

Magic
The Musical

By

Anthony Scialli ©2012

Dramatis Personae

Laura A talented magician, daughter of Jack
Charlie An untalented magician, Jack's apprentice
Armando A talented but impaired magician, Jack's rejected apprentice
Danielle An evil magician, Jack's widow and Armando's lover
Merlin An old magician, Jack's best friend
A Magic Box

Setting

The action takes place on the stage of a theatre where the Great CharLee is billed. Throughout, there is a magician's cabinet, a magic box, on stage. The box is about 6 feet tall and about two or three feet deep and wide, like a telephone booth but opaque and covered with magic symbols. A door opens into the box.

Act 1

Scene 1. Charlie and Laura are onstage. He is performing as the Great CharLee (emphasis on the second syllable), dressed in an Asian costume. She is dressed as his assistant.

VOICE OFF.

Ladies and gentlemen, direct from the exotic Orient, the Great CharLee!

Charlie attempts to do a trick, pulling a rabbit out of a hat. He goes through great contortions, putting his arm into the hat and obviously struggling. He waves a magic wand that becomes limp in his hands. He is just not very good. Laura gets increasingly impatient.

LAURA.

(Privately to Charlie) God, you suck.

Laura passes her hand over the hat as though it is part of the act, and Charlie at once is able to extract an extremely mangled toy rabbit. The music starts. As Laura sings, Charlie continues his act, having difficulties with the tricks and subtly rescued by Laura, who makes the tricks work while letting Charlie appear to be the magician.

[Cue Track 1: Where is the Magic?]

LAURA.

(Singing)

Where is the magic?
Where has it gone?
Where is the magic that we used to call our own?
When we were younger,
When we were happy,
No-one could beat us,
No tricks defeat us,
We played each weekday,
And twice on Saturday
'Cause we had magic on our side.

When you were younger,
You seemed much smarter,
You didn't drop the balls or break the rabbit's ears,
I often wonder
Why I stay with you
When I've more talent,
I'm better looking,
I make the tricks work,
You're just a dumb jerk,
I have more skill in my little finger.

When you had magic,
I was attracted,
I could have watched you work your tricks the whole day long,
But now you've lost it,
You're just a moron,
Your hands are empty,
They make no magic,
Your words are only gas,
I have to save your ass,
By lending you my own precious magic.

I give you the great CharLee,
Mystic sorcerer from the East,
East Rutherford by the way,
From the nuthouse just released.

Trained by one of magic's best,
By my father, rest his soul,
Training wasted on this tool,
Wasted time on this asshole.

Without your magic,
You're only faking,

You wave your arms around and shout some silly crap,

CHARLIE.

(Spoken) Shazzam!

LAURA.

(Singing)

You don't impress them,
Their doubts infest them,
They could be at home
In front of T V,
Instead of watching you
Making a joke of me,
I'm just a clown in your little circus.

Enter Danielle and Armando as back-up singers in masks.

LAURA.

(Singing)

Where is the magic?
Where has it gone?
Where is the magic that we used to call
our own?
When we were younger,
When we were happy,
No-one could beat us,
No tricks defeat us,
We played each weekday
And twice on Saturday
'Cause we had magic on our side.

DANIELLE and ARMANDO.

(Singing)

We want to know where is the magic,
Where has it gone, where has it gone?
Where is the magic that we used to call our
own? Yeah!
We want to know when we were younger,
We want to know when we were ha-happy,
beat us
beat us
weekday
Saturday
'Cause we had magic on our side.

You don't have magic,
You're just a moron,
Why are you faking,
Why don't you get gone?
Without your magic?
You are an eggplant,
You stink like dog doo on our shoes.

Magic
Moron,
You should
get gone,
Magic
eggplant,
Magic you can't lose.
Ah!

You don't have magic,
You're just a moron,
Why are you faking,
Why don't you get gone?
Without your magic?
You are an eggplant,
When you have magic you can't lose.
Ah!

Where is the magic?
What did you do with it?
You let the magic slip away with all
your brains.
You took my magic,
My daddy's magic,
You aren't worth his spit,
You are a low life shit,
If he could see you now,
You'd take your final bow,
He'd make a mess of you,
The Great Char-Lee'd be through,
You'd be a dead duck,
But I don't give a fuck,
For what you've done to my precious
magic.

What have you done with Laura's magic?
What did you do, what did you do?
You let the magic slip away with all your
brains. Yeah.
Why did you take you take her magic?
Why did you take her daddy's ma-magic
Worth spit,
Low shit,
See now,
Final bow,
Mess you,
You're through,
Dead duck,
Give a fuck,
For what you've done to her precious magic.

Danielle and Armando exit as the Great Char-Lee takes his bows. Laura and Charlie are alone onstage after the performance.

CHARLIE.

They love me!

LAURA.

Why would you think they love you?

CHARLIE.

Didn't you hear that applause? They went mad when the act was over.

LAURA.

They were grateful that the act was over.

CHARLIE.

Laura, I detect some negative energy emanating from you.

LAURA.

It's not negative energy, Charlie. It's contempt.

CHARLIE.

My, you're an angry young woman. Why don't you like me? You used to like me.

LAURA.

Of course I'm angry. I have to work for you in my father's own theatre. You used to be a decent magician. When my father was alive, you were good enough to be taken on as his assistant. A magician of his stature, with his reputation in the world of magic, his renown on six continents, his dexterity and his skill, could have had any assistant, but he chose you.

CHARLIE.

Well, I was Jack's second choice, wasn't I? Armando was his first choice, but his first choice didn't work out very well.

LAURA.

(Embarrassed). I've told you, we will not speak of...him.

CHARLIE.

Yes, I know, we're very touchy on the subject of Armando.

LAURA.

I said, we will not speak of him.

CHARLIE.

I don't see why it upsets you so much. Armando was Jack's first choice. He didn't work out. I was your father's second choice. I worked out.

LAURA.

Yes, you worked out. Until his death, my father treated you like a son. And you were a promising magician. Then, poof, he was gone and you turned into a bum.

CHARLIE.

I still pack 'em in every night.

LAURA.

But you can't make the tricks work. I have to make them work for you.

CHARLIE.

It takes so much practice. It's so tedious to practice all the time. And you don't mind, do you? It gives you a spot in the show, after all. Much better, I should think, than taking tickets or showing people to their seats.

LAURA.

It should be my show, and you know it. You're the one who should be showing people to their seats. Or cleaning the toilets. Goodness knows, cleaning toilets suits your talent.

CHARLIE.

But it's my show. All the stuff is mine. As Jack wished. As he very clearly put in his will.

LAURA.

I'll never understand it. He was my father. He gave me his magic, why didn't he give me his show?

CHARLIE.

Maybe with all that magic, he figured you wouldn't need the props.

LAURA.

Yes, I could replace most of it. But there's one prop I can't replace (*indicating the magic box*). His magic box.

CHARLIE.

What is that piece of junk, anyway? Jack never taught me what it did.

LAURA.

It has a magic so powerful, only my father could make it work. But he never worked it for me. I have no idea what it does. But I'll figure it out. Meanwhile, keep your hands off it. You may own it, but I'll be the one to work it.

CHARLIE.

Whatever you say. It doesn't interest me very much. I'm going to get a beer. You want a beer?

LAURA.

No. (*Charlie exits.*)

[*Cue Track 2: My Dad*]

(*Singing*)

He was my dad
He'd do nothing bad
To me, but it doesn't seem right
That he gave all his toys
To that blockheaded boy
Instead, instead, instead, instead, instead, instead,
Instead of to his heart's delight.

He thought the world
Of his fair-haired girl,
There was nothing that he wouldn't share with me,
So it's strange that he made
All the tricks of his trade
A bequest, a bequest, a bequest, a bequest, a bequest, a bequest,
A bequest to that brainless flea.

We were a pair
When we went out there
On the stage to make the audience our own,
For he had such a knack,
The Amazing Jack
Was so great,
Was the greatest act the world has ever known.

Dad, why did you leave me?
And why did you leave him everything?

It was just us two, then it was him, too,
How did I fail you?

Did I break your magic wand or
Maybe I sneezed on your fairy dust,
Give me a clue, pop,
How I made you stop
Giving me your trust.
Giving me your trust.

He was my dad
So it's awf'ly sad
That he isn't able to come back to say
Why he gave all his stuff
To that worthless powder puff

(Merlin, masked, is revealed.)

MERLIN.

And left me, and left me, and left me, and
left me
All alone, so alone, so all alone, so alone,
so alone,
And left me to wonder why you went
away.

And left you, and left you, and left you,
and left you
All alone, so alone, all alone, so alone, so
alone,
Wonder why you went away.

He was my dad...

Merlin disappears. Enter Danielle, a voluptuous woman, dressed provocatively. She speaks with a French accent.

DANIELLE.

Good evening, young lady.

LAURA.

And who the hell are you?

DANIELLE.

My, you're an angry young woman.

LAURA.

So I've been told. I've had a bad day. Several of them. So, who are you? We don't invite many people backstage.

DANIELLE.

I am Danielle. I am a fan.

LAURA.

A fan? Of whom?

DANIELLE.

Of the marvelous magician, the Great Char-lee. I have come to meet him, to sit at his feet.

LAURA.

He's no magician, and he couldn't even find his feet without help.

DANIELLE.

