no problem. *(Starts removing HORTENSE'S things from the box.)* No problem at all! Why didn't you tell me?

HORTENSE: You mean you can pay me?

WAGSPETER: No. *(Pause.)* I'll do better than that!

HORTENSE: You will?!

WAGSPETER: Sure! Why don't you move in here?

HORTENSE: Here?

WAGSPETER: Of course, my little pine nut. After all, nobody uses the office at night. And I won't charge you much rent. What's this landlord charging you anyway?

HORTENSE: No, I don't think I could live here. (*Starts to put things back into the box.*)

WAGSPETER: Why not? There's a bathroom right down the hall. And look at all the time you'd save traveling back and forth to work each day!

HORTENSE: No. I don't think so.

WAGSPETER: Sit down, Miss Jessup. Before you leave, I have to tell you something. (*HORTENSE sits on the sofa and WAGSPETER sits next to HER.*) May I call you Hortense?

HORTENSE: Well, yes, I suppose so.

WAGSPETER: Hortense. Such a lovely name!

HORTENSE: You really think so? I never liked it.

WAGSPETER: Oh, I do. I think it fits you like a glove, a boxing glove. Have you ever boxed, Hortense?

HORTENSE: Boxed? Good heavens, no!

WAGSPETER: Oh, I don't mean professionally. (*Holding up HORTENSE'S face and examines it.*) Are you sure you've never boxed? (*Jumps up and starts shadowboxing.*) Oh, I'd love to go a few rounds with you in the ring. (*Takes HORTENSE'S hand.*) I've noticed you aren't wearing any. Does this mean no one's corralled you yet, my little Mustang?

HORTENSE: What? What are you talking about?

WAGSPETER: Hortense, I have to tell you something that's been eating away at me like—like maggots.

HORTENSE: Maggots?!

WAGSPETER: Oh, horsefly, I mean Hortense, can't you see what I'm trying to tell you? I love you!

HORTENSE: What?! Oh, Mr. Wagspeter, this is so unexpected.

WAGSPETER: Unexpected? Call me Buford. (*Puts HIS arm around HORTENSE.*)

HORTENSE: Buford, I never imagined you and me . . .

WAGSPETER: Horse feathers! Don't play innocent with me. You mean you haven't noticed how I look at you with my big brown eyes? (*Flutters HIS lashes.*) How could you not have noticed, my sweet?

HORTENSE: Maybe I need new glasses.

WAGSPETER: That makes two of us. Oh, you can't leave me! I could never live without you!

HORTENSE: But this is so sudden!

WAGSPETER: Mrs. Hortense Wagspeter! Oh, the very sound makes my spine tingle. (*Monica enters, unnoticed by them.*) I'll tell you a secret. It's not every woman who can make my spine tingle, you little spine tingler, you! (*Cuddling HORTENSE.*)

HORTENSE: (*Giggling.*) Oh, Mr. Wagspeter!

WAGSPETER: Ah, ah, ah! Buford. After all, we're practically engaged!

HORTENSE: Engaged?!

WAGSPETER: Of course! If we're going to get married, don't you think we should get engaged first?

HORTENSE: Married?

MONICA: (*Knocking WAGSPETER off the sofa.*) Buford T.

Wagspeter, you are the scum of the earth! That's what you are!

WAGSPETER: Monica! Sweetheart!

MONICA: Don't you sweetheart me, you weasel, you!

HORTENSE: Who's this?

WAGSPETER: Weasel? Is that any way to speak to the man you love?

HORTENSE: Oh, I get the picture now.

MONICA: Ugly, isn't it! Buford T. Wagspeter you're nothing but a two-timing . . .

HORTENSE: (*Hitting WAGSPETER with HER purse.*) Snake in the grass!

WAGSPETER: Ow!

MONICA: (*Hitting WAGSPETER.*) Oh! "Snake in the grass" is too good for him!

WAGSPETER: Monica, I'm surprised at you. Hitting an unarmed man.

HORTENSE: Here's another surprise. (*Hits WAGSPETER.*) And another! (*Hits WAGSPETER again.*)

WAGSPETER: Ow! And you told me you never boxed! Look, Monica . . . there's an explanation.

MONICA: Explanation! Ha! Buford T. Wagspeter, I hope I never see you again!

WAGSPETER: What about our honeymoon? Our plans . . .

