

PUSHING DAISIES

"Oh Oh Oh... It's Magic"

Episode #3T7056

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FINAL DRAFT 
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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. YOUNG NED'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG NED sits with his FATHER. His MOTHER exits the house carrying a pie. DIGBY is at Ned's feet.

NARRATOR

At this very moment in the town of Coeur d'Coeurs, Young Ned believed in magic.

Ned's Father has set up a small PROSCENIUM on a table and magically pulls a small, engraved brass ball from behind Ned's ear. Ned's eyes widen with surprise. Ned's Father puts the ball under ONE of THREE POLISHED COCONUT SHELLS and shuffles.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was not the magic that sparked from his fingertip when he touched a dead thing alive-again. That particular magic had not yet been discovered.

The shuffling stops and Ned points to a shell. Underneath is nothing but Ned's Father's smiling face on the other side.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

This was the magic of a father's love.

NED'S FATHER

Alakazam--!

Ned's Father lifts the other two shells to REVEAL an engraved brass ball under each. Ned eyes his father, then the coconut shells as Dad continues to shuffle the shells around.

NARRATOR

Like the magic of pulling balls out of thin air or unknotting a knot with the tap of a finger, Young Ned would discover this magic was not magic at all. It was just a trick.

One after the other, Ned touches a shell and his father lifts it. And one after the other, there is nothing under the shells.

EXT. LONGBOROUGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS - DAY (RE-USE FROM "DUMMY")

Ned stands with his father in front of school.

NARRATOR

After Ned's mother died, his father performed another trick. A cruel disappearing act.

NED'S FATHER

I'll be back.

And with that, Ned's Father DISAPPEARS...

NARRATOR

And when his father never came back... Ned stopped believing in magic.

CLOSE ON - THREE POLISHED COCONUT SHELLS

Ned's Father's hands continue to shuffle them.

NARRATOR

He didn't know his father would one day perform his sleights of hand and misdirections for a younger, more impressionable audience.

We see a BOY'S HAND ENTER FRAME and select one of the coconut shells. Ned's Father lifts it up and REVEALS ON THE OTHER SIDE, not Ned, but RALSTON and MAURICE (AGE 5). They're in LIL' DEVIL HALLOWEEN costumes (as seen in "Girth"). We are--

EXT. TWINS' HOUSE - HALLOWEEN NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ned's Father sits on the porch with Ralston and Maurice, as Ned's Father's NEW WIFE brings them a tray of cookies. He's got the same hat and SMALL PROSCENIUM that he had with Ned.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

A new family that did not include Ned, but did include his half-brothers, Maurice and Ralston.

Ralston and Maurice point to the two remaining coconut shells.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Maurice and Ralston loved their father and delighted in his magical tricks and insisted on learning every one of them.

Ned's Father lifts both up to reveal there is nothing under the shells. Maurice and Ralston exchange a stunned look.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But there was one magic trick their father never taught them and would only show them once.

As with the Young Ned, Ned's Father DISAPPEARS...

OMIT

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE - NIGHT

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN appears to be floating in thin air.

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

It's 19 years, 42 weeks, 6 days, 13 hours and 7 minutes later. Maurice and Ralston have become the illusionist duo "Two for the Show."

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL ADULT RALSTON AND MAURICE (mid-20s) on stage, making the beautiful woman levitate between them.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Enthralled with the mercurial world of magic, they took the happiest memory of their father and crawled inside it.

The IMAGE FREEZES. There's now ELECTRICITY CRACKLING out of Ralston's and Maurice's fingers. We are looking at a POSTCARD promoting "Two for the Show" at "The Conjuror's Castle." CAMERA PULLS BACK from the "TWO FOR THE SHOW" POSTCARD to REVEAL it's being held by the real Ralston and Maurice. We are--

INT. PIE HOLE - DAY

NED, who holds a freshly-baked pie in his hands, is flanked by his twin half-brothers, Ralston and Maurice (now in their civilian attire), the latter hands Ned the "Two for the Show" postcard.

NARRATOR

The mercurial world of magic and its associations had another effect on half-brother Ned, who could wake the dead...

NED

Magicians.

MAURICE

Illusionists.

RALSTON

Illusionists.

Ned swallows, winces, forces a smile as he peruses the postcard.

NARRATOR

At the mere mention of magic, he experienced the sting of anxiety-induced acid reflux.

OLIVE and CHUCK stare at the twins, trying to figure out which is which. EMERSON couldn't care less; he's reading the paper.

CHUCK

Who doesn't like magic?

NED

I love magic.

(swallows, winces)

As much as I love other forms of popular entertainment. Like Boxarate Tae-Kill-Do cage-fighting or monster trucks on ice.

CONTINUED:

OLIVE

To certain factions of the god-fearing public,
magic is the devil's work, you little devils.

(sotto, to Emerson)

Magically delicious little devils.

EMERSON

("hell, no")

Mmm-mmm.

Olive realizes he's not Chuck, who is on her other side.

OLIVE

Oh. I thought you were--

(sotto, to Chuck)

Magically delicious little devils.

CHUCK

("hell, yes")

Mmm-hmm. Like a confection.

RALSTON

This little devil's gonna serve you a slice of
heaven. Inside one of these pies is a prize.

MAURICE

But which pie? This pie? That pie?

RALSTON

Pick a pie, any pie.

OLIVE

That one!

Olive points and QUICK ACTIONS AS Ralston grabs a knife off the counter and Maurice grabs the pie Olive picked and an empty plate. CAMERA PUSHES IN TO OBSCURE THE ACTION as SWISH-SWISH-SLASH, Ralston wields the blade OUT OF FRAME, then:

CAMERA PULLS OUT TO REVEAL... A slice of pie has been perfectly sliced and put on a plate, surrounded by an amazing horseshoe garnish of julienned cherries. Chuck and Olive GASP.

CHUCK

Did you magically julienne those cherries?

RALSTON

Yes.

MAURICE

But wait, there's more.

Ralston tips the pie pan, REVEALING FOUR TICKETS to "Two for the Show at the Conjuror's Castle," fanned out on the bottom of the pan where the slice of pie used to be.

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCK / OLIVE

A magic show!

EMERSON

A magic show?! Wait. Wait. Now, where'd I put that rat's ass I could give? Magic ain't nothing but a voodoo grift.

RALSTON

Magic is as magical as you want it to be.

OLIVE

They magically put tickets into this pie.

EMERSON

If by "magically" you mean "making you look this way so you don't see what they're doing that way," then, yes, those tickets alakazammed their way under that delicious, flaky crust. Or Hocus pulled 'em outta his pocket and Pocus slipped 'em in the pie pan, as evidenced by the cherry-rhubarb crumble on his sleeve.

Maurice glares at Emerson as he brushes the rhubarb crumble off his sleeve. Chuck excitedly takes the tickets from the pie pan.

MAURICE

We're performing after the second performance of the Great Herrmann, who's great in all sorts of ways, not just magically.

RALSTON

He's the big, muckety-muck patriarch of the Conjuror's Castle. And to us, too.

MAURICE

After Dad had to leave...

NED

"Had to leave"?

MAURICE

Why else would he have left? After Dad had to leave, Herrmann was the next best thing.

NED

Yay. Another magic dad.

RALSTON

We'll introduce you after the show, if you come to the show. Will you come to the show, big brother?

NED

Big half-brother, once removed by the fact you didn't know I existed before last week.

CONTINUED: (3)

EMERSON

I'd like to RSVP in the resoundingly affirmative.

NED

You said magic is a voodoo grift.

EMERSON

It is a voodoo grift. And on second thought, calling these boys out on their fairy dust deceptions will hone my P.I. powers of observation. Like a brain-teaser or *Where's Waldo?*

MAURICE

You're not invited if you're gonna heckle.

Emerson reaches across the counter and pulls a ticket out from behind Ralston's ear, "magic-style."

EMERSON

But -- "Shazam" -- I have a ticket.

CHUCK

I'll be there, front and center, loud and applauding, snapping like a beatnik or praising the Lord. However you like it.

OLIVE

Loud and applauding! Loud and applauding! That's when I'm at my best.

RALSTON

Loud and applauding. And preferably amazed.
(to Ned)
What do you say, *Frère Pie-Maker?*

Chuck holds up a ticket with a small ribbon that reads: "Ned."

