

# Young Authors' Club

FLORITA COOK, Editor

## SENIOR DAY

### THE MAGICIAN'S BOX

Original by Philip Dick  
Maybe you recall the announcement in the paper recently about that magician coming here for an engagement. Well, when I saw it I thought it would be interesting to see the show. So I went.

There wasn't anything special during the first part. He dragged a rabbit out of a hat, pulled a lot of bright rags out of his sleeve and so on. But the last act, obviously the piece de resistance, caught my eye. Hallowsay (that was the magician) pushed a big red box out on the stage, about as big as a good sized hotel safe. It was a dark red, the color of blood, and had a lid instead of a door. Well, Hallowsay invited everyone to peek inside, and when they were sure that there was no false bottoms or panels he began putting stuff into it. He must have put in a dozen assorted objects before he was through—look, watch, hat, things like that. When he was finished he closed the lid and locked it. Finally he announced:

"When the box is opened it will be empty." And when it was, it was!

Well, you can imagine the surprise of everyone. Then he closed the lid again and repeated: "When he opened it, there was everything just the way he had left it."

After the show I wandered back stage to find out more about the box. I found Hallowsay in his dressing room helping himself to stuff from a bottle.

"Hello," I began. But I got no further.

"You want to know about the box, don't you?" he growled. I nodded. He got up and strode over to a closet from which he dragged the thing.

"Here it is," he said.

"How does it work?"

"Look," he grunted, "I don't know. I saw the window of a curio store, asked about it and bought it. The man didn't know how it worked either. Said he got it from some foreign looking fellow. Said it right enough. All I know is that when you put stuff in and close the lid the stuff disappears. When you lift the lid again, there's the stuff. Now go away and stop bothering me." I noticed that Hallowsay had dropped into his every day vernacular. The pompous stage speech was an affection.

"But haven't you ever wondered what happened when you closed the lid?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied. "Lots of times. But I ain't never been dumb enough to try and find out. The only way to learn anything is to get inside and close the lid and see where you go. But not me, no sir."

"Would . . . would you let me try it?" I asked. He stared at me in astonishment, then an expression of disgust appeared on his face.

"It's your funeral, brother. Go ahead. But if you don't come back, it ain't my fault."

I thanked him, and with a feeling of excitement crossed the room to the box. I could see that it was going to be a tight squeeze, but I peered off my coat and climbed in. The box emitted of oriental perfume. Here goes, I thought. I pulled the lid down on myself.

It was dark. Dark, as night. Not a crack of light showed through the lid. Suddenly my heart seemed to stop beating. I could no longer feel the pressing sides of the box about me.

I reached out my hands and felt nothing. I stood up. There was nothing above me. I moved a step and suddenly felt nothing under my feet. Kneeling down a reached about. It seemed that I was standing on a platform, a step to any side and I would fall, how far I did not know. Now I was scared all the way through. I had gotten into a box and closed the lid. Now I was not in the box, even though I moved not an inch. It was fantastic! Such things could not happen! But it had.

I was afraid to move for fear I

might fall. I was afraid of the dark about me which was like a blanket. I reached into my pocket and dug out a book of matches. I scratched one across the strip on the package. Nothing happened. Reaching down my other hand I felt searing pain flash across my fingers. The match was burning and I could not see it. I threw it away.

I must have cried. Or screamed something. I don't remember what it did after that. When I think of it, all I can recall is suddenly feeling the box around me again, and a blinding streak of light above me and Hallowsay's face peering at me.

"Got tired of waiting for you to come out. What happened? Where did you go?" he asked.

I slowly got out of the box and began putting on my coat. The magician hovered over me asking again and again what had happened.

I finished putting on my coat and went home.

(I made the change suggested. Philip, The ending leaves the reader up in the air—and the reader doesn't like that very much—he likes to be let in on the "answer" even if none of the characters know it. The style is smooth. This would have been a first-class Junior story, and since you wrote it while still a Junior, it will rate that now.)

## CREDIT LINE

Five credits for Philip Dick,  
February 7, 1944.

"Santa's Return"—Philip Dick, Jr. This paints a rather gloomy picture but it is thought-provoking and shows that the author has a very active mind. I like the style of writing. . . .

*Count J. H.*

189 Hagar Ave., Piedmont, Calif.

## PRO AND CON

DEBATE A department for opinions on current events. The editor's name will be printed on the winners of this column. At the time of publication, the editor will be notified if they may be criticized. The only exception being that there be at a hand be accurate in contribution to the department and non-controversial. Social enemy opinion or hot their truth shall cause to appear.