MONICA: Honeymoon! Ha! I wouldn't go to Viagra Falls with you if you were the last man on earth!

WAGSPETER: Not Viagra! Niagara! Niagara Falls!

MONICA: And here's your cheap ring! *(Pulling the ring off her finger and throwing it down.)*

WAGSPETER: *(Crawls on floor to retrieve the ring.)* Cheap? Cheap? *(Looking up at MONICA.)* Do you know what that ring cost me?

MONICA: A lot of cereal box tops.

WAGSPETER: Oh, so you save them too.

MONICA: And don't try calling me either! It's over! Over! *(To HORTENSE.)* Oh, why do I always pick losers?

HORTENSE: Men! They're all alike!

MONICA: You can say that again. Who needs them?!

(MONICA and HORTENSE storm out.)

WAGSPETER: Women! *(HE crawls around looking for the ring.)* Now where is that cheap ring? *(Enter RUDY BOTTACHI and GINO. WAGSPETER hears them, but HIS back is turned. HE looks at audience, smiles, and nods. RUDY and GINO stand behind HIM.)* Is that you, sweetheart? Ready to kiss and make up, my little pigeon? *(HE rises and runs toward "her" with his eyes closed and his lips puckered.)* Oh, kiss me, you tease! *(After a few moments, HE opens his eyes and finds HE is face to face with RUDY. HE tries to act nonchalant and starts whistling and walking away. GINO grabs him roughly.)*

RUDY: All right, Wagspeter. Enough with the games. You know why we're here. You got the money?

WAGSPETER: Money? Oh, the money! Well, practically. Almost. My secretary has just gone to the bank to get it.

RUDY: Is that right? We'll wait.

WAGSPETER: *(After an uncomfortable pause, HE checks his watch.)* I can't imagine what's keeping her. Maybe I should go look for her. Poor thing, she gets lost so easily. *(GINO blocks his way. He pats GINO'S tie.)* Nice tie.

RUDY: Sit down!

WAGSPETER: *(Whistles a bit, obviously nervous.)* Can I offer you boys some coffee? Rolls? I could just run down to the -

RUDY: You're not going anywhere.

WAGSPETER: Oh, silly me! The bank's closed! I'll just have to go first thing in the morning.

RUDY: You won't be here first thing in the morning.

GINO: You'll be in the hospital.

WAGSPETER: Oh, please, Mr. Bottachi, I just need a **little** more time.

RUDY: I gave you a little more time. And you're wasting mine. Break his fingers, Gino.

WAGSPETER: Break my what? (*Puts HIS hands behind his back; GINO keeps trying to get at his fingers, but WAGSPETER keeps twisting away.*) Now, you stay away from me. Oh, please! Don't hurt me! Help! Can't we work something out? Please! I don't deal well with pain. (*As GINO grabs him, he stomps on GINO'S foot.*)

GINO: Ow! Now you're going to get it! Now I'm going to break your toes, too. One by one!

WAGSPETER: I'm sorry! It was an accident. I'm such a klutz. (*To RUDY.*) Oh, please! I'll do anything. Anything! Just name it!

GNOMES rush in. Lights dim.

GNOME 1: Freeze! (*GNOME #2 rings her bell and all freeze in place.*) What did he just say? Did he just say what I think he said? Rewind that! (*Lights go up. All reverse themselves and appear as they were before.*)

WAGSPETER: Oh, please! I'll do anything! Anything! Just name it!

GNOME 1: Freeze! (*Lights dim. GNOME 2 rings bell and they freeze.*) That's what I thought he said. (*GNOME 2 keeps ringing bell.*) Will you stop with the bell already! (*GNOME 1 snaps her fingers in front of WAGSPETER. He "unfreezes," while the others remain still.*)

WAGSPETER: What? Oh great! (*Rubs HIS eyes.*) It's Yoda! (*GNOME 2 rings the bell.*) Two Yodas!

GNOME 2: We're here to grant your wish, Wagspeter.

WAGSPETER: My wish?

GNOME 1: You want to be rid of these people or what? Didn't I just hear you say you'd do anything.

GNOME 2: Somehow I don't think they'll stop at just breaking your fingers and toes.

GNOME 1: The kneecaps are probably next.

WAGSPETER: The kneecaps! (*Grabbing HIS knees.*) Ooohh!

GNOME 2: And then they'll go for . . .

WAGSPETER: (*Plugs HIS ears, collapsing.*) Stop! I'm feeling faint.

