

FRIGHT TIME

3 Spine-tingling Tales for Young Readers

- TRICK OF TERROR
- THE HAUNTED HOLLOW
- DON'T GO DOWN THERE!



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TRICK OF TERROR

by Paul Buchanan

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My family was sitting eight rows from the stage. The Great Scarpini pulled a white silk handkerchief from his tuxedo pocket and tossed it in the air. Suddenly it was four white doves that flew out over the audience. One of the doves flapped straight towards us, but when it was directly over our heads it became a sudden puff of white confetti that rained down on us.

This was the most amazing magic show I'd ever seen. And I've seen plenty of them—I even put on one myself at the Elm Street School Talent Show—but there had never been a magic

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show like The Great Scarpini's. The posters outside the theater said that he was "Greater Than Houdini," and it was true. Time after time he did the impossible, right before our eyes.

He poured milk out of a pitcher, and it hovered in mid-air, a bouncing white blob. And when he put the pitcher under it, the milk poured down into the pitcher again. Not a drop hit the stage.

He blew up a long balloon and somehow snipped it into six smaller balloons with a big pair of scissors. He batted the tiny balloons into the audience and all the kids fought for them.

My sister, Heather, sitting next to me, managed to get one of the balloons. I looked at it closely. It was just a regular balloon. My dad looked at it too and shook his head. He was pretty impressed. Dad and I are good at figuring out this kind of stuff, but we had no idea how The Great Scarpini did any of his magic. The audience was going crazy.

So when Scarpini asked for a kid volunteer from the audience, hands went up all around the theater, including mine. Some of the kids in back stood on their chairs waving, trying to get Scarpini's attention. But Scarpini looked

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straight at us the whole time—as though he had already made up his mind. I thought for sure he was going to pick me. He stretched out his hand and pointed to where my family was sitting.

“How about that little girl there in the red tee-shirt?” he said. “Would you please come up here and help me with my next illusion?”

My sister Heather is kind of shy, so she sunk down in her chair. Her face turned nearly as red as her shirt.

“Come on, Heather,” I said. “Go up there. Maybe he’ll turn you into a golden retriever or something else useful.”

“Shut up, Dylan,” she said, sinking lower in her seat.

“What do you say, ladies and gentlemen?” The Great Scarpini asked. “Do you think we can coax this pretty little girl up on stage?”

Everyone started clapping and cheering, and Dad tried to peel Heather out of her seat. “Come on, Princess,” Dad urged. “It’ll be fun. Nothing bad will happen.”

In a minute my seven-year-old sister was climbing up on stage and standing in front of the most amazing magician in the world.

“Go, Heather!” I cheered.

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The Great Scarpini held up his hands to quiet the audience. "I am going to make this young lady disappear before your very eyes," he said.

Heather looked suddenly panicked, and Scarpini rested his hands on her shoulders, as if to keep her from running away. The audience roared in laughter. "Nothing to worry about," Scarpini said in the direction of my family. "If anything happens, I promise to replace her with a new daughter." The audience roared again.

The Great Scarpini turned around. Behind him was a large wooden cabinet I hadn't noticed before. It was red and was covered with weird symbols and what looked like letters from foreign alphabets painted in gold. He turned the cabinet around and knocked here and there to show that it was solid wood. When the door was towards the audience, Scarpini opened it. The cabinet was black inside.

Scarpini looked down at Heather. "You're not afraid of the dark, are you?"

Heather's eyes were wide. "Yes, I am," she admitted in a trembling voice.

Scarpini tugged back his sleeve to show his bare arm. He reached up in the air, and suddenly an unlit light bulb appeared in his hand. He