Astonishing

by

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INT. ATTIC - DAY

The attic is dusty and barren. A shaft of sunlight from a lone window illuminates a corner. In the corner rests a large trunk plastered with railway stickers.

SIRENS outside. Distant SCREAMS. A helicopter THUNDERS overhead, shaking dust from the rafters.

A door SLAMS downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

HALLEY, 20s, athletic and trim, catches her breath at a granite countertop.

HALLEY
Blake, next time you find an ancient codex of ultimate evil, don’t read it!

BLAKE, 20s, fraternity sweatshirt, bends over, panting, against the kitchen door.

BLAKE
You blame me for everything.

JEN, 20s, wearing a pagan pendant, points out the window.

JEN
Shush!

They duck and peer outside. A ghastly mob of ZOMBIES shambles down the suburban street.

Halley glares at Blake.

BLAKE
Come on, Halley. How could I know?

HALLEY
Like “cursed tome of vilest darkness” wasn’t a clue.

BLAKE
I’m just saying, “kick off the zombie apocalypse” is a little extreme on the curse-o-meter. Right, Jen?

Jen ignores the byplay.
Think they saw us?

A window SHATTERS in another room. More zombies stagger across the lawn toward the kitchen.

Attic?

Dead end, but defensible space. Yeah.

Halley, Blake, and Jen race from the kitchen as zombies BANG on the windows.

Mom’s gonna be so pissed when she gets back from Hawaii.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The door BURSTS open. Halley, Jen, and Blake rush in and SLAM the door.

Jen regards the barren attic in surprise.

Mom kept talking about cleaning out the attic after I left for college. I didn’t think she’d do it.

Footsteps TROMP up the stairs. MOANS and GROANS.

I don’t think we exactly fooled them. Can we block the door with that?

He points to the trunk.

Must be Grampa’s old prop trunk from his magic act.

Blake looks interested. Jen shakes her head.

Stage magic. Not the same.

Still, there might be something we can use. Blake, hold the door.
BLAKE
Hello, zombies? Strength of the undead?

HALLEY
Put your back into it.

BLAKE
Gee, thanks a bunch.

The door CREAKS open. Blake SLAMS his body against it, pushing it shut.

BLAKE
Looks like they mastered doorknobs.
Just our luck, attacked by the zombie Mensa club.


HALLEY
The Astonishing Abner?

Jen shrugs ruefully.

The two women open the trunk and hastily pull out magic act props – interlocking steel rings, a top hat, decks of playing cards, colorful silk handkerchiefs.

Zombies POUND on the door.

Jen pulls out a saw.

JEN

Blake struggles to keep the door closed. A rotted fist PUNCHES through a panel next to his head.

BLAKE
Hurry up, you two! This isn’t nearly as much fun as it looks.

HALLEY
Jen, check this out.

She holds up a wand.

JEN
A prop wand. Just another gimmick.
Do flowers pop out the end or what?
HALLEY
I don’t think so. Here.

Jen takes the wand. The hairs on her arm stand up.

JEN
A charged wand! But, how?

HALLEY
You’re a witch, Jen. Magic runs in your veins. That doesn’t come out of nowhere. Is it possible your grandfather-

The others catch on.

BLAKE
Had the power of true magic, too, except he hid it-

JEN
By posing as a stage magician? Because everyone knows-

HALLEY
Stage magic’s not real. It’s the perfect cover.

JEN
It’s brilliant. And I thought-

SMASH! More putrid fists bash through the door. Jen puts on the top hat and rises, wand in hand.

JEN
Bring it on, moldy oldies.

Blake dives aside as the door SHATTERS. The pustulent LIVING DEAD shamble into the attic, MOANING.

Jen gestures with the wand. Takes a breath. And—Nothing. Moldering zombies stumble across the room at her.

Halley delivers a spinning kick to the lead zombie’s face, knocking him over into his cohorts. More zombies crowd in through the door, GROANING.

HALLEY
Jen?

JEN
Sorry. Stage fright.

She clears her throat.
To Abner Hotchkiss came powers unbidden,
A secret carefully hidden.

The gift of true magic flowing,
To granddaughter unknowing.

A terrible curse,
Our powers joined to reverse.

Grandsire, I implore and admonish,
Time now for us to astonish.

A brilliant burst of light fills the attic.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY
Light flares from the attic window across the city.

INT. ATTIC - DAY
Jen, Halley, and Blake blink furiously. No zombies. Shattered door as good as new. Blake WHOOPS in triumph.

Jen smiles. She doffs the top hat and sets it carefully on the trunk lid.

JEN
Thanks, Grampa. I love you.

The three friends walk to the door.

BLAKE
Fighting zombies always makes me hungry.

HALLEY
Pft. The door fought more zombies than you did.

JEN
Enough, you two. Let’s get some ice cream.

The door closes. The top hat tips and rolls off the trunk lid to the floor.

A white rabbit hops out. Another. And another ...

FADE TO BLACK.