

2. Starving for a Living

1. pages 25–26 **The crowd, part of the throng . . . to . . . divvy up the proceeds.** The story of Houdini and Hardeen as yogi and lyre player, respectively, doing the mango tree effect was based on Hardeen's account in the *Linking Ring*, (May 1943, 199) of their playing the Midway Plaisance at the Columbian Exposition and a corroborating letter to the editor (*The Herald Tribune*, October 13, 1923) that appears in one of Houdini's scrapbooks at the Library of Congress. The dialogue of Houdini as yogi was culled from another article that appears in another Houdini scrapbook at the Library of Congress, called "Hindu Magic Explained at Last." There is independent corroboration that Houdini did a fakir act at the World's Fair from a man who would later become a close friend: Dr. Joseph Waitt of Boston. In an article "Tales About Houdini Refuted by Dr. Waitt," *The Boston Globe*, November 6, 1926, clipping in the Harvard Theatre Collection in the Pusey Library, Harvard University, Waitt recalls seeing Houdini, before he met him, do the "Hindu Needle Trick" at the Columbian Exposition.

2. pages 26–27. **Sol Bloom.** Bloom's activity at the World's Fair was derived from two articles in *Chicago Jewish History*, the publication of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. They are "Sol Bloom, The Music Man," by Walter Roth, *Chicago Jewish History*, Summer 2000, 4–7, and "Jews on the Midway" by Walter Roth, *Chicago Jewish History*, Spring 2001, 1, 4–7.

3. page 27. . . . **solo work at Kohl and Middleton's Dime Museum.** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 41 and 61.

Kellock suggests that besides doing magic and card effects, Houdini performed his packing box escape but this seems to be an error on Kellock's part.

4. pages 27–28. . . . **woman named Mattie Lee Price.** Harry Houdini, *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 230–231.

5. page 28. “ . . . **sold the act as no other man . . .**” Ibid., 230.

6. page 28. “**This was one of the most positive demonstrations . . .**” Ibid., 231.

7. pages 28–30. **Risey in the box.** The Risey story is based on a clipping in Houdini's Pressbook, 1894–1899, 3, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center at the Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

8. page 30. **Wilhelmina Beatrice Rahner.** Details of Bess's life before Houdini are from the recollections of her niece, Marie Blood Hinson, as told to Silverman and published as an appendix in Kenneth Silverman's *Houdini!!!* (New York, HarperCollins, 1996).

9. page 30. . . . **blind date . . .** There are many mythic accounts of Harry and Bess's first meeting, most of them propagated by Harry and Bess themselves. William Lindsay Gresham, a Houdini biographer, thought that a blind date on the beach arranged by Theo

was the most likely scenario. It's clear that Theo did meet Bess first; in fact, both he and his friend Joe Hayman suggest that maybe Harry was being set up with the other Floral Sister and that Theo was dating Bess. Not for long.

10. page 30. **“Love-at-first sight”** to **“married twice”** Bess's accounts of their three marriages are faithfully reported by Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 59–68. Houdini researcher Manny Weltman has raised the possibility that Harry and Bess never formally married.

11. page 30. **“sold her virginity . . . for an orange”** Bess's crack that she “sold her virginity to Houdini for an orange” was made to Houdini showgirl Dorothy Young, who relayed it in an interview with the authors.

12. page 31. **“Though the matter had not been mentioned . . .”** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 48.

13. page 31. . . . **seriously ill daughter.** Ibid., 50–51.

14. page 31. . . . **cost them the rest of their booking at the Imperial Music Hall . . .** Hardeen's gaffe is recounted by Milbourne Christopher in *Houdini: The Untold Story* (New York: Pocket, 1975), 18. Hardeen acknowledges the booking in his own recollection in an article in *The Sphinx* (Vol. 35 1936, 214) but neglects to admit his mistake.

15. page 31. **Houdini led his brother and Bess on a walk.** The Coney Island Oath is composited from two sources. Bess's account appears in Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 53, while Hardeen offers his version in "Those Years of Magic," an article he wrote in *The Sphinx*, Vol. 38, 1939, 200.

16. page 31. **"By this time I was in a state . . ."** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 53.

17. page 32. **"Your attention towards this end of the hall . . ."** Professor Langdon, the "Poet Lecturer at Huber's," is identified as such in an ad that appears in one of Houdini's scrapbooks at the Library of Congress. His patter has been slightly altered from the version that Houdini himself reported in a letter to the editor of *The New York Tribune* on November 1, 1921. Houdini has Langdon say "escapes from everything, makes no bluffs, Houdini, look at him, the king of Handcuffs." The problem is that it doesn't seem that Houdini had been doing handcuff escapes on stage yet.

18. page 32. **Unthan/Big Alice.** The litany of freaks is from Houdini's letter to *The New York Tribune*, which was reproduced in Patrick Culliton's, *Houdini Unlocked, Book One, The Tao of Houdini* (Kieran Press & Peter C. Mayer Rare Editions, Ltd., 1997), 41.

19. page 32. **"We opened and when I found out . . ."** Houdini to Quincy Kilby, January 2, 1919. Letter in the Kilby scrapbook at the Boston Public Library.