CHUCK

Look! There's a ticket with your name on it!

Ned takes a breath, opens his mouth to protest and we CUT TO:

EXT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - THEATER - NIGHT

Emerson, Ned, Chuck and Olive sit in their theater seats. From behind the curtains, Ralston and Maurice smile and wave. Chuck, Olive and a halfhearted Ned return the smile and wave.

CHUCK

You barely said a word to them.

CONTINUED:

NED

Because I barely know them. I saw them once when I was nine and they were just those little bastards my father was cheating on me with.

OLIVE

Now those little bastards are your little brothers. So be nice.

EMERSON

You can't just flash some jazz hands and abracadabra, brotherly love.

NED

What he said. There should be a grace period, then a getting-to-know-you period, then a dinner on a national holiday. I invite them to the Pie Hole and all of a sudden it's, "*Frère Pie-Maker*, come to our show." And it's a magic show.

CHUCK

What do you got against a magic show? They've got sequins, drama, the promise of bloodshed.

OLIVE

Next to pageants, they're my favorite thing.

NED

They give me acid reflux.

OLIVE

Suck a lozenge.

NED

A magical lozenge that'll make me forget they're putting on a magic show. Which is the same kind of show my dad put on. So what they're pulling out of their magic hats isn't a rabbit, it's my childhood trauma. They're wearing it like a cape and taking to the stage.

CHUCK

Maurice and Ralston are the family you didn't know you had. If I could talk to my Aunt Lily as the mother I didn't know I had, I'd have a sea of questions. Don't you have a sea of questions?

NED

There may be a pond.

CHUCK

Then why not dive in?

CONTINUED: (2)

NED

I'm not a diver. I'm a cautious swimmer. I test the surface with my big toe before gently wading into the shallows.

Ned turns his attention to the GEEK on the stage, who drinks a glass of wine, then subsequently eats the glass. Standing next to the Geek is a table adorned with a buffet of things he will eat -- lightbulbs, goldfish in a bowl and a small white mouse in a large brandy snifter.

EMERSON

Ah. Now, see there? That's nice. Here I was thinking to myself how I was gonna tell all y'all to shut the hell up and then you stopped talking so I didn't have to. Thank you.

NARRATOR

Chuck was a diver. While the Pie-Maker insisted on wading into the shallows of brotherly love, Chuck insisted on diving into the depths of a recent and strange revelation.

EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - NIGHT (RE-USE)

Establishing.

NARRATOR

Her Aunt Lily was, in fact, her Mother Lily.

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

The PHONE RINGS and LILY answers it.

NARRATOR

Not satisfied hearing such life-altering news second hand, Chuck wanted to hear the words directly from her mother's lips.

LILY

Hello?

INT. OLIVE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Chuck has the phone pressed to her ear.

CHUCK

(disguise #1)

Are you tired of paying an arm and a leg for peace of mind? Hello, I'm Loretta Ramos from Livelong Day Life Insurance. We have an amazing Mother's Day offer for women who've given birth. May I ask if you qualify for--

Click.

ANOTHER DAY

CHUCK

(disguise #2)

Our November cheese is rubbed with paprika, creating pungent floral notes and a fresh lemony tang. It's particularly appealing to the palets of women who've had a baby. Have you had a--

Click.

ANOTHER DAY

CHUCK

(disguise #3)

You've been randomly selected to receive your very own psychic reading--

Click.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - THEATER

Ned, Emerson, Chuck and Olive, as before. A MAGICIAN named THE GREAT HERRMANN moves up the aisle, wearing a long scarf tied around his neck for dramatic effect.

NED

Oh, no. Here comes the other "Magic Dad."

CHUCK

Is that the Great Herrmann? Maybe he can be your Magic Dad, too.

NED

Already had a Magic Dad. It didn't work out.

(then)

I need another lozenge.

Herrmann points to Ned, then glances at Ralston and Maurice who peek out from behind the curtain. They nod -- that's him! Ned sucks frantically on his lozenge as Herrmann approaches.

NED (CONT'D)

Lozenge isn't working. Stomach acid rising. Along with the other contents of my stomach.

GREAT HERRMANN

Excuse me. Are you the Pie-Maker?

NED

I'm a pie-maker.

CONTINUED:

Herrmann squeezes past Emerson to Ned, who he promptly hugs.

GREAT HERRMANN

Hello! Excuse me, excuse me. Hello! I feel like I should hug you. Can I give you a hug? Look, I'm already hugging and there's nothing you can do about it. How'd that happen?

CHUCK

Magic?

OLIVE

I wanna hug!

GREAT HERRMANN

I'm not made of hugs.

(back to Ned)

Maurice and Ralston won't stop gushing. I'm so grateful you came into their lives.

(sotto)

Maybe you can take some heat off me. The boys are kinda needy. We'll talk about that later.

(to Olive and Chuck)

Pretty girl. Pretty girl.

(to Emerson, gasps)

I sense you are a great investigator of things unsolved... named after a poet and a fish.

EMERSON

I sense you better give me my wallet before I make my foot disappear up your ass.

GREAT HERRMANN

(handing the wallet over)

The boys tell me you're a heckler.

OLIVE

They tattled on you.

GREAT HERRMANN

We don't play that way at the Conjuror's Castle, so let's nip that in the bud, shall we?

EMERSON

How do you propose we nip, Herman?

GREAT HERRMANN

It's *Herrmann*. And this is how we nip:

(to the crowd)

Private Investigator Emerson Cod, with your keen eye and great investigation of things, who better to vouch for the integrity of the shackles during the Great Herrmann's next feat; a feat so dangerous, anyone even attempting it clearly suffers from dementia.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Which is why I call this feat... "Cementia."
Applause for our volunteer, Emerson Cod!

The crowd erupts in APPLAUSE, Chuck and Olive as loud as any.

MOMENTS LATER

CAMERA PUSHES PAST A CEMENT MIXER to FIND the Great Herrmann is standing in a metal cube, wrapped in chains that circle his body many times over. We see stacks of "Quick 'n' Hard" brand quick-set cement nearby. Emerson stands next to him, annoyed, on stage. On the other side stands his assistant, ALEXANDRIA (30s).

GREAT HERRMANN

Have you ever had your breath taken, Emerson Cod? Leached from your lungs by a cement mass crushing you in a deadly embrace?

EMERSON

No.

GREAT HERRMANN

In just moments, I will contort my shackled body into this box that will then be filled with "Quick 'n' Hard" brand quick-set cement and welded shut. Demented and cemented, I give you "Cementia." If my shackles are secure, Mr. Cod, then kindly return to the audience.

(then)

Applause for Emerson Cod!

Emerson tests the shackles and leaves the stage. Herrmann contorts himself into the box and before Alexandria closes the lid:

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Now you see me...

And then he ducks out of sight and Alexandria closes the lid. She places a funnel in the top and spins the box around the stage, finally placing it next to a small cement mixer. Alexandria flips a switch, the mixer pours cement into the cube.

Alexandria dons a welding helmet and ignites her torch. The audience covers their eyes as the INTERACTIVE LIGHT of the OFF-CAMERA WELDING TORCH flashes and sparks before them. Emerson glances over. The Great Herrmann is under the table, wedged between Emerson and Ned. He's winded and speaks sotto:

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Emerson Cod, it was no accident I chose you to volunteer. I require your keen eye and investigation of things in a personal matter. Someone has been killing my assistants. I invite you tonight to solve their murders.

Herrmann stands, just as a SPOTLIGHT splashes over him.

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)
(to the crowd)
I live to amaze another day!

NARRATOR
But not another day after that.

OFF the crowd erupting in a SECOND ROUND OF APPLAUSE...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - GREAT HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Emerson, Chuck, Olive and Ned stand over a top-load freezer. The Great Herrmann (in a dressing robe) nearby, looking into the freezer-*cum*-coffin. Ned pops a lozenge in his mouth and starts sucking.

GREAT HERRMANN

Her name was Alice. Tonight would've been our 200th performance together. I found her just like this. Except over there.

He points to a rabbit cage on the other side of the room. They're looking at a DEAD RABBIT in a Tupperware container.

OLIVE

Did you turn your assistant into a bunny?

GREAT HERRMANN

My assistant has always been a bunny.

OLIVE

I just wanted to know if he knew that.

GREAT HERRMANN

Alice was murdered. Like the others.

