

No Tricks Zee

A Zatanna sleepy peril story

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Author's Note

I love how this story turned out. This is another one of my debut stories, my way of sharing my passion for sleepy peril to you all.

You don't need much preparation to enjoy this fun little story. You only need to immerse yourself in the words, the sounds and the feelings. First, I want you to go on the internet and find a picture of Zatanna from DC Comics. Sear that image of her into your mind. Next, think of your favorite actress playing Zatanna. Think of her voice - that's Zatanna's voice. Sentences in italics and centered on the page represent a short thought in Zatanna's mind. You're ready to go.

Find a comfy chair and give yourself about 30 minutes.

Try not to rush. Immerse yourself.

Have fun, and don't forget to breathe.

Story

Zatanna looked at a photograph of her father as she attached a pearl to her left ear, unaware of the person at her door.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

“In a second,” Zatanna replied. She picked up a small box and removed another pearl. She brushed away a lock of her curly jet-black hair and attached the pearl to her right ear.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

“Coming!”

Zatanna stepped off the chair, her pantyhosed feet touching the cold tile floor. She adjusted the strap of her lacy white brassiere and tugged her fishnet hosiery. Black spandex briefs hugged Zatanna’s hips, shimmering as she walked. The cool air of the room flowed past the skin of her bare shoulders and belly.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

“I’m coming, I’m coming,” Zatanna replied, her silky voice rising. She picked up a pair of white gloves and slipped them on her hands.

Zatanna put her gloved hand on the doorknob and turned it. The door opened and Zatanna was greeted by a girl in a glittering minidress. The dress hugged the girl’s figure tightly, curving around her breasts and ending at the middle of her thigh. Her legs were covered in shiny dark pantyhose, and

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she wore black high heels on her feet. A small purse slung around her bare shoulder.

Zatanna looked up and saw the girl's face, a grin beaming through her blonde pigtails.

“Heyyyyyy Zeeeeee!” The girl said in a high pitched voice.

Zatanna turned around and walked back toward her chair.

“Katie, why are you here so early?”

“Thought I'd come over and hang out before rehearsal! The rest of the stage girls will be here soon anyway, “ her squeaky voice annoying Zatanna slightly.

Zatanna picked up a white corset hanging from the chair and held it in the air.

“*TESROC SSERD!*”

She released her hands and the corset floated on its own around her chest. The laces on the corset tied themselves snugly, pushing Zatanna's breasts upward. Zatanna then picked up a white vest, and buttoned it around her waist. Zatanna adjusted the vest, causing her cleavage to jiggle slightly.

Katie stared in awe.

“*REZALB SSERD!*”

A black blazer with long coat tails floated behind Zatanna. She put her arms through each sleeve, adjusting her cuff links in the process.

“*TOOBSSERD*”!

A pair of black leather boots glistened as they floated over to Zatanna’s legs. She slipped her pantyhosed foot in one of the boots and grabbed a zipper, zipping the smooth leather boot up to her left knee. She finished slipping the other boot on, brushing off some dust from the heel.

Zatanna twirled around and smiled, her heels clacking over the tile floor. Her curly black hair swirled in a circle and landed on her shoulders.

“How do I look?”

“Gorgeous and stunning as usual, Zee.”

Zatanna gave Katie a friendly smile and then picked up a small white bowtie from her dressing table.

“By the way Zee, I wanted to thank you again for offering me a job here.”

“Of course Katie. Apologies, the stage girl salaries aren’t much.”

“Yeah, hard to make an honest livin’ in this town.”

Zatanna handed Katie the white bowtie and turned around. “You mind slipping this around my collar?”

Katie grinned and reached around Zatanna’s neck. She slipped the bowtie’s strap through the collar and started tightening its buckle.

“Hey Zee. I gotta question.”

“Yes?”

“Is there any other way to summon your magical powers besides using your voice?” Katie asked, her hands still holding the bowtie’s strap.

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Zatanna closed her eyes and smiled. “Nope. Been that way since I was a little girl training with my father...The *Great Zatar*.”