GNOME 1: So what's the story here?

WAGSPETER: I borrowed some money from Mr. Bottachi and I haven't been able to pay it back.

GNOME 1: The old story.

GNOME 2: How much?

WAGSPETER: Five thousand dollars.

GNOME 1: Five grand?

GNOME 2: That's it?

WAGSPETER: With interest, they want ten thousand.

GNOME 1: What a coincidence! I just happen to have ten thousand dollars (*Waves the money in front of WAGSPETER.*) right here.

GNOME 2: Go ahead. Take it. (*WAGSPETER hesitantly does.*)

WAGSPETER: What are you, my fairy godmothers or something?

GNOME 2: Something like that. (*Laughing.*)

GNOME 1: Yeah, something like that!

GNOME 2: So, do you want the money or don't you?

WAGSPETER: Well, yeah, but . . .

GNOME 1: There are no "but's!" Do we have a deal or don't we? Yes or no?

GNOME 2: We don't have all year!

WAGSPETER: Yeah, sure. Wait a minute, how much are you going to charge me? As you know, money is a little bit of a problem right now.

GNOME 2: Did I mention money? Huh? Did I? Huh? Huh?

GNOME 1: We're not interested in money, Wagspeter. We'll work something out. Okay?

WAGSPETER: Yeah, sure. Sure! (*Throws his arms around GNOME 1.*) Oh, thank you!

GNOME 1: (*Yelling.*) Don't touch me! I don't like being touched, especially by strangers, and you, Buford T. Wagspeter, you are a stranger!

WAGSPETER: Sorry.

GNOME #1 snaps it's fingers and RUDY and GINO "unfreeze."
GNOMES exit. Bewildered, WAGSPETER stands holding the money.

RUDY: *(Taking the money.)* I thought you'd see things our way.

GINO: You want me to count it, boss?

RUDY: Why? You think Buford here would try and cheat me?

Nobody cheats Rudy Bottachi and lives to tell about it! Nobody!
(RUDY and GINO exit.)

WAGSPETER: *(Mocking RUDY.)* Nobody cheats Rudy Bottachi and lives to tell about it! Oh yeah? Well, nobody messes with Buford T. Wagspeter and *(GNOMES enter with the trunk. GNOME 2 rings bell and they "appear."* *WAGSPETER drops to the floor and covers HIS head.)* Oaaaahhh! What are you trying to do, scare me to death?

GNOME 1: Will you shut up with the bell?!

GNOME 2: So, you got your wish, and it's time to pay the piper.

WAGSPETER: You girls don't waste anytime, do you? What is it you want from me?

GNOME 1: We've got a little job for you.

GNOME 2: A little job, yeah!

WAGSPETER: *(Suspiciously.)* What kind of a job?

GNOME 1: You're going to be a magician's assistant.

WAGSPETER: A magician's assistant? I don't know anything about magic.

GNOME 2: You're going to learn.

GNOME 1: Unless you want Rudy Bottachi to find out the money you just gave him was counterfeit.

WAGSPETER: What?! You mean I gave Rudy Bottachi counterfeit money? Are you crazy? He'll kill me! He'll kill you! He'll kill me again! You don't mess with these kinds of people!

GNOME 2: Don't worry.

WAGSPETER: *(Sarcastically.)* Thanks, that makes me feel a lot better, fairy godmother.

GNOME 1: He can't kill you if he can't find you.

GNOME 2: That's right! And you'll be right under his nose!

GNOME 1: Right under his nose! *(GNOME 1 and GNOME 2 laugh.)*

GNOME 2: Now get in the box.

WAGSPETER: *(Backing away, picking up HIS fish pillow.)* What?

GNOME 1: What are you, deaf? Get in the box!

WAGSPETER: You're not going to hurt me are you? I don't deal well with pain.

GNOME 2: Get in the box! (*WAGSPETER reluctantly does.*)

GNOME 1: (*Grabbing the pillow and throwing it.*) Oh, be a man! (*As GNOME 1 and GNOME 2 are putting him into the trunk, there is a BLACKOUT.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

The Blue Hour Nightclub, a club where magic and other acts are performed. There should be a small table downstage to the far right and one far left. Center stage is where the magic show is performed. (See Production Notes.)

AT RISE:

MICKY and her TWO ASSISTANTS are onstage with WALT. All are still dressed in their stage clothes. WALT, being a very nervous type, pops antacids into his mouth from time to time.