The Great Herrmann lifts Alice and her Tupperware coffin out of the freezer to REVEAL TWO DEAD DOVES in another container.

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Fred and Ginger were impaled when a rigging in my coat misfired. They would fly out of my pockets in a puff of glitter and birdseed as I strummed a chirping slide guitar.

Herrmann lifts Fred and Ginger out of the freezer to REVEAL a much larger Tupperware container holding a DEAD MONKEY.

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

And Mercury, sweet Mercury. Mercury loved performing with balloons and children. That's when he was happiest of all. Now he's dead. Bludgeoned by a falling sandbag.

CHUCK

Who would want to kill your animals?

EMERSON

(clears his throat)

We appreciate and sympathize with your predicament, Mister Herrmann...

CONTINUED:

GREAT HERRMANN

Please. Call me Great.

EMERSON

No.

(then)

We're private detectives, not pet detectives. It would sully my reputation as an expert in the field if I were to take to investigating missing puddy tats and dead bunny wabbits.

OLIVE

I wanna help missing puddies and dead bunnies.

Emerson cuts her off by holding up his hand and saying a sharp:

EMERSON

Eh.

GREAT HERRMANN

I'm curious. Does a pet detective get paid more than the other kind? I don't know facts and figures and going rates for such things.

NARRATOR

Private Detective Emerson Cod debated facts and figures and going rates, then said:

EMERSON

Pet detectives get paid a whole lot more. So how's about you prestidigitate a little green, if you wanna be serious.

The Great Herrmann waves his hands in the air and exposes his sleeves, then holds his clasped hands in front of Emerson.

GREAT HERRMANN

Blow on my hands.

EMERSON

Give me my damn money.

The show must go on. The Great Herrmann flourishes once more and A WAD OF BILLS suddenly appear in his hand.

GREAT HERRMANN

If you'll excuse me. The County Bridge and Tunnel folk have arrived for the nine o'clock.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Great Herrmann exits his dressing room. Ned quickly catches up and they walk and talk through the narrow corridor.

CONTINUED:

NED

Um... Great...? I never got to ask... how exactly do you know Maurice and Ralston?

GREAT HERRMANN

Nobody "exactly" knows anybody, do they? I was there when their father left. Your father left. Got real good seats to that show.

NED

I was the dress rehearsal. Show sucked then.

GREAT HERRMANN

How do you tell a couple of kids you never met that their dad you never met just dropped 'em like they're hot? Can't sugarcoat that turd.

NED

No. Not effectively. What did you tell them?

GREAT HERRMANN

What they wanted to hear. That their dad was an important man and had important-man matters to attend to. I told them he had to go and, for their safety, they couldn't go with him. Blah, blah, blah, please stop crying, blah.

NED

Did their dad, my dad, say... anything to you?

GREAT HERRMANN

What's he gonna say? "Hey, the boys will be hungry in about an hour?" He was ditching his kids at a Sunday matinée, for Christmas sake.

NED

Thank you for looking out for them.

GREAT HERRMANN

Didn't have a choice. I couldn't shake 'em for the life of me. Ten years. Everyday after school they'd pop by looking to get taught some magic trick or play with my monkey. Heed this warning: establish very clear boundaries early and often.

NED

I guess they really needed a father.

GREAT HERRMANN

Son... See what I did there? Son...

Herrmann puts his hand on Ned's shoulder in a fatherly gesture, which promptly prompts Ned to pop a lozenge into his mouth.

CONTINUED: (2)

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Ever feed a stray pussycat? It's like that. You love the pussycat, and I do love those boys. Dearly. But that plate of tasty pâté with tuna sauce was not a promise.

As Ned ponders that, Herrmann hurries off to the stage. He runs into Ralston and Maurice at the other end of the hall:

GREAT HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Pussycats! Your brother's been looking for you. He's right over there! Go get him!

EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - NIGHT (RE-USE)

Establishing.

NARRATOR

Aunt Lily's secret that she was Mother Lily was so secret not even her sister Vivian knew.

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lily and VIVIAN enjoy cocktails and literature.

NARRATOR

What she could not know was the father of Lily's daughter, Chuck, impregnated Lily while he was engaged to Vivian.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Lily reacts, suspicious.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Lily lived in fear that one day Vivian would discover her betrayal and settle her hash...

ON THE DOOR

Vivian and Lily (brandishing her shotgun) open the front door "EXORCIST"-STYLE to REVEAL a MAN SILHOUETTED on the porch. He steps out of the shadows and we see it's DWIGHT DIXON.

NARRATOR

...and today that hash-settling day has come one day closer.

DWIGHT

You must be Vivian.

LILY

Who the hell are you?

NARRATOR

Who the hell he was... was Dwight Dixon.

CLOSE ON - A CAMEL

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL - YOUNGER DWIGHT wearing military-issue sunglasses, sitting on the camel's back, wearing a United Nations uniform, complete with blue beret.

NARRATOR

In his youth, Dwight Dixon brandished the blue beret of the United Nations Peacekeepers.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PULL BACK TO REVEAL Younger Dwight is flanked by TWO MEN, also wearing U.N. uniforms. They are:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Together with Chuck's father and the Pie-Maker's father, Dwight performed tasks of peace enforcement and, in the process, learned many things about his brothers in arms.

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dwight sits opposite Lily and Vivian, a beautiful cheese plate on the coffee table between them.

NARRATOR

Some things Lily would rather he not know.

DWIGHT

(to Vivian)

Charles kept a picture of you. You were a mermaid sitting in the cradle of a giant fishhook with a clamshell brassiere and the tail of a mackerel.

VIVIAN

I don't think we were ever mackerels.

DWIGHT

You were always a mackerel. Whenever I'd see that picture, I'd say--

LILY

"Holy mackerel." Heard that one coming from around the corner. It was wearing tap shoes.

DWIGHT

(chuckles)

Oh, Lily. Charles never told me you were witty. Probably the only thing he didn't tell me about you. Boy, did he talk about you.

(re: Vivian)

When he wasn't talking about this one, which was ninety-nine-point-nine percent'a the time.

There's a sparkle between Vivian and Dwight:

CONTINUED:

VIVIAN

I'm quite a conversation piece.

DWIGHT

Yeah, ya' are. You opened that door and I took a *Rock'em Sock'em Robot* pop to the chin. Now I know why Charles always regretted letting another woman come between the two of you.

As Vivian prepares a cracker, Dwight steals a glance at Lily.

VIVIAN

(not angry at all)

He broke my heart, the son of a bitch.

DWIGHT

Charles broke a lot of hearts, but only had his heart broken once.

(to Lily)

Knocked him for a doozy, too.

VIVIAN

(re: cheese and cracker)

Yak cheese. It's the cheddar of Nepal.

DWIGHT

Mmmmm. I can taste the Himalayas.

LILY

Do you have a point to this visit? Or were you just stopping by for snorts and giggles?

DWIGHT

The snorts and giggles were just the raisins in my oatmeal. No, I'm here looking for something. A common, brass pocket watch. It belonged to Charles, hence it'd have a "C.C." engraved on the back. Looked just like this one, which is mine, hence the "D.D." We all got them while were in the service together.

Dwight holds up a pocket watch identical to the one Chuck has from her father, except Dwight's has D.D. engraved in the back.

LILY

(cutting Vivian off)

I don't recall a pocket watch.

DWIGHT

Normally, I wouldn't bother you about a silly, old watch, but it's from a time in my life when I was doing something right. Looking back, there aren't a lot of those times. And I miss those times. And I miss Charles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

(then)
I'd gladly pay for it.

LILY
I said I don't recall.

DWIGHT
Vivian... maybe you--

LILY
She doesn't recall, either.

DWIGHT
Well, with or without a pocket watch, I can tell when it's time for me to go.

VIVIAN
I'll get your coat.

DWIGHT
(after she's gone)
I'm not gonna say anything to Vivian about what you did to her. That would be cruel. Not as cruel as what you did. But no need to quantify your sister's pain.

LILY
Don't come for me, fella, I fight dirty.

DWIGHT
I don't wanna fight. I need to change your perception of me. Let's sit down and tear a pheasant together. Me, you and your sister.

LILY
If I see you again, it won't be a pheasant I'll be tearing.

DWIGHT
Tabasco. You sure are a spicy cocktail.

Vivian returns with Dwight's coat.

