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Assistants

By Katy Grabel

Never call what he does tricks. Use words like *effects* and *illusions*. Never look better than he on stage. Buy two sets of shoes: one for *your* feet and one for the dummy's. Always be exactly at the right spot, at the right time, to hand him the right prop, in the right way, or he'll be howlin' Houdini mad. Don't touch his coins, his pipes, his clocks, his rope. Don't touch his silks, his birdcage, his linking rings. Don't touch his top hat, his cane, his dove bag, his thumb tip. Don't touch his floating ball, his rising card, his vanishing bouquet. Don't play solitaire with his manipulation deck.

After doing three shows in one day, don't fall asleep in a box and miss your cue or he'll be....

When he asks you to become a part of his cast of *amazing artists*, understand that *you* are his caste of amazing artists.

When he says you'll stay in the best hotels around the world, be grateful for the hot pancakes at 2 a.m.

When he shoots you out of a cannon each night, tell yourself this is not passive-aggressive behavior.

Don't feed the doves before the show, or they'll poop on stage. Don't feed the geese before the show, or they'll poop on stage. Don't feed the horse before the show, or she'll poop on stage. Do feed the magician before the show, or he'll be cranky.

When he tells other magicians about his standing ovation and it was more like enthused clapping, keep your mouth shut.

When you catch him in front of the mirror practicing that mysterious look, don't laugh.

By the time he says he planning a human-decapitation illusion, you'll know this is passive- aggressive behavior.

Get used to: a home near the interstate so you can easily get back on the road; friends with names like Cardini, Albini, Verdini; fake thumbs you'll find when emptying his pockets before washing; a four-garage that won't hold a single car, for all his magic equipment.

When you finally tell him you want to get paid, you want equal billing, and you want to shoot him out of the cannon for a change, and he casts the big Houdini-will-rise-up-from- the-grave-and-strike-you-down curse on you, tell him you don't believe in magic anymore.