

The Shop

by H. G. Wells

I had seen the shop on the street before. I had passed by it once or twice. A sign on the door said "THE MAGIC SHOP." Another sign said "Magic Tricks Sold Here."

The window was filled with interesting things. There were glass balls. There were rabbits in hats. There were playing cards. You know—the kind that magicians use.

I had never thought about going inside. But Jimmy and I were taking a walk. He suddenly grabbed me by the arm. He pulled me up to the magic shop.

"Look, daddy," he said. "Look in the window there." He pointed a finger at a box. The words on the box said "THE DISAPPEARING EGG."

Jimmy's eyes opened wide. "If I were rich," he said, "I'd buy that trick. And that one too. And that! And *that!*"

I said, "Your birthday is only two months away. We could come back then."

But then Jimmy saw a bright blue box. A card next to it said "BUY ONE OF THESE. AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS!"

Jimmy pulled me by the arm again. He pushed open the door. We went into the store.

This was no **ordinary** store. This was a magic shop. It was not very big. It was not well lit. The door banged shut as we went inside.

We were alone. There was no one else there. Jimmy and I quickly looked around. We saw a paper tiger in a glass cage. The tiger smiled at us and shook its head.

There were magic fishbowls of every kind. There were piles of coins. There were funny mirrors everywhere. When you looked in some, you

looked tall and thin. Others made you look short and fat.

While we were laughing at these, a salesperson came in. I guess he came in. I didn't see him come in. But there he was!

He was quite tall with a long, sharp chin. He rested his arms on the top of the counter.

"May I help you?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "I'd like to buy a few tricks for my son."

"What kind do you want?" asked the man.

"Some that are easy and fun," I said.

"I see," said the man. Then he suddenly reached behind his head. He pulled a little glass ball out of his ear.

"Something like this?" he asked. He held out the ball.

I was surprised. I had seen that trick done before, of course. Magicians *always* do that particular trick. But I had not expected to see it here.

"That's good," I said to the man.

"Yes, isn't it?" he said.

Jimmy reached out to take the glass ball. But the ball wasn't there!

"You'll find it in your pocket," announced the man.

Jimmy reached into his pocket. And there it was!

"How much does that cost?" I asked the man.

"Oh, we do not charge for glass balls," he said. "We get them free."

He pulled another glass ball out of his neck while he spoke. Then he took one out of his other ear.

"You may have all of them free," he said. "You may have this one too." He reached up and pulled another ball out of his mouth. "Here you are!" he said.