Katie paused, then piped up again. “So like...if I were to say, cover your mouth right now with my hand, you wouldn’t be able to do anything?”

Zatanna laughed. “If you covered my mouth right now I’d shove an elbow into your ribs and turn you into a rabbit!”

Katie giggled, tugged the strap and then patted Zatanna’s back.

“All done Zee!”

BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ!

Zatanna turned her head and saw Katie reaching into her purse, pulling out a smartphone wrapped in a glittering jewel case. Katie unlocked the phone and started sliding her finger across the glass screen.

“Let’s seeeee...Gotham crime rate—*down* actually! That’s a first. Batgirl foils robbery on 10th street. The Joker—back in Arkham.”

Zatanna sighed and nodded her head. “It’s a crazy town.”

“Yep...prettyyy crazy.”

“Alright! Well, rehearsal for our magic show is in twenty minutes. Let’s get ready to dazzle Gotham.”

Katie hopped to another dressing table and Zatanna sat back at hers.

“Is that him?” Katie asked, pointing to the photograph on Zatanna’s table.

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“That’s him.” Zatanna replied, looking at the photograph longingly. “He is—*was*—the greatest magician in the world, and taught me everything I know. He’s...”

Zatanna’s voice trailed off as her mind filled with fond memories of her father, training her in the art of magic.

“Um, so Zee, what’s the line up for tonight’s magic show again?” Katie asked, changing the subject.

Zatanna refocused, shaking her head. “Well, we are going to start off with my favorite, the vanishing act. Then we’ll do the audience participation tricks. Finally, we will end with something...dangerous.”

“What’s that?”

Zatanna pointed to a straitjacket hanging on the wall.

“Ohhhh, sexyyyyy. You’re gonna do your water escape routine,” Katie replied.

“Yep. It was The Great Zatar’s favorite way to end a magic show.”

“Awwwwwww. The guys in the audience will love it!”

Zatanna shimmied in her seat and brushed some of her curly hair back.

Katie continued.

“Especially the part where they get to gag your mouth.”

Zatanna chuckled. “Stage manager’s idea. The audience was skeptical that I wouldn’t use my powers. It’s definitely...gotten us a lot more ticket sales.”

“Yeah...’cause it’s hot.”

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Zatanna picked up a small metal tube and twisted its cap, revealing a maroon red lipstick. She applied the lipstick around her striking feminine lips, and smacked them twice. She then picked up a small square glass bottle of fragrance and sprayed it on her neck. She looked in the mirror and noticed Katie opening her purse.

Katie took out a small clear bottle and a piece of cotton. She unscrewed the bottle's cap and dipped the cotton into it. She looked at Zatanna, smiled and then applied the cotton ball to her index fingernail.

Zatanna looked back down at her table, turning her attention to a makeup kit. She removed a small brush and applied some eye shadow to her face.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

"We're busy right now, give us a minute," Zatanna replied.

"No worries Zee!" Katie said, standing up.

"I'll get it."

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

"Jeez you people are so impatient. Coming!" Katie yelled, walking over to the door.

Zatanna heard the door creak open. "Heeyyyyyy sir, how can we help you?"

"*Delivery for Zatanna Zatara,*" a low male voice replied.

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“Hey Zee, did you order something?”

Zatanna continued applying her makeup, brushing her eyelashes with a small comb. She put the comb down and picked up a mascara brush. “I don’t think so. Tell them to just leave it at the door,” she said with a hint of annoyance in her voice.

“It’s from someone very special,” the low male voice continued.

“Oooooooooo, Zee! I wonder what it is.”

“Leave it at the door.”

Zatanna heard the sound of crumpling paper and a cardboard box opening up.

“Awwwwwwwww...Zee, someone sent you roses!”

She heard Katie sniff the roses loudly. “WOWWWW, Zeeeee, come over and smell these they’re—”

FSSSSSSSSSS.

THUMP.

Silence.

“Katie?”

Silence.

Zatanna set her mascara brush on the table and turned her head back.