WALT: You got no talent, kid. Face it. You're no good. Go out and get yourself another job!

MICKY: I don't want another job!

WALT: I should have known better! Who ever heard of a female magician! (*Pointing at ASSISTANTS.*) And this! What's this supposed to be?

MICKY: My assistants, of course!

ASSISTANT 1: (*To ASSISTANT 2.*) Does this mean we're fired? (*ASSISTANT 2 nods.*)

MICKY: Look Walt, I'll change the act. Just tell me what you want.

WALT: What do I want? What do I want? (*HE picks up one of the chairs and slams it down.*) Sit down, Micky. (*MICKY does.*) Let me draw you a picture. I want you to go home, Micky. I want you to put your magician's hat and your wand (*Takes MICKY'S hat and throws it.*) in a box. Are you following me? I want you to set fire to the box. After that, I want you to go to the kitchen, turn on the oven, and make yourself some nice rabbit stew. Then go get yourself a real job!

ASSISTANT 1: Cook the bunny?!

ASSISTANT 2: You're sick, Walt! That's what you are, sick!

WALT: You're right! I am sick! You're giving me an ulcer! (*Taking another pill.*)

MICKY: (*Looking at HER bandaged finger.*) I don't know why he bit me. He never bit me before.

ASSISTANT 1: My fault. I forgot to feed him.

MICKY: (*Rising.*) You got to admit, the audience loved it! Maybe we should write it into the act.

ASSISTANT 1: That's a great idea!

WALT: You people really don't get it, do you? You're finished! Fired! Through!

ASSISTANT 1: (*To ASSISTANT 2.*) Are we really out of another job? I need this job. What am I supposed to do? I haven't even paid for this outfit yet.

MICKY: Walt, give me another chance.

WALT: I gave you another chance! I gave you ten other chances and the same thing happens every time.

ASSISTANT 1: How am I going to pay the rent?

MICKY: Magic is my life, Walt! It's all I know.

WALT: Then I'd say you're in big trouble.

MICKY: You don't understand . . .

WALT: No, you don't understand, Micky! Magic is tricks and illusions! The hand being quicker than the eye. It's not really magic, kid! It's fooling the audience into believing the unbelievable. It's making the audience look over there (*Gesturing.*) while you trick them over here. There's nothing mysterious . . . or magical . . . about it.

MICKY: Look, Walt, magic is in my blood! My father was a magician. His father was a magician . . .

ASSISTANT 2: Grandma was a witch.

ASSISTANT 1: She was?

WALT: Yeah, yeah, I know. Marlin the Magnificent! Merlin the Marvelous. But you're not like them! You're Micky the Miserable! They had talent. They had what it takes, but you . . . you've got no talent!

MICKY: You gotta understand, I was **born** to be a magician, Walt.

WALT: Don't be ridiculous! Magic isn't something you inherit like blue eyes. Face it, Micky, as a magician you stink! You don't have what it takes.

MICKY: Listen, Walt, I'll do anything - *(Enter GNOMES, as before.)*

GNOME 1: Freeze! *(GNOME 2 rings bell. Everyone freezes; lights dim. There is a spotlight on the GNOMES.)* What did she just say? Did she just say what I think she said? Rewind that.

MICKY: *(Lights return; EVERYONE "unfreezes" and MICKY repeats line exactly as before.)* Listen, Walt, I'll do anything -

GNOME 1: Freeze! *(GNOME 2 rings bell. Lights dim; MICKY and Others "freeze." GNOME 1 smiles.)* That's what I thought she said. Come on, let's get the box. *(GNOMES exit and return with the trunk, placing it on the magician's table. GNOME 1 snaps her fingers in front of MICKY'S face. MICKY "unfreezes." Everyone else remains perfectly still. Spotlight remains on MICKY and GNOMES.)*

MICKY: *(Startled.)* What?! *(Sees GNOMES, rubs her eyes, then backs away.)* Who are you?

GNOME 1: We're here to grant your wish, Micky.

MICKY: My wish? What's going on here? What wish?

GNOME 1: You wanted magic, you got magic.

GNOME 2: We're here to help you.

MICKY: Help me? Who—what are you? *(Reaches out to touch GNOME 1.)*

GNOME 1: *(Shouting.)* Hey, no touching! I don't like being touched, especially by strangers, and you, Micky, are a stranger!