I detect, shall we say, some jealousy.

LAURA.

(as Charlie enters in shorts and a t-shirt) Jealous? Hardly. You want him, take him. He's all yours.

CHARLIE.

Take who? What's all this about?

LAURA.

This lady is a fan of yours. She wants to sit at your feet.

CHARLIE.

Maybe I should put on clean socks. *(Extending his hand to Danielle)* Glad to meet you; my name's Charlie.

DANIELLE.

(reverentially taking his hand in both of hers). The Great Char-Lee! How I have looked forward to this day, to meeting you!

CHARLIE.

The pleasure's all mine, I'm sure. See, Laura, I'm not such a bad magician. I have a fan.

LAURA.

She's crazier than you are, Charlie.

DANIELLE.

Not at all, not at all. I simply recognize talent when I see it. I am a connoisseur of magic. You have that special something that I have not seen in a great many years. Not since the Amazing Jack.

CHARLIE.

I was his apprentice, you know.

LAURA.

You saw my father? And you're comparing this amateur to the Amazing Jack? You must be joking.

DANIELLE.

Joking? What is joking? I never joke. I am very strongly drawn to talented magicians. I am crazy for talented magicians. *Quand je te vois sur la scène, je deviens folle.*

CHARLIE.

Spanish! I like that.

DANIELLE.

It is French, my darling. It means that I become crazy when I see you on the stage.

[Cue Track 3: Crazy]

(Singing)

DANIELLE.

When I see you on the stage
I feel a fever coming,
Quand je te vois sur la scène,

When you pull the rabbit from the hat

Your skill and your talent speak straight to my
heart.

Your smooth fluid motions fill my eyes with
awe,

I've never seen anything like it before.

I'm crazy for you,
It's so mysterious,
Why I'm deliriously crazy.

I love you,
You make me love you though
Your helper is a cow,
She's a nasty bitch.

When you look into my eyes,
My heart begins his racing,
Thump-y thump he says to me.

You know ev'ry card before it is picked,

LAURA.

Girl, you need an aspirin.

Which he does very poorly I note.

But does the bunny get a vote?

He makes blunders that no one could miss.

Maybe you need an optometrist.

You're crazy
There is no mystery,
I tell you sister, you're just crazy.

Bitch.

(Spoken) Thumpy-thump?!
(Sung) Girl, you need a pacemaker.

DANIELLE.

At vanishing things you're partic'larly slick.

It's your skill with your body that makes me so fond,

Can I see just how long is your magical wand?

I'm crazy,
I haven't got a chance,
When I'm with you I'm really crackers,
Call me an ambulance

I love you,
I hope you love me too,
I want to prove to you that
I'm the perfect girlfriend.

(Charlie has been basking in the attention. At this point, he scratches his butt. Danielle and Laura share a look of revulsion).

For some girls,
To love a man's a must,
To love a man is just
Crazy.

You try to look your best,
You cater to his requests,
Although he's really a pest,
And in the end your life's a holy mess!

(Spoken) You're still a cow.

(Sung)
I'm crazy,
When I'm close to you,
Can you be a little crazy, too?

LAURA.

It's not hard when the decks are all queer.

But how can we make you disappear?

Have I told you that you are a nut?

(Spoken) You, my dear, are simply a slut.

(Sung) You're crazy,
You haven't got a chance,
When you're with him you're really crackers,
Call her an ambulance,
Or, maybe better I should smack her.

She thinks she loves him,
She thinks she loves him,
She's just a crazy bitch.

For some girls,
To love a man's a must,
To love a man is just
Crazy.

You try to look your best,
You cater to his requests,
Although he's really a pest,
And in the end your life's a holy mess!

(Spoken) Maybe you're not so crazy.

(Spoken) Bitch.

(Sung)
Crazy, too.

CHARLIE.

I love it when women fight over me.

LAURA.

In your dreams, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

And what did you say your name was?

DANIELLE.

(Dramatically) My name is Danielle *(pronouncing it in French, Dah-nee-el)*.

CHARLIE.

Well, that's a right nice name. Maybe we should get to know one another better.

DANIELLE.

In my country, a man would invite a lady out for a glass of champagne to get to know her better.

CHARLIE.

Champagne—now there's a good idea. Let's do it, Danielle *(he pronounces it Danny-el)*.

DANIELLE.

(correcting him) Danielle.

CHARLIE.

Right. Whatever. Maybe I'll just call you Danny.

DANIELLE.

(making a face) Whatever.

CHARLIE.

So we're set, then, Danny. I'll go put on some clothes and we'll head out to find some bubbly. I have a nice suit, 'though it makes my balls itch.

DANIELLE.

(Grimacing) I will count the minutes, chéri.

CHARLIE.

(correcting her) Charlie. It's pronounced Charlie.

DANIELLE.

Yes, of course. Hurry up, my dear.

(Charlie exits)

LAURA.

He's a dope.

DANIELLE.

We can't all be the Wizard of Oz.

LAURA.

Some of us can't even be Toto. What do you want with a dim bulb like Charlie?

DANIELLE.

I told you, I am strongly attracted to great magicians.

LAURA.

You honestly think Charlie is a great magician? I must be doing a better job covering for him than I thought.

DANIELLE.

Your envy of him makes you very unappealing. What do you remind me of? I know, a mad cow, a *vâche folle*.

LAURA.

Why would I envy that snail, that ass, that pustule? That pustule on the ass of a snail?

DANIELLE.

Perhaps because he owns everything here and you own nothing.

LAURA.

How did you know that? That's very private family business.

DANIELLE.

I know a great many things. I think I will take a walk around and inspect the backstage of the Great CharLee. I have always wondered what the backstage looks like.

LAURA.

Just don't touch anything. We have enough trouble keeping up with everything Charlie breaks.

DANIELLE.

(Wandering apparently without aim, fingering a few props, then coming to the magician's cabinet, which was her goal after all).

And what is this strange looking box? I've never seen it in the Great CharLee's show.

LAURA.

(Putting herself between Danielle and the box) Stay away from it. You might get hurt.

DANIELLE.

Hurt by a magic prop? Don't be silly.

LAURA.

That cabinet is very powerful. You don't understand it.

DANIELLE.

And I suppose you do? How does it work then?

LAURA.

I don't exactly know.

DANIELLE.

I didn't think you did.

LAURA.

It was my father's. He was the only one who knew how it worked, but I'm studying it. I'll figure it out.

DANIELLE.

Oh, but if it was your father's, it must be Charlie's now. I can't imagine why you would be studying Charlie's box. You have his permission, I suppose?

LAURA.

I don't need Charlie's permission to study my father's box. And what business is it of yours? It has nothing to do with you.

DANIELLE.

Oh, but that will change. That will change. *(She exits).*

LAURA.

(Mocking) "That will change, that will change." That little baguette will never get her hands on my father's box as long as I'm alive.

(Stroking the box) Dad, why were you so mysterious about this cabinet? You taught me everything else; why couldn't you teach me this?

(The box shakes and smoke comes from inside it. Laura backs away in alarm. Merlin appears from inside the box. He is an old Englishman dressed in a shabby suit and hat, out of fashion, carrying a carpetbag.)

MERLIN.

(Coughing) Oh, my. That was a rough ride. *(To Laura)* Excuse me, my dear, sorry to barge in on you, but you can't always time your arrival with these nutty cabinets.

LAURA.

Who are you?

MERLIN.

Merlin's my name. Not *that* Merlin. It's a common name among magicians. You must be Jack's girl. Laura, isn't it?

LAURA.

(Shaking hands) Yes, pleased to meet you. You knew my father?

MERLIN.

Knew him? I was his best friend. We were mates back in the day. Ah, we had some wonderful times, Jackie and I.

LAURA.

Why haven't I ever met you? Why didn't you come around before?

MERLIN.

Ah, well, it's a long story. Best friends sometimes lose track of one another, don't they? But I thought about Jack all the time, every day. And I was terribly broken up to hear of his passing.

LAURA.

Yes, that was sad.

MERLIN.

I thought about coming to the funeral, but it was a bit awkward for me. I decided to come now, though. I figured you could use some help. Jack would have wanted me to help you.

LAURA.

Help? What kind of help would I need?

MERLIN.

A long time ago, shortly after your mother, ah, disappeared, your father was left alone with a wee babe. That was you. All the women in the neighborhood found your father a sympathetic soul and wanted to help him. He was very good looking, you know. But your pa had no interest in making friends with the ladies. He was too preoccupied with you and with his craft. Merlin, he said to me, one day, I won't be here to watch over my wee lass, and I'm counting on you to see that she doesn't get cheated out of her inheritance.

LAURA.

What inheritance? I loved my dad, but he left everything to his apprentice, Charlie. Who is now my boss, thanks to his owning everything in my dad's show.

MERLIN.

But perhaps he doesn't own everything.

LAURA.

I've seen the will. Everything went to Charlie.

MERLIN.

Even the box?

LAURA.

Everything

MERLIN.

Hmm. That doesn't seem right. I'm certain your father meant for you to have his magical box.

LAURA.

If he meant for me to have it, he sure kept it a secret.

MERLIN.

Very strange, very strange.

LAURA.

What do you know about the box? I've been trying to figure it out, but I haven't gotten anywhere with it. And here, you just show up in it.

MERLIN.