“Katie?”

Zatanna looked at the door and saw a delicate female arm on the floor, its fingers curled slightly. The arm didn't move.

“Katie!!” Zatanna gasped, stepping off her chair, her heels clacking faster and faster as she walked to the door. She knelt down next to the girl, the fishnets on her knee touching the cold tile.

Zatanna put her hand on Katie's shoulder and turned the girl over. Katie's blonde bangs brushed away, revealing a pair of peacefully closed eyes. Her mouth opened slightly, her glittering chest rising and falling at a steady rate.

“Katie? Katie, wake up,” Zatanna whispered with urgency, shaking the girl's shoulder. Katie didn't respond. Zatanna looked out into the hallway, left and right.

Empty.

Zatanna darted her eyes to the floor and observed the cardboard box. The box was a dark pink color and was surrounded by red ribbons. Inside the box was a bouquet of red roses along with a small white envelope. Zatanna noticed green fumes floating from the roses. She picked up the bouquet, gently sniffed the flowers and recoiled. Her eyes widened as she set down the bouquet, turning her attention to the envelope.

She picked up the envelope with trembling fingers and opened it, pulling out a small folded note. She unfolded the note and read the contents:

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*To Zatanna,
Sweet dreams.*

CREEAAK.

Zatanna heard the door move. She dropped the note and turned her head to look.

Nothing.

“Uhhhhnnnnn...” Katie moaned.

Zatanna knelt back down to check on the girl. She checked Katie’s pulse, placing a pair of gloved fingers on the girl’s neck. Normal. She placed her fingers under Katie’s nose, feeling a gentle warm breathing.

CLACK.

A brown shoe appeared in Zatanna’s field of vision and she shot her head up.

She froze, eyes wide open, as a bouquet of roses floated an inch from her face.

A surge of adrenaline coursed through her body, and she opened her mouth to shout a spell. A silent gasp came out instead.

“AH—”

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FSSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

Another puff of thick opaque green gas flowed into her face. Zatanna stumbled back, inhaling another lungful of the fumes.

“Ohhhh...uhhnnnn...”

The man stepped forward and Zatanna stumbled back again, landing on her spandex-covered derrière. She raised her gloves and shouted a spell.

“UHNNN...SE—SEPOR!!!”

Nothing.

The man stepped forward again.

Her head spun and her vision blurred.

She gritted her teeth and shouted again with all her strength.

“SEPOR!”

Her finger tips glowed.

“SEPOR!!!!!”

The man lunged forward and collided with a bundle of ropes. He flew backward with a grunt, the ropes coiling tightly around his arms and body. The bouquet of roses dropped to the floor.

Zatanna sighed and gasped for air. Her breasts heaved up and down under the white lacy bra and corset. Small amounts of strength returned to her limbs, her brain still under a massive weight of sleepiness. She continued holding her gloved hand up, palm facing the tied-up man.

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The man twisted under the ropes, grunting and shaking his head back and forth. Zatanna focused her mind again, and raised her hand further up. The ropes tightened around the man, who groaned in response.

“Uhhnnnn...who—who sent you?!” Zatanna yelled, struggling to her feet.

The man grunted and wiggled tirelessly under the ropes. Zatanna kicked the bouquet away with her leather boot.

“Who sent you?!” she yelled again, taking a staggered step forward.

Zatanna noticed the man reach for something in his pocket and then tightened the ropes further.

“Aghhhhh!” The man grunted louder.

Another wave of sleepiness crashed into Zatanna. The glow in her fingertips faded.

“Uhhnnnn...no...no...”

The man loosened his ropes and freed his arms.

“No—back...get...back!”

He pushed off the ground and got to his feet.

He's coming! Focus Zatanna!

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“Uhhnnnn...*SEPOR!*”

No response.

Focus!

The man reached into his pocket and pulled out a light pink handkerchief. Zatanna watched, trembling, as he took a larger step forward, his hand balled to a fist.

“*SE—*”

The man grabbed Zatanna’s hair and rocketed his fist into her abdomen.

