



Cold Whispers

The SECRET of the TRAGIC THEATER



by Michael Teitelbaum

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The **SECRET** of the **TRAGIC THEATER**

by Michael Teitelbaum

illustrated by Denise Prowell

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The Audition

All her life, everyone who fourteen-year-old Nina Holbrook knew told her she had a beautiful singing voice. Nina had gotten the lead in every school musical—and dreamed of singing on Broadway one day.

More than anything, Nina loved old songs. She even dressed in **vintage** clothes when she sang her favorite oldies. Today, Nina hoped to take a big step on the road to achieving her dream. She was about to audition for the hottest TV talent show on the air—*Singing Superstar!*

On this gray Saturday afternoon, Nina sat in the front seat of her mother's car on her way to the audition.

"You're going to knock 'em dead, as usual, honey," her mother said as they made their way through the city streets.

"This is different, Mom," Nina replied. "It's one thing to be the best singer in *my* school. But all the people who are going to be at this audition are the best in *their* schools, too."

Nina glanced out the window at the bright, blinking marquee of the Grand Theater. As they approached, Nina saw a long line of people stretching down the block.

“Oh, man,” Nina said. “It looks like everyone in the city is here to audition. Let me out here, Mom.”

“Good luck, honey—and don’t worry,” her mother said as Nina climbed out of the car. “Call me when you’re done, all right?”



Nina joined the long line of hopeful singers. She was so far back she could hardly even see the theater. A group of teenage girls stood right in front of her on line. One of the girls dressed in rainbow-colored pants and a sequined shirt, scowled. She looked at Nina's outfit—a vintage 1940s dress—and shook her head.

“What are you dressed up for?” asked the girl. “Halloween is still months away.”

“I like vintage clothes,” Nina said, smiling. Kids had made fun of her for her **offbeat** taste before. She was kind of used to it. “So what song are you going to audition with?”

“I’ve practiced a rock song and a rap number,” the girl said. “I’ll decide last minute once I get a look at the judges. What about you?”