NARRATOR
While Lily was giving Dwight the stink-eye with the only eye she had...

EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Dwight steps out onto the porch, shrugging on his coat.

NARRATOR
...her sister, Vivian, had set her eyes on something much sweeter. A confection she hadn't tasted in quite some time. A date.

CONTINUED:

Dwight pulls a hand out of his pocket and sees a note: "Meet me tonight. The Pie Hole." Signed: "The Mackerel."

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE - NIGHT

The Great Herrmann, shackled as before, contorts himself into his box. Before Alexandria places the lid over him...

NARRATOR

As the Great Herrmann took to the stage for his second performance of the night...

GREAT HERRMANN

Now you see me...

The Great Herrmann ducks into his box and Alexandria closes the lid. She spins the box around the stage, finally stopping next to the cement mixer. Alexandria pours cement into the cube.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - GREAT HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM

Ned, Chuck, Olive and Emerson are alone in the cramped dressing room. Chuck is looking closely at the rabbit Alice's cage. Olive and Ned are looking at the dead monkey.

NARRATOR

...a murder investigation was being performed under the proscenium arch of his dressing room.

Olive considers the dead Mercury, trying to contain her emotion.

OLIVE

Poor Mercury, gone too soon. If only you could tell us who did you in.

NED

He's a monkey. Barring evolutionary leaps yet unheard of, the monkey can't talk.

OLIVE

He's also dead, which means he really can't talk.

NED

That's true, too.

CHUCK

Alice can talk. She has burns on her lips and ulcers on her tongue. She's telling us she was poisoned, the poor thing.

EMERSON

We got one monkey flattened by a sandbag. Means killer knows their way around backstage.

Ned is looking over the dead bodies of Fred and Ginger.

CONTINUED:

NED

Two doves, impaled by bad taste and a malfunctioning coat gag. Killer knows how the Great Herrmann's tricks work.

Chuck indicates the take-out plate next to Alice's rabbit cage. Part of the lettuce on the sandwich has been eaten.

CHUCK

Look. I think Alice ate the lettuce off the Great Herrmann's BLT.

OLIVE

Killer knows how to make a sandwich.

CHUCK

That lettuce was supposed to stay in that sandwich and be eaten by the Great Herrmann.

NED

The falling sandbag, the rigged jacket... killer wasn't trying to kill the animals.

EMERSON

Killer was trying to kill Herrmann.

A SUDDEN SCREAM and CACOPHONY OF MURMURS from the theater.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE

Ned, Emerson, Chuck and Olive run on stage to see a panicked Alexandria watching as STAGEHANDS are using a BLOWTORCH to cut through the metal of the Great Herrmann's box. They finish cutting the lid and pry it off to expose the Great Herrmann's scarf sticking out of the cement block like a wick.

ALEXANDRIA

He didn't get out! He didn't get out!

Alexandria emits a gut-wrenching, guilt-ridden SCREAM. Maurice and Ralston race to the stage and tug on the scarf in an attempt to pull Herrmann out of the cement. The Geek joins the fray -- the scarf tears loose. Ned, Chuck, Olive and Emerson watch.

OLIVE

Isn't it funny how easy it is to stay calm when everybody else is freaking out?

OFF the pandemonium...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - ALLEY/BACKSTAGE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

TWO POLICE CARS are parked nearby. Alexandria (Great Herrmann's assistant) and the Geek watch as a CONCRETE CUBE (which holds the Great Herrmann's body) is being FORK-LIFTED into the back of the CORONER'S VAN by a pair of CORONER'S ASSISTANTS.

NARRATOR

Sadly, the Great Herrmann, professional prestidigitator, had failed to escape his great escape. His untimely expiration was deemed by the authorities to be accidental death due to aggravated "Cementia."

CAMERA FINDS Maurice (still holding the Great Herrmann's scarf) and Ralston watching the proceedings from across the alley, ashen with shock. Ned, Emerson, Chuck and Olive stand nearby.

RALSTON

This wasn't an accident. The Great Herrmann performed that trick a thousand times.

CHUCK

What'd he do with all the cement blocks?

RALSTON

Donated them to the Papen County Marine Institute to create artificial reefs.

MAURICE

The Great Herrmann has a dedicated fan base of barnacles, corals and oysters.

CHUCK

Tonight, the invertebrates of the sea will mourn his loss.

Maurice and Ralston sit on the curb, dejected.

OLIVE

If only they could rise up and avenge him. And Fred and Ginger and Alice and Mercury. I want 'em all to be avenged! Sorry. Now that everyone's calmed down, I'm freaking out.

(then)

I think it's the animal cruelty.

NED

Don't freak out. I know a dog and a pig who haven't been impaled, poisoned or bludgeoned that need to be fed, walked and loved.

OLIVE

Aw... I think I'm gonna go do that right now.
(to Maurice and Ralston)
Sorry about your next-best-thing Magic Dad.
(to Ned)
And I'm... I'm sorry about yours, too.

Ned reacts as Olive moves off, suppressing emotion.

NED

He wasn't my -- he didn't -- we didn't have that kind of relationship. Although, he did put his hand on my shoulder and call me "son," which felt like someone scuffed their feet across a shag rug, reached into my chest and gave my heart a static electric pop.

CHUCK

In a good way or a bad way? Because I always sort of liked that static electric pop.

NED

In an "I don't know" way. Which is the same way I'm feeling about you-know-who. It's all very confusing. There's murdered Magic Dads and the promise of tasty pâté with tuna sauce.

EMERSON

What'd you think you were saying in your head? 'Cause that's not what came outta your mouth.

NED

What I'm saying... I should say to them.

Ned crosses to Maurice and Ralston and sits between them.

NED (CONT'D)

I'm gonna take care of this. Herrmann will be avenged. I don't mean vigilante justice 'cause what kind of example would that be? I mean regular go-to-jail-for-your-crimes justice.

MAURICE

You gonna kick someone's ass, Frère Pie-Maker?

NED

Yes. I'm going to kick someone's ass.

NARRATOR

And the ass-kicking would commence with the ass that poured the cement.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE

Alexandria sits on a stool, being questioned by Emerson, Ned and Chuck. Her mascara has found its way down her cheeks from the crying. We see the cement mixer and the bags of cement in the background, a gruesome reminder of the evening's events.

ALEXANDRIA

I gave Herrmann plenty of time to get out.

NED

Then why didn't he get out?

ALEXANDRIA

I don't know. It's pretty cramped in there. He could've got a blood clot and passed out.

EMERSON

How does he usually get out?

ALEXANDRIA

He doesn't tell me that stuff. The monkey knows more about his tricks than I do.

CHUCK

You mean his dead monkey?

ALEXANDRIA

Yes, his dead monkey. What? You gonna try and pin that one on me, too? What about Fred and Ginger? I suppose I "avada kedavra'd" the whole menagerie. Is that it?

CHUCK

Don't forget the rabbit.

ALEXANDRIA

Alice was the only one I liked. That damn monkey was mean. And those birds... those horrible birds. Every time they'd fly out of his pockets they'd attack my weave.

NED

So when animals attack, you attack back. Then kill the guy who trained 'em to attack.

Ned leans on the cement mixer, which CREEKS dramatically.

ALEXANDRIA

No. I stand there humiliated by a mean monkey night after night for eight years -- I told myself no more than three, but it's been eight -- I stand there and take it, hoping the Great Herrmann will make good on the carrot he's been dangling and give me my own act. I'm not gonna kill the keeper of the carrot.

EMERSON

Sure you are. Eight years of carrot dangling while the Bobbsey Twins pass you by? You been spurned and, next to a spurned lover, a spurned employee rides shotgun on the homicide chuck wagon.

CHUCK

Herrmann and anybody he's shared a stage with has wound up dead. Except you.

NED

Which means you're the killer, killer.

ALEXANDRIA

Or I'm next. Or it was an accident, like the cops said, and nobody's next. Doesn't matter what you think it is. It's magic. Nothing is what you think. Also, you're wrong. Someone else shared the stage with the Great Herrmann.
(then)

The Geek.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - THEATER - NIGHT

The Geek sits at a table across from Emerson, Ned and Chuck.

EMERSON

You like the comic books and action figures?

NED

He's the kind that bites heads off chickens.