I'm afraid I don't know very much about it. Jack kept very close about his box. I was just thinking today about how I ought to come and find you and, poof! I was here. I thought Jack might have taught you how to work the thing, but I see he kept it from you, too. All I really know about it is that Jack found it in Singapore and spent years studying it. Didn't he include it in his act?

LAURA.

No. He said it was too dangerous.

MERLIN.

Yes, surely it must be. Though all magicians seem irresistibly drawn to it, it surely is too dangerous. Your father was pursued his whole life by people trying to steal his box. He would have wanted me to make sure that after he was gone, they didn't steal it from you.

LAURA.

I've noticed a lot of interest in that box. We've had more than our share of tourists hanging around back here ogling that thing.

MERLIN.

You need to be very careful, my dear. That crew can be a desperate lot.

LAURA.

(Laughing) Desperate they may be, but I just tell them to kiss off. Why, we had one of them desperate fellas here when my dad was alive, name of Armando. He apprenticed with my dad until it was obvious that he was only hanging around to get at that box. He even pretended he was interested in me. But we kicked his butt out the door, Dad and I.

MERLIN.

That's rather frightening. Has he come back since your father died?

LAURA.

He wouldn't dare.

MERLIN.

Don't underestimate the power of that box to attract vermin. Once a magician gets an inkling of it, the attraction can be irresistible.

[Cue Track 4: Magic Box]

(Singing)

To be a magician is a lot of fun,
With tricks and deceptions to wow ev'ryone,
You make things vanish and you make things appear,
Like nickels and quarters from a young girl's ears. *(He produces a coin from Laura's ear.)*

But when the show is over and the crowds are gone,
And you settle in your armchair with your jammies on,
You try not to dwell on the unorthodox,
But your dreams keep returning to that magic box.

Your father was in Asia when he found that crate,
He got it from a Singaporean potentate,
Another magician would have gone quite beserk,
But he struggled for years to make the fool thing work.

Your father was the guy who made the ladies sigh
When you were in nappies yet,
But the thing he held most dear, next to you, of course, my dear,
Was his magical cabinet.

Your daddy was my friend, though maybe in the end,
I should have been a better mate,
But one thing I know is true is that he would have wanted you,
In charge of his magic crate.

What's the big attraction of this magic box
That to a magician is so intoxicating?
The secrets of the universe
Belong to the person who unlocks it first.

The universe has powers we can only guess,
Those powers could bring heaven to the wilderness
Or in the hands of evil could make quite a mess
And bring about an era of unhappiness.

Be careful who gets around that crazy thing,
Whose friendly demonstrations have a hollow ring,
Though having it in here makes your theatre rock,
A magnet for villains is that magic box.

Your father would have wanted you to watch your backside with this crew,
And not ever to forget,
That if you don't watch this crowd, they'll take as much as they're allowed,
And come back to steal your cabinet.

Your father is the man who will beat them in the end,
With you and me by his side
And if we are clever folks, you won't be cheated by these blokes,
Of the box that was your dad's pride.

LAURA AND MERLIN.

My/Your father is the man who will beat them in the end,
With you and me by his side
And if we are clever folks, we won't be cheated by these blokes,
Of the box that was Jackie's pride.

MERLIN.

Well said, my dear. We'll talk more later. Now it's time for me to get these old bones
settled for a spell.

LAURA.

My dad kept a bedroom at the back of the theatre.

MERLIN.

(Ruefully) Yes, I know.

LAURA.

You're welcome to stay there.

MERLIN.

Thank you, my dear. I shall. *(Exits)*

(Laura hums to herself as she straightens up. Armando enters and stands quietly upstage. It is a moment before Laura notices him. He is a handsome, dark man, dressed impeccably.)

LAURA.

You!

ARMANDO.

Yes. It is I.

LAURA.

Armando!

ARMANDO.

I have not changed my name.

LAURA.

What are you doing here, you cockroach?

ARMANDO.

I see you are still gentle with words. I came to express my condolences on the death of your father.

LAURA.

You're still a liar, Armando. You don't care about my father, and you never did.

ARMANDO.

I came because I cared about you. We once had something special.

LAURA.

Did we now? It was special until you realized you couldn't get what you wanted by using me.

(She catches Armando glancing surreptitiously at the magic box).

Yes, it's still there, you creep. And you still can't have it.

ARMANDO.

You misunderstand me.

LAURA.

Why did you run out on me?

ARMANDO.

Your father and I had...differences. We could not get along. Our disagreements were poisoning the air. I had to breathe.

LAURA.

Baloney. He wouldn't teach you how to work the box. And when you realized that I had no power to change his mind, you dropped me like a stone.

ARMANDO.

You have become such an angry young woman.

LAURA.

I wish people would stop telling me I'm angry. Of course, I'm angry. Why wouldn't I be angry?

[Cue Track 5: Evil Ways]

(singing)

You treacherous magician with your lying tongue,
A tool for your ambition, I was quite in shock
When you argued with my father and went on the run,
Because he wouldn't let you near his magic box.

ARMANDO.

(Spoken)

Laura, Laura, you've got it all wrong. I was too timid to tell you.

LAURA.

To tell me what?

ARMANDO.

How I felt about you.

LAURA.

Enough of your lies, Armando. *Piss off!*

ARMANDO.

(Singing)

I, I should have told, I should have told you
How I felt, I felt, I felt about you,
I made no comment
On what you meant
And so I went away,
If I were a man that day,
I would have thought to say,
That I love you.

I, I was too shy, I was too timid,
I was scared that you had a speed limit,
Yes, I had a hunch
That you would punch
Me if I went too far,
Though I was intoxicated,
I was intimidated,
'Cause I love you.

I didn't know how much I cared,
Didn't know how much I loved you,
Didn't know if you loved me, too,
Didn't know 'cause I was scared.

You didn't tell me I should call,
Didn't tell me that I was free
To make love to you so tenderly,
To make love to you at all.

LAURA.

We had no communication
Back in those early, early days,
Waiting with anticipation
For a clue, For a clue
Behind that stony gaze.

ARMANDO.

We had no communication
Back in those early days,
Waiting with anticipation
For a clue, For a clue
For a clue behind that stony gaze.

LAURA.

I don't think you cared,
Don't think you loved me,
Didn't love me,
You're a liar and a creep,
A low life scum.

You had no respect for me, you cheat,
You wanted only to enrich yourself
You're a bastard, you're a shit,
A rotten bum.

LAURA.

I don't think you cared,
Don't think you loved me,
Didn't love me,
You're a liar and a creep, creep, creep,
A low life scum.

ARMANDO.

I didn't know how much I cared,
Didn't know how much I loved you,
Didn't know if you loved me, too,
Didn't know 'cause I was scared.

You had no respect for me, you cheat,
You wanted only to enrich yourself
You're a bastard, you're a shit, shit, shit,
A rotten bum.

You didn't tell me I should call,
Didn't tell me that I was free
To make love to you so tenderly,
To make love to you at all.

We had no sophistication
Back in those bad old, bad old days,
Watching you with trepidation
For a sign, for a sign you'd changed your
evil ways.
A sign, for a sign, for a sign,
You'd changed your evil,
Damn, you had some evil ways.

We had no sophistication
Back in those bad old days,
Watching you with trepidation
For a sign, For a sign
For a sign you'd changed your evil ways.
For a sign, for a sign,
For a sign you'd changed your evil,
Damn, you had some evil ways.

(They exit, furious, in opposite directions. Charlie enters. He is all dressed up, but a bit too loud. He spends some time in front of a mirror combing his hair. Danielle enters, very slinky, dressed to kill.)

DANIELLE.

There you are, chéri. You look very handsome.

CHARLIE.

(At a loss for words.) Wow.

DANIELLE.

Do you like me, darling?

CHARLIE.

I'll say. You sure are pretty.

DANIELLE.

Oh, I just threw on some old things. You would like me much better without them.

CHARLIE.

I can imagine.

DANIELLE.

We'll go for a little glass of champagne, and after, you won't need to imagine.

CHARLIE.

That sounds awfully nice, but aren't we moving a little fast? We just met.

DANIELLE.

(Pouting) You hate me!

CHARLIE.

No, no, nothing like that. I'm just kind of blown away. You're about the prettiest girl I've ever seen. I'm not used to pretty girls throwing themselves at me.

DANIELLE.

Throwing at you? What is throwing at you? Is this like throwing up? Are pretty girls throwing up at you?

CHARLIE.

No, no. Throwing themselves at me. It's an expression.

DANIELLE.

This English is a very strange language. I don't understand it.

CHARLIE.

Don't worry about it. But slow down a little. Don't be so aggressive.

DANIELLE.

But, Charlie, I am going very slowly. I am being very gentle and very patient with you. You have not seen aggressive yet. But if you do not cooperate, you will see much aggression, *beaucoup d'aggression*.

[Cue Track 6: What I Want]

(Singing. During the song, Charlie resists Danielle's advances, but in the end, he gives in.)

You can fight me if you want to lose,
It's your headache if that's what you choose,
In my country, we would call you bête,
What I want I get.

When I'm near you, I am getting hot,
If you say no, I am hearing not,
I want you to join my tête à tête and
What I want I get.

Is it such a bloody sacrifice
To be near me when I'm making nice?
You obey me, I'll be in your debt,
What I want I get.