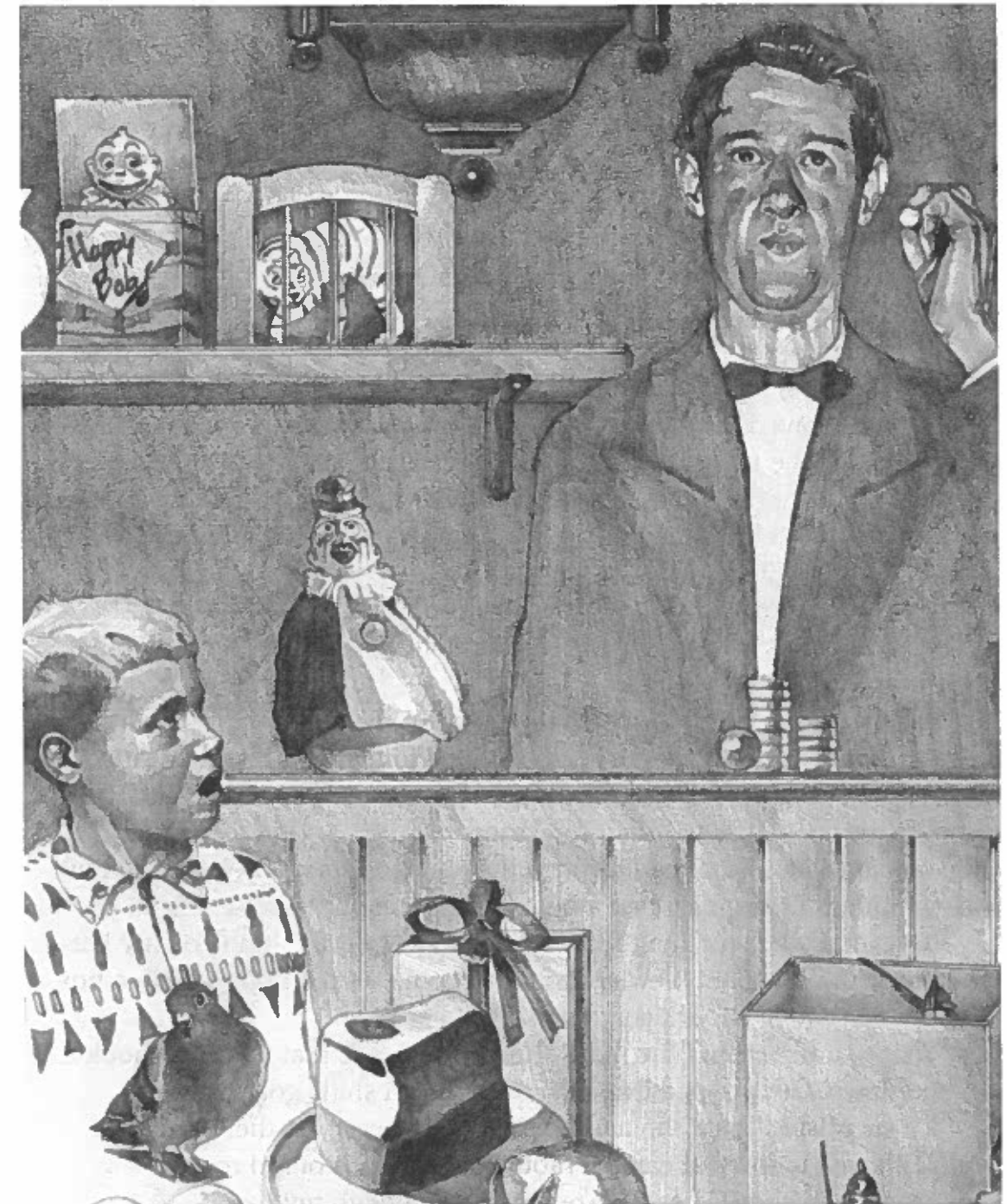
Jimmy looked at me. "You may have them," I said.

The man turned to Jimmy. "You know," he said, "you're the right kind of boy."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Only the right kind of boy can come into this shop."

Just then we heard someone banging loudly on the door. Then we heard the squeaky voice of a boy. "Ny-a-a-ah!" it squealed. "I *wanna* go in there! Ny-a-a-ah! Ny-a-a-ah! I *wanna* go in there! I *WANNA* go in there!"



The boy's parents could be heard outside. "But we *can't* go in there. The door is locked."

The boy's voice trailed away. "Ny-a-a-ah!" cried the boy. "I *wanna* go in there!"

"But the door *isn't* locked," I told the man. "We just came in!"

"The door is locked *now*," said the man. The door is always locked to that kind of boy!"

"How did you do that?" I asked in **astonishment**. "How could you lock the door from way over here?"

"It's magic!" said the man. "We're a real magic shop. We do real magic here. Watch this!"

The man waved his hand, and colored sparks of fire flew into the air.

I smiled at the trick. Still, I thought he was carrying the joke just a little too far.

The man turned to Jimmy and said, "You wanted the box with THE DISAPPEARING EGG."

"But . . . how did you know that?" I asked the man.

He did not answer. He just put his hand into my jacket and took out that box.

"Let's wrap the box now," said the man. He reached up into the air and some paper appeared. Then he put his hand to his mouth and began pulling out string. He kept pulling out string—it seemed never to end. Out came yards and yards of bright red string.