GEEK

PETA put a stop to that kind of Geek a long time ago. Performers dressing up as savages and eating live animals. It's tacky and a surefire way to alienate your audience. I eat glass and nails and *regurgitate* fish, frogs and mice. Been working my way up to a kitten. And rest assured, no animals are harmed in my act.

EMERSON

What about harming animals in someone else's act?

GEEK

I go to a lot of trouble to regurgitate my critters in a safe and un-traumatic manner. I'm not harming my animals or anybody else's.

CHUCK

Regurgitating a kitten is a unique talent.

GEEK

I was born ordinary. But there's no fun in ordinary, so I trained my body to do the extraordinary. My very first job was as a plant in Herrmann's audience. That's how we met. He'd pretend to hypnotize me and, under his spell, I'd drink a bottle of beer, then eat the bottle. It was like a father and son act.

NED

(popping a lozenge)

Hmmm.

EMERSON

What were you and your tummy doing while Herrmann was getting cemented on stage?

GEEK

I was walking the crowd before my next show. I pickpocket watches, rings and keys and regurgitate them on stage as part of my act. With everything that happened, I forgot to give them all back. Listen for yourself.

They lean over to listen to the Geek's belly and we HEAR the familiar TICK-TICK-TICKING. Chuck's necklace swings toward the Geek's belly as if being pulled by a magnet.

CHUCK

Did you swallow a magnet?

GEEK

Somebody must've had one in their pocket.

CHUCK

That's an amazing talent, Mister Geek.

GEEK

You know what, thank you. I mean that sincerely. Herrmann was the only one around here who had any respect for my contribution. Now he's gone, so I'll take your compliment and put it next to the ones Herrmann gave me.

NED

Any idea why he couldn't get out of that box?

GEEK

Can't say why he couldn't get out of that box in the worst of times if you don't how he gets out in the best of times. I bet the Great Herrmann is in there right now striking some *Last Days of Pompeii* pose that's gonna tell you everything you need to know.

NARRATOR

While the investigators continued to ponder why the Great Herrmann did not get out...

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA

Olive stands over PIGBY and Digby, both enjoying a bowl of chow.

NARRATOR

...Olive Snook was about to ponder how someone else did.

There's a DING on the door, and before Olive can see who it is:

OLIVE

We're closed--

(sees it's:)

Vivian! You're out. We agreed you'd call before dropping in unexpectedly, which would have been expected if you called.

VIVIAN

I couldn't risk sending a message and Lily intercepting it. This has to be covert.

(then)

I'm on a date. With a man.

Vivian steps aside so Olive can see Dwight standing behind her.

OLIVE

A handsome, nice-smelling, older man with a sensual twinkle who was best friends with the Pie-Maker's pop. Small world.

Pigby snorts her agreement.

DWIGHT

Evening!

OLIVE

Evening!

Olive casts a suspicious eye toward Dwight, covers with a smile.

AT A BOOTH

Dwight and Vivian sit and gaze at each other. Dwight's watch with the engraved D.D. swings from its chain.

DWIGHT

We walked out of that sandstorm with our boots, our berets and our pocket watches. With no pockets to put 'em in. We made a spit pact just like in the Boy Scouts. Last one alive and kicking returns them watches to the desert and lets the sandstorm claim 'em.

Dwight puts the watch back in a WATCH CASE, where there are two empty slots for the remaining two watches.

VIVIAN

That's so very romantic and poetic and you certainly took your time to come calling. Charles has been dead for twenty years.

DWIGHT

I've been in prison for twenty-two.

Olive's ears perk, she coyly crosses to Vivian and Dwight.

VIVIAN

Emotional or Federal?

DWIGHT

I'm gonna say "yes" to both.

VIVIAN

I can only say "yes" to one.

DWIGHT

Must seem a little less romantic now.

VIVIAN

Oh, no. On the contrary.

Dwight's eyes twinkle. Olive starts cleaning the table in the booth behind them, slowly sinking beneath the back of the seat until she can no longer be seen. She stops and listens.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I won't feign surprise. I knew what kind of man Charles was, and to hear you tell it, you boys sound more like bandits than peacekeepers.

DWIGHT

We were a little of both.

VIVIAN

I have a small confession. About Charles's pocket watch. I do recall it. So does Lily. I don't know why she lied to you. I think she just wanted you to leave.

DWIGHT

If Lily wants to keep that watch, she should keep it. Maybe it's worth something to her or she knows what it's worth. Either way, she doesn't have to explain herself to me.

VIVIAN

She didn't keep it. We buried it with our niece, "Lonely Tourist" Charlotte Charles. It was her father's. We wanted her to have it.

Olive reacts from behind the back of the seat.

DWIGHT

That poor girl murdered on a Tahitian getaway. That was Charles's little girl?

VIVIAN

(nods)

Lily's sensitive when it comes to Charlotte.

DWIGHT

Of course she is. She lost her daughter.

Olive stands up from behind the back of the booth.

OLIVE

Niece.

VIVIAN

Niece.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I know what their relationship is. I'm just saying, it's easy to forget the way things are if that's not how they feel. I think you both lost a daughter. You raised the girl. How could it not feel like she's your own. I'm glad the pocket watch is with Charlotte.

NARRATOR

Because now he knew where to find it, or so he thought...

CLOSE ON - CEMENT BLOCK

A CRACK snakes across the surface. We HEAR OFF-SCREEN NOISE of a MINI JACKHAMMER hammering cement.

NARRATOR

...just as our private investigators thought they knew where to find the Great Herrmann.

CONTINUED:

The CEMENT BLOCK CRUMBLES. We are--

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Emerson, Ned and Chuck (all wearing goggles) all look over the CORONER's shoulder (also wearing goggles and holding the jackhammer) at the heap of CRUMBLED CEMENT before them.

It's empty.

EMERSON

Where's the Great Herrmann?

The coroner retrieves an ENVELOPE from the debris. Emerson snatches the envelope, opens it to REVEAL a HANDWRITTEN NOTE.

CHUCK

Now you see me...

IT READS: "...and now you don't. XXOO The Great Herrmann."

EMERSON

"...now you don't. Double hugs, double kisses, the Great Herrmann."

NED

Son of a bitch.

OFF that...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE NOTE found in the cube. PULL BACK to REVEAL Maurice and Ralston staring at it in confusion. Digby sits between them. Ralston fidgets with Herrmann's scarf (torn from the cube). Ned sits opposite the boys and Digby.

NED

It was a disappearing act. Now you see him... now you don't. Good news is he's alive.

(then)

Somewhere.

RALSTON

Why would the Great Herrmann disappear?

NED

I'm sure he wouldn't have disappeared unless he had to. He's an important man. Probably had important-man matters to attend to. Oh.

MAURICE

That's what Herrmann told us when Dad left.

NED

That's why I said, "Oh." It was an attempt to corral all those words back into my mouth.

RALSTON

What did Herrmann tell you? About when Dad left? Did he tell you why Dad had to leave?

NED

He told me what he told you.

MAURICE

Did he tell you anything he didn't tell us?

NED

There may have been select details.

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

EXT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - DAY - FLASHBACK

NARRATOR

On a cool autumn day, 9 years, 48 weeks, 26 days and 7 hours earlier...

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE - FLASHBACK

Young Maurice and Young Ralston (age 12) sit with their father. The twins sip GIGANTIC SODAS and clutch new MAGIC WANDS.

NARRATOR

Maurice and Ralston's father promised them a magic show they would never forget. But this magic was not magic at all. It was a trick. Dear dad would be conducting a repeat performance of his cruel disappearing act.

Herman Gunt (the Great Herrmann, 10 years younger) stands on stage with a LARGE BLACK CABINET. He gestures to the audience and a spotlight hits the twins' father, whose hand is raised.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Opportunity presented itself when a promising new magician, cleverly billed as Herman Gunt's Magic Express, called for a volunteer.

TIGHT on Dad's LIPS that mouth:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"I'll be back," dear dad said.

ON STAGE, the twins' father steps into the cabinet with a last look at his boys. Herman closes the cabinet, spins it around, then opens the door. The cabinet is empty. Herman closes the door, spins the cabinet again and opens it. But instead of their father reappearing, the box remains empty. Herman is shocked. Young Maurice stares in disbelief and fear. Young Ralston cries; a dark puddle of urine stains his pants.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The fledgling magician tried to comfort the fatherless boys with vague-but-important motives behind their dear dad's disappearance.