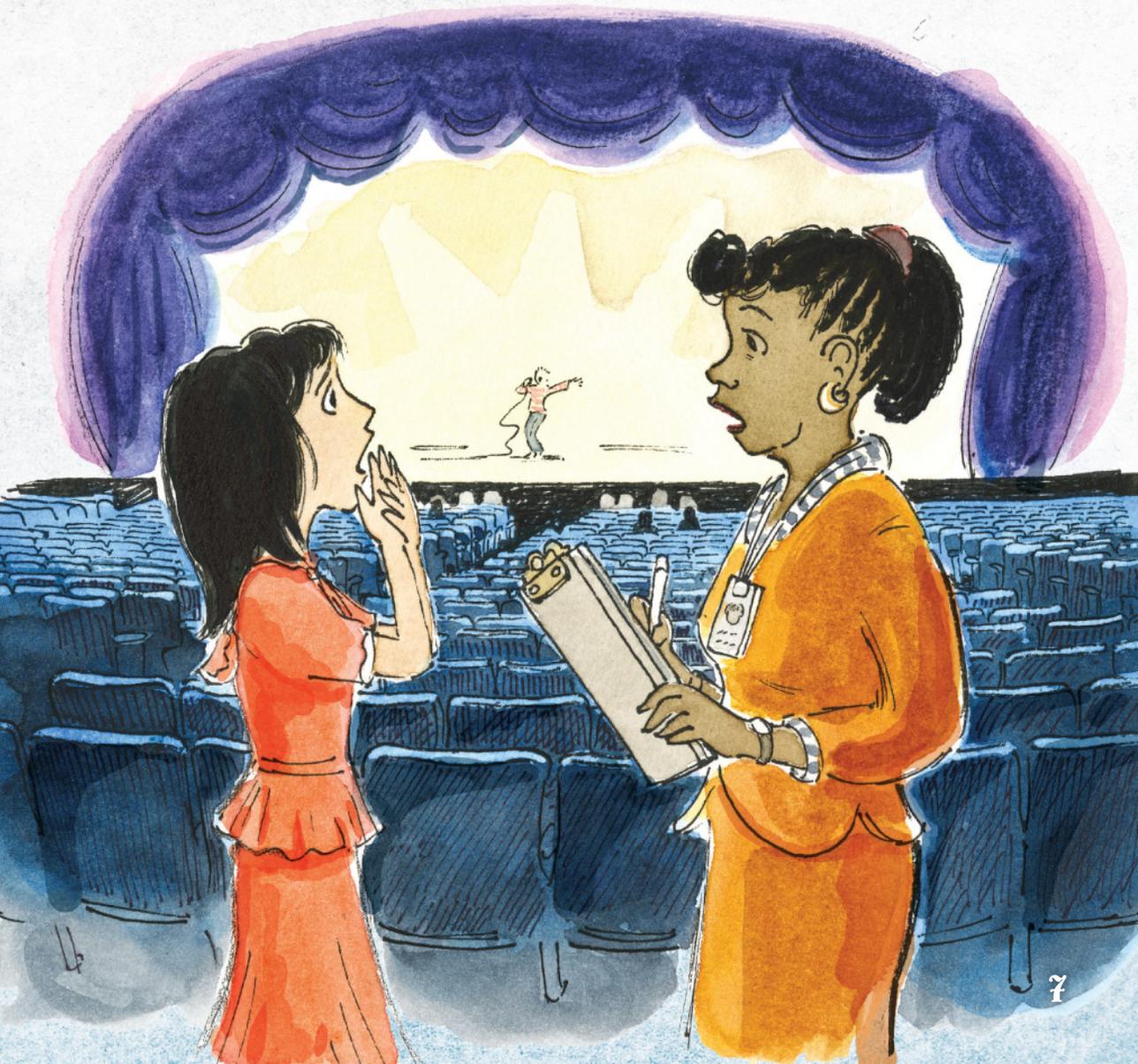
“I’m going to do a song from the 1930s called *Twilight*,” Nina said proudly.

“What century are you from?” another girl asked. “They don’t pick a winner based on the song the fewest people have heard of, you know.”

Nina couldn’t wait to get away from these mean girls. When she reached the front of the line, she got a close look

at the beautiful theater, all lit up. Her excitement started to build. Then, once inside, it was crushed.

“I’m sorry, miss,” said the woman in charge of the line. “We’ve reached the **maximum** number of singers for this year’s contest. You’ll have to try again next year.”





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Teitelbaum is the author of more than 150 children's books, including young adult and middle-grade novels, tie-in novelizations, and picture books. His most recent books are *The Very Hungry Zombie: A Parody* and its sequel *The Very Thirsty Vampire: A Parody*, both created with illustrator Jon Apple. Michael and his wife, Sheleigah, live with two talkative cats in a farmhouse (as yet unhaunted) in upstate New York.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Denise Prowell has illustrated several books and many educational materials for children. She lives in northeastern Pennsylvania with her husband, Mark, and has helped to work on a rural and urban land plan in that region. Denise wishes to thank the people of the Scranton Cultural Center, the marvelous theater whose interior was used for visual reference in this book. For these illustrations, Denise used marker, watercolor, acrylic paint, and pastel on watercolor paper.

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The **SECRET** of the **TRAGIC THEATER**

Nina had just missed her one chance to be on the hottest TV talent show around—*Singing Superstar!* But then fate intervened and provided another stage for her to show off her talent, a stage far from the TV cameras. Some say that fame comes at a price. Nina was about to find out just how high that price can be!

Beware the Pharaoh's Tomb!

Curse of the Haunted House

The Doomed Amusement Park

The Ghost at The Grand Inn

The Horror in the Cave

Night of the Gravedigger

The Secret of the Tragic Theater

Terror at the Ghost Town Mine

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