

MOVIE MAGIC

Suzi B. Mystery #2

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FOREWORD

The Suzi B. Mysteries are sort of a continuation of the 15-book series of *Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries*, in which Suzi B. is a featured character. If you haven't read any of those, it might help you to know a little background information about the characters.

Attorney Peter Sharp's wife Myra threw him out of their home (which she owned before they were married), due to a conflict of their philosophies about legal representation: she was a prosecutor with the District Attorney's office, and Peter was a defender of those poor unfortunate people 'wrongfully' accused of crimes.

For a while Peter stayed in their back yard on a dilapidated old Chris Craft cabin cruiser he was restoring, until Melvin Braunstein, a former law school classmate, arranged for him to rent a slip in Marina del Rey California. Peter had the old boat trucked there, launched at the boatyard and towed to the slip. He then moved aboard and started making minor court appearances for Melvin Braunstein, who operated his own small law practice from a houseboat in the Marina, on the same dock as Peter's boat.



When Melvin died in a plane crash, Peter inherited his former classmate's modest law practice, along with the office manager that came with it - Melvin's thirteen-year old step-daughter Suzi, a Chinese computer genius, and her huge St. Bernard.



Melvin's houseboat

Pursuant to a request in Melvin's Will, the court appointed Peter as Suzi's legal guardian, and through a series of misfortunes that miraculously worked out, they wound up living on a beautiful 50-foot Grand Banks trawler-yacht.



The *Suzi B.*

Along the way in each of his legal adventures, Peter usually wound up butting heads with his ex-wife, who Suzi adores and is constantly scheming to get back into the Sharp household. There's also Stuart Schwartzman, Peter's old friend and frequent client, who is the most entrepreneurial person in Southern California – and Jack Bibberman, the best private investigator that Peter ever met.

When Peter wasn't swilling Patrón Margaritas at one of the marina's local watering holes, he was usually involved in some losing legal case that little Suzi inevitably solved, leaving Peter with the impression that he was really as good as he thought he was, but Suzi resented Peter always getting the credit, and the Suzi B. Mysteries chronicles what happens when she decides to go out on her own and solve some crimes.

The same cast of characters is still around from the original series, and they inevitably get 'drafted' to help Suzi out... but make no mistakes who is really solving the cases – as she so successfully did in her first adventure, ...*Sorry Wrong Number* – in which a brave member of the LAPD Bomb Squad he to pull her out of danger.

All of the Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries are summarized at the end of this book, and if you're curious about them, more details are at <http://www.LegalMystery.com>, so sit back, relax, and read Suzi B.'s 2nd mystery, as told by Suzi's legal guardian, attorney Peter Sharp.



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Play it Again, Sam

Other than hopping over to Maui to shoot the breeze with world travelers at the Lahaina Yacht Club a couple of times a year, I don't travel very much, but I have noticed that there seems to be a new growth industry in this country. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, it has doubled in the past few years.

Unfortunately it's almost impossible to get into this industry, but if you *could* find a way, you would have a really permanent job – as a ghost piano player.

The first time I encountered one of these spirits was in Hollywood at place called the *Magic Castle* and



as you may have guessed from the way it bills itself, it really *is* 'world famous,' and features the best magicians that the world has to offer.

In the music room, a piano is played by *invisible Irma*, the Castle's resident ghost, who takes musical requests. The first time I visited the castle I was blown away by the piano presentation. You see the keys move, but there's nobody sitting at the piano... and as advertised, you really can make a request, and Irma will play it for you.

I've been in a lot of saloons, but I've never seen anything like Irma. I firmly believed that she was a unique ghost... and a pretty decent piano player, so you can imagine my surprise one evening in Lahaina when my dear friend Cynthia treated me to an enjoyable evening of entertainment a block down the street from our yacht club, to a place upstairs of Ruth's Chris' Steak House called *Warren & Annabelle's Magic*.

The lounge is like a large Victorian living room where guests can have dinner and drinks; sitting off to the side is piano and stool, where each evening, before the magic show in the theater area starts, you can see the piano seat cushion compressed as if someone is sitting on it – and then the piano starts to play.



The host announces that Annabelle is now at the piano and will be taking requests. Wow! The ghost piano player industry is now in full swing. There are now twice as many of them working. Who said the economy isn't improving fast enough?

As amazing as Annabelle was, my big surprise came a few days later when I got to the airport for my return flight back to Los Angeles, and was informed that the plane was overbooked. If I wanted to wait until

the next day, the airline would put me up in a first-class hotel for the evening, give me a \$500 air credit, and make sure that I get on a flight that next day.

The deal sounded too good to be true, so I figured that it wasn't - and demanded to be put on that overbooked flight... and it worked. I arrived at LAX around 10PM that evening. When reading the *New York Times* online the next morning, learned that the airline I was flying on - I hate to mention names, but it was *American*, had filed for bankruptcy protection.

Because of the time difference, I realized that if they filed in a New York courthouse at nine AM that morning, it would have been three AM in Maui, which means that they would be off the hook for my hotel room - and since their flights were grounded that day, I would have been stuck in that hotel - on my dime - until I could get a flight back to the mainland.

* * * * *

Well, all's well that ends well, and now that I'm back in the marina I've discovered that my legal ward Suzi has a new friend: a boat-owner who just became a neighbor on our dock - and Suzi has a favor to ask of me. I know this because my favorite breakfast has been prepared and is waiting for me in the boat's main lounge area.

I'm used to her huge dog watching me eat a meal because he's always on 'crumb patrol,' but having her stand there is a little disquieting, so I address her. "What?"

"Peter, I need a favor."

Here it comes. She's got something up her sleeve. She always does.

"As you now know, there's a new neighbor on the dock. His name is Barry and he moved his boat here while you were in Hawaii. He took Ed Sinclair's slip... you know, the author who died recently.

"Well, he's in the movie business, and he's got connections with the unions that all the movie crew people belong to."

"That's nice, kid... but that helps us how?"

"Well he's working on a movie now, and a few of the cast and crew need some minor legal matters taken care of. Now don't get excited. I don't want you to do anything. I've done all the work for one default divorce, a name-change, a landlord tenant matter, and some other little thing.

"And your name won't appear as attorney of record on any paperwork. I've done everything so that they appear to be representing themselves."

"I'm glad to see you've been keeping busy, but if you've done all the work, what do you want me to do? There must be something, or I wouldn't be eating this fine breakfast."

"Well, seeing as I'm only thirteen years old and won't be in Harvard Law School for another couple years, I'm not licensed to practice law or prepare papers for people, so if anyone asks, I'd like you to back me up and say that you looked over all the paper work and it seemed in order."

"Suzi, I know you like to monetize everything you do, so please tell me: how is this going to help our little law firm?"

"Barry may put me in his movie."

"You can't work in a movie. First of all, there must be some child labor rule that'll probably prevent it. And if you do get into a movie, you'll have to have a full-time chaperone on the set. Second of all, it'll take you away from the office for too many hours, and thirdly, this town is full of people in the movie business who gain favors from people with promises of getting them into the movies.

"Besides, I don't think you really want to be in the movies."

"You're right Peter, I don't... but by meeting the whole cast and crew and passing out our cards, I think I can bring in some business for us... and it'll only take a couple of decent cases with paying clients for you to visit your storefront Yacht Club in Maui... and next time you'll fly there and back first class on a *real* airline."