Herman awkwardly kneels next to a stunned Maurice and Ralston. Pulling them close, he hands Maurice a distinctive white scarf for his tears before whispering in both of their ears.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The twins' fragile hearts gladly believed in the illusion of his words. Until now...

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As before.

NED

He wasn't an important man. He didn't have important-man matters to attend to. Your dad...

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

NED (CONT'D)

our dad was just some guy ditching his kids at a Sunday matinée. That's what Herrmann told me. That's what he didn't tell you. He didn't wanna hurt you anymore than you'd already been hurt.

MAURICE

You sure didn't have a problem telling us.

RALSTON

Yeah.

NED

Well, in my defense, you badgered me a little and considerable time has passed. I probably sound like some horrible missionary showing up and telling the natives they're worshipping a false god, but... you kind of are. He left three kids. There really isn't a good excuse.

A moment as Ralston and Maurice take that in, then:

MAURICE

Did Herrmann tell you Ralston wet himself when Dad disappeared? It was years before we could perform a disappearing act without a mop.

RALSTON

Why would you say that?

NED

I get anxiety-induced acid reflux at the mere mention of magic. Ralston, you wet yourself. We're two grown men with dad-related body fluid issues. We're hung up because our dad left us. I can't suck lozenges for the rest of my life and you can't wear adult diapers.

RALSTON

I learned to control my bladder years ago.

NED

Oh. Good for you.

(then)

I know my acid reflux is just heartburn. And your heart's burning, too. Look at the way you're holding that scarf. You're not clinging to Herrmann, you're clinging to Dad. Holding on tighter isn't gonna bring him back. It's not going to bring either of them back.

With a little effort, Ned tugs the scarf free from Ralston.

NED (CONT'D)

Where's the rest of it?

CONTINUED: (2)

MAURICE

I'd assume it was in that block of cement with Herrmann's "...now you don't" note.

NED

Yeah, it probably should've been, huh?

INT. PIE HOLE - COUNTER - LATE NIGHT

All the blinds are drawn. Emerson is at the counter, Chuck and Olive behind it. Pigby on the ground. Ned ENTERS with a head of steam, flanked by Maurice and Ralston. Everyone turns as:

NED

The Great Herrmann died. On stage. From "Cementia." With the rest of this scarf around his neck. Someone switched the blocks.

MAURICE

It's classic sleight of hand.

RALSTON

Like in a shell game.

NED

Herrmann is that little ball under the coconut shell. Somebody shuffled the shells around and we looked under the wrong one. There were two performances of "Cementia." So, two blocks.

EMERSON

Killer shuffles the blocks, hides the one with Herrmann in it and everybody thinks the great Great disappeared into his disappearing act.

CHUCK

No body, no murder. And it makes for a good urban legend.

OLIVE

How do ya shuffle a 500-pound block of cement?

MAURICE

Forklift. Only one block of cement was fork-lifted out of the Conjuror's Castle tonight.

NED

Which means the other one is still inside. The switch had to happen somewhere between the stage and the loading dock, when people weren't watching the blocks carefully.

OMIT

CLOSE ON - A METAL DETECTOR

NARRATOR

Using metal detectors to detect the metal of the shackles worn by the Great Herrmann while performing "Cementia"...

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - LOADING TUNNEL - NIGHT

Maurice and Ralston sweep the darkened corridor with flashlights as Olive sweeps the floor with her METAL DETECTOR.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...Two for the Show, featuring Olive Snook, began their search at the loading dock and worked their way back toward the stage.

OLIVE

I always love a good treasure hunt. Not that a dead body is a treasure. Although, I'm sure the Great Herrmann was *treasured* and you'll treasure finding his dead body and bringing justice to whoever made it dead.

ON NED, CHUCK AND EMERSON

Ned and Emerson sweep the darkened corridor with FLASHLIGHTS while Chuck sweeps the floor with her metal detector, approaching the base of the loading ramp.

NARRATOR

The Private Investigator, the Pie-Maker and Chuck began their search under the stage and worked their way toward the loading dock.

CHUCK

Might not've been the cement that killed him. We could chisel open that block and find a murder weapon. Like a Mojave rattlesnake or a hidden hypodermic needle Herrmann unknowingly injected himself with while contorting.

EMERSON

Or we chisel open that block and find he drown in cement.

CHUCK

When we do chisel it open, it's too bad Maurice and Ralston can't talk to the Great Herrmann. They didn't get to say goodbye.

EMERSON

The boohoo bosom has done dried up.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

Well, my boohoo bosom is plump and bearing milk. A small conversation can go a long way, even under the falsest of pretenses.

NED

Have you been crank calling Lily again?

CHUCK

Not recently. Although that depends on how you define "recently."

EMERSON

Woman, don't you know people have caller ID?

There's a sudden, rapid DINGING from Chuck's metal detector.

CHUCK

Ooh! Sequins, drama, bloodshed!

NED

There's something under the floorboards.

ON THE FLOORBOARDS - MOMENTS LATER

Ned and Emerson pull up the last of the slats of the floor to REVEAL THE SECOND CEMENT BLOCK lying inside a pre-dug pit in the concrete foundation of the Conjuror's Castle.

NED

I give you "Cementia."

Ned runs his finger over a tiny hole in the cement, out of which hang a few tattered strands of Herrmann's scarf.

EMERSON

Herrmann slid right off that stage and dropped into this strategically jack-hammered grave.

CHUCK

Out of all the ways to have your body stashed, this one isn't so terrible. Maybe the killer wanted the Great Herrmann to be part of the Conjuror's Castle forever.

EMERSON

If the killer cared that much, he should'a broke out his trowel and made this look nice. Lord knows there's plenty cement in the house.

CLUMP-CLUMP-CLUMP. Someone's walking above their heads. Narrow shafts of light streaming down through the slats above their heads. Someone TURNED ON THE STAGE LIGHTS. This is all followed by a CLICK-CLICK-CLICK-WHIR from directly above as:

CONTINUED:

NED

Did somebody just turn on the cement mixer?

NARRATOR

At that very moment, the killer came back to fill in the Great Herrmann's grave with cement.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - LOADING TUNNEL - NIGH

Emerson, Ned and Chuck stand below the trapdoor, listening to the CLUMP-CLUMP-CLUMP of footsteps overhead.

CHUCK

Maybe it's Olive and the boys.

OLIVE (O.S.)

Maybe what's Olive and the boys?

They turn to see Olive, Maurice and Ralston behind them.

CHUCK

Whoever turned on the cement mixer.

Maurice and Ralston see the grave and Herrmann's cement block.

MAURICE

You found the Great Herrmann.

EMERSON

Whoever dropped his block in the floor is back to seal his ass in and make sure Herrmann is part of the Conjuror's Castle forever.

Chuck shoots Emerson a look. The boys point at the stage above:

RALSTON

That's his killer?

MAURICE

That's his killer?

Before they get an answer, Maurice and Ralston snatch Olive's and Chuck's metal detectors out of their hands and scramble up the ramp toward the trapdoor.

NED

No, no! Fools rush in! We're not fools!

OLIVE

They sprang. Like attack monkeys. Aw. That made me think of Mercury.

EMERSON

I'll take care of them. You take care of him.

Emerson indicates Herrmann's block, draws his gun and EXITS.

OLIVE

Do either of you have a gun?

CHUCK / NED

No.

OLIVE
I'm going with Emerson.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - STAGE - NIGHT

Maurice and Ralston spring out of the trapdoor, brandishing the metal detectors like baseball bats. A SHADOWY FIGURE disappears behind the stage curtain and into the wings.

MAURICE
Over there!

Maurice and Ralston pursue. After a moment, Emerson crawls out of the trapdoor, gun drawn.

EMERSON
You don't go chasing murder suspects willy-nilly. What'cha gonna do? Use your Wonder Twin Powers? Shape of "gonna get yourselves killed," form of "you're pissing me off."

After another moment, Olive crawls out of the trapdoor, too.

OMIT

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - GREAT HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Maurice and Ralston (brandishing metal detectors) run past the open door, followed by Emerson, a beat, then Olive, who stops.

OLIVE
Psssst. Emerson.

Olive waves to Emerson, who walks back INTO FRAME.

OLIVE (CONT'D)
Is that guy dead?