PUNCH!!

“AGHHHHH!” She cried, clutching her corset and falling to her knees.

The man started maneuvering his body behind Zatanna.

“*SE—MMMMMMMMPHHHHH!*”

She screamed her spells as the damp silky handkerchief pressed into her mouth and nose. The cloth muffled her cries.

“*HRRRMMMM! Mmmmmmmph! Mmmmmmmph!*”

The man lifted Zatanna’s upper body off the ground, keeping the handkerchief tightly sealed around her nose. She started smelling a sweet chemical odor. Zatanna raised her left elbow and lunged it into the man’s ribs. He grunted loudly, but continued holding firm. Zatanna lunged another,

weaker, elbow into the man. The man responded by wrapping his fingers around Zatanna's belly, touching the frills on her vest and corset.

Zatanna felt pressure being applied to her diaphragm, the man's thumb inching up her lower breast. His fingers crept up her chest, curving around the fabric of her bra. She expanded her chest in response to this perversion and inhaled a lungful of the fumes.

“Hhhhhmmpph...mmm...”

Another wave of sleepiness crashed in.

The edges of her vision started fading.

Her eyelids fluttered.

The man crept his hand lower, an inch above her spandex briefs, and pressed his hand into her stomach, causing her corset to creak. She breathed again and sent a rush of sweet vapors to her lungs.

“Hhhhhmmmpph...mmm...”

He moved his hand lower, touching Zatanna's spandex briefs, feeling the smooth shiny texture.

He pressed again.

She inhaled.

“Hhhhhmmmpph...mmm...”

More sleepiness.

Her arms collapsed to her side as she relaxed her muscles. She used every last ounce of her strength to keep her eyes open. She looked at the floor where Katie laid, hoping the girl would wake up.

Zatanna's half-open eyes furrowed.

Katie's arm moved.

“MMMMMMmmmmpphhh!!”

Zatanna consumed a large fraction of her remaining energy reserve to scream at Katie, hoping the commotion would jostle the girl awake. The scream cost Zatanna another breath, and she inhaled deeply, her breasts rising and falling.

Katie, wake up!

Katie moved again, her arm bending back. Her glittering minidress created a bokeh of moving lights in Zatanna's vision. Katie stood up off the ground, and started walking toward Zatanna, her heels clacking on the tile floor.

“mmmmpphhh...”

Why is she smiling...

“mmmmpphhh...”

CLACK...CLACK

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“HEYYYYY Zeeee!!”

Zatanna’s mind rushed with thoughts of disbelief and betrayal.

“HRMMPHH?!!”

Another wave of sleepiness crashed in.

“Heyyyy, sorry about all the sleepy gas, but we need you unconscious for this next part,” Katie squeaked.

Zatanna raged, fighting back against the fatigue that consumed her body.

“HHHHHHHHHRMMMMMMMMMPHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Katie opened her purse and reached in. She pulled out a small glass bottle and a hypodermic needle.

“MMMPH!”

Katie inserted the needle into the bottle.

“Sorry Zeeee, but I think the chloroform my goon’s usin’ is starting to wear out.”

No no no...

“mmmmph...”

Zatanna felt strength return to her arms. She clenched her fist and focused on a magic spell.

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Katie pulled the plunger back on the needle and sauntered over to Zatanna.

The goon continued holding the handkerchief firmly over Zatanna's mouth. He pressed it further, squeezing her nose.

“Mmmphhh!”

Focus Zatanna! Got to break free!

Katie grinned, her face just inches away.

“This will sting.”

Zatanna clenched her fist even tighter and focused on her spell.

Katie lifted the needle and touched it to Zatanna's tender neck.

Zatanna shook her head as she felt the prick.

“Mmmphhh!”

Zatanna gasped into the handkerchief as she felt the sharp cold metal crawl deeper and deeper into her neck. Katie then pushed the plunger downward and Zatanna felt a cold liquid enter her veins.

