

## *The Last of the Gentlemen Magicians*

### *Excerpt*

The drum roll came loud and steady as the audience sat waiting for the final flourish, the big hurrah. Ogden smiled slyly at them teasing that he might let them in on his secret. Sawing a woman in half is a standard trick that many magicians before Ogden had performed, but the honest effort and joy in his own performance made him seem somehow more dazzling.

His assistant, Paloma, wiggled her toes as her feet poked out of the end of the wooden box she had been placed in only moments ago. A magician's assistant's job was to smile, engage the audience, and above all be a protector of secrets. Ogden and Paloma both trusted and respected each other, traits that made them a good match.

After he was done with his final sawing movements, Ogden spoke to the audience and lifted the two blades from the floor and rested them on top of the box. "And now, I will insert these two blades – which as you can see are solid through and through – into the box, splitting it in half!"

Gary, who was the comedic portion of the act said, "Paloma, I hope your insurance policy is up to date."

"Only if his last paycheck cleared!"

The audience laughed at the ribbing Paloma provided throughout the show.

With over-the-top movements, Ogden thrust the two blades into the box and appeared to have bisected Paloma who gave a small yelp. With one swift move, he separated the two pieces and the drums gave one final rim shot.

The audience at Lalo's Lounge had grown fond of Ogden's weekly performances – although fond might have been too strong a word. They expected the show, and so they saw it. The Saturday night show was usually packed and the Sunday one brought in customers who normally wouldn't be hanging around Lalo's on a Sunday. Eduardo, the owner, sat behind the bar watching Ogden and Paloma's performance. He clearly remembered ten years ago when a painfully shy 30-something appeared at the door with a suitcase marked MAGIC and a furry sentient puppet, named Gary who was knee-high. Ogden nervously asked if Eduardo was in need of an act for his lounge.

Years ago, Ogden had been an accountant at a local firm downtown but the work...was just work. At that point, Ogden -- being egged on by Gary -- left his job to pursue what he felt was his life calling: magic. But not just any magic, it was the magic of yesteryear, not what you saw these so called street magician's doing. Ogden felt they were so base and crass without respect for the Art. Ogden believed in the Magician's Code, and like a true magician of the years gone by he felt the only way to be was a gentleman. A top hat, a tuxedo with tails, shoes polished and buffed until they gleamed was his trademark look.

When Eduardo saw the earnestness of the man at his door, wanting to start over, wanting to fulfill his life's work, even if it was magic, how could he say no? The fact that the show became somewhat of a success in spite of its corniness proved to Eduardo that positive karma was still alive and kicking.

While sipping their 7 and Sevens, rum and cokes, the audience applauded with as much enthusiasm as they could once Paloma had been put back together and helped out of the box by Ogden. Gary, sitting on a stool yelled out his closing act punch line, "Now that's why quality magician's assistants are highly *sawed* after!"