

Spellbound

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He whips off the sheet with a flourish
and the audience is horrified.
No applause, no cheering,
maybe a gasp. A mother shields
her son's eyes so he cannot see the horror
of the empty box. They knew
he was all smoke and mirrors
but his tricks should have conjured something.
Where is the magic in revealing a case
without a smiling, talented assistant?
What is special about turning nothing into nothing?

A man in the audience clears his throat.
The lights come up—no one cares where she is,
only where she isn't. Busy demanding their refunds,
furious that they've been tricked,
no one considers that she might be lost,
her ears stuffed with quarters,
sawed in half and handcuffed,
buried under white rabbits and silk scarves.
She was supposed to be sparkling
inside a glass like a lightning bug
that's nearly out of air.