Zatanna's eyes fluttered shut as an avalanche of sleepiness consumed her body and mind. She unclenched her fist and slumped. The goon released his grip and Zatanna opened her mouth to breathe. She collapsed, her body sliding down the goon's legs as she hit the floor.

THUMP.

She laid on the ground, eyes closed, breathing steady, her consciousness withering away. Her head tilted slightly, leaving small curls of hair over her parted lips. Her gloved hand rested on a bed of black hair, fingers

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relaxed. The other gloved hand rested over her corset, which expanded and fell with barely a thought.

Under a hazy mind, Zatanna listened to whispers of Katie conversing with the goon.

"...uh huh..."

"...yeah, okay...here you go..."

"...mmbmm..."

"...yeah, that sounds like a good idea..."

Zatanna heard footsteps getting closer to her.

RIPPPPPPPP. TEAR.

Zatanna felt a piece of duct tape stretch across her mouth. A pair of hands smoothed it out over her cheeks.

"...mmn..."

So...tired.

An arm slipped under Zatanna's back, sliding across her blazer's fabric, while her consciousness continued to evaporate. Fingers slithered under her thighs, touching her fishnet hosiery, and squeezing her silky flesh. Her body levitated off the ground, her head flicking backward, a cool breeze on her neck. Her arms dangled and swung back and forth at regular intervals.

The door opened with a creak and then closed quietly. Footsteps echoed through the hallway. She moaned softly through her tape gag as they carried her sleeping body away.

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“...mm...”

Her ear tingled.

“Showtime Zee.”

*Sleep.....**

She entered a deep slumber.

* * * * *

Zatanna felt a thick cloth gag between her lips as her consciousness resumed, along with the sound of thunderous applause filling the air. She opened her eyes a smidge and saw glimmers of stage lights in front. A giant red curtain covered her field of vision.

“Mmmmmnnnnn...” she moaned through her gag. She opened her eyes wider and tried moving her arms, but felt them trapped under a binding, suffocating outfit. She looked down and saw the criss crossed straps and sleeves of a straitjacket. She kicked her legs and heard the sound of chains rattling. She looked at the set of chains wrapped around her chest and ankles, shifting in her chair. Two sets of metal locks held the chains around Zatanna in place.

“Hmmmmphhhh?!”

The escape act...

Applause again.

Zatanna kicked and twisted her body, causing the chains to rattle louder.

“HRRRRMMMMPH!”

“HMMMMPHHH!”

“AND NOW LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.”

Zatanna froze.

“FOR OUR FINAL ACT, I GIVE YOU—”

Oh my god.

Zatanna winced as the red curtains pulled apart and blinding stage lights flooded her retinas.

“ZATANNA!!!!!!!!!!”

Thunderous applause and cheers deafened the room. Zatanna looked on in shock as an audience of a thousand patrons, dressed in tuxedos and dresses, clapped and hollered at her. Zatanna flicked her eyes left and right in disbelief.

On her right she saw a man dressed in a black cape, tuxedo and top hat. He was leaning on a cane. Zatanna looked to her left, and saw a blonde haired girl in a glittering minidress. The two of them raised their arms and gestured at Zatanna.

Applause.

Zatanna looked straight into the audience, her eyes wide as saucers, completely motionless. The clapping died down.

“For our final act of the evening, we will have Zatanna perform her daring, heart pounding and brilliant—water escape.”

The host paused for dramatic effect.

“*Without* the use of her powers.”

Thunderous applause.

Zatanna turned her head and focused on the stage girl to her left. The stage girl glanced back slightly, and grinned.

Katie!!

A furious storm raged through Zatanna. Zatanna’s eyes narrowed, her eyebrows lowered and she flailed inside her straitjacket. Her chair bounced back and forth on the wooden stage. The audience laughed.

“Settle down people, settle down.”

The audience quieted.

“Now! Before we begin the act, I would like to invite a member of the audience to inspect Zatanna’s gag and bindings.”

A thousand arms raised in the air. The audience laughed again.