MICKY: Sorry. How do you know my name?

GNOME 1: You're Micky Kowalski, and you want to see your name in lights. And we can arrange it.

MICKY: You? What do you mean, you can arrange it?

GNOME 2: You're kind of dense, Micky.

GNOME 1: You want success. We can give you success.

MICKY: How are you going to do that?

GNOME 2: You gotta have a little faith in us, Micky.

MICKY: Faith in you? I don't even know you.

GNOME 2: (*Sarcastically.*) What, you want to see some ID?

MICKY: Well, yeah. You got some?

GNOME 2: No, I don't.

GNOME 1: (*Confidentially.*) Look, I'll level with you, Micky. We're with the FBI and our new badges (*Yelling.*) aren't ready yet!

MICKY: You don't have to get nasty. You got to admit, this is a little weird. You walk in here . . . dressed like . . .

GNOME 1: All right, you can stop right there! You want to talk fashion? Huh, Micky? You want to talk fashion? (*Pointing to ASSISTANTS.*) What do you call that?

MICKY: We're on a very tight budget.

GNOME 1: Look, you're wasting our time.

GNOME 2: We thought you were serious.

GNOME 1: I guess we were wrong.

GNOME 2: Right! We got other people to see. (*GNOME 1 and GNOME 2 start to pick up the box.*)

MICKY: Wait! Look, it's just that I don't even know you . . . and -

GNOME 1: It's been nice **not** knowing you, Micky. Goodbye and good luck.

GNOME 2: You're going to need it.

GNOME 1: Magicians! (*GNOME 1 and GNOME 2 cackle and start to leave.*)

MICKY: Wait! (*GNOMES stop.*)

GNOME 2: So, do you want our help, or don't you?

MICKY: Well, sure, but -

GNOME 1: - there are no "but's!" Yes or no? You want the box or don't you?

MICKY: The box?

GNOME 1: The secret's in the box.

MICKY: (*Approaching the box.*) In the box? (*Touching it.*)

GNOME 1: (*Pushing HER hand away.*) Unh, unh. Not yet, Micky.

GNOME 2: You want the box or don't you?

GNOME 1: We don't have all year!

MICKY: Yes, yes, I want the box!

GNOME 1: Fine. Then it's a deal.

GNOME 2: Now about payment . . .

MICKY: Well, money is a little problem right now.

GNOME 2: Did I mention money? Huh, did I? Huh? Huh?

MICKY: No, but I just naturally assumed . . .

GNOME 1: Don't assume anything about anyone, Micky, especially us.

GNOME 2: We have no use for money. As for payment, we'll work something out. Okay?

MICKY: Well, yeah, okay, sure. Thanks.

GNOME 1: Fine. We have an agreement, then.

GNOME 2: Good. We'll catch you later. (*GNOME 1 and GNOME 2 start to leave.*)

MICKY: Wait! (*Putting HER hand on GNOME 1's shoulder.*)

GNOME 1: (*Swings around and jumping up and down.*) Don't touch me! Didn't I just tell you that? No wonder she can't do magic. She can't even follow directions!

MICKY: Sorry. But what about the box? You never told me about the box.

GNOME 1: You'll find out.

GNOME 2: Let's just say we're giving you a little assistance!

GNOME 1: To be more accurate, a little assistant.

GNOME 2: Right! A little assistant! (*Both cackle as they open the trunk. GNOME 2 snaps fingers and both exit, lights return and all others "unfreeze."*)

WALT: (*Continuing as if nothing has happened.*) You're all washed up, Micky.

MICKY: (*Distracted and looking around.*) What?

WALT: I said you're washed up. You're a has-been-who-never-was.

WAGSPETER: (*Appearing as a ventriloquist's dummy from the trunk.*) Who's washed up? Speaking of washing, Walt, when was the last time you washed your neck? (*All are surprised by HIS appearance.*)

WALT: What the . . . ? What's that supposed to be?

WAGSPETER: I'm Micky's new assistant. Right, Micky?

MICKY: (*Still astounded.*) R-r-r-right . . . he's my little assistant.

WALT: (*Sarcastically.*) Cute.

MICKY: Let me come back tonight, Walt, I've been working on some terrific new stuff.

WALT: You and the dummy, huh?

ASSISTANT 1: It's terrific stuff, Walt.