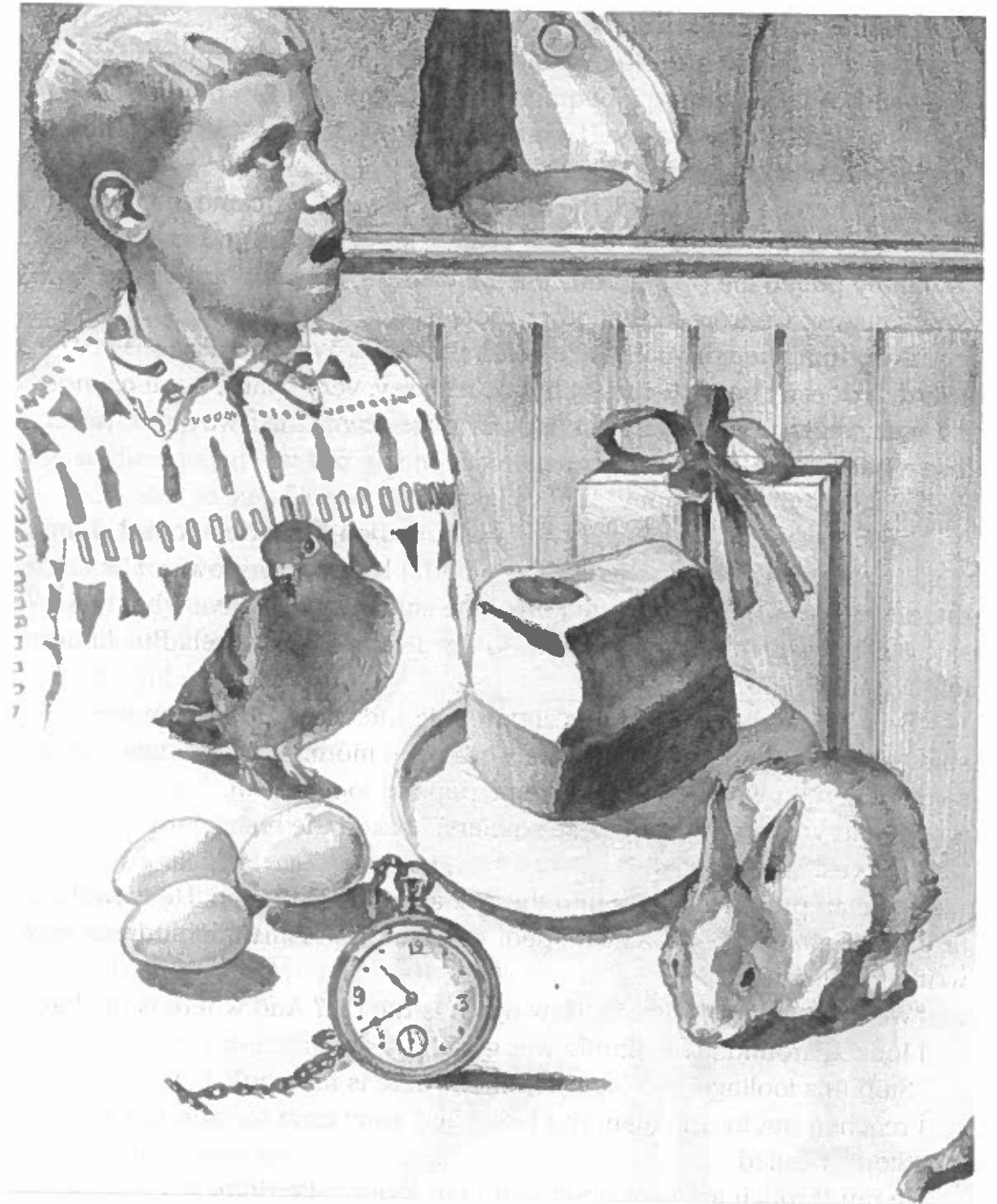
The man's hands danced through the air, and a moment later, the box was wrapped. There was even a beautiful ribbon on top.

Just then I felt something moving around in my hat. I took off my hat—and out flew a pigeon. It flew around the room. Then it hopped into a box next to the smiling paper tiger.

"That's strange," said the man. "Here, let me see that hat." He shook it up and down. Out popped five or six eggs and a shiny gold watch.

"It's surprising," said the man, "what people carry in their hats." He shook it some more. Out came a rabbit and a bunch of red roses.

"Are you finished?" I said. "Are you finished with my hat?"