Your resistance is a useless ploy,
I'm your teacher, you're my fond schoolboy,
Don't be naughty and please don't forget,
What I want I get.

Would you like to play a little game?
Spin the bottle will look very tame,
Will I win you, do you want to bet?
What I want I get.

If you're good to me, you'll get a treat,
Something juicy, something good to eat,
Be a darling, be my little pet,
What I want I get.

Do I attract you? Please let down your guard,
Why must you make ev'rything so hard?
I knew I fancied you when first we met and
What I fancy I get.

Do I attract you? Please let down your guard,
If you will let me, I will make it hard,
I knew I wanted you when first we met and
What I want I get.
What I want I get.

(Blackout)

Scene 2. The next morning. The lights come up on Danielle, making herself quite at home backstage, brushing her hair and putting on her make-up. Merlin enters right.

MERLIN.

Well, look what malodorous road kill the cat dragged in.

DANIELLE.

Good morning, Merlin. I rather expected you'd turn up.

MERLIN.

You're looking remarkably well preserved, Danielle.

DANIELLE.

I have always been well preserved. I don't see the point in letting oneself get old.

MERLIN.

Getting old is what people do.

DANIELLE.

No, it is not what I do. It is never what I do.

MERLIN.

I am not sure I would want to always be young. I did some very stupid things when I was young.

DANIELLE.

(She gets up and puts her arms around his neck) Are you counting me as one of the stupid things you did when you were young?

MERLIN.

(Detaching her arms from around his neck) You are the most stupid thing I did when I was young.

DANIELLE.

Well it doesn't matter. I have a new young man now.

MERLIN.

I suppose you're after Jack's young assistant since he inherited Jack's box. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're old enough to be his grandmother.

DANIELLE.

Perhaps. But he couldn't tell in bed last night. I'm still a tigress between the sheets. Admit it, Merlin. You also swooned when I put my tongue in those special places, no?

MERLIN.

I don't like to think about it. I'm not proud of myself. You were my best friend's wife, dammit.

DANIELLE.

Poor Merlin has a conscience. What a shame; it's such an inconvenience to have a conscience. Nothing bad came of our little fling, darling. So you made love to your best friend's wife. Don't make it into such a big deal, *mon vieux*.

MERLIN.

But you had a child...my child!

DANIELLE.

Don't remind me. That little parasite nearly wrecked my gorgeous body being born, and then she tried to suck the life out of my perfect breasts. I was very happy to run away from that unfortunate situation.

MERLIN.

Your motherly sentiments are so touching.

DANIELLE.

I'm not the motherly type. I never was. It's not my fault that the little bitch got thrust into this world.

MERLIN.

Not your fault? How was it not your fault? You were there at the moment of conception, as I recall.

DANIELLE.

I was there, but I didn't ask to become a mother. You stuck your magic wand (she grasps his crotch) where it didn't belong.

MERLIN.

(Pulling away) I recall having been invited. Against my better judgment, I might add. You know that box is hers by rights.

DANIELLE.

That box is mine! Community property and all that.

MERLIN.

He never let you near it, did he?

DANIELLE.

No. He was very secretive about it. He showed up after one of his trips to Asia and tried to sneak that *boîte* back here. But as soon as it came within a hundred feet, my senses picked it up. I am quite a sensitive person, you know. I felt the power of that box like I've never felt power before. When I touch it, I feel the electricity, as though all living souls are speaking through it. I insisted that he tell me about it, but he refused.

MERLIN.

He was on to you, was old Jack. He knew you were no good.

DANIELLE.

For years I had to put up with his sanctimonious *merde* about doing good in the world. There he was sitting on a source of immeasurable power in the universe, and he wants to be a girl scout. Well, he's gone now, and the box is as good as mine.

MERLIN.

How exactly do you plan to get it?

DANIELLE.

If you must know, I plan to marry the new owner. He'll give me anything I want as long as I wiggle my lovely *derrière* in his face.

MERLIN.

You're going to marry that boy? That's obscene! I can't let you do that.

DANIELLE.

How will you stop me, darling? The young man is smitten. Do you think he's going to listen to an old man trying to tell him that his beautiful and sexy lover is really an old witch out to rob him? Be realistic, Merlin. The box is mine. Well, I must be running. My darling Charles will be craving my company. *Au revoir, mon vieux. (Exits left).*

MERLIN.

That miserable woman. She's too much for me. (*Spoken over song intro*) I'm just too old to handle her. I never could handle her. Too old, too old.

[*Cue Track 7: Remorse*]

(*Singing*)

I'm just a frail and tattered old magician,
These bones have been around a time or two,
There aren't many tricks I haven't mastered,
But next to her, I don't know what to do.

There was a time when I was young and foolish,
She tricked me with her beauty and her charms,
She made me wrong the only friend I've ever had,
But when she looks my way I still get warm.

I don't expect remorse from her,
I'm not a stupid sorcerer,
There's too much damage to incur
By telling what there is to tell.
That woman makes my hormones stir,
It's tempting to of course infer,
That I might be in love with her,
Except that she's a bitch from hell.

We met one sunny day, I think in April,
When winter's chill was giving way to spring,
She held my hand and braided flowers in my hair,
She told me she and Jack were quarrelling.

But quarrelling or not, he was her husband,
And quarrelling or not, he was my friend,
And quarrelling or not, she had my daughter,
And that is why I need to make amends.

I don't expect remorse from her,
I'm not a stupid sorcerer,
There's too much damage to incur
By telling what there is to tell.
That woman makes my hormones stir,
It's tempting to of course infer,
That I might be in love with her,
Except that she's a bitch from hell.

My old friend Jack did not suspect betrayal,
His daughter was his daughter, never doubt it,
But still I have to wonder if he knew what happened
And chose to never say a word about it.

When all is said and done, she is his daughter,
When all is said and done, she was his wife,
When all is said and done, I'm just a tired old man,
And loneliness is all I have in life.
Loneliness is all I have in life.

(Charlie enters right. He looks like he hasn't slept much.)

MERLIN.

You just missed her. She went that way.

CHARLIE.

Who are you? And what do you know about my business?

MERLIN.

(Extending his hand) Name's Merlin.

CHARLIE.

(Sarcastically) Yeah, right. And I'm Tinkerbell.

MERLIN.

I very much doubt that your name is Tinkerbell, Charlie, but I can assure you that my name is Merlin.

CHARLIE.

Hey, how'd you know my name?

MERLIN.

I know a lot of things. Like where you spent last night. And with whom.

CHARLIE.

(Proudly) Yeah, how about that? I was a beast.

MERLIN.

Yes, I'm sure you were.

CHARLIE.

Eat your heart out, old man. I'll bet you never had a piece that fine in your whole life.

MERLIN.

You shouldn't bet on things about which you are entirely ignorant.

CHARLIE.

You're all dried up. You just don't have what the chickies want.

MERLIN.

Perhaps. But things may not be as simple as they seem to you.

CHARLIE.

Nothing could be simpler. There's this stunning French gal with a body that never quits. And she wants what I got. She craves my anatomy.

MERLIN.

Does she now?

CHARLIE.

You bet. She refers to my equipment as a classic American hot rod. Isn't that wild? A Hot...Rod. Get it?

MERLIN.

Yes, it's brilliant. You don't suppose she could be using you, do you?

CHARLIE.

Using me for what?

MERLIN.

Perhaps she's after your property.

CHARLIE.

Property? What property? I don't own anything except some crappy old magician props, a cane that goes limp just like your pecker, a deck of marked cards, a handkerchief with

coins sewn inside it, an old hat stained with rabbit shit. She doesn't want that stuff. She's a classy lady.

MERLIN.

Are you sure you don't have anything of value?

CHARLIE.

You just don't get it. What she wants is me! My habeas corpus. My Hot...Rod.

MERLIN.

It seems rather hard to believe, doesn't it?

CHARLIE.

That's because you don't know anything about love.

MERLIN.

Ah, love is it?

CHARLIE.

Yes, love. If you never had it, you'll never understand it. It makes you want to climb to the top of the building and shout, to tell everyone about your hot honey, to describe the incredible lust that takes over when you're with her, to describe in detail all the moist places you've explored together.

MERLIN.

I see. It sounds rather disgusting, I must say.

CHARLIE.

Don't be put off. It's the best thing there is. Love changes you from being a loser one minute to being a superhero hunk rock star the next minute.

[Cue Track 8: When You're in Love]

(Singing)

When you're in love,
Isn't anything you can do,
When you're in love,
Nothing better can happen to you.

My love and I
Are the essence of heavenly lust,
Don't be put off,
Isn't anything finer than us.

You might have thought that
No woman would want my stuff,
But I've got a girlfriend now and
She just can't get enough

When you're a schmuck,
It's astounding when someone loves you,
If you're in luck,
She won't realize how much better she could do

She thinks I'm classic,
A vintage American hot rod,
Which she likes next to
Her classic French feminine bod.

When you're in love,
Isn't anything else you want to do,
Going to heaven
On a rocket ship built for two.

Ask me how I
Got that goddess to sleep in my bed,
Haven't a clue,
Would have thought she'd be laughing instead.

I'm not a loser and
I'm not just a silly putz,
Cause I've got a girlfriend now,
And she likes me very much.

(Laura enters. Charlie stops and bows.)

CHARLIE.

Top o' the morning to you, Laura, or perhaps I should say *bonjour* (*mispronouncing it*).