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Zatanna's eyes opened wide and her cheeks turned red. She looked at Katie, who was smiling along with the audience. Zatanna's rage reached new heights and she screamed through her gag.

“HHRRRRRMMMMMMMMPHHHH!!!!!!!”

More laughter from the audience. The host joined in.

It's not an act!

“Ha Ha Ha. My lovely assistant will now go down and find one lucky person to come up here!”

Katie bowed and walked down to the audience seating area. She leaned into one audience member, then recoiled, giggling. She then hopped to another person, and hopped away smirking. Hands in the audience waved to her. Katie finally grabbed a man's arm and dragged him over to the stage.

“AWWWWWWWWW” the entire audience groaned. The man walking with Katie had glasses on, crooked teeth and a mat of messy hair. The man smiled ear to ear when he reached the stage.

The host walked over to the man and put a microphone to his face.

“And what is your name sir?”

“D...D...David!” The man replied, trembling.

“David! Alright, let's give it up for *DAVID* EVERYBODY!!!!!!!”

Applause filled the room. David grinned like a big idiot.

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Zatanna watched intently as Katie held David's hand and walked him over. David stepped behind Zatanna, brushing some of her hair with his arm. Katie looked over, and gave Zatanna a wicked smile.

David placed his hands over Zatanna's straitjacket, starting at the shoulders and going down her back. He tugged a few of the straps. He then reached to the front of her corset and tugged, his hands inches away from her spandex briefs. He started making his way up Zatanna's chest, placing his hands over her voluptuous breasts. Zatanna heaved her chest, and David pulled his hands away, the audience chuckling.

Zatanna's cheeks flushed deep crimson red. David knelt down and put his hands on her smooth leather boots. His hands made their way to the chains, and he pulled on a big metal lock, causing Zatanna to kick slightly.

David gingerly stepped up to Zatanna's front and looked her in the eyes. Zatanna stared back, and gave him a pleading look, muffling a bit through her gag. David smiled back awkwardly and put his hands on the cloth gag. He moved his fingers tenderly under the gag's fabric, around her cheeks, and ending in the back of her neck. His fingers found a fabric knot and he tugged hard on it, pressing the gag further into Zatanna's lips.

"Hmmmph!!!"

The audience laughed at her squeak.

David tugged the knot again.

"Hrrrrmmmmphhh!!!"

Laughter.

Nice work, David.

David stepped back, joining Katie and the host.

"Now, David! How did the bindings feel to you?"

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The host put the microphone to David's mouth.

"Well...they're tight alright! I checked the straps and the gag. Everything looks okay!"

The audience clapped.

"And David, please confirm for us, you and I have never met. And you have never met my lovely assistant before, correct?"

"That's correct sir."

"NO TRICKS!"

"No tricks sir."

The audience clapped as David went back to his seat.

Katie walked to the side of the stage brought back a big metal hook attached to a chain from the ceiling. She walked back off, and then pushed over a giant glass water tank, with three other assistants helping her. The glass tank was filled one third of the way with water. The audience oooed and ahhhed.

"AND NOW, our lovely assistant will place Zatanna on the hook!"

Don't you dare, Katie.

Katie danced over to Zatanna. She stepped behind Zatanna and unlocked the chains on the chair. Zatanna sat up to run, but Katie grabbed Zatanna's collar, pushing her back down. Katie then attached the hook to Zatanna's straitjacket. The audience laughed at the charade.

Zatanna then turned her head back and looked at Katie's hand. She noticed a shiny metal object glinting in the stage light, and her eyes filled with dread.

Something's in her hand!

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“All done,” Katie said, smiling for the audience.

“WONDERFUL! The chain will now lift her up and into the tank!!”

The host announced

Katie lingered behind Zatanna, and then leaned in close. Zatanna gasped as she felt the sharp prick of a needle on her neck.

“No tricks Zee,” Katie whispered.

Zatanna screamed through her gag as the needle pierced her soft neck, injecting a cold liquid into her throat.

“HRRRMMPHH!!”

