

The Magician's Assistant

by John Waterhouse

Excerpt

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Setting: The lounge of a three-bedroom house in suburbia.

The time is the present.

Eddie Chapel, a suave gentleman 50's

Paul Cook, a musician 30's

Stacy Roberts, an accountant 30's

Samantha, an assistant from an agency 30's

Sykes, a mysterious visitor 40's

Act One

Paul is playing his guitar, experimenting with an idea for a new song. Enter Stacy.

Stacy: That sounds good.

Paul: Not bad. The new songs are coming. Had a good day?

Stacy: Not bad. *(they kiss)*. So what are the songs about?

Paul: Finding purpose, love and desire.

Stacy: Nothing new then.

Paul: This is ground breaking stuff! It's all down to the slant you put on it!

Stacy: Oh, I see.

Paul: So what have you done today, creatively speaking?

Stacy: *(laughs)* There's not much creativity in accountancy.

Paul: I thought that was the whole idea; to find innovative ways of hiding earnings and avoiding tax.

Stacy: We're not all completely lacking in scruples.

Paul: I didn't mean it like that. I just thought it was what you're paid for.

Stacy: I'm paid to keep client's accounts tidy, which is more than can be said for this room.

Paul: I'll sort my stuff out in a minute. Its part of my creative process. You need to spread things around when you're in the zone We've been over this.

Stacy: And I've told you, if you want to keep using this place as your studio, you need to get off your bum and start doing some dusting! How about tidying up now, whilst I make tea?

Paul: Ok, you're the boss.

Stacy: And don't give me that kept man thing again.

Paul: I didn't say a word!

Stacy: It's what you meant. Anyway, we need to talk.

Paul: Really?

Stacy: Don't worry, it's nothing serious.

Paul: Oh, that's alright. I thought you wanted to talk about money.

Stacy: I do want to talk about money.

Paul: We are getting more gigs.

Stacy: I know that and I believe in what you're doing. The thing is that bills are going up. The mortgage, gas, electricity, Prosecco; Ferrero Roche, you name it.

Paul: You don't mean....you want me to get a job?

Stacy: Would you do that?

Paul: But it would kill all creativity!

Stacy: I knew you'd say that which leaves one alternative!

Paul: Oh, no; you don't mean I've got to sell my guitars?

Stacy: I want to let out the spare room.

Paul: Oh! I see. Well, if its' going to help.

Stacy: I knew you'd see sense.

Paul: But we'll lose our privacy!

Stacy: Not really. He'll spend most of the time in his room.

Paul: If it is a he!

Stacy: It is.

Paul: What?

Stacy: I came back at lunchtime to let him in.

Paul: Well, nothing like talking things through.

Stacy: There was nothing to talk through.

Paul: I suppose he's some kind of jobbing builder.

Enter Eddie from behind Paul.

Stacy: Not quite.

Paul: Someone on benefit then?

Stacy: I don't think so.

Eddie: Excuse me.

Paul: Hang on, I'm guessing....*(turns round)* What? *(does a double-take)*

Eddie: The name's Eddie. How do you do.

Paul: Oh. Pleased to meet you. *(shakes hand)*.

Stacy: Eddie; this is Paul, my boyfriend.

Eddie: I just came down to see if anything has arrived for me. I'm expecting a package.

Stacy: Nothing's arrived yet. Paul's a musician by the way.

Eddie: I'm in show business myself.

Paul: You don't play anything, do you?

Eddie: Hardly; more a sort of cabaret act.

Stacy: You didn't tell me that.

Eddie: Not important really. Only light entertainment. Anyway, please don't mind me.

Exit Eddie.

Paul: Curious character.

Stacy: He's a bit eccentric but he has a certain style.

Paul: Yes, about 1940's at a guess.

Stacy: Nothing wrong with a bit of old fashioned charm.

Paul: You don't know what his act is?

Stacy: You name it, he'll probably do it.

Paul: I doubt I could name it and be sure it was legal! I wouldn't trust him an inch!

Stacy: Don't worry. He's only here until...well, I'm not sure exactly. Until his current contract ends I think he said.

Paul: So we could be stuck with him for ages?

Stacy: No, no. The agency only provide clients for upto three months at a time.