MICKY: Look, Walt, I was just having a bad night. I was nervous and upset. I haven't been sleeping well -

WAGSPETER: - nightmares every night!

WALT: *(To WAGSPETER.)* Maybe it's the company she keeps.

MICKY: Look, Walt. I couldn't concentrate last night.

WALT: Tell that to the poor guy you tried to saw in half.

ASSISTANT 1: My fault. I forgot to switch the saws.

MICKY: I told him I was sorry.

WALT: I hope you sent flowers to the hospital.

MICKY: It won't happen again.

WALT: You're darned right it won't! You've done your last show!

ASSISTANT 1: Oohhh! *(Starts crying.)*

WAGSPETER: Now look what you've done, you big bully!

WALT: Look, face it, Micky, this business isn't for you. You screwed up the simplest magic acts. A ten year-old kid could do better. You're an embarrassment to the profession! Find yourself another line of work, a butcher maybe. You're good with a saw.

WAGSPETER: Oh, that was a cheap shot.

WALT: So take your dummy and your bunny and your *(Pointing to ASSISTANTS.)* whatever—and get out of here before I throw you out!

MICKY: Let me tell you something, Walt. Someday, someday soon, you're going to see Micky Kowalski's name in lights.

WALT: Yeah, if you open a deli, I will.

MICKY: What?

WALT: A delicatessen. You know. Corned beef sandwiches and dill pickles? Micky Kowalski's Corner Deli!!

ASSISTANT 1: It does have a nice ring to it.

WAGSPETER: Have we had lunch?

MICKY: A deli?

WALT: Hey, don't knock it. Open a deli and at least you won't starve.

ASSISTANT 1: *(Crying.)* We're all going to starve!

WAGSPETER: Stop crying. You can wait tables.

ASSISTANT 1: *(Sobbing.)* I don't want to wait tables! I want to be in show business! *(MICKY pulls a handkerchief out of her pocket to give to ASSISTANT 1. It is connected to a long series of colorful scarves. SECRETARY rushes in.)*

WALT: It's Okay. Micky and her . . . friends were just leaving. Goodbye, Micky. I'll e-mail your last check.

MICKY: What do you mean you'll e-mail it? You can't e-mail a check.

WALT: You're lucky I'm not billing you for the business I've lost because of you.

MICKY: *(Dejected.)* Come on. Let's go. *(MICKY and ASSISTANTS begin to pack up.)*

SECRETARY: We got a problem, Walt.

WALT: Now, what?

SECRETARY: Harry Boulini is sick. *(MICKY and others stop.)* He can't perform tonight.

WALT: What do you mean he can't perform?

SECRETARY: He's got the flu.

WALT: So?

SECRETARY: He's too sick to go on.

MICKY: *(Approaching with the dummy.)* Probably something he ate.

WAGSPETER: Some bad corned beef.

WALT: Shut up.

MICKY: I'll take his place, Walt. I can do it.

WALT: Get out! *(To SECRETARY.)* What about Caesar? Get Caesar on the phone.

WAGSPETER: Julius Caesar's been dead for centuries, millennia. Don't you read the papers?

SECRETARY: Gus Caesar's in Vegas. Remember? Won't be back until the beginning of next month.

WALT: Great. Who else can we call?

MICKY: Me.

WALT: No!

SECRETARY: I tried everyone. Either they're out of town or they're booked for tonight.

MICKY: I'll do it. Come on, Walt.

WAGSPETER: What have you got to lose?

WALT: What have I got to lose? Are you nuts?

WAGSPETER: Maybe.

SECRETARY: Oh, there was a message from somebody, too.

(Checking HER pocket.) Here it is. Sid Weiss.

WALT: Sid Weiss? The Sid Weiss?

MICKY: Who's Sid Weiss?

WALT: Sid Weiss is a critic from *The Chronicle*. He's the most influential critic around today. His reviews can make or break a show. A good review could put this place on the map. A bad review, well, get a bad review from Sid Weiss and you might as well close the doors.

WAGSPETER: And open a deli?

WALT: Shut up! *(To SECRETARY.)* Did he say what he wanted?

SECRETARY: Yeah, *(Checking HER notes.)* I got it here somewhere. Oh, yeah, here it is. Be here tonight to review the show.

WALT: Tonight! Oh no! This can't be happening! Not tonight! I'm ruined!

MICKY: Walt . . . *(MICKY and ASSISTANTS wave in a silly way.)*

WALT: No!