20. page 32. **“generously curved amazonskindergarten?”** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 60.
21. page 32. **Up Early Get Coffee** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 64–65.
22. page 34. **Tony Pastor’s** Ibid., 66.
23. page 34. **Bess got so discouraged . . .** Houdini’s diary in the collection of Dr. Bruce Averbook. “Bess refused to work at Huber’s, I put up stuff and worked alone...”
24. page 34. **It was one of those early spring rains . . .** The account of the Houdinis joining the Welsh Brothers circus is from Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 72–76.
25. page 35. **Projea, the Wild Man of Mexico.** See Houdini’s own account in *Dramatic Mirror*, November 8, 1902, and Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 76–77.
26. page 36. **A. Lutes.** Houdini played on a bill with Clare A. Lutes in January of 1895 at Huber’s Palace Museum in New York City, clipping in Culliton Archives, now housed at

the Conjuring Arts Research Center in New York. Lutes was still active as late as 1920, according to an ad in the June 11, 1920 issue of *Variety*.

27. page 36. **Regurgitate/Akimoti** *Conjurers' Monthly Magazine*, April 15, 1907, 265.

Also see Harry Houdini, *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 172.

28. page 37. **Evatima Tardo (Thardo)**. Tardo made a strong impression on Houdini as evidenced by his description of her in *Miracle Mongers*, even though he spelled her name with an extra *h*. Harry Houdini, *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 187–189. For the additional details on her life, we drew on various contemporary newspaper accounts, including *Naugatuck Daily News*, Oct. 8, 1897, 2, *The Evening Republican*, September 11, 1897, *The Daily Northwestern*, February 11, 1898, 3 and the *Newark Daily Advocate*, May 16, 1905, 4.

29. page 37. **Selling soap, etc.** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 79.

30. page 37. **“Houdini had ‘forbidden’ Bess from going to see a show in the town that the troupe was currently playing.”** *Ibid.*, 80.

31. page 38. **Gaiety Girls.** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 95. A perusal of Houdini’s Pressbook, 1894–1899, at the

Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin turns up a few negative reviews of the burlesque show, including one reporter from Springfield, Massachusetts who thought the show “vulgar” and “indecent.” “No self-respecting man or woman would sit through the performance unless compelled to do so,” he wrote.

32. page 38. **Professor Morat** Letter from Billy Diamond in *The Sphinx*, (July 28, 1920), 179. Also see the clipping from *The Evening Journal*, (February 11, 1896) in Houdini Pressbook, 1894–1899, 8, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

33. page 38. **Female Wrestlers** unidentified clipping in the Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 10, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

34. page 38. “. . . **that illustrious Professor Morat . . .**” Letter to Houdini from Leopold Weiss, August 16, 1902, in the collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

35. page 38. **Marco/Dooley/Marko**. *Conjurers' Monthly Magazine*, January 1908, 155, and Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 85–87.

36. page 39. **Handcuff Act.** See letter from W. D. Leroy to Houdini, May 7, 1896 in the collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. According to Dr. James William Elliot in a letter to the July 1919 issue of *The Sphinx*, Keyes was the first person in the east who “supplied the means of getting out of any handcuffs” and he sold his secret to Tommy Downs.

37. page 39. **Borrowed Handcuffs from Audience for Metamorphosis.** *Manchester Union*, November 8, 1895, clipping in Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 4, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

38. page 39. **Gloucester Challenge** *Gloucester Daily Times*, November 22, 1895 clipping in Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 6, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

39. page 39. **New Britain** *Morning Dispatch*, March 3, 1896 in Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 10, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

40. page 39. **New Brunswick** *The Daily Sun*, June 10, 1896 clipping in Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 13, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

41. page 39. **Halifax** *The Morning Chronicle*, July 1, 1896 clipping in Houdini Pressbook 1894–1899, 13, in the collection of the Houdini Historical Center, Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

42. page 40. **HH Tied To Horse** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 86.

43. page 41–42. **Straitjacket/Dr. Steeves**. *Conjurers' Monthly Magazine*, January 1908, 155.

44. page 42. **Hardeen Full View Straitjacket** Doug Henning with Charles Reynolds, *Houdini, His Legend and His Magic*, (New York: Times Books, 1977), 157.

45. page 42. **Bought Marco Show**. Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 151.

46. page 42. **Cardo . . .** Letter from Bess Houdini to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, December 16, 1926, in the collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Also see Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 37.

47. page 42. **Applied as assistant to Kellar and Herrmann**. Milbourne Christopher, *Houdini, the Untold Story* (New York: Pocket, 1975), 26.

48. page 42. **Toledo—cover salary at Box Office.** *Toledo Times-Bee*, March 10, 1907.
49. page 42. **Newark, \$8 date.** Houdini to Jim Bard, March 22, 1902, from the Steranko collection.
50. page 42. **Sell Act/Magic School.** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 93–94.
51. page 44. **Swindled out of Salary/Lost \$60 at craps.** *Ibid.*, 95.
52. page 44. **HH on train tracks** *Ibid.*, 95–97.
53. page 44. **Houdini had just gotten a solid fifteen-week booking to work with Dr. Hill’s California Concert Company.”** Dorothy Kipper Lickteig’s Anderson Co, Kansas Early Gleanings, Vol. 3 1930–1952, 151.
54. page 44. **“That experience has always seemed to me . . .”** “How Harry Houdini Picked the Lock of Success,” *Dramatic Mirror*, July 8, 1914, clipping in Patrick Culliton Archives, now housed at the Conjuring Arts Research Center in New York.
55. page 45. **“That was the first time . . .”** “Men Who Made Magic” by Will Goldston, *The London Sunday Express*, February 10, 1935, 9.

56. page 45. **Dr. Hill & Pratt** Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 97.
57. page 45. **Two Rabbits for a Quarter**. “Why I Am A Skeptic” by Harry Houdini, *Variety*, September 24, 1920, 33ff.
58. page 45. **Walker** “**I haven’t learned to coin . . .**” Harold Kellock, *Houdini His Life Story* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928), 99–100.