LAURA.

Don't be such an asshole.

CHARLIE.

Well, look who got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. Thank goodness I'm in such a good mood, grumpy girl.

LAURA.

(To Merlin). What's wrong with him?

MERLIN.

He's in love.

LAURA.

That's ridiculous.

CHARLIE.

Danny doesn't think it's ridiculous. You don't understand. You've never been in love.

LAURA.

Maybe, maybe not.

CHARLIE.

(Exaggerated) Well, except for Armando. But he doesn't count, 'cause he dumped you.

LAURA.

Your French goddess will dump you, too. She's just using you.

CHARLIE.

Why would she be using me? Like I told grandpa, I haven't got anything she would want, except for my Hot...Rod.

LAURA.

Don't be such an idiot. She wants that box *(pointing)*.

CHARLIE.

That piece of junk? She can have it. It doesn't work anyway.

LAURA.

(Grabbing him by the collar) You listen to me carefully, Charlie. She. . . cannot. . . have . . . it.

CHARLIE.

(Peeling her hand off his shirt) Chill, girl. I'll give it to whomever I want. You're getting pretty uppity considering you're the hired help.

(He turns on his heel and walks off, humming his song).

LAURA.

(She goes to the box and fiddles with it.) I've got to figure out this box before that dickhead does something stupid with it.

MERLIN.

Yes, you must learn how to operate the box. I will look around—maybe there is an instruction manual around here somewhere. Although I suppose instruction manuals are all online these days *(he exits)*.

(Laura is still tinkering with the box when Armando and Danielle enter from opposite wings. Laura quickly hides inside the box. Danielle rushes over to Armando and embraces him).

DANIELLE.

Armando! Darling!

ARMANDO.

Hello, Danielle, did you have a nice night?

DANIELLE.

Not at all. I spent it with the very silly boy who owns the box.

ARMANDO.

He seems to have had a wonderful time. He's been going around telling everyone that you call him your hot rod.

DANIELLE.

Are you jealous, my darling? You know I love only you. Besides, there is nothing hot about his rod. It's a rather mushy little *éclair*. Quite pathetic, actually. It will be quite boring to be married to the little toad.

ARMANDO.

Is it worth it?

DANIELLE.

Darling, I want that box and I will have it. After I marry him, I will make sure it is very clear that I own it before I send Charlie to the next world.

ARMANDO.

And how will you get rid of him?

DANIELLE.

It depends how much he annoys me. If he is nice to me and doesn't pester me to have sex with him, he will die quietly in his sleep. If he makes things unpleasant for me, he will pay for it with a very painful death.

ARMANDO.

I want the box, too, Danielle, but this talk of murder is not my style.

DANIELLE.

Don't worry about it, my darling. You don't have to be involved. Just be available at night to support me through the marriage part. *(She puts her hand in his pants)* I'm going to need a lot of support.

ARMANDO.

(Pulling away) Not here, Danielle. It's too public.

DANIELLE.

(Leading him away by the hand) Then we'll go somewhere private. I have this terrible taste in my mouth from last night. I know just how to fix it. *(They exit.)*

LAURA.

(Coming from her hiding place) Armando, mixed up in this! I knew he was no good. And they're going to kill Charlie! I've got to warn him. Even Charlie deserves better.

[Cue Track 9: When Evil Wins]

(Singing)

How can people be so evil?
How can people just not care
How their actions harm another?
How can they not be aware?

Why are people so reluctant
To let people live in peace?
What's the reason you people quarrel?
Why does your hatefulness increase?

Now if I had an evil nature,
I suppose I could be cruel,
I suppose I'd be a tyrant,
Yes, I'd be an awful tyrant,

Maybe, sometimes,
I do holler too much at Charlie.
(Charlie struts onstage, does a muscle-man pose, and exits)
He's a dope, dope, dope,
But, nope,
(Merlin is revealed.)

I don't have an evil nature.
I don't have an evil nature.

How can people be so evil?
How can people just not care
How their actions harm another?
How can they not be aware?

What if people just were friendly?
What if people said hello,
How are you, I hope you're happy?
Can I help you, but no!

MERLIN. *(Singing)*
You don't have an evil
nature.

Your father knew you could never be evil,
He knew that evil would cause you despair,
He trusted you'd never take after your mother,
Now it's time to beware.

No, no.

LAURA and MERLIN.

No-one wants to be too joyful,
No-one can be so naïve,

As to trust in human goodness,
It would be too hard to believe,
To believe.

(Charlie enters and, after his first line, Danielle and Armando slink onstage, their clothing in disarray.)

CHARLIE.

Ev'ryone gather around,
I've got news you'll all want to hear,
Yesterday I was just a clown,
Today I'm a man thanks to my Danny dear.

She's amazing, a regular *bête fauve*, (*Spoken*) (that's French),
I'm amazing, a tiger in pants (or out of them),
It's amazing how happy she's made me (oh, how she made me),
Made me, made me, my little enchantress from France.

DANIELLE.

(Combing her hair with her fingers and trying to tuck her blouse into her skirt)

Charlie my darling, you make me all flustered,
I can't keep my chemise tucked into my skirt.
Perhaps we can talk of our future at dinner,
And then I will give you some naughty dessert.

CHARLIE.

Danny the future is now if we want it,
You are the most wonderful thing in my life,
I'd like to ask you to be with me forever,
I'd like to ask, Danny, would you be my wife?

DANIELLE.

(Spoken) Yes.

LAURA.

(Screamed) No!
I can't believe what you tell us.

CHARLIE.

Laura, you're so cute when you're jealous.

DANIELLE.

Stay out of my bizness, *vâche folle*, will you?

CHARLIE.

(Shrugging, spoken to Laura). Tough luck.

LAURA.

I heard that witch say that she would kill you,
(*Spoken*) You schmuck!

CHARLIE.

She was talking about last night in bed,
Oh what an evening!
Another amazing fuckfest like that and I'm dead.

LAURA.

Charlie you moron, she's taking advantage.

DANIELLE.

Shut up little Laura, you're making me tired.

LAURA.

She'll rob you and cheat you and turn off your heartbeat.

DANIELLE.

You leave me no choice but to tell you you're fired.

LAURA.

(*Spoken*). You can't fire me. You're not the boss.

CHARLIE.

(*Spoken*). But I am. You're fired.

ARMANDO.

(*Sung as a soliloquy, although Merlin can hear him. Armand has been moved by Laura's distress.*)

Oh, look at how his words have injured her,
How her world now lies in ruins,
I can't stand to be involved with this,
Why the hell am I a part of this?
I loved her once, I love her still,
I don't know why I ever lost her,

I may be beyond all hope
But nope,

MERLIN.

I don't have an evil nature,
I don't have an evil nature.

You don't have an evil
Nature

DANIELLE (*Soliloquy*).

How can you people not be evil,
Why would people ever think to care,
Why in the hell would anyone anyone care?

QUINTET.

LAURA.

How can people be so evil?
How can people just not care
How their actions harm another?
How can they not be aware?

DANIELLE.

How can you people not be evil,
Why would people ever think to care,
Why in the hell would anyone anyone care?

CHARLIE.

How can people be evil,
How can people just not care,
How can they not be aware?

ARMANDO.

Look at how his words have injured her,
How her world now lies in ruins,
I can't stand to be involved with this,
Why the hell am I a part of this?
I loved her once, I love her still,
I don't know why I ever lost her.

MERLIN.

How can people be evil,
How can people just just not care,
How can they not be aware?

ARMANDO.

I may be
Beyond all hope but
Nope.

DANIELLE.

Beyond all hope but
Nope.

LAURA.

Nope.

ARMANDO & LAURA

I hate it when evil
Wins.

DANIELLE.

I love it when evil wins.

MERLIN.

She loves it when evil wins.

ALL.

When evil wins.

CURTAIN, ACT 1

ACT 2

Scene 1. Backstage. The magic box is now center stage. Laura is found sitting on the ground with a large and ancient book in her lap. She is tinkering with the box as the curtain rises. She pauses, a dreamy look coming over her.

[Cue Track 10: My Mom]

LAURA.

(Singing)

Kids growing up usually have a mom,
To pack their lunch and wipe their noses
And to take the blame for their adult neuroses,
I wonder what my mother was like.

I see her as a blonde or perhaps a redhead,
But in my mind she might as well be
Bald, 'cause my father would never tell me
What, what my mother was like.

It hurt him so much when she passed away,
He almost couldn't bear to live without her,
He never would agree to talk about her,
I wonder what my mother was like,
I wonder what my mother was like.

I imagine she was soft and kind,
That she smelled of rain and violets,
Hugs and kisses that alone were mine,
A happiness that I could never forget,
Or could I?

I growing up never had a mom
To kiss my boo-boos and make them better,
I'm really sorry that I never met her,
I wonder what my mother was like,
I wonder what my mom was like.

(Merlin enters)

MERLIN.

(To himself). What an amazing intermission! Absolutely first rate. *(Noticing Laura)*
Laura! You're not supposed to be here.

LAURA.

Merlin, you knew my mother, didn't you.

MERLIN.

(Guardedly). Yes.

LAURA.

Tell me about her. What was she like?

MERLIN.

Well, she was...special.

LAURA.

In what way? What do you mean?

MERLIN.

Once you met her, you never forgot her.

LAURA.