CAMERA REVEALS the Geek's body lying prone on the floor in the middle of the dressing room. A RAILROAD SPIKE has been driven through his nose, into his skull. They slowly approach the body.

EMERSON
That's the Geek. He eats glass and swallows small animals. What's he got up his nose?

OLIVE
Maybe it's one of those small animals crawling to freedom, or he corked up a nosebleed and decided to take a nap. Excuse me, Mr. Geek...

Olive pulls at the spike and it comes out several inches. She quickly shoves it all back down, wipes her hand on her dress.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

No, that's all the way in there. He's dead.

Olive quickly moves away. She and Emerson share a collective cringe and turn to see Maurice and Ralston standing in the dressing room door, each holding onto one of Alexandria's arms.

Emerson and Olive startle and SCREAM. Which, in turn, causes Maurice, Ralston and Alexandria to startle and SCREAM.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - THEATER

Alexandria plops down into a chair. Emerson stands over her. Maurice and Ralston flank him from behind with their detectors.

EMERSON

You killed Herrmann, buried him in the floor, then snuck in to seal the deal with a little more of your cement handiwork. Only you were surprised by the Geek and killed him, too.

ALEXANDRIA

Oh, is that how you're gonna frame me? After you beat me to death with metal detectors. I'm an unarmed woman. Why don't you calibrate those things to find your manhood, ya pansies.

EMERSON

If you didn't kill anybody and you're not here burying bodies and disposing of witnesses, what are you doing here?

ALEXANDRIA

Packing. The universe killed Herrmann to send me a message. And that message is: Eight years is long enough to wait for a carrot. And if the keeper of the dangling carrot is dead, then there's not gonna be any carrot.

EMERSON

Well, my associates are digging up that carrot you were trying to bury and we're gonna see what the universe has to say about that.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - LOADING TUNNEL - SAME TIME

Chuck and Ned have chipped away enough concrete to expose Herrmann's face and hands. Ned sets his watch and touches Herrmann. A SPARK and his eyes pop open:

GREAT HERRMANN

I live to amaze another day!

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

No, you live to amaze another minute. You've been crushed in "Cementia's" deadly embrace.

GREAT HERRMANN

I was hoping that didn't happen.

(glances around)

How am I talking right now and not dead?

NED

Magic.

GREAT HERRMANN

It's a family trait. Must'a got it from your father. And you got some potent kung-fu. Your brothers aren't that good.

NED

Um, thank you.

CHUCK

Herrmann, I know asking a magician to reveal the secret behind his great escape is rude...

GREAT HERRMANN

Then don't do it. Nobody likes rude.

NED

It could help us catch your killer. How come you didn't get outta your box?

GREAT HERRMANN

Magic man to magic man...

(to Chuck)

Plug your ears.

Chuck does and Herrmann takes a breath to tell Ned the story.

NARRATOR

Magic man to magic man, the Great Herrmann detailed the facts of the escape that wasn't.

INT. "CEMENTIA" BOX - FLASHBACK

The Great Herrmann contorts himself into the cramped space and begins wiggling out of his shackles.

NARRATOR

Once loose from the shackles that bound him, it was not magic that got the Great Herrmann out of his box, but a series of trapdoors.

Herrmann wiggles out of the chains that bind him. He scuffs at the floor of the box with his foot, but nothing happens.

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But in his final performance, the hidden key that opened the first trapdoor -- a magnet concealed in his shoe -- was not underfoot.

Frantic, he bangs his heel down even harder. But still nothing happens. A tense beat, then CONCRETE POURS into the box, drowning the Great Herrmann and FILLING FRAME.

OMIT

RESUME

Ned is stunned.

NED

Magnets in your shoes? That's the secret to your greatest trick?

GREAT HERRMANN

I could've lied and told you it was force fields and telekinesis. Someone snatched the magnets outta my shoes when I wasn't wearing them. I like to wear slippers between the shows. Comfortable feet, level head.

CHUCK

The Great Herrmann, do you have any last words or regrets? Something you might want to say to Maurice and Ralston?

GREAT HERRMANN

Something I want them to have. My freezer has a false bottom. Inside, you'll find my magic book of magic tricks and illusions. Every trick in the book is in that book. Give it to Maurice and Ralston. I wanna keep it in the family.

(motions Ned closer)

I'm glad I set out that saucer of pâté.

NED

(off his watch alarm BEEP)

Time for my next trick.

GREAT HERRMANN

With a little showmanship, if you don't mind.

Ned obliges. He waves his hand with a dramatic flourish, then:

NED

Now you see me...

HERRMANN'S POV - NED

Ned touches the Great Herrmann and we... CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - THEATER - NIGHT

Ned and Chuck are talking to Emerson in the audience. Maurice and Ralston flank Alexandria with their metal detectors in the b.g.

NED

There were supposed to be magnets in the Great Herrmann's shoes. That's how he triggers the trapdoor and escapes "Cementia." But someone stole the magnets so he couldn't escape.

CHUCK

After Herrmann died, there were magnets in the Geek's stomach.

EMERSON

So what?

CHUCK

Sew buttons. He ate the evidence. The Geek is the killer.

EMERSON

Geek ain't the killer. Geek's dead. Black magic woman killed him. Took that dangling carrot and stuck it in the damn fool's head.

ALEXANDRIA

Stop saying that. I did not.

NARRATOR

In fact, she hadn't.

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Olive in the doorway, her back to the grisly sight of the Geek.

NARRATOR

The killer who took that metaphorical carrot and stuck it in this damn fool's head...

OLIVE

They did not just leave me with a dead body.

The Geek slowly rises off the ground, stands and pulls the spike from his nose, brandishing it like a weapon.

NARRATOR

...was none other than the damn fool himself.

As the Geek takes a menacing step toward Olive...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

OMIT

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - BACKSTAGE/STAGE - NIGHT

The Geek drags Olive toward the stage. He threateningly presses his spike against her head as he pulls her across the stage. Olive is terrified but keeping her shit together, eyes darting around, looking for her first opportunity to escape.

GEEK

Right now I feel like I'm very calm.

OLIVE

You are.

GEEK

Thank you. And I wanna stay that way.

OLIVE

Please do.

GEEK

But I need you to stay calm, too. So what's our promise to each other?

OLIVE

Stay calm.

GEEK

Which means?

OLIVE

No screaming.

GEEK

You're wonderful. I can't wait to let you go.

ALEXANDRIA (O.S.)

Everybody can see you.

CAMERA POPS WIDE TO THE PROSCENIUM ARCH as the Geek turns to see: Emerson, Chuck and Alexandria watching from the audience. Emerson draws his gun. The Geek turns and immediately uses Olive as a human shield.

CHUCK

Olive, are you okay?

OLIVE

Uh... I'm calm.

CONTINUED:

EMERSON

Nerd, you need a bigger human shield. You're hanging out all sorts of places I could shoot. Now how's about you let Wee Lady Wee go.

GEEK

I got a gun, too. I swallowed a pearl-handled pistol. Right now, I'm using my stomach muscles to cock the trigger. When it flies outta my mouth, it's gonna shoot you in the face.

OLIVE

I did hear something click. Wait. It's a click-clicking. Never mind. It's a watch.

EMERSON

You ain't shooting anybody in the face, tums.

NED (O.S.)

And you're not getting away with murder.

The Geek spins to see Ned has run on stage.

ALEXANDRIA

You killed the Great Herrmann. I guess he shouldn't have called your act cheap.

The Geek is stunned into silence. Emerson, Chuck, Ned and Olive glance at Alexandria and then back to the Geek.

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM - FLASHBACK

The Geek auditions his newest trick for Herrmann. He holds up a RAILROAD SPIKE and slowly hammers it into his nose with a tiny hammer. Herrmann barely hides his disgust.

NARRATOR

The Geek -- aka, Gunther Pinker -- saw a father in the Great Herrmann, and a long and happy future performing together. But Herrmann did not see a son in him; only a cheap novelty act whose cheap novelty had run out.

Herrmann shakes the Geek's hand and pats him on the shoulder. He escorts the Geek out as the twins walk in. Herrmann welcomes them with a smile. The Geek's eyes brim with tears.

OMIT

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM - FLASHBACK

The Geek picks up a black dress shoe. He pries open the heel of the shoe, digs out an OBLONG MAGNET from inside, pops it into his mouth and swallows. He then drinks a glass of water.