Paul: So he could be here for twelve weeks?

The doorbell rings. Stacy opens the door.

Stacy: Parcel companies! They just drop the package and immediately buzz off. *(carries in large, odd-shaped package. Looks at address)*. It's for Eddie! *(Opens rear door and calls up)* Eddie; your package is here. *(to Paul)* I wonder what it is.

Paul: Are you sure he's not moving in?

Enter Eddie.

Eddie: Ah, thank you.

Exits.

Paul: So he's already giving this place out as his address.

Stacy: Well, if it's just to receive a package?

Paul: But what a package! Just what does he do?

Stacy: Why don't you ask him?

The doorbell rings.

Paul: Standby for package number 2!

Stacy: Now that's enough.

Opens door. Enter Samantha, wearing a jump suit.

Paul: Now that's what I call a package!

Samantha: I'm Samantha. Is this where Eddie lives?

Stacy: It's where Eddie is staying.

Samantha: Ah, that's alright then. The agency sometimes gets it wrong.

Stacy: The agency?

Samantha: Yeah. You get sent to all kinds of places in this job. You wouldn't believe.

Paul: *(eyeing her)* I might actually.

Stacy: Just a minute please. *(opens rear door and call up)* Eddie, a visitor for you.

Enter Eddie.

Eddie: Ah, you're from the agency.

Samantha: Yes. I'm Samantha and I've come appropriately dressed as requested.

Stacy: Is he taking you parachuting?

Eddie: Hardly. If you'd come this way, I'll outline what's required of you.

Eddie and Samantha exit.

Paul: So he's bringing women back in now?

Stacy: She arrived independently, didn't she? I can't really stop him having the odd visitor.

Paul: And she was certainly an odd visitor!

Stacy: I noticed you didn't seem to object to her appearance.

Paul: No, she had a nice.... Never mind that; why's she gone upstairs? Not for...

A loud explosion is heard

Stacy: Banging?

Paul: Well, you said it!

Enter Eddie.

Stacy: Now look here, you can't be exploding things...in the bedroom.

Eddie: Sorry about that. It was just a little pyrotechnic. Went off by mistake!

Enter Samantha in fishnets, leotard and top hat.

Samantha: Sorry about that. My bad.

Stacy: That's your costume?

Samantha: Yes, I'm his assistant.

Eddie: I'm a magician.

Stacy: Really! That's interesting.

Paul: Well don't say I didn't warn you if you find the sofa sawn in two.

Eddie: Nothing quite so drastic, I assure you.

Samantha: We were supposed to be rehearsing in a pub room.

Paul: You didn't blow that up as well did you?

Eddie: Quite the opposite. They had a flood.

Paul: Is there no disused nuclear fallout shelter nearby you can use?

Stacy: Paul! Wait a minute; we're weren't doing anything tonight, were we?

Paul: No. Having a 'quiet night' as I recall. Oh no; you don't mean....

Eddie: You mean we could rehearse here?

Stacy: Why not?

Eddie: We'd be happy for you to watch!

Samantha: Oh, yes. It would be like having a test audience.

Paul: And testing the house to destruction at the same time, no doubt.

Eddie: That's settled then!

Stacy: Make the evening go off with a bang (*laughs*).

Paul: And bang goes my guitar practice!

Eddie: You play electric guitar?

Paul: When I get the chance, yes.

Eddie: Can you play a little something for each trick?

Paul: Well, I suppose I could improvise.

Samantha: Ooh, that sounds amazing.

Paul: You've not heard me play yet!

Stacy: You'll be great. I'll be the audience; so what happens now?

Samantha: We need to make a bit of space to perform in.

Stacy: Ok.

Furniture is moved and Stacy sits down in anticipation.

Paul: I think I've got something. *(plays a riff)*.

Eddie: Excellent. I'll go off-stage.

Exits by rear door.

Samantha: Great, now if we can dim the lights.

Stacy: I can turn off the main lights and put on the standard lamp? *(Stacy attends to the lights and resumes her seat)*.

Samantha: Perfect. Ok. When you're ready, maestro.

Paul plays the riff again.

Samantha: Ladies and Gentlemen.....

Paul carries on playing.