Oh, yes, I was sure of that. What she pretty?

MERLIN.

(In spite of himself). Oh, my. She was very pretty.

LAURA.

What was her hair like? Was she a blonde or a redhead?

MERLIN.

She could be either. Or a brunette. She changed her hair quite often. At the blink of an eye. Very unpredictable was your mother.

LAURA.

They must have been very much in love, my parents.

MERLIN.

(Under his breath). One of them was.

LAURA.

What was that?

MERLIN.

Oh nothing, nothing. I was just wondering if you'd figured out that box yet.

LAURA.

I think I'm making some progress. Watch this.

(She waves her arms and mutters an incantation. A small puff of smoke comes from the box).

MERLIN.

Yes, I suppose that would be progress.

LAURA.

It's not very much, I know. Why don't you try, Merlin? Take a look right here (*She indicates in the book*). I can't quite make it out. What do you think?

MERLIN.

(*Looking in the book*). Hmm. Very interesting. Let's see.
(*He gestures and utters an incantation. A squeak comes from the box, then a dove appears from inside it and flies offstage.*)

LAURA.

Bravo! Although I don't think this box was made to create birds.

MERLIN.

No, I rather think we have a ways to go. There are some old books in the room above the theatre. Perhaps one of them would be helpful.

LAURA.

Yes, I really need to figure out this box before that Danielle gets her claws into it.

MERLIN.

I'm afraid you don't have much time. You'd better hurry.

(*They exit left as Danielle leads Armando onstage.*)

DANIELLE.

There it is my darling, Jack's magic box. Soon to be our magic box.
(*She reaches out to caress the box, but a spark from the box shocks her.*)
Ow! What's wrong with this stupid thing?

ARMANDO.

It doesn't seem to like you.

DANIELLE.

It's a box. It has no business deciding if it likes me. I am its mistress!

ARMANDO.

Not yet you aren't.

DANIELLE.

Details, details, my darling. It's only a matter of time. You've been rather distant with me, my love. Are you jealous that I've been leading along that little boy?

ARMANDO.

I don't like the idea of killing him.

DANIELLE.

You want me to stay married to him? Don't be silly.

ARMANDO.

And you're so mean to Laura. She's a sweet girl. She doesn't deserve to be treated so poorly.

DANIELLE.

Armando, darling, you must be joking. That little twit doesn't deserve to be treated as well as I've treated her. She thinks she can stand between me and my magic box. What a silly child. Armando, it pains me to think you've gone soft on her. I know you have history with her, but you love me now, don't you.

ARMANDO.

(Unconvincingly) Yes, my dear.

DANIELLE.

Well, I would appreciate it if you would act more loving. And figure out that damn box. You apprenticed with the Amazing Jack, did you not?

ARMANDO.

I did.

DANIELLE.

Well, didn't he teach you anything?

ARMANDO.

A few things.

DANIELLE.

Then get on it, my darling. I am tired of waiting. *(She exits, muttering under her breath)* Happily I have a back-up plan in case you fail me, my darling.

ARMANDO.

(Armando approaches the box. He caresses it.) Hello, old friend. It's nice to see you again. *(The box hums, vibrates, lights up.)* Yes, Jack taught me years ago that I will not be the one who will master you. But it's nice to see you all the same. You remind me of when I was young, when it was exciting to get up in the morning to see what I would learn that day. When the world was full of possibilities. Those were the best days of my life. Learning magic with Jack. Jack. And Laura. Ah, Laura. You wonder how these things begin. How I fell in love with Laura.

[Cue Track 11: Magical Laura]

(Singing)

How do these things begin?
I didn't plan to fall in love,
All I did was walk into the room,
And the rest was magic.

Magical Laura,
I knew the moment I saw her
That she would be
Magic for me,
Magical, magical,
Magical Laura.

When Laura said those magic words
My world became a better place,
I don't remember what she said to me,
Abracadabra or something like that.

Magical Laura,
I knew the moment I saw her
That she would be
Magic for me,
Magical, magical,
Magical Laura.

I don't know how she cast her spell,
I only know that she caught me,
I'm as helpless as a man can be,
Without a wish to be set free.

Magical Laura,
I knew the moment I saw her
That she would be
Magic for me,
Magical, magical,
Magical, magical,
Magical Laura.

(Armando exits right, Laura enters left carrying a very large and dusty book with many pages.)

LAURA.

I found the instruction manual!

(As she reads it, Charlie enters, surprised to see her.)

CHARLIE.

You! I thought I told you to stay out of here!

LAURA.

Be quiet, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

But I *am* glad to see you. I've missed you, Laura.

LAURA.

(*Preoccupied with her book.*) That's nice, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

It's been awful. Danielle is not much help onstage, strutting about like she does with her hips going back and forth one way and her chest going back and forth the other way, keeping me from concentrating, seeing as how I have some trouble concentrating anyway, but even more so with her putting her hands on me right onstage! My show is falling apart. I mean, I love her and all that, but she's a lousy assistant. She has no patience, sighing that little sigh whenever I ask her to hold the hat, jumping around like a rabbit before I can even get the rabbit to appear, taking her own bows whenever she likes, whether or not the trick is done. At least she's something to look at. I suppose she distracts the men in the audience so they aren't so likely to be watching me, particularly useful because men are likely to throw things at me when the tricks aren't working very well. I can't much say that I like the idea of the men in the audience leering at her. But at least they're not looking at me. The kids, though, the kids aren't interested in looking at her, no matter how big her tits are. They want magic, not boobs. I guess I don't blame them...Laura, you're not listening to me, are you?

LAURA.

No, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

Laura, what am I going to do? I need you back! Laura!!

LAURA.

(*Finally looking at him.*) What is it, Charlie?

CHARLIE.

Come back to me.

LAURA.

(*Going back to her book.*) Forget it, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

What can I do to get you back?

LAURA.
Give Danielle up. Send her away.

CHARLIE.
I can't.

LAURA.
Of course you can't. Your brains are in your pants. You lose IQ points every time you pee.

(Merlin enters, greets Charlie.)

MERLIN.
Hello, young fellow.

CHARLIE.
Hey, pops.

MERLIN.
(Stopping short, to the audience). Oh shit, am I his father, too? *(He shakes his head, no.)*

LAURA.
Merlin, I found the instruction manual.

MERLIN.
(Pronouncing it in French) *Formidable*. It's a rather large book, though. When will you have the box working?

LAURA.
I just started reading. It's going to take me a while.

MERLIN.
No, no, no, we don't have a while. You've got to hurry, Laura. You've got to get that box working now.

LAURA.
Stop pressuring me! I'm reading as fast as I can. Why are you rushing me all of a sudden?

MERLIN.
There's a lot at stake here. Read faster.

LAURA.
I'm doing my best. Don't be so pushy. If you want to help, get that gnat out of here. He's distracting me.

MERLIN.

(Putting his arm around Charlie's shoulder) Come, my boy. Laura has work to do. Let me tell you about the good old days of magic.

CHARLIE.

(Sarcastically, as Merlin leads him off right) Oh, joy. Old man stories. You're really starting to creep me out. And you don't smell very good either.

(Danielle enters, left.)

DANIELLE.

You!

LAURA.

Yes, yes, me.

DANIELLE.

But, why are you here? This is quite impossible. You were told that you may not trespass here.

LAURA.

Blow it out your bilge hole, lady.

DANIELLE.

No, *you* blow it out, how are you calling it, your big hole. And get out!

LAURA.

I have Charlie's permission.

DANIELLE.

That sick little puppy. How dare he give you permission?! I rescind his permission.

LAURA.

You're not in charge yet. Now get out of my light. I'm trying to read.

DANIELLE.

You have no manners. And why does that make-up make you look like a fish. Oh, I'm so sorry. You're not wearing make-up.

LAURA.

Why would any man be attracted to you? You're repulsive.

DANIELLE.

Attractive enough for the amazing Jack.

LAURA.

That's low, even for you.

DANIELLE.

Oh, it's quite true. Jack succumbed to my charms quite early. He absolutely insisted we be married the instant he laid eyes on me.

LAURA.

Liar!

DANIELLE.

Oh, my, have I upset you, my dear? The truth can be so inconvenient, can it not?

LAURA.

You and my father? Ha! What a joke. That would make you my mother. What a horrible thought.

DANIELLE.

Deny it as much as you like, my girl, but can't you see the family resemblance? Yes, yes, something about the eyes, and definitely the mouth. Why, we look like sisters, don't we? Of course, you are a good deal wider in the hips and not so excellent in the chest. No, young lady, you are my daughter, although you are even more unpleasant looking now than when I shat you out on the floor, screaming with pain and grieving for the ruination of my beautiful female parts.

LAURA.

Then why did my father say nothing about you?

DANIELLE.

Because your father had failed. He had failed to make a good marriage, and he had failed to make a good father. The Amazing Jack was the world's most amazing loser.

LAURA.

He was the best father.

DANIELLE.

How pathetic. Jack for all his talent as a magician, for all his kindness to the unfortunate of the earth, and for all his warmth and fellowship for others was many things, but he was never your father.

LAURA.

What do you mean?

DANIELLE.

The Amazing Jack was not so amazing in bed. He was shooting blanks. Your real father is that wrinkled old windbag, Merlin. He could show a girl a good time in his day, rolling

around in the hay with his best friend's wife. Sadly, I got too big a dose of his magic joy juice. Before I knew it, wham bam, how do you say it, knocked down.

