

THE BASEMENT

by

David Schreiber

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Cast:

Ralph.....20s. A cable repairman.

Magenta.....Female. Late 30s to 40. A sorceress.

Time:

The present

Setting:

The living room of Magenta's home.

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(Lights up on a living room. The front door is on the right. Ralph is knocking at the door. There is a small stuffed animal down left.)

RALPH
(Knocking)

Hello! Northwestern Cable repair!

MAGENTA
(Enters from left, crossing to right)

I am coming! Please be patient!

(Talking to stuffed animal)

Is he the one? Excellent?

(Magenta opens front door)

RALPH
Ralph Novus, ma'am. I'm with Northwestern Cable. I—

MAGENTA
Yes, yes. Please do come in. Immediately. Did anyone see you?

RALPH
No. I don't think—

MAGENTA
Excellent! My, what a delicious uniform you're wearing.

RALPH
Okay. Um—

MAGENTA
You're here to repair my cable. Follow me to the basement.

RALPH
No!

MAGENTA
Excuse me?

RALPH
I need to check up here, first.

MAGENTA
But the problem is in the basement. This way.

RALPH
It's, uh...standard Northwest Cable policy. I need to check all outlets, uh...in the proper order. Yeah. And you've got an outlet right here!

MAGENTA

But I can't live without my cable! Please come with me right away!

RALPH

I really need to check up here first.

MAGENTA

Oh, all right. But I will have you downstairs.

RALPH

Huh?

MAGENTA

I mean...I can't wait for you to repair my cable television.

RALPH

(Ralph's cell phone rings)

Okay. Excuse me, please.

MAGENTA

Of course.

RALPH

Oh, hi boss.

MAGENTA

(Quietly, to stuffed animal)

Yes. I'm trying.

RALPH

(Quietly, into cellphone)

Yeah, she keeps trying to get me to go down to...right.

MAGENTA

Don't tell me to do that! I'm going to—

RALPH

What do you mean ritual sacrifice?

MAGENTA

I don't care what you think. I'm going to use the powder.

RALPH

You didn't say anything about—

MAGENTA

(To the stuffed animal)

I have some in the kitchen. It will work.

I shall return forthwith!

(To Ralph, normal voice)

(Magenta exits, left)

RALPH

You said this would be easy! You...Calm? You're not the one stuck in here with a crazy...I don't care how valuable it is, I'm not...Oh hell, I'm getting out of here.

(Moves to door)

I am not...wait, the door's locked. I can't get it open.

MAGENTA

(Enters from left. Hurries to Ralph)

Ralph! You're not departing, are you?

RALPH

I need to get something from my truck.

MAGENTA

I'm afraid that door tends to stick. You can exit through a door in the basement.

RALPH

(There's a loud burst of talking from the cell)

Hold on, ma'am.

(To phone)

She right here! The...customer is right here. Yes. All right.

(Ralph hangs up phone)

Um...

MAGENTA

So, shall we go downstairs?

RALPH

O quantum est in rebus inane!

MAGENTA

What?

RALPH

O quantum...est in rebus...inane!

MAGENTA

Latin?

RALPH

Yeah. Um, are you...all right?

MAGENTA

Superb. What was that you just—?

RALPH

A book I just read! It's the title. Have you read it? It's about...uh...this guy who...uh...is looking for...the fountain of youth...in the Vatican. Or maybe Paris. I forget.

MAGENTA

I see. A gentleman who reads. My favorite.

RALPH

Thank you?

MAGENTA

Now let us descend so you can go outside to your—

RALPH

I'm just going to work on this plug now. It may take a while.

MAGENTA

But—

RALPH

You don't need to stay. I'm fine.

MAGENTA

I'll bring you some lemonade.

RALPH

No! Thank you.

MAGENTA

Water?

RALPH

No, I'm...uh...I'm doing dehydration therapy this afternoon.

MAGENTA

Of course.

(Walks behind Ralph. Take magic dust out of her hand and sprinkles it on Ralph)

RALPH

I really do work better when I'm alone!

(Ralph sneezes)

Achoo!

MAGENTA

Health.

RALPH

Thank you. I'm...

(Yawns)

Oh, excuse me. I'm awfully tired all of a...

(Ralph falls asleep)

MAGENTA

Ralph? Ralph! Excellent.

(To stuffed animal)

Yes, he slumbers soundly. But, I...nothing. It has left me somewhat fatigued.
Come, Ralph.

(Tries to pick up Ralph)

Oh my. He is heavier than he appears. I shall use a levitation spell.

(Listening to stuffed animal)

No, I will use a levitation...I don't need to...I can perform a simple spell on my own without...Really? Well, I'm not the one who decided, at the dawn of the twentieth century, to become the god of buggy whips and slide rules. I can handle this situation without your advice.

(Turns to Ralph)

Now, let me see...

Like a feather, aloft,
Like an eagle, soaring,
Like a kitten, playful,
Rise above the flooring.

