

# THE GREAT MARVELLO



BY  
**JONNY ZUCKER**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
**BRETT GOWLETT**



“...AND FINALLY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WILL NOW PRESENT FOR YOU MY GREATEST EVER TRICK! I, THE GREAT MARVELLO, WILL MAKE AN OBJECT FLY BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!”

In anticipation, the women in the audience ruffled their finest dresses and the men shuffled their most polished shoes on the floor of the town hall.

The Great Marvello, magician, illusionist and travelling performer of legendary reputation, stood onstage. A dazzling spotlight picked out his purple velvet suit, his waxed moustache and his slim, bendy body that made him look more like a snake than a human. Marvello paced around the stage dramatically, as if his every step held the key to a breath-taking mystery. His eyes darted this way and that, looking for a “volunteer”.

“YOU, SIR!” cried Marvello, pointing to a man in the audience, wearing a smart grey jacket and brightly polished, pointed, black shoes. “YOU, SIR! PLEASE STAND UP!”

The man, who had pale, rubbery cheeks, coughed nervously and looked at his wife, as if the expression in her eyes would tell him what to do. But she looked as bewildered as he did.

So, coughing slightly, he held on to the back of the seat in front of him and rose.

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“YOUR NAME, SIR?” demanded The Great Marvello, relishing the power he held over both this man and the entire audience.

“Johnson,” replied the man quietly. “Basil Johnson.”

“MR JOHNSON, HOW KIND OF YOU TO ASSIST ME WITH MY ACT. ARE YOU FEELING NERVOUS?”

“Err... yes, slightly,” replied Mr Johnson, unsure what fate was about to befall him.

“WELL, MR JOHNSON, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR. I ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR MIND AND BODY WILL BE IN PERFECT CONDITION AFTER THIS TRICK.”

Mr Johnson nodded nervously.

“MR JOHNSON, PLEASE CAN YOU SHOW THE AUDIENCE IF YOU ARE WEARING A WATCH.”

Mr Johnson frowned for a second and then rolled up his left shirtsleeve. He held his left arm in the air, showing the glittering and expensive gold watch that was attached to his wrist.

Maintaining his position on the stage, The Great Marvello licked his lips. The audience whispered and muttered amongst themselves for a few seconds but when Marvello placed a finger on his lips, they fell absolutely silent.

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,” said Marvello, lowering his voice to increase the tension, “in a minute, I will say the number ‘one’. After that, I will say the number ‘two’. But when I say the number ‘three’, that fabulous watch on Basil Johnson’s wrist will, by the power of magic invested in me, fly – yes, FLY – across the room and become attached to my wrist!”

“IMPOSSIBLE!” someone cried out.

“CAN’T HAPPEN!” shouted someone else.

“Say what you will,” grinned Marvello, his moustache twitching slightly, “but the truth will be my judge!”

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The audience sat forward in their seats and Mr Johnson shuffled nervously on his feet. The torches around the edge of the room gave the whole place a slightly smoky odour and added to the sense of intrigue.

“Number one,” announced Marvello. Nothing happened.

“Number two,” he said. Still no movement.

“NUMBER THREE!” he shouted.

Instantly, Basil Johnson and a large area around him were surrounded by a wispy, grey cloud of smoke. “I say, what’s going on here?” he demanded.

As soon as the smoke faded – and it faded pretty quickly – every single person in the room could see that the sparkling watch had completely vanished from his wrist.

There were gasps and cries from the audience.

Mr Johnson looked astonished and checked his other wrist and inside his jacket pockets for the missing timepiece. But it was nowhere to be found.

The audience screamed and applauded.

But where was the watch?

A few seconds later, Marvello clicked his fingers and, suddenly, there was the watch, on his left wrist, as if it had been there the whole time. It looked like he had been telling the truth; the watch had “flown” across the room to him.

The audience went crazy. They screamed and yelled and stood on their seats. Never before had they seen such genuine magic. The magician was indeed a marvel.

Except he wasn’t a marvel at all, because this is what had actually happened: I, Cassie Hopkins, The Great Marvello’s honest and hard-working assistant, had been hiding under Mr Johnson’s seat for ten minutes (Marvello had pointed him out to me several minutes before the show began). I released the smoke from a small canister and it immediately engulfed him. Then, with expert swiftness, I undid his watch and swiped it from his wrist while the audience’s eyes were riveted on Marvello, waiting to see the watch “fly” across the room. I then squeezed myself up as small as possible and rapidly crawled down the aisle and passed the watch up through a

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hidden trapdoor. Marvello took it in a flash and secretly tied it to his own wrist. It was the work of twenty seconds but by George it looked impressive.

To great cheers and thunderous applause, The Great Marvello, beaming widely, invited Mr Johnson up on stage and returned his watch, bowing in a most theatrical manner. Mr Johnson was delighted to get his watch back, shook hands with The Great Marvello and then left the stage. There were even louder cheers from the audience and then the stage curtain swiftly came down.

He'd pulled off exactly the same stunt with a woman called Irene Robson and a silver brooch several nights previously; the reception had been equally spectacular.

The toothy grin on The Great Marvello's face instantly vanished and he scowled at me.

"Come on, you little urchin. Pack up the stuff and let's get out of here as quickly as possible!"

I knew not to disobey The Great Marvello. He was a man with a fiery temper and a yell as loud as a volcano. In a flash, I packed all of our "magical" items into a green sack and slung it over my shoulder, while he grabbed his precious brown suitcase: the one he never let out of his sight, the one he never let me touch, the one with all the dosh.

As the audience filed out of the front door, saying how wonderful the show had been, Marvello and I sneaked out of the back and hurried down the snaking lane that led away from the village as fast as we possibly could.