LAURA.

Knocked up. And don't be ridiculous.

DANIELLE.

I do not do ridiculous.

LAURA.

You're pitiful.

DANIELLE.

(Heading off, with her chin high) No, you, little girl, with your faith in an old, washed up, and very dead imitation father are pitiful. *(Stopping before exiting, she turns to Laura)* Be a good girl and clean up after yourself before you leave here...forever. *(Exits)*

LAURA.

Oh, dad, did you really marry that awful woman? Is that why you never would talk about her, because thinking about her made you so unhappy, so sorry you had ever fallen under her spell? And could I really have a French mother? How is that possible? I don't like flaky pastry or turtlenecks or Woody Allen. And what of my memories of a happy childhood with the Amazing Jack? Are my memories all lies?

[Cue Track 12: My World]

(Singing)

The world used to be a safer place
When I had a father and a mother,
And never did I think I'd have to face
The possibility they didn't love one another.

But into my life came an evil demon
Who whispered that my world was just pretend,
That things were not what they were seemin',
She brought my little world to an unhappy end.

You never think about the end of your world,
You never think about how it might be
To learn that you spent your life living a lie,
To be deprived, to be deprived
Of your fondest memory.

THE COMPANY.

(Appearing in various places onstage to sing back-up)

You never think about the end of your world,
You never think about how it might be
To learn that you spent your life living a lie,
To be deprived, to be deprived,
To be deprived, to be deprived,
To be deprived, to be deprived,
To be deprived
Of your fondest memory.

(The Company vanishes except for Laura and Armando who are left on stage together.)

ARMANDO.

So sad.

LAURA.

Get away from me, you murderous slime.

ARMANDO.

Murderous slime? That's not fair.

LAURA.

Armando, I heard you and your evil lover plotting to kill Charlie. Your lover who, by the way, says she's my mother.

ARMANDO.

Your mother? That's disgusting.

LAURA.

You're telling me?

ARMANDO.

It's true, Laura, that Danielle plans to kill that young boy, but I have nothing to do with it.

LAURA.

Always plotting, always lying. Armando, you irritate me. I heard the two of you putting your heads together. Right before you put other parts of your body together. As soon as Danielle gets her hooks into that box, Charlie is dead. Now I don't care all that much for Charlie, who is as smart as a toad and twice as handsome, but I won't let Danielle have that box and I won't let her kill Charlie.

ARMANDO.

And I will stand by you. I love you.

LAURA.

That's just cruel, Armando. I had hoped once upon a time that you loved me, but I've grown up. You're drilling that snake who calls me her daughter, scheming to steal my father's box, and planning to kill an innocent kid whose only crime is excessive testosterone. You don't love me.

ARMANDO.

I will prove it to you. You want to learn how to work that box, don't you?

LAURA.

Of course I do.

ARMANDO.

I will teach you.

LAURA.

How will you teach me? If you knew how to work the box, you would have stolen it long ago.

ARMANDO.

Ah, but I could not have stolen it. It is not mine.

LAURA.

Ha! Why would that have stopped you?

ARMANDO.

Because the box will not work for just anyone. It will only work for the few magicians whom it recognizes and with whom it has a special relationship.

LAURA.

A relationship? It's a box!

ARMANDO.

Of course. But, it's a magic box. You don't expect it to be inert, like an overgrown umbrella stand, do you? The box knows me, and although we have a cordial relationship, the box does not belong to me. It belonged to your father, and I'll bet the box would be happy to meet Jack's daughter. Why don't you try saying hello?

LAURA.

(Sarcastically) Say hello to the box. Right.

ARMANDO.

Laura, you can spend the next month reading that book, page after yellow page of tiny script, a telephone book of useless detail and complicated instructions, but you won't get anywhere with the box until you have properly introduced yourself.

LAURA.

I would feel silly talking to a box. It's so...inanimate.

ARMANDO.

You talk to Charlie, don't you?

LAURA.

You have a point.

[Cue Track 13: Hello]

(Singing to the box)

Hello, Mr. Box, my name is Laura,
I humbly come to stand before ya,

(The box shakes and flashes its lights)

I hear you can hear and maybe see, too,
It's a real pleasure to finally meet you.

(The box shakes and flashes its lights again)

ARMANDO.

(Spoken) It hears you, Laura. Go on.

LAURA.

(Singing; the box continues to flash in between Laura's phrases.)

My father was Jack, I think you knew him,
Since his death, my life has been rather grim,
He gave all his stuff to a dope named Charley,
With whom I have been rather quarrel-ly.

(The box rumbles and flashes darker lights)

I know you must be busy and I hate to bother,
But a witch is trying to steal you, and she says that she's my mother,
If I weren't such a pacifist, I'd beat her senseless with my fist,
I wonder if it's possible to send her to Callisto.

ARMANDO.

(Spoken) Callisto? What's Callisto?

LAURA.

(Spoken) The fourth Gallilean moon of Jupiter. A very cold place.

ARMANDO.

(Spoken) She'll hate it.

THE BOX.

(Singing)

Laura my dear girl, of course it's my pleasure
To help out the daughter of my buddy, Jack,
I never much cared for that harlot, your mother,
I'd be very glad to stab her in the back.

LAURA.

Gee, Mister Box, that's very kind of you,
It's been very difficult to figure out what to do,
Being a magician has always been my fondest dream,
And now I'll have a happy ending,
Now I'll have a happy ending,
Now I'll be okay,
Kicking ass in my own special way,
Happy ending with you on my team,

LAURA and THE BOX.

Happy ending with you on my team.

ARMANDO.

What did I tell you? You've brought the box back to life.

LAURA.

With your help, thank you. But of course, you would help me bring it back to life. Now it's all the more dangerous. Evil people could take it over. Evil people like you.

ARMANDO.

I'm not after the box anymore. I'm only trying to help you.

LAURA.

(Sarcastically) I'm sure you are. And I'm sure that's what the devil woman will say as she steals it away from me, that she's only trying to help me. The devil woman who had her hands all over you, you weasel, you snake.

ARMANDO.

That's not fair.

LAURA.

Not fair to weasels and snakes.

ARMANDO.

Laura, I love you.

[Cue Track 14: Second Act Love Song]

LAURA.

(Singing)

There was a time when I was young,
When I would have believed
That you loved me,
But I was deceived
That you loved me.

ARMANDO.

(Spoken)

Laura, I'm so sorry.

(Singing)

In my life, I've been a skillful actor,
Playing parts according to my needs,
The needs of other people just were not a factor,
My self-absorption led to my bad deeds.

All my life has been nothing but theatre
Using people as props, but the very worst fact
Was that with you I was such a confabulator
And that was the theme of my first act.

But this is my second act love song,
The act when I find you once more,
The act when I tell you my love's not an act
When you see that I've changed from before.

I lost my way on the stage of my own drama,
My misbehavior was well known all over the town,
And I regret that by my hands you suffered trauma,
The way I played my first act should have brought the curtain down,
The way I played my first act should have brought the curtain down.

But this is my second act love song,
The act when I find you once more,
The act when I tell you my love's not an act
When you see that I've changed,
See that I've changed from before.

LAURA.

You sing a pretty song, but it's hard for me to believe you. Why would you, with your good looks, your careful manners, your sleek hairdo, and your lying mouth ever change?

ARMANDO.

It's true, Laura, that I had an interest in the box, a box I could never have, a box the workings of which I could never understand the way Jack understood and the way you will understand. And, yes, I teamed with Danielle to steal the box from you, to use whatever means necessary to make it ours. But I'm no longer interested in Danielle and I'm no longer interested in the box. I'm interested in you.

LAURA.

And if I don't believe you, if I won't have you?

ARMANDO.

Then send me to Callisto! If the only way for me to be touched by you is to be banished by you, I am ready.

LAURA.

A little melodramatic, don't you think?

ARMANDO.

I am perfectly serious (*he steps into the box*). If you can't believe that I am sincere, send me away, remove me from your sight, cut me off from human contact. Better the cold of the outer solar system than the freezer of your disregard.

LAURA.

(Shrugging) Whatever you say.

ARMANDO.

(*Sticking his head out*) You're sure you won't give me another chance?

LAURA.

Well, you are a rather nice looking fellow. But, no, I think you'd better be off.

(*Armando pulls himself back into the box as Laura waves her arms.*)

ARMANDO.

(*Sticking his head out again*) We did make a handsome couple.

LAURA.

Yes, we did. But, no, I don't think it's going to work. Back into the box.

(*Armando pulls himself back into the box as Laura waves her arms again.*)

ARMANDO.

(*Sticking his head out yet again*) And goodness knows, you've been very irritable without me.

LAURA.

Yes, I have been. I think it would be very healthy for me to have a boyfriend. But, maybe not. Boyfriends can be such a bother. Back you go (*Armand reluctantly pulls himself back into the box.*)

(*She waves her arms, the lights of the box blink, but nothing happens*)

ARMANDO.

(*From inside the box*) You need to say something. The box doesn't have eyes, you know.

LAURA.

All right. (*She waves her arms*) Abracadabra! (*and with a crack, Armand is gone. Merlin enters and sees the box blinking.*)

MERLIN.

Fabulous, you've got it working!

LAURA.