(Pause)

Nothing! Why...why am I so weak? So tired.

(To stuffed animal)

What? But I have hours until the deadline...I can...

(Magenta collapses)

What is wrong? Help me, master!

(Listens to stuffed animal)

Yes, my Lord.

(To Ralph)

Awake yon sleeper,
Arise my dreamer,
Sleep no more, young man,
Stand upon your femur.

(Pause)

Ralph? Ralph, wake up!

RALPH

Wha? What happened?

MAGENTA

You fell asleep.

RALPH
(Stands)

What's wrong?

MAGENTA

I am a diabetic. I am undergoing hypoglycemia. Please, help me down to the basement. I have medicines there. Please, there isn't much time!

RALPH

It worked!

MAGENTA

What worked?

RALPH

The spell! Wow!

MAGENTA

The spell? The Latin!

RALPH

Mr. Antonio will be very happy.

MAGENTA

Antonio sent you! Of course. I should have recognized his work.

RALPH

(Takes out cell phone)

I should call him. Hmm, I can't get a signal.

MAGENTA

My Lord is preventing it.

RALPH

Your Lord?

MAGENTA

The Awesome One. A god from the old world.

RALPH

Mr. Antonio didn't say anything about that.

MAGENTA

He resides in my basement.

RALPH

I should have guessed.

MAGENTA

I shall give you a spell to counteract Antonio's. But you must say it. I shall reward your handsomely if you do.

RALPH

I'd rather have *all* your treasure. Mr. Antonio said it was worth over five million dollars. Now, I wonder where it could be. Hopefully not down there.

MAGENTA

Ha! Money! How base.

RALPH

It works for me.

MAGENTA

How would you like to live forever?

RALPH

Live forever.

MAGENTA

That is the treasure that resides in this house. My Lord has granted me immortality.

RALPH

Sure.

MAGENTA

How old do you think I am?

RALPH

I don't know. Forty?

MAGENTA

Forty!?! You impertinent little...I was thirty-three when my Lord bestowed immortality upon me. That was over seven hundred years ago. And it can be yours, as well.

RALPH

Uh huh. Will I be renamed after a color as well?

MAGENTA

My Lord has his...peculiarities. Another of which is that he requires a virgin sacrifice once every five years.

RALPH

A virgin sacrifice? But...hey! I'm not a virgin!

MAGENTA

Don't lie, young man.

RALPH

Whatever. I just want the cash. I wonder if your Lord can stop me breaking that window.

MAGENTA

But Ralph!

RALPH
(Hears a voice only he can hear)

What?

MAGENTA

Ralph, don't turn away from—

RALPH

Shhhh! What the...who is that?

MAGENTA

Whom?

RALPH

That teddy bear. It's talking to me!

MAGENTA

You hear him! You hear my Lord's...our Lord's voice. He has chosen you.

RALPH

He's a teddy bear?

MAGENTA

That is merely his upstairs presence.

RALPH
(To the stuffed animal)

Yes, I can hear you.

MAGENTA

You shall be known as...Saddlebrown!

RALPH
(To Magenta)

Ugh.

(To stuffed animal)

Really?

MAGENTA

Ralph, I feel so tired. Antonio's spell...please, repeat after me...

RALPH
(To Magenta)

Shhh!

(To stuffed animal)

Yeah. Yeah!...All right, I'll tell her.

(To Magenta)

Magenta?

MAGENTA

Yes?!?

RALPH

Your Lord says that you've grown tiresome and impertinent.

MAGENTA

What?!?

RALPH

And that he likes me a lot better. And that he needs only one follower.

MAGENTA

No! My Lord!

RALPH

Did you know that if I do nothing, Mr. Antonio's spell will kill you?

MAGENTA

Ralph, listen to me—

RALPH

In just another minute, actually.

MAGENTA

Ralph, please. Repeat after me: "Hear the bell..."

RALPH
(To stuffed animal)

Money and immortality! Cool!

MAGENTA

Ralph—

RALPH

Mr. Indigo? Yeah, I like that!

MAGENTA

Ralph! Listen! It's very easy.

Hear the bell
See the shell

Be a man
Kill the spell

RALPH

Hear the gel?

MAGENTA

Bell! Hear the bell!

RALPH

I'm sorry. That was mean. I should let you die in peace.

MAGENTA

My Lord! Please! I have served you for centuries! Please don't...don't...

RALPH

Magenta?

MAGENTA

Ralph...

(Magenta dies)

RALPH

Magenta?

(Hears voice speaking)

What? Right. So about this whole sacrificing a virgin thing...well, I don't know about going out and finding some innocent...oh really? I never would have guessed. I mean, he's like sixty years old. Talk about a...oh, right.

(Takes out cell phone and dials)

And I just lure him down to the basement, and...yeah, I guess he won't suspect.

(Speaking on cell phone)

Mr. Antonio? I did it, Mr. Antonio...yeah, come on in. I'll be waiting.

(Ralph hangs up. Lights down)

THE END