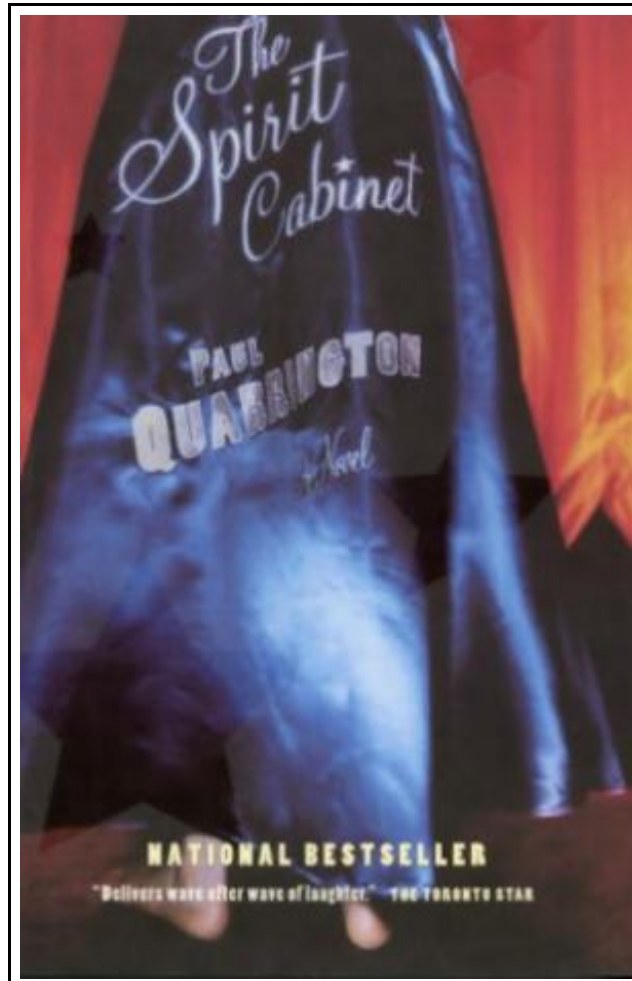


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THE SPIRIT CABINET: A NOVEL

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Vintage Books Canada, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, 2000. Soft cover. Book Condition: New. 341 pages. From Publishers Weekly: Canadian screenwriter (Due South) and award-winning novelist Quarrington (Whale Music) poignantly uses the tacky, tricky background of Las Vegas to tell the story of two magicians who pay the price for a great and dangerous wisdom. German Jurgen Schubert and Swiss Rudolfo Thielmann (think Siegfried & Roy) are sellers of wonder--a flamboyant Vegas magic act, spawned from a seedy club in Munich. At the height of their fame, they pay \$4.8 million for the much sought-after Houdini collection, which includes the Davenport Spirit Cabinet and ancient books containing history's greatest magic secrets from all over the world. Labeled showmen, not "real" magicians, by their contemporaries, towering illusionist Jurgen and animal trainer Rudolfo are compared by the World-Famous Kaz to "chimps [who] bought some books about brain surgery. " Quarrington reveals the pair, often rude and showy, as having been shaped by the traumas and disappointments of their pasts: Rudolfo was a pathetically lonely child raised in an opium den in Bern, and Jurgen is still desperately trying to prove that real magic exists. Jurgen proclaims to Rudolfo and to sensuous female assistant Miranda, as well as to lovable albino leopard Samson, that he wishes to change their lucrative, successful show by the dark wizardry gleaned from the mysterious teachings of Houdini's dusty books. But Jurgen is seduced into another world through the creepy doors of the Spirit Cabinet, and a story that begins as an entertaining lark-uneven yet humorous--ends up tender and heartbreaking. As Jurgen becomes more deeply involved with his supernatural metamorphosis, he becomes Christ-like, levitating and performing miracles while he drifts irreversibly away from Rudolfo, his life partner. Quarrington gathers most of Vegas to see the duo's final act, powerfully blending...

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