MICKY: Give me one last chance.

WALT: Oh, why is this happening to me?

MICKY: Come on, Walt, if I screw up tonight, you'll never see me again.

WALT: Never?

MICKY: Never.

WALT: I'll never see you – *(Indicating the ASSISTANTS.)* or them – *(Indicates WAGSPETER.)* or that again?

MICKY: Well, I can't speak for him.

WALT: What do you mean you can't speak for him?! *(WAGSPETER laughs.)*

MICKY: I'm joking, Walt! I'm joking! If the show's not good, no, if the show's not great, we're history. You'll never see any of us again. Do we have a deal? *(WALT is considering it.)* Come on, Walt.

WALT: *(To SECRETARY.)* Are you sure there's nobody else you can call?

SECRETARY: I tried everyone.

WALT: *(Resignedly.)* I know I'll regret this. I just know it. *(SECRETARY exits.)*

MICKY: You won't, Walt! You'll see! I'll be great. You just watch and see!

WALT: I don't want to watch. My heart can't take it.

MICKY: (*Grabbing HIS hand.*) You won't regret this, Walt. I promise.

WALT: And no saws!

WAGSPETER: No saws? Aw, come on, where's your sense of adventure?

MICKY: (*Putting dummy into trunk.*) All right, no saws. Promise.

WALT: And don't try anything fancy.

MICKY: Walt, you'll see a magic show tonight that will blow your socks off! (*Pulls a pair of brightly colored socks from her pocket.*) These yours? (*MICKY lifts WALT'S pant legs up reveal he has no socks.*)

WALT: (*Looking down, then grabbing the socks, sits and puts them on.*) That's it. Just stick to the simple stuff.

MICKY: (*To ASSISTANTS.*) Come on! Let's get ready! We've got a show tonight! I have a feeling our luck is starting to change.

MICKY rushes out as WALT takes off his shoes to put on his socks.

WAGSPETER: Oh boy, we're back in business!

ASSISTANT: (*Hopeful.*) We are?

WAGSPETER: Yeah, but if she screws up again, you'll be waiting tables in the very near future.

ASSISTANT: (*Crying.*) Oooh!

WAGSPETER: Pull yourself together. Maybe she'll get lucky. Get me out of this box. (*ASSISTANT does.*)

WALT: (*Yelling.*) And leave the dummy at home!

WAGSPETER: (*Returning.*) Who are you callin' dummy, pal! I've got a few tricks up my sleeves, ya know! (*Lights flicker. Brightly colored boxers fly from the trunk onto stage.*) These yours? (*WALT rushes over to retrieve them, holds them up, puzzled.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO, SCENE 1**AT RISE:**

The Blue Hour Nightclub. Two tables have "Reserved" signs on them. The trunk is no longer on the magician's table. WALT is escorting the WEISSES to one of the tables.

WALT: Right this way, Mr. Weiss. We have a table reserved for you. I'm so glad you could make it tonight, you and your lovely wife.
(*MRS. WEISS giggles.*)

SID: Well, I've heard some curious things about your place and figured it was time I checked it out for The Chronicle. My readers like to know where to throw their money away. Besides, magic's big these days.

WALT: I'll send the waiter right over. Anything you'd like, just tell the waiter—it's on the house, of course.

SID: You wouldn't be trying to bribe me, would you, Walt?

WALT: No, of course not!

SID: Too bad. (*HE laughs and MRS. WEISS joins in loudly. WALT laughs nervously.*)

WALT: The waiter will be right here. (*WALT leaves and sends in the WAITER dressed as a large white rabbit, if possible.*)

MRS. WEISS: Oh, isn't that cute?

RUDY: (*Entering loudly from rear of auditorium.*) Will you look at this dump? Why did you want to come here? We could have gone someplace classy for your birthday? No, you got to drag me to this dump.

ANGEL: Sshh. I love magic shows.

RUDY: Magic-schmagic! These shows are all rigged. There ain't no such thing as magic.

ANGEL: Yeah, says you.

RUDY: Says me, is right. (*To GINO.*) Find us a decent seat, Gino. If we gotta be here, at least I want to be able to see. (*GINO looks around, then approaches the WEISSES and lifts them out of their seats.*)

SID: Hey! What are you doing? Get your hands off me!

MRS. WEISS: Help! Somebody help me! Help! (*RUDY sits at table as GINO roughly escorts them away.*)



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