But there was no answer. For no one was there!

I stared at Jimmy, and Jimmy stared at me.

"Daddy," said Jimmy.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I *like* this store, daddy. I like it so much!"

Before I could say a word, the tall man appeared. He came out of some door on the side, I suppose. He said, "May I show you our other room, sir?"

Jimmy pulled me by the arm. "*Please*, daddy," he said. And before I could answer, we were in that other room.

"Everything here is real magic," said the man. "Why, here's a magic sword. It doesn't bend. It cannot break. It's very, very sharp, but it cannot cut your fingers. Here's the best part. Whoever owns this sword will never lose a **battle**."

"Oh, daddy!" said Jimmy. "That's just what I need!"

The fellow was good. There's no question about that. He showed Jimmy magic trains. They ran by themselves without batteries or power. Then there were toy soldiers lying in a box. The soldiers came alive when you said a certain word. It's a hard word to say. I can't say it myself. But Jimmy learned it right away.

"Bravo!" cried the man when Jimmy said the word. He put the toy soldiers back into the box. "Say the word once more," said the man. Jimmy said the certain word, and the soldiers popped to life again.

"Would you like to have these soldiers?" asked the man.

"Oh, yes!" Jimmy said.

The man put the soldiers into the box and closed the top. He waved the box in the air. *Presto!* It was wrapped! And Jimmy's name and address were written on the box!

"We must go now," I said. "How much is the bill? And where is my hat?"

I looked around. Now Jimmy was gone!

"Stop this fooling!" I yelled. "Tell me, where is my boy?"

I reached out for the man. But he turned away from me and ran.

"Stop!" I called.

He ran through an open door, and I ran swiftly after him.

Bang!

"Excuse me, sir," said a little man. "I didn't see you there."

I was out on the street again. I had bumped into someone on the street. And there, just a few feet away, was Jimmy. He was holding a box.

I turned around to look at the magic shop. But nothing was there. There was just a little **alley**.

We did not say a word until we reached home. Jimmy spoke first. "That was *some* shop," he said. "That was *some* shop, daddy."

"Yes," I agreed.

Then we opened the box. It was filled with toy soldiers.

That happened six months ago, and now everything seems fine. Jimmy's toy soldiers seem just like any toy soldiers.

But I said to Jimmy one day, "What if your toy soldiers could come alive? What if they could march around all by themselves?"

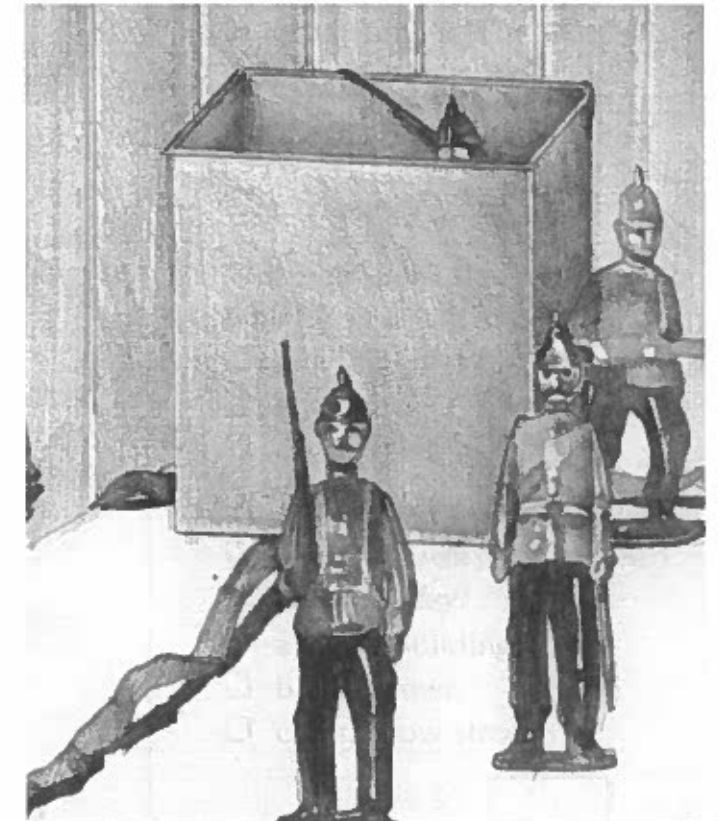
"Oh, but mine *do*,"

Jimmy said. "I just have to say a certain word before I open the box."