NARRATOR

Herrmann had conveniently arranged his own funeral in "Cementia." The keys to his escape were consumed...

The sounds of Herrmann's death-to-come -- the cement mixer's WHIR and Alexandria's gut-wrenching SCREAM -- carry us to...

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - CROSS SECTION - FLASHBACK

A CROSS SECTION VIEW of the stage and the storage area below. Alexandria and STAGEHANDS stand on the stage with the HERO CUBE holding Herrmann. The Geek waits below stage with a DUMMY CUBE. A trapdoor opens and the hero cube drops down onto a RAMP.

NARRATOR

...then, after Herrmann's death, the Geek waited for his exact moment, exploiting the misdirection of shock and grief, to perform a sleight of hand.

As the cube slides down the ramp, the Geek pulls up a piece of flooring to expose a hole in the foundation. The hero cube slides down the ramp and drops into the floor.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He made the Great Herrmann vanish into a pre-dug grave and replaced him with another cube. If there was no body, there was no murder.

The Geek pounds the flooring back into place. Then he pushes the dummy cube to the bottom of the ramp, switching the cubes.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The Geek intended to return with his trowel and seal the Great Herrmann's grave with the very brand of cement that took his life...

A beat later, two CORONER ASSISTANTS arrive with a dolly to take away the cube.

RESUME ON THE STAGE

Ned faces off with the Geek, who holds Olive hostage. Emerson, Chuck and Alexandria watch from the audience.

CHUCK

...making him part of the Conjuror's Castle forever. I called it.

CONTINUED:

Ned slowly backs the Geek and Olive across the stage as he advances on them.

GEEK

I would have eaten anything for that man. I loved him like a father. He taught me how to perform. That first beer bottle I ate for him was a promise. A promise he broke. He turned his back on me, abandoned me like I was... cheap. You have no idea what that's like.

NED

I was abandoned, by my father when I was nine. I hated him for leaving me. I wrote letters to my future self, telling future me to never forgive my father and always hold a grudge. Those letters were little, angry time capsules. But being angry didn't help. Despite what he did, I still loved him and wanted him back.

(then)

Now.

LOADING TUNNEL

Ralston and Maurice pull a LEVER on the wall.

ON STAGE

The trapdoor swings open! The Geek PLUMMETS downward, releasing his grip on Olive as he falls. A THWUMP below. Olive steps out of harm's way. Ned rushes to her side.

As they all look down THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR...

The Geek has landed in the grasp of Herrmann's dead outstretched hands. Ralston and Maurice grin up at Ned and Olive.

MAURICE / RALSTON

Ta-da!

OMIT

EXT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - DAY

NARRATOR

The Geek -- aka, Gunther Pinker -- was arrested for the murder of the Great Herrmann -- aka, Herman Gunt. When they were ready, twin magicians, Maurice and Ralston, dealt with the loss of their Magic Dad...

INT. CONJURER'S CASTLE - GREAT HERRMANN'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

The twins stand in front of Herrmann's freezer. Ralston lifts out the false bottom, revealing a LEATHER-BOUND tome. Maurice pulls the book from the freezer.

NARRATOR

...finding his book of secrets where he had left it. But they knew there was someone who had waited 8 long years for that carrot...

The twins look at each other and then turn to Alexandria, who stands behind them.

MAURICE

We'll make you a photocopy?

NARRATOR

...and with it, Alexandria the assistant would become the Great Alexandria, respected headliner at the Conjuror's Castle.

Alexandria considers, and then grabs Herrmann's magic TOP HAT. She puts it on with a tilt and a glint in her eye.

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - DAY

Maurice and Ralston sit at the counter. Ned serves them each a piece of pie. The twins smile up at their brother.

NARRATOR

As for the Pie-Maker, he discovered magic was not just what disappears, but what reappears when you least expect it.

Ned looks across the restaurant to Chuck. She's dressed for a night out. She walks up to Ned.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Emboldened with this new perspective, the Pie-Maker arranged a private magic show.

CHUCK

Are you ready?

INT. NED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ned and Chuck sit in Ned's car. Chuck wears a blindfold.

CHUCK

If we're going to a magic show, I hope you brought your lozenges...

CONTINUED:

NED

You helped me conquer my lozenge dependency. As terrifying as it is, magic runs in the family. And I kinda like being Frère Pie-Maker. It's a nice feeling to be able to talk to the family you didn't know you had. Okay, you can look.

Chuck removes her blindfold and sees her aunts' house.

CHUCK

Aw.

NED

I wanted you to have that nice feeling, too. Want to talk to your mother?

CHUCK

Are we gonna crank call Lily?

NED

In a way.

CHUCK

Ding-dong-ditch?

NED

Huh-uh.

CHUCK

How?

NED

A small conversation can go a long way, even under the falsest of pretenses.

Ned flips the switch on a RADIO RECEIVER on the dash.

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lily holds her empty martini glass out for Olive, who gives her a refill with the last of a shaker, shaking the final drops.

OLIVE

Now that Vivian has gone to bed... have you ever role-played?

LILY

I've role-played, but never in a context I'd be comfortable role-playing with you.

OLIVE

Not that kind of role-play.

LILY
(re: her glass)
More olives, Olive.

Olive PLOP-PLOP-PLOPS three more olives into Lily's cocktail.

OLIVE
This is a work-your-grooves-out kind of role-play, not a get-your-groove-on. You told me things only me, you and that nunnery know. About Charlotte... and you being her mother and not being her mother.

LILY
Oh. That. Again. Say, when you were a jockey, did you ride the horses or just beat them after they were dead?

OLIVE
I'm not talking about a dead horse, I'm talking about a dead daughter and that's an awful lot of weight to haul around.

LILY
You are harshing my buzz.

OLIVE
I don't wanna harsh, I wanna help. Help me help you carry the weight. Unburden yourself. If Charlotte were alive right now and you didn't have to worry about Vivian settling your hash, what would you say to her?

LILY
Is this the role-play part where you're supposed to be Charlotte?

OLIVE
Yes, Aunt Lily. It's Charlotte. Don't you recognize me? Should get your eye checked.

Lily stares at Olive a beat, then downs her entire cocktail.

LILY
Charlotte, there's something you should know.

OLIVE
I'm listening...

Olive leans forward so Lily can speak more into the BEE BROACH pinned to her sweater. CAMERA ZOOMS INTO THE BEE BROACH and we see a tiny microphone protrudes from its stinger.

INTERCUT WITH:

BACK TO NED'S CAR

Ned and Chuck listen to the crackling speaker as Lily's voice comes out the speaker.

LILY (O.S.)
I'm your mother.

Chuck GASPS. Ned nods at a microphone on her side of the dash.

NED
"Presto." Go on. Ask your sea of questions.

Chuck hesitates, then speaks into the microphone.

CHUCK
There's so many. I wanna know everything.

OLIVE
I wanna know every -- everything?

CHUCK
Everything. Start at the beginning.

BACK TO CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE

CLOSE ON a tiny earbud in Olive's ear. Chuck's voice can be heard faintly coming through it. Olive speaks for Chuck.

CHUCK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tell me about the day I was born.

OLIVE
Tell me about the day I was born.

LILY
I was at the nunnery, right in the middle of mid-middle morning prayers. Sister Mary Mary came running with a crucifix and a bucket of holy water. She had ideas about the kind of spawn I was carrying. But when you were born, even she could see you were an angel...

Lily continues to spin her tale...

NARRATOR
As the once-dead girl named Chuck had her very first conversation with the mother she'd always thought dead...

BACK TO NED'S CAR

Chuck curls into her seat, listening and talking. She smiles at Ned.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
...and felt her heart grow full...

CAMERA PULLS up from Ned's car, across town toward...

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

CAMERA PUSHES IN on a man digging a grave. Camera sweeps past the headstone for *Charles Charles* to the headstone for *Charlotte Charles*, to REVEAL it's Dwight digging up Chuck's grave.

NARRATOR
*...across town, Dwight Dixon was visiting the
dead daughter of his dead friend...*

Dwight uses his shovel to pry open the lid of Chuck's coffin. It CREAKS open. Dwight stares inside. The coffin is empty.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
...and found her coffin empty.

OFF this portent of trouble to come, CAMERA PULLS UP rapidly into a satellite shot of the town. A FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW