

“Howard’s Fun Shop and Magic Emporium”

A Children’s Play

Written by
Randy Clower

Based on the Short Story “Howard’s Fun Shop”
By Geoffrey Grimes

“Howard’s Fun Shop and Magic Emporium”

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Lennie Deaver, an eleven-year old boy in the 5th grade at Queens Elementary School

Ensemble, dancers and chorus during the All-School Magical Gala

Miss Roughhouse, the teacher in Lennie’s 5th grade homeroom

Classmates, Lennie’s fellow students in Miss Roughhouse’s home room

Doc Howard, the owner of Howard’s Fun Shop and Magic Emporium and medical doctor who treats Mandy Deaver

Magicians, guest magicians who serve as assistants in the All-School Magical Gala, also are members of Doc Howard’s medical team who assist with Mandy’s care at the hospital

Gramps, Lennie and Mandy Deaver’s grandfather and guardian

Nurse Jane, the Emergency Room nurse at General Hospital

Grandma, wife of Gamps

Mandy Deaver, Lennie Deaver’s 14-year old sister

“Howard’s Fun Shop and Magic Emporium”

(At rise: A drum roll.)

Announcer: Welcome to the Queens Elementary All-School Magical Gala! Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls,, the coolest, most fantastical, amazing-est, magician in the whole world – Lennie Deaver!

(On a fog-filled stage, Lennie appears in a magicians outfit and cape like that only a kid could imagine. A beautiful assistant joins him onstage. Music as Lennie performs a few very simple tricks, the kind found in a beginners magic set. As his routine continues, we see a few school desks appear behind him followed by some other scenic pieces that represent his classroom. He becomes more and more aware of this change but tries to ignore it. Finally, his assistant visibly transforms into Miss Roughhouse, his fourth grade teacher played by the same performer. The contrast between beautiful assistant and scowling frump should be very apparent and over the top. He turns after she has fully transformed which brings him out of the daydream we’ve been witnessing. Any remaining trappings of the dream vanish and Lennie is sitting at his desk, a kid in trouble.)

Miss Roughhouse: Lennie! Lennie Deaver! I asked you a question! What do you think you are doing? Where is your mind today, young man? Why can’t you pay attention?

Lennie: Uh...I...um..

Girl Student: I know what he’s thinking about!

Boy Student: I do, too!

Girl Student: It's magic! That's all he thinks about! It's magic! He thinks he's a magician!

Boy Student: Yeah! He thinks he's the greatest magician in the world!

Lennie: No, I don't! I just like...

Girl Student: He drives his sister nuts! Any time any one goes to see Mandy, Lennie drives them nuts! "You wanna see a trick?"

Boy Student: Yeah! Mandy flushed his magic goldfish down the toilet! (The students break into wild laughter.)

Miss Roughhouse: Quiet! There is nothing wrong with Lennie's interest in magic but there is a time and place for everything and this is the hour for American History..not magic tricks, students making noise...(to Lennie) or day-dreaming. Do I make myself clear?

Students: Yes ma'am.

(The bell rings and everyone bolts for the door. Lennie grabs his books and flees the school. Students follow him out of the room, taunting him as he tries to get away.)

Students: Hey! Lennie! Show me a trick! I wanna see you fly like Superman! Or make me float! Yeah! Can you make me disappear? Wooohoooo!

(Laughing, the kids fade away, leaving Lennie demoralized and alone. He walks slowly along, dragging his feet.)

Lennie: What's the big deal? How come the kids keep picking on me because I like magic? Maybe they're right. I'm just no good at it. The only magic tricks I have are from

that crummy old magic set I got when I was six years old. I need some new tricks! I need somebody to teach me magic! Awwww, it's no use. Maybe I should just give up.

(During his monologue, the façade of Howards Fun Shop has appeared onstage and Lennie is clueless. The scene should be played to the audience to stimulate them to shout instructions to Lennie to turn and see the shop. When he finally does, it's as if the heavens have opened up.)

Lennie: (slowly approaching) No way! It looks like...could it be? Yeah! (reads signage) "Howards Fun Shop and Magic Emporium". Whoa. A magic store? Here?

In Blainestown? (Reads a sign on window) "Grand Opening!" I can't believe it!

(Lennie goes to the door and opens it. A cowbell clanks. With a little theatrical wizardry, we are suddenly inside the store. Shelves of brightly colored magic tricks and illusions as well as posters of the magical greats from the early 1900's are seen. It's your basic magic store. Lennie gasps in amazement.)

Lennie: WOW! This is *cool!*

Doc (unseen) Why, thank you! That's quite a compliment!

Lennie: Uh..hello?

(With a flourish, Doc comes out from behind the small doorway behind the counter.)

Doc: Doc Howard, at your service. Or, to simplify things even more, call me "Doc".

Lennie: Ok...uh.."Doc". I'm Lennie. Lennie Deaver.

Doc: Nice to meet ya, Lennie. Welcome to my fun shop and magic emporium.

And...since this is my grand opening, I have a free gift just for you.(Doc hands him some kind of small pocket trick still in it's package.)

Lennie: Gee! Thanks! A new trick is just what I need!

Doc: Don't worry...I'll teach it to you before you go. But first... You do know the first rule of being a magician, don't you?

Lennie: Hmmm..don't reveal the secrets of your tricks?

Doc: Very good! Excellent! Where did you learn that?

Lennie: I got a magic set a long time ago...(suddenly older) when I was a kid, ya know. The instructions said never to tell anyone how you do magic...

Doc: Unless, of course...*they're* a magician *too!* And Mr. Deavers...I'm under the impression *you* are a magician!

Lennie: Well...maybe. I guess so. Not too sure how good I am, though..]

Doc: No, no...it's not "maybe". It's not "I guess so". You are or you aren't. Schoolwork, sports, playing the *tuba* for that matter...it all takes study and practice, right? Magic is the same way. *You* just have to start somewhere and say, "I'm a magician!" So..what do *you* say?

Lennie: *I'm a magician!*

Doc: Ok, then! And here at the Fun Shop, you'll learn the most baffling feats of legerdemain known only to a few!

Lennie: Uh...is that leger-thing...is that magic?

Doc: Yup!

Lennie: Yaaay! I'm so glad I walked home through town today and saw your shop.

It's like...like...

Doc: Magic?

Lennie: Yeah!

Doc: People who love magic always seem to find my store sooner or later. I think it's like a magnet drawing them in!

Lennie: Well, I'm glad it worked on me! I was..well..about ready to give it all up.

Doc: I can spot a good magician a mile away...why on earth would you think about giving it up?

Lennie: Well, until now I didn't know where to go to learn new magic!

Doc: Right. That problem's solved. What else?

Lennie:(Reluctantly) The kids. In my school. They think magic's dumb. They think *my* magic's the dumbest of all.

Doc: I don't think I've met any kids who think magic is "dumb." Maybe . . . maybe they're a little jealous of a bright young man who likes something they can't do, something they don't understand. No, I'm pretty sure your classmates want what most people want from magic.

Lennie: What's that?

Doc: Wonder! Amazement! Like seeing something materialize out of thin air! (A scarf appears) Imaginary flowers growing in your hands! (Doc Howard produces a magical bouquet from underneath the scarf. Lennie smiles.) Magic is believing that the universe around us reveals a new secret every day ! Watch carefully! (More tricks)

You see, Lennie... learning magic isn't just "doing a trick" for somebody. It's making them believe in the impossible! When you can do that, nobody will call your magic dumb.

Lennie: Yeah...I think I understand! Oh, wow...I gotta get home! I've got to look after my sister. But, I'll come back tomorrow...if it's ok.

Doc: Of course it is!

Lennie: Great! I'll be here! Bye! (Starts to exit)

Doc: Wait a sec! Aren't you forgetting something? (He indicates the free trick) The secret to your new trick! (He leans down to whisper in Lennie's ear.)

BLACKOUT.

(Lennie's Home. He enters and calls out .)

Lennie: Mandy! I'm home! You ok?

(Mandy appears in a wheelchair.)

Mandy: Boy, are you gonna get it when Gramps gets home!

Lennie: Hey, I'm only thirty minutes late!

Mandy: Gramps said he was gonna be late getting in and for you to come right home after school to watch me!

Lennie: I know but...

Mandy: It doesn't take that long to walk home!

Lennie: yeah, yeah, I know but I stopped off at a new store! A new magic store has opened up downtown on the corner of Center and Forest! You should see it! It's...

Mandy: A magic store? Ohhh nooooo! You didn't buy any more of that junk, didja?

Lennie: It's not junk! Magic is...

Mandy: It's junk! It's all just tricks! There is no *real* magic. You just fool people. *And that's not fair!*

Lennie: But...some people like being fooled! It makes them happy...

Mandy: Ha! No it doesn't! It doesn't make *me* happy! Buncha junk...I wish Uncle Jim never gave you that stupid magic kit for your birthday. And all my friends think you're a dweeb, always boring us with the same tricks over and over!

Lennie: Fine! I won't show you any magic tricks *ever again!* Howzat?

Mandy: Good!

Lennie: Ok then! I won't! Even if you beg me!

Mandy: That'll be the day!

(Mandy lightly coughs)

Lennie: (Suddenly concerned) Um...you ok?

Mandy: Sure. Don't worry about me. (A beat) If you wanna be a great magician, make it so I don't get sick all the time.

(Lennie doesn't know how to respond.)

Lennie: You gonna tell Gramps I was late?

Mandy: (Softens a bit) Naw..not if you shut up about magic and magic stores. It's all dumb and a big waste of time.

Lennie: Ok, if that's the way you want it...

Mandy: I'm gonna watch TV.

(She exits. Lennie looks at the magic trick given to him by Doc. He starts to say something but thinks better of it. The lights slowly fade. The Magic Shop reappears. Lennie enters.)

Lennie: Hiya Doc!

Doc: The Incredible Lennie! Glad you came back today! How was school?

Lennie: It was ok.

Doc: No problems with your friends?

Lennie: Not today. But my sister is buggin' me.

Doc: Big sister or little sister?

Lennie: Little.

Doc: Ahhhh. Sometimes they can be a handful. But I'll bet there was a time when she thought you were the coolest big brother in the world.

Lennie: (Remembering) Yeah...she did. A long time ago. Now, she just...well...

(Doc nods for him to continue.)My sister is sick a lot...not very happy. She...can get pretty mean sometimes.

Doc: Oh. I see. Guess you'll just have to be patient with her, eh?

Lennie: (Shrugs) I guess.

Doc: Maybe some magic will cheer her up?

Lennie: Ha! She hates magic more than anybody!

Doc: Not really. She's just angry for being sick all the time. Sounds like she needs a little magic! A chance to believe in the impossible! (A thought) I have an idea, Lennie. You're just in time for a very special meeting... The Blainestown Association of Magicians! Wanna join?

Lennie: (Eagerly) Sure!

Doc: The Association meets here (gestures toward door behind counter), in the back storeroom every Thursday evening. As a matter of fact, we're getting ready for a big show at *your school* in a couple of days. C'mon!

(They step through the curtains into the back of the magic store, featured in the open stage area, center, where others are working with large stage illusions, each one performing a quick routine. Lennie and Doc Howard stand aside and watch, Lennie in amazement. This scene is a mini-magic show, actual effects to be determined.)

Doc Howard: So what do you think, Mr. Deavers? Do you think your young friends will still think magic is dumb?

Lennie: No way!

Doc Howard: Come over here and meet my assistants. This is Harpo. This is Ginger..Jose..Maria. Pretty good, eh?

Magicians: Hi, Lennie...(etc)

Lennie: They're the best! Do you think I could be as good as you someday?

Doc: Lennie, listen to me, okay? You can do this and anything else you put your mind to. You've probably heard that a zillion times from your folks and teachers...and ya know what? It's true! Take to your heart what you have just seen and believe that the universe has many wonderful secrets yet to reveal. These are just tricks – every one of them – but they point to what is possible in your heart and in your imagination! That's what magic is!

Lennie: Thank you, Doc!

Doc : I have one more idea. I was just thinking. What would you say if I asked you to help me on stage when we come to Queens Elementary for the Magic Gala? How would you like to be my special assistant that evening?

Lennie: (Stunned) Do . . . do you mean it? Oh, Doc, do you really mean it? You mean I could be on stage with you during the show and . . . and do *magic*? *Real* magic?

Doc: What other kind of magic but real magic!? (winks)

Lennie: Oh, Doc! You bet! I can't wait to tell Mandy! Maybe she won't tease me about magic anymore!

Doc Howard: Well, you might be right about that! Let me tell you what I have in mind.

(Doc leads him to a platform illuminated in misty light in the middle of the stage.) This is going to be the grand finish of our magic program—the biggest, most exciting of all the illusions!

Lennie: What is it, Doc?

Doc Howard: (Placing his hand on Lennie's shoulder, begging a confidence) Not to tell a single soul! Promise!

Lennie: Oh, no, Doc! I won't tell Gramps or Mandy or Miss Roughhouse or anyone!

Doc Howard: That's fine! Well, here is what is going to happen....

The lights FADE.

Lennie's House.

It is dark as Lennie runs up to the front porch of his home. Gramps is standing on the porch just outside the front door.

Lennie: (Out of breath) Gramps!

Gramps: Lennie Deaver! Where have you been, son? Do you know what time it is?

I've been looking all over for you!

Lennie: Gramps! I've got something cool to tell ya about!

Gramps: Lennie! Just stop! Just wait a minute! I have some bad news about your sis.

Lennie: Wha..? What do you mean?

Gramps: (The two sit down on the top step of the front porch.) Mandy started getting sick tonight...a very high fever. We had to take her to the hospital. I'm afraid she's developed a serious infection.

Lennie: But..is she..is Mandy gonna be ok?

Gramps: She's pretty sick, son...but we can't lose hope. Come. We need to go.

(They exit as a Hospital Room appears opposite. A Nurse is seen tending to a very ill and semi-conscious Mandy. After a moment, Gramps and Lennie enter quietly.)

Lennie: Gramps! I've never seen Mandy look this sick!

Gramps: I know but don't let her hear you say that...you have to stay positive and upbeat. That'll help her more than you know!

Lennie: (Approaching bed tentatively) Uh..hiya, Mandy! I'm sorry you got sick.

(Mandy barely stirs. The Nurse approaches.)

Nurse: Mr. Deavers, has the doctor spoken with you?

Gramps: Yes! In fact, this is Lennie, my grandson.

Nurse: Nice to meet you, Lennie. I'm Nurse Kirkwood. So, your grandfather has told you the situation?

Lennie: Well...he said Mandy was really, really sick...

Nurse: Yes, but we're doing all we can to help her get better! You can help most of all!

Gramps: I haven't told him yet...I was hoping you could help explain.

Nurse: Ahhh..I see. Well, Lennie, your sister needs a transfusion. You know what that is, right?

Lennie: Y..yes...

Nurse: Your grandfather tells me you and your sister have the same type of blood. That's very important. She needs some of your very special blood in order to get well.

Lennie: Oh! Er..right. So..what do I hafta do?

Nurse: I'm going to arrange for us to go down the hall in just a minute so we can get started right away. It's very easy and won't take too long.

Lennie: Will it hurt?

Nurse: Hardly any.

Gramps: I'll stay with you the entire time, son.

Lennie: Sure. Whatever it takes, count me in!

Nurse: Fine. Why don't you wait here while I go over some paperwork with your granddad...talk to your sister if you'd like...and I'll be back in a minute. (To Gramps) He's a brave one, Mr. Deavers.

Gramps: You bet he is!

(They exit. Lennie stands for a moment and then turns to his sister.

He moves to her side.)

Lennie: Well, sis...looks like we're gonna be blood brother and sister. (Chuckles weakly at his joke) I got a new trick yesterday..I know you said you didn't wanna see any more but...well...I think you might like this one. (He shows a small kerchief) I want you to pretend this is what's making you so sick...you know, if we work together, try really hard and believe...believe in the impossible we can..(He does a simple bare handed vanish of the silk.) make you well.

(Mandy smiles and claps weakly.)

Mandy: That...was good!

Lennie: Wow! You liked it! That's great!

(The Nurse re-enters the room)

Nurse: Lennie...will you follow me, please?

Lennie: Yes ma'am...(A few steps, stops, turns back to Mandy) Mandy...remember...

Believe in the impossible!

(He exits as the lights fade.)

STOPPED HERE: AUG 24 06

#

Scene 7: Lennie's Home

Getting ready to walk to school on the morning of the big Magic Gala, Lennie is standing on the front porch of his home with Gramps.

Lennie: But what should I do, Gramps? What should I do? I just want to come home and go see Mandy.

Gramps: Son, I know you do, and I want to, too, but she is just too sick. I don't know why she got worse, but we'll just have to wait to see if your blood that you gave last night makes a difference. Nurse Jane, she said we should know something more later this morning when you're in school.

Lennie: But, Gramps? What should I do? How can I do the magic show with Doc Howard tonight when Mandy is sick in the hospital?

Gramps: Lennie, if you were in Mandy's place and Mandy was asking that same question, what would you tell her?

Lennie: I would want her to go ahead. I would want her to do it and do the show with Doc Howard.

Gramps: I thought that's what you would say. And, Lennie, I think that is just what she would say, too. I tell you what. You go on ahead and do the magic show tonight. I know that you have really had your heart set on that, and I know, too, that Doc Howard is really excited about having you help him. And something else – if Mandy is doing better this afternoon, Grandma and me will be sitting right on the front row at the Magic Gala tonight! How about that?

Lennie: Oh, Gramps, thanks so much! (Lennie jumps off the porch and races off to school.)

Scene 8: The School Cafeteria/Stage

Lennie's class, Miss Roughhouse, and other school children begin taking their seats in the rows of chairs arranged to the side of the stage. The music swells as the time approaches for the show to begin. The last to enter are Gramps and Grandma who take their seats on the front row with the children and Miss Roughhouse. At the climax

of the music introduction, **the dancers break into “Dance Magic.”** At the end of “Dance Magic” Doc Howard emerges center stage in a top hat, cape and tuxedo.

