

THE MAGIC OF CRIME

A mystery-comedy in two acts

by

Tom Anastasi

and

E. Kyle Minor

Characters

(In order of appearance)

Marco Cacciatore

Theresa Rothschild-La Dolce

Katrina Rothschild

Trevor La Dolce

Joe Thursday

Bill Cannon

Jennifer Towers

Voice

Audience Member

Time: Now.

Place: A place where magic show is the main entertainment. (Dinner or dessert are optional.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: FEEL FREE TO CHANGE ANY DINNER OR DESSERT LINES TO ADJUST TO YOUR SITUATION.)

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Act I, Scene I

(MARCO CACCIATORE, a competent magician who is about, but not quite at the “big time” points to a brightly colored box placed on casters so that everyone can see the bottom of it.)

Marco

If I may have your attention please. Thank you. Thank you very much. *(MARCO is all smiles)* Tonight I, Marco Cacciatore, am honored to unveil the Houdini Box for the first time in this country and for the first time since the Great Houdini’s death October 31, 1926. I will be assisted by none other than Trevor La Dolce, the Nashua philanthropist and Vice-President of the Rothschild import company, who by the way, located the Houdini box only two months ago in Katmandu after years of searching. Trevor, take a bow.

(Points to TREVOR ROTHSCHILD in the audience).

And, of course, his lovely wife, Theresa Rothschild-La Dolce. Ah, ha. Don’t turn that spotlight off just yet. Sitting next to her is the woman who made all this possible, Katrina Rothschild, her lovely mother. *(MARCO holds for applause)* Now then. I need a volunteer from the audience.

(Does a magic trick with audience members. It could a rope trick, card trick, or even rings depending on the skill of the magician.)

Does anyone have a watch, a necklace, a ring -- something of value?

Theresa

Mom, give him your necklace.

Katrina

But Theresa, this is the entire family fortune. If something goes wrong, that means half a million dollars-gone! I don’t know why you insisted I should wear it.

Trevor

Katrina, it’s you. It makes you look like a million bucks. See, you’ve doubled your value already *(He laughs at his own joke)*. I promise everything will be fine.

Theresa

Entire fortune? What about the life insurance payment?

Katrina

Never count your chicks when they’re hatched in an insurance company.

Theresa

(Whispering) Besides, Mom, you don't want to spoil Marco's trick. We owe him that much anyway. Come on, mom, it'll be fun.

Marco

Ooh, there's a fine looking necklace. Mrs. Rothschild; may I call you Katrina?

Katrina

No. I mean yes, you may call me Katrina, but no, you may not have my necklace.

Marco

What do you think everyone?

(MARCO eggs crowd on to applaud. As she uncomfortably acknowledges the crowd, he takes her necklace off and proceeds back on stage with it in his hand. She gets up and considers tackling him like a football player, but thinks twice about it and sits down.)

Come up here on stage. Katrina, Trevor, Theresa. And I need three volunteers from the audience.

(MARCO picks two real volunteers and JENNIFER, who is a "plant" acting as an usher. Takes TREVOR aside as people are coming on stage. They are having a "stage conversation" that the audience can hear, but ostensibly no one on stage can)

Listen Trevor, old boy. I didn't pay \$250,000 for a bloody box that just sits there. I mortgaged my house – which I inherited from my parents. I am doing Letterman next week, and I will not look like a jerk.

Trevor

Too late, my friend.

Marco

You make the box work tonight!

Trevor

Poveraccio. I can't help it if you're unsuited for your chosen profession. Once a chauffer...

Marco

Please, I welcome your insults. I'll sick a pack of ravenous lawyers on you and sue you for larceny and slander. Unless you can get me my money back or make this work--

Trevor

Save it for your act, Marco. Remember, my former limo driver, you bought the box from Theresa's father, not me. I'm dreadfully sorry he had a heart attack before explaining the trick, but, as they say, *caveat emptor*.

(MARCO draws a blank)

Remember: buyer beware. Sue if you wish. I have a roomful of lawyers who would dissect you like a lab rat.

Marco

Trevor, they're waiting! *(Smiles at the audience)*.

Trevor

Keep your rented shirt on *(also smiles at the audience)*. The Houdini box will work!

Marco

It better. *(Both are all smiles.)*

(Goes back to center stage with the crowd) I apologize, ladies and gentlemen. It seems I got Trevor's chicken and he got my beef. [Author's note: feel free to change this and all food dialogue to suit your menu or no menu at all] Now, without further ado, I'm going to put this necklace in the bag. Can everyone see it? Here, all of you, put your hand in the bag just to make sure that there isn't any funny business going on. Katrina, come on up.

(As KATRINA gets out of her seat, JENNIFER hands her a note that she reflexively reacts in horror to. After a moment she regains her composure While MARCO shows the necklace to audience members on stage, THERESA and TREVOR have a "stage conversation" to the side)

Theresa

What's he want? Something wrong with the box?

Trevor

Marco's worried I don't know how to work it.

Theresa

You can, can't you?

Trevor

Mais oui. He's just afraid your father suckered him out of a quarter mill.

Theresa

Well...did he?

Trevor

Mia carissima! Of course not. It worked fine in Katmandu before I bought it from the Great Ameen. I locked Ameen into the box myself. A few minutes later, I opened the box and the only thing inside was a giant cactus with real quills. When I turned around, Ameen was standing right behind me. Spectacular! I spent a couple of hours practicing with the amazing Kozak from the Magic Castle yesterday and I've mastered the trick. I'll show you how it works tonight. I'm just making Marco sweat more than usual. (*Sotto voce to himself*) I'm sure I can figure it out.

Theresa

If it's such a cinch, why is Marco having so much trouble with it?

Trevor

Forget it, *mine shatze*. Marco couldn't find his own picture on his driver's license.

Theresa

I hope you're telling the truth.

Trevor

You'll see. Marco, could I see your license for a sec...

Theresa

I mean your knowing how to open the box! If this gadget lays an egg we're out the \$125,000. Plus the expense of going to Katmandu. Hopefully, mummy will get that insurance check or our family name is mud! We'll all be driving limos. Think of the shame!

Trevor

Think of the accidents! Besides, I couldn't handle having a real job with a desk and a boss and requirements and expectations and showing up three days a week.

Theresa

That would be five days a week.

Trevor

People actually work five days a week? Yea, right.

Theresa

Since you have it all figured out, I'm sure we could find another buyer.

Trevor

Mon Amor! We'll do no such thing! It'll work like a charm. Don't worry your pretty little ear.

(*TREVOR sneaks a nibble on THERESA's ear.*
THERESA giggles with the nibbles.)

Theresa

Trevor! Dessert will be out soon!

Trevor

Mon bob-bon! You are my just dessert!

(Back to the main action on stage)

Marco

First, let me show you the bag is empty

(Unzips the bottom and puts his hand through. Then he reziips it, and turns it inside out to show it is empty.)

Ok, now I need a volunteer from the audience to wrap the necklace up.

(Someone does. Then he audience members pass the wrapped up necklace among themselves and Jennifer takes it to Katrina, Theresa, and Trevor, who gives to Marco.)

Thanks, now I'm going to put the necklace in the bag. *(Does)* Thank you all. Now, everyone, please return to your seats. Thank you very much.

(MARCO puts his hand in the bag and takes out the necklace and shows it to the audience, and then puts it back. Then he puts down the bag to lead applause)

Ready? One...two...three!

MARCO looks in the bag after doing the "change" gimmick. Deadpan "take" out front. Instantly smiling again.)

One...two...Three!

(He looks in the bag again: nothing)

Three and a half..!

(Turns bag inside out. Then, to nobody in particular)

Did someone switch bags on me..?

(MARCO turn the bag inside out again..)

Katrina

Very funny, Marco. Give us the necklace.

Marco

Nothing would please me more...*(his voice trails off as he continues searching)*.

Katrina

You're taking your little joke too far, Marco. Please, bring it here...

Marco

(To the service staff) Waiters, more coffee for everyone, please...!

Theresa

(Warning) Marco..!

Marco

Decaff for Ms. Rothschild.

Katrina

Marco, I insist that you return my necklace at once! *(To Theresa)*. I told you I never should've worn that tonight! We're ruined!

Theresa

Come on, Marco! We don't need another life insurance claim!

Trevor

You sure about that?

(THERESA elbows TREVOR in his ribs. TREVOR reacts painfully.)

Marco

I'm afraid to tell you this now, but when I went to magic school, I learned how vanish, but I *was* sick the day they taught the reappear - had to pick that up on my own.

Trevor

That explains what happened to his brain.

Katrina

Marco, give me that freaking necklace or so help me-! *(Takes sip of water)*

Marco

Wait! One...two...three...(Reaches hand into the bag) Nothing.

Katrina

(Panicked) Give me the necklace. (Catches herself -- dabs her mouth with her napkin.) Please.

Marco

Wait! I have this book. I think it can help.

(Takes out large book entitled "Making Stuff Reappear" by Jimmy Hoffa.)

Ok, here we go. (Patter a while) Ok, one, two, three

(Pulls out a Lindt chocolate ball (or other fake item) wrapped up – as he unwraps it)

What the –

(LIGHTS DIM 30%. TREVOR, KATRINA, THERESA, and JENNIFER rush on stage. They carry flashlights and turn them on. TREVOR with his flashlight in hand, but not yet on, goes to grab the bag from MARCO, who is furiously turning it inside out)

I don't understand. It's not here. Where is it?

(Katrina looks through the bag to no avail.)

Katrina

(Screams. Pointing at Marco) Thief!!! Call the police! Call the police!

(Havoc. Trevor dials his cell phone. LIGHTS UP on Thursday, whose phone now rings. He answers it).

Thursday

(Takes his badge out.)

I'm already here.

