

**Under The Buckeye Tree**

**by**

**Magic Trick**

(c) 2020  
WT/SS

**EXT. ROAD - CAMPER VAN - MOVING - DAY**

Dust and gravel flies up from the wheels of a vintage camper-van as it speeds around a bend. The vehicle's side panel comes into view, garish paint job, faded decal of -

- A figure in silhouette spinning brightly colored juggling balls. A banner below it reads: *Jake the Juggler - Weddings, parties, special occasions.*

**INT. CAMPER VAN - REST STOP**

The vehicle pulls off the road onto a grassed area adjacent to a stream and a flowering Buckeye tree.

JAKE, 36, nuggety build - four-foot five inches tall, kind face, throws the car into park, then reaches into the back seat to grab a picnic basket.

JAKE

Rise and shine, Kiddo. We've officially made it to the Buckeye state.

A sleepy-eyed LOLA, 16, wakes. She's average height, platinum blonde hair. A small tattoo of juggling clubs graces her cheek bone.

The van is a mess of trash and treasure, rhinestone performance outfits, juggling gear, take-out containers.

Lola frantically feels around for something. Breathes a sigh of relief when she holds a snowglobe up to the light. It's vintage looking, heavy glass crystal, obviously much prized.

The scene in miniature depicts a perfect family portrait around a Christmas hearth. A faded salutation below reads: *Greetings from Florence, Italy. Love Mom.* Lola tips it upside down watches the snow inside spin and whirl.

She turns a gold key at its base and: *We'll Meet Again* plays.

JAKE

Come on then. Let's eat.

**EXT. UNDER THE BUCKEYE TREE - MINUTES LATER**

A simple picnic spread of coffee, sandwiches and fruit. The snowglobe sits on the picnic rug. Jake picks it up.

JAKE  
(shaking the globe)  
Ever think you might have been  
better off with your Mom?

LOLA  
No way!

JAKE  
Cause anytime you want to shut up  
shop, all you gotta do is...

Lola shakes her head, lies back on the grass.

JAKE  
You got a lot of talent, kid. World  
is yours for the taking.

LOLA  
And what about you?

JAKE  
Hey, I'm the parent.

LOLA  
You were really good, you know?

JAKE  
Thanks honey, but my days of elves,  
hobbits and oompa-loompas are over.

Lola gazes at the sunlight glancing off the snowglobe.

LOLA  
Do you suppose she's happy?

Jake lies down next to Lola, looks up at the sky.

JAKE  
Happiness is fleeting, kid. Your  
Mom wanted money and adventure.  
With me there was never going to be  
enough. Chasing dreams is fine, but  
chasing the almighty buck? Makes  
you lazy, and always wanting.

Grinding wheels sound on the sidewalk interrupting their  
reverie. MALCOLM, 20, big guy, mean looking, diamond  
encrusted necklace, fade-haircut, zips past on a skateboard.  
He turns, does a double-take, flips his board, backs up.

MALCOLM  
 (gawking at Jake)  
 I thought it was you!

Jake squints against the sunlight.

JAKE  
 Pardon me?

MALCOLM  
 You. You're that guy, man! That  
 freakin' 'little guy' from the TV -

Malcolm pulls out his cell-phone, aims it at Jake.

JAKE  
 (batting him away)  
 Ah, no. Sorry. You're mistaken.

MALCOLM  
 Come on, man. You're him. One pic.

JAKE  
 No, I am not him. And no, we do not  
 all look the same. I'm asking you  
 politely to please back off.

Malcolm laughs, aims his cell phone at Jake, clicking off shots. Jake's livid, he kicks Malcolm's legs out from under him, a stunned look on his face as he falls to the ground.

MALCOLM  
 Just wanted a selfie, mate!

Malcolm grabs Jake around the ankles hauls him to the ground, slams a fist into his face - once, twice, three times.

Lola's in tears, helpless, as blood streams from Jake's nose. She spots the snowglobe, picks it up, wields it above her head, about to strike when from the corner of his eye Jake sees her, wrenches it from her and casts it aside.

Malcolm delivers four more body blows to Jake, one final kick for good measure, gets to his feet and skates off laughing.

**EXT. MALL - FORECOURT - NIGHT**

A sizeable crowd has gathered, Moms, Pops, grandkids. From a boombox *Scott Joplin's, The Entertainer* accompanies the opening act. A loyalty donation bucket next to it.

Jake takes to the stage dressed in colorful garb, suspenders, waxed and curled moustache, and Poll hat.

LOLA (V.O.)

My dad always said the world was not built for him. That it was way too big and he was way too small.

JAKE

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and a big round of applause for y'all coming out tonight.

Faint applause and a few whistles as Jake bows.

JAKE

And another round for my lovely assistant, Lola.

He extends his arm in her direction. The audience claps.

Lola slides a Rola Bola towards Jake and he commences a few warm-up tricks with shaker cups, juggling scarfs and hats.

- while Lola expertly back-flips her way over to her father where they ham it up with a duelling six-ball fountain.

Glow balls and devilsticks are next. Ball-spinning and sleight of hand tricks follow amidst audience oohs and ahhs.

Skateboard tucked under his arm, Malcolm approaches.

Lola tracks him to the front of the crowd, then loses him.

**IN THE CENTER OF THE FORECOURT:**

Jake's making a few comedic attempts to ride a unicycle much to the audience's delight. Finally he's up, cycling around the perimeter. He doffs his hat to the audience, wipes imaginary sweat from his brow.

Lola throws him a microphone on the fly. He catches it.

JAKE

You've been a fantastic audience. We thank you! And now, for the piece de resistance. What do you say to some flaming torches?

A resounding: YEAH! from the audience. Clapping and applause dies down and then... A loud voice cuts through the silence.

MALCOLM

How about you go back to where you  
fucking came from, Midget!

Faces in the crowd turn in disgust. A couple of people laugh.

MALCOLM

Hey! Cripple! You fucking deaf too?

JAKE

(points to Malcolm)  
What do tall people and a lamp post  
have in common...?

Jake makes a goofy face.

JAKE

... That's right. Intelligence!

The crowd bursts into laughter. All eyes on Malcolm who  
realizing he's the butt of the joke stalks off.

**MINUTES LATER:**

The crowd in awe as Lola lobbs a third flaming torch to Jake  
as he ignites it then juggles all three into the air.

The sound of laughter fading off into the night...

**EXT. MALL - FORECOURT - NIGHT**

Dimly lit and deserted now. Lola and Jake look forlorn as  
they stare into the empty donation bucket.

LOLA

Do you suppose that bastard...?

Jake holds two closed hands in front of Lola. He smiles.

JAKE

Doesn't matter. Pick one.

Jake opens his palm to reveal Malcolm's diamond necklace.  
Lola's mouth gapes open, her face lights up.

LOLA (V.O.)

When people remark on how small my  
dad is I tell them: if you knew him  
you'd know he is a giant of a man.

Malcolm takes Lola's hand in his, as they walk towards the  
Mall exit, as the last of the lights blink off one by one.