Yes, it wasn't so hard after all. Armand helped me.

MERLIN.

(*Looking around*) Armand. . . where is he. We have to be careful of him.

LAURA.

Don't worry. He's gone.

MERLIN.

Gone where?

LAURA.

Let's just say I sent him away.

MERLIN.

Ah, so we're alone?

LAURA.

Yup. Just you, me, and the box.

MERLIN.

So, how does it work?

LAURA.

I wave my arms and say abracadabra. It's pretty simple.

MERLIN.

What if you just wave your arms or just wish something?

LAURA.

It doesn't work. I've got to say something.

MERLIN.

Splendid! (*He produces a roll of duct tape and a gag*) Then, we won't have any interference from you. (*Merlin binds Laura's wrists with the duct tape, calling offstage*) Danielle, my dear, come look what I have for you.

LAURA.

What are you doing, Merlin, are you crazy?

MERLIN.

(*Gagging Laura*). Settle down Laura. We can do without your mouth for a little while.

(*Danielle enters.*)

DANIELLE.

How nice, Merlin, you've got the box working and the little cow is all tied up. How sweet of you.

MERLIN.

Yes, my dear. I believe we've won. (*To Laura*) Oh, Laura, I suppose I should explain. During the intermission, Danielle and I became. . . reacquainted. She convinced me that there was virtue in helping her take charge of Jack's box. She was, after all, Jack's faithful wife and by rights, she ought to have inherited his possessions.

(*Laura objects, but can only make wordless noise*).

Oh, don't fuss so. We'll take good care of it, won't we my dear?

[*Cue Track 15: Victory*]

LAURA.

(*Singing wordlessly behind her gag the bit from Magic Flute*)
Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!
Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

MERLIN.

We've got her where we want,
We've got her tied up tight,
We've got her mouth shut up,
We've finally done it right.

DANIELLE.

I never thought I'd see

Your love boat run aground,
It's a great day for me
To see you beaten down.

LAURA.

Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!
Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

Now you can kiss my ass,
Now you can lick my feet,
'Cause even you can see
That I/we have got you beat.

LAURA.

Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!
Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

DANIELLE.

Victory, it's sweet, it's magic and it's

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

All for me/us,
It's something I/we won't share with you!

DANIELLE.

Have you heard the news?
Since I win, you lose,
If you've got the blues, sing them.

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

You might be in shock
Or have a mental block
Since I/we own your box now.

MERLIN.

You need to pack your bags,
And take the next bus out,
Because our victory
Is what it's all about.

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

Your loser dad would be
So proud of loser you,
You screwed his plans up more

Than he could ever do.

DANIELLE.

Victory, it's sweet, it's magic and it's

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

All for me/us,
It's some-thing I/we won't share with you!

DANIELLE.

Have you heard the news?
Since I win, (spoken) you lose,
(Sung) If you've got the blues, sing them.

LAURA.

Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!
Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

DANIELLE and MERLIN.

You might be amazed,
Even completely crazed,
Since I/we own your box now.

Victory, it's sweet it's magic and it's
All for me,
It's something I/we won't share with,
And nothing can compare with
The thrill I/we have in beating you.

DANIELLE.

You've been a good boy, Merlin. You'll get your reward later, but first, let's get me in the driver's seat of this thing. How does it work?

MERLIN.

It's quite simple, my dear. The box has been activated, as you can see. Now we must transfer Laura's power to you. You need to enter the box and the box's energy will flow into you. After that, it will do your bidding.

DANIELLE.

I'm not sure I should get inside the box with that nasty little girl sitting right here. She might make it do something to me.

MERLIN.

She can't! She has to speak to make the box work. No words, no magic, right, Laura?

LAURA.

(Struggling wordlessly) Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

DANIELLE.

Oh, look how mad you made her. That must be right. All right, Laura, I'm taking possession of your box. It's so nice when children are seen and not heard.

LAURA.

Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!

(Danielle enters the box as Merlin holds the door for her. He closes the door. From inside the box, Danielle can be heard singing Victory. Merlin hurries to Laura, releases her hands and removes her gag.)

DANIELLE.

(From inside the box) Ah, Laura, I feel the energy entering me; what a lovely feeling to have all that warm energy entering me.

LAURA.

That's great, Danielle. I'm so glad you like it, because you're going to be very cold very soon.

DANIELLE.

(Screaming) You're talking! How is that possible? You tricked me! Laura you are such a disgusting little bitch.

LAURA.

(Waving her arms) Thanks, Mom. Abracadabra! *(and with a crack, Danielle is gone)*

MERLIN.

Well done! Where have you sent her?

LAURA.

Callisto.

MERLIN.

The fourth moon of Jupiter? She'll hate it. Laura, I'm sorry I had to treat you roughly, but I needed to make Danielle believe that I had betrayed you.

LAURA.

Did you really, you know, have sex with her during intermission?

MERLIN.

Ah, my, it was very difficult, but one has to make sacrifices for the cause.

LAURA.

Thank you. I appreciate your sacrifice.

MERLIN.

It's sad though that you sent Armando away. I hope you didn't also send him to Callisto. A lifetime with Danielle on a cold Jovian moon. I'm not sure I could think of anything worse. As I hear tell, he was a pretty fair magician.

LAURA.

He was. He was my father's apprentice. I used to love watching him perform.

MERLIN.

So what happened between you? It sounds like there was something there.

LAURA.

We had some trust issues.

MERLIN.

What a pity. What will you do now for companionship? What will you do for magic?

(Charlie enters, wearing a fancy new magician's outfit)

CHARLIE.

Howdy, everyone! What do you think of my new threads? I look pretty sharp, don't you think? Say, where's Danielle?

MERLIN and LAURA.

Gone.

CHARLIE.

Wow. That's nice. She was really starting to annoy me. And she sucked as an assistant. You know what I mean, not just sucked in a good way but *sucked*. No sense of theatre at all. Well, Laura, I guess it's you and me again, just like it used to be.

LAURA.

No, I don't think so, Charlie. I think it's time I went out on my own.

CHARLIE.

Sorry, that doesn't work for me, Laura. You're a much better magician than I am. I couldn't deal with the competition. And besides, your father left all his stuff to me, so you're out of luck. Say, old man, you were his friend. Why did he leave his show to me instead of Laura?

MERLIN.

I imagine he knew that the scoundrels would be after the magic box, so he put the villains onto you instead of onto his daughter. He knew that you would never get the box working and that Laura would. He and the box had that kind of understanding.

CHARLIE.

I was used! Oh well. But still, I own all the magic junk, so you'll just have to stay with me, Laura.

LAURA.

No, Charlie, I have my own magic and I have a better partner.

CHARLIE.

Who?

LAURA.

Armando. It turns out, he's not such a bad guy after all. And he loves me.

MERLIN.

But I thought you sent him to Callisto.

LAURA.

I said I sent him away, but I didn't send him to Callisto. You see, he put himself in a vulnerable position; he trusted me. I was learning to like him, and I thought I might want him around, so I only sent him down to the corner store.

(Armando enters carrying a six pack and a bag of chips)

CHARLIE.

Oh, good, you brought snacks *(he takes a can and the chips)*.

ARMANDO.

Laura!

(Laura and Armando stand hand-in-hand looking into one another's eyes)

[Cue Track 16: Where is the Magic? Reprise]

LAURA.

(Singing)

You beautiful magician with your tender touch,
Your charming disposition is an added plus,
Could it be that you're the magic that I need so much,
I'm ready for what the future has in store for us.

(Conversation over the bridge:)

MERLIN.

(Putting his arm around Charlie) Come on my boy. I think we need to go.

CHARLIE.

(His mouth full of chips) Where are we going, old man?

MERLIN.

I'm taking you under my wing, young fellow. I might be able to make a fair magician out of you.

CHARLIE.

(Smelling under Merlin's arm) Yeah, maybe, but I don't like that nasty old man smell coming from under your wing. Tell you what, you teach me magic, and I'll teach you how to take a bath. Then maybe you'll be able to get yourself a hottie like I got for myself.

MERLIN.

Yes, my boy, I'm sure you're right.

LAURA.

(Catching him before he exits). Merlin. . .

MERLIN.

Yes?

LAURA.

My wicked mother told me something that really shook me. I need to know if it's true. I need you to tell me the truth. Are you my father?

MERLIN.

(Looking her straight in the eye, speaking slowly and deliberately) No. Jack was your father.

LAURA.

(Smiling). I knew it. But, thanks.

(Merlin gives her a smile and a nod and exits, leading Charlie off).

ARMANDO.

(Singing)

Two together we'll find our way,
Finding magic in a kiss,
Making up for our lost time,
Making up for what we missed.

LAURA.

We are two of magic's best,
Trained by the amazing Jack,

ARMANDO.

Magic better than the rest,
Love is magic, that's a fact.

ARMANDO and LAURA.

We'll find the magic
That never left us,
We'll find the magic that we used to call our own,

Now that we're older,
We can be happy,
No-one can beat us,
No tricks defeat us,
We'll play each weekday
And twice on Saturday
'Cause we have magic on our side.

(The rest of the company joins them onstage, all singing)

Where is the magic?
Where has it gone?
Where is the magic that we used to call our own?
When we were younger,
When we were happy,
No-one could beat us,
No tricks defeat us,
We played each weekday
And twice on Saturday
'Cause we had magic on our side.

Curtain