"Then they march around by themselves?"

"Oh, yes, daddy," Jimmy said. "I wouldn't like them as much if they couldn't do that."

Since then I sometimes drop in when Jimmy is playing. His soldiers seem just like any other toy soldiers. But it's hard to tell.



There is also the question of the bill. I want to pay for the soldiers. I guess the man at the shop will send a bill. After all, he knows Jimmy's name and address. But so far he has never sent a bill.

Since then, I have walked that street again and again. But I have never been able to find the shop. It seems to have disappeared—like magic!



LOOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY. How well can you find facts in a story? Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. What was in the window of the shop?
 a. a paper tiger in a cage
 b. toy soldiers in a box
 c. a box with a "disappearing egg"
2. The tall man said that Jimmy was
 a. a selfish child.
 b. the right kind of boy.
 c. very silly.
3. The toy soldiers "came alive" when you
 a. shook them up and down.
 b. put batteries in them.
 c. said a certain word.
4. When did Jimmy and his father visit the magic shop?
 a. a month ago
 b. six months ago
 c. a year ago

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NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS. Here are four vocabulary questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. It was not an ordinary shop. The word *ordinary* means
 a. old.
 b. usual.
 c. closed.
2. "How did you do that?" he asked in astonishment. The word *astonishment* means
 a. surprise.
 b. happiness.
 c. danger.
3. Whoever owns that sword will never lose a battle. A *battle* is
 a. a bet.
 b. a fight.
 c. a soldier.
4. The magic shop was gone. All that was left was a little alley. What is an *alley*?
 a. a tall building
 b. a big town
 c. a narrow street

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ADDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH.
Complete the paragraph below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word appears in the story. There are five words and four blanks, so one word in the box will not be used.

Harry Houdini was one of the greatest _____¹ who ever lived. He was able to _____² himself from anything. He got out of ropes, chains, and even jails into which he had been _____³. For forty years he amazed people everywhere with his _____⁴.

free magicians tricks
locked glass

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

READING BETWEEN THE LINES.
These questions will help you think critically. You will have to think about what happened in the story, and then figure out the answers. Put an x in the box next to the right answer.

- Jimmy's father entered the magic shop because
 - a. he loved magic tricks.
 - b. he knew about the shop.
 - c. his son wanted to go inside.
- We may infer (figure out) that the boy outside was
 - a. very polite.
 - b. not "the right kind" of boy.
 - c. one of Jimmy's friends.
- What is unusual about the story?
 - a. Characters seem to appear and disappear.
 - b. All the characters are about the same age.
 - c. The story is very long.
- Which sentence is true?
 - a. They sent Jimmy a bill.
 - b. Jimmy's father never found the shop again.
 - c. Jimmy paid for the toys.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

NOTING STORY ELEMENTS.
Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, **setting**, and **mood**. Put an x in the box next to the right answer.

- What happened last in the *plot*?
 - a. Jimmy said he wanted the toy soldiers.
 - b. The man wrapped the box.
 - c. Jimmy's father bumped into a man on the street.
- Which sentence *characterizes* the tall man?
 - a. He loved all children.
 - b. He did magic tricks well.
 - c. He made people pay high prices.
- The story is *set*
 - a. in a small house.
 - b. in a magic shop.
 - c. in a department store.
- What is the *theme* of the story?
 - a. Unusual things happen when a father and son go into a magic shop.
 - b. You should not buy things you do not need.
 - c. Some stores go out of business very quickly.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

THINKING MORE ABOUT THE STORY.
Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- ◆ Why do you think Jimmy liked the magic shop so much? Do you think you would have enjoyed visiting that store? Explain why.
- ◆ What are some of the strange things that happened in the story? Think of as many as you can.
- ◆ Give reasons that might explain some or all of the things that you listed above.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 138 and 139.

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