Doc Howard: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Queens Elementary School Magic Gala. We have a wonderful evening of magic for you tonight, but before we begin, I want to introduce to you my very special assistant for our show. Please welcome to the magic stage, Mr. Lennie Deaver! (Doc Howard turns and prompts the audience’s applause as Lennie Deaver struts down stage to take his position next to Doc Howard. Lennie bows deeply as his surprise classmates, surprised, respond with great applause and encouragement.)

First Boy Student: Way to go, Deaver!

First Girl Student: Wow! Lennie! You really are a magician! Wow!

Second Boy Student: Break a leg, Lennie! Break a leg! Go ahead and disappear! (The rest of the class exclaims and applauds as Doc Howard reaches down and shakes his assistant’s hand. They smile at each other and then turn to exit upstage center as **the ensemble breaks into a short reprise of “Dance Magic.”** The illusionists wheel the props one at a time into place, perform the routine to music while Doc Howard gestures, drawing forth the magic at just the right moments with grand effect.

Illusion 1

Illusion 2

Illusion 3

Illusion 4

The music rises again as the dance ensemble draws the illusion props to the sides.

Doc comes forward to the microphone to introduce the final effect.

Doc Howard: Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you very much for your warm reception this evening. To conclude our program tonight, you are about to witness one of the most beautiful effects we have conjured before you. I am pleased to introduce once again my special assistant, Mr. Lennie Deaver, who will direct the production of the most beautiful princess in the world. Mr. Deaver, is your magic ready? (Lennie gives a “thumbs up” from center stage as two other assistants wheel out the platform for the princess illusion, followed by others who carry before them the tall black curtains on eight-foot high T-bars. The assistants parade around the four sides of the platform two times before placing the T-bars in their slots, the curtains completely enclosing the empty platform. The music swells to a climax when, just on cue, Lennie takes his place before the front curtain. At the precise moment, Lennie reaches up with both hands and grabs the front curtain at points as high as he can reach and pulls down, toppling the curtain before him. Lennie back steps rapidly to avoid being struck by the T-bar and curtain but stops short when he realizes what he sees before him: Doc Howard in his medical suit and the other magician/assistants in their own medical scrubs, all standing behind Lennie’s sister, Mandy, sitting in a wheel chair. Everyone in the audience rises in astonishment and begins a heartfelt applause. Slowly, Doc Howard urges Mandy forward toward the microphone, pushed from behind by one of the magician/assistants. Doc Howard takes the microphone.

Doc Howard: What a wonderful surprise for concluding our Magic Gala! Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats for one last moment. Thank you. (Doc pauses a moment while people settle again into their chairs.) Several weeks ago, Lennie Deaver, your friend and classmate, came to my magic store. He was very sad. He didn’t think

his friends cared very much for his magic. What I told him that afternoon I want to share with you tonight. It is a sad heart that does not like magic. Only a heart without an imagination can't enjoy magic. Magic isn't something weird or strange. It is not bad religion. Magic is what you create from your imagination that makes your universe alive with flowers, and forests with fairies, and oceans with magical mermaids that sing sweet songs, and unicorns you surprise in your backyard when they didn't know you watching. Magic is the blessing that comes from a heart so big and filled with so much love that it inspires a miracle, and that's what has happened maybe tonight.

Two weeks ago Mandy Deaver, Lennie's pretty sister, became very sick, and she has been in General Hospital until just tonight. I want to tell you about Mandy's brother, Lennie, and what he did. He was the only one who could help her get well, and he wanted very much to be with her tonight at the hospital, but this morning she was still very sick. This afternoon, however, Mandy took a wonderful change for the better and insisted on coming tonight if for only just a few minutes. She still has a way to go, but she has turned the corner, and she has something she want to say to all of you –
Mandy?

Mandy: I just want to tell all of you how proud I am of my brother Lennie. If it weren't for him, I would still be very sick in the hospital. But Lennie made me better when he gave me his very own blood. I know that he loves me very much, and I want to say to everyone tonight that Lennie Deaver, you are the greatest magician in the world!

(Everyone stands up and applauds as Lennie comes forward to stand beside Mandy in her wheel chair and takes her hands. They look at each other and smile. Then, Lennie

turns to the audience as Doc Howard comes forward, and together both bow to the audience.

Dance Ensemble: Reprise of “You Are the Greatest Magician in the World.”