Voilà! He presented the bouquet of red carnations with a flourish.

“That’s amazing!” she said, clearly impressed.

“It was nothing.” He sketched a bow.

“But I didn’t see where they came from.”

“The same place as this.” He waved his arm to reveal Cornish hens over wild rice with grilled asparagus.

“Ooh, my favorite!”

“Then we must celebrate.” He gestured for a floating bottle of Mumm’s to fill two champagne flutes.

She clapped her hands and giggled. “I’ve never seen someone with so much command at his fingertips.”

“Oh, I am but an amateur,” he said.

“But these things. I don’t see how you can do them.”

“Well, as they always say,” he said, “things that occur that we cannot yet explain might as well be magic.”

“What else can you do?”

He conjured a glass of small-batch bourbon and gave it a sip.

“Damn,” he said. “I was hoping for Blanton’s.”

“What is it?”

“Knob Creek,” he replied.

“You mean you don’t always get it right?” She touched her lips.

“Actually,” he said, “it rarely happens.”

“What do you mean?”

“That bouquet?” He nodded toward the flowers.

“What about it?” she said. “They’re lovely.”

“They were supposed to be orchids,” he said.

“Oh.”

“The Cornish hens?”

“Yes?”

“I was thinking quail.”

“So the champagne?” she asked.

He nodded. “Dom Perignon.”

“But I thought you knew magic.”

“Oh, I do.” He winked.

“So you can conjure up all of these things, but you rarely get them right,” she said.

“That’s it in a nutshell,” he said.

“My God, I feel like I’ve been tricked.”

“I’m thinking so too,” she said.

“But you’re a fraud.”

“That’s a little harsh. Magic is just like life: imperfect even in its beauty.”

“So you’re OK with doing parlor tricks and getting them wrong,” she said.

He gestured at the table and made everything disappear.

“Of course. After all,” he said with a shy smile, “I’m only human.”