Zatanna felt a numbness spreading through her vocal chords. Her mouth started feeling like dry cotton.

Katie pulled the needle out and palmed it in her hand.

“No tricks.”

She stepped back and smiled at the audience.

No, no, no. My voice! My powers!

The chain began pulling Zatanna into the air, making loud clanking noises as the gear mechanism turned. Three assistants pushed the glass tank directly under Zatanna. The mechanism stopped, then reversed, and Zatanna moved downward.

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Zatanna's boots entered the pool of water, the sounds of the audience being replaced with the sounds of her own muffles. The glass tank produced a distinct echo as she bumped into the walls now surrounding her. At the bottom of the tank was a large rubber hose, connected with metal fittings and valves.

Zatanna looked up and saw Katie's face smiling back through the opening.

"Mmmmmphh!"

Katie pushed a giant metal cover down, slamming it onto the tank.

SLAMMMMMM!

The noise echoed and left a ringing in Zatanna's ears.

The host started to speak, but Zatanna only heard distant sounds, the glass surrounding the tank inches thick. She heard applause through the glass, and then heard a metal valve squeak. Cold water rushed in near her boots. Instinct set in and Zatanna twisted and turned in her straitjacket.

"Mmmmmph! Mmmmmmph!"

The audience cheered as Zatanna struggled.

Show them what you're made of Zee!

Zatanna turned her focus inward and started searching for memories of her training. She recalled a particular memory about the first time she learned the art of escape magic. She remembered crying in anger when her first

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escape attempt failed; her father, comforting her. Zatanna's father had left her with Harry Houdini's parting wisdom:

Zatanna, there is always a way out.

The water reached her hips. Zatanna focused and wiggled her arms under the straitjacket's sleeves, twisting her shoulders with fierce determination. She found an opening in one of the sleeves and shimmied her hand through. She tugged her arm and loosened one of the sleeves. The audience roared.

Come on Zee, one more sleeve!

The water valve squeaked and Zatanna felt the water flow increase near her legs.

“Hrrrrmmmmph!?”

The cold water entered her corset and vest, sending a shiver down her spine. As Zatanna continued working through her escape, the water rose to the level of her breasts, soaking the lacy bra. Using her liberated hand, she searched for a strap in the back and loosened it. She then lifted her loose arm and stuck her head through an opening in the sleeve. Zatanna tugged frantically and released the other sleeve. The audience roared again.

You've done this a million times Zee!

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The water reached her neck and the valve squeaked again. Zatanna boiled with rage as she pulled her head around the other loose sleeve, tugging hard on the straitjacket's straps. She dipped her head underwater and slipped the jacket off and over her head, freeing her arms.

The audience stood to their feet.

Zatanna ripped her gag off, lifted her head in the tank's air pocket and shouted a magic spell.

“AH—AH—”

My powers!!

She grabbed her throat, still numb from Katie's sinister drug, and screamed.

“AHH—AHH—”

GLUB GLUB

Water entered Zatanna's mouth as the tank now filled to the top. Zatanna held her breath, raised her arms and pushed at the tank's metal cover.

CLUNK.

She locked it.

She pushed harder.

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CLUNK!

CLUNK!!

Father, there's no way out!!

Zatanna faced the audience, opened her mouth in terror and pounded on the glass, breaking a small bone in her pinky.

POUND POUND POUND!!

With a look of horrifying dread, the host sprinted backstage and grabbed a sledgehammer.

The audience screamed.

GLUB GLUB GLUB

Water filled Zatanna's lungs.
She opened her mouth to breathe.
Bubbles.

The host slammed the tank with the hammer.

SLAM!!

Father, help me!!

GLUB GLUB GLUB

More water. Bubbles.

POUND POUND!!

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Her vision faded.

The auditorium doors opened.

Father is that you...

“STOP THE SHOW!!!!!!”

Something is thrown at the tank.

SHHWWWWWP!

PING!

POUND...

Father...

Her arms floated.

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEEEEEEEEP!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!

* * * * *

No Tricks Zee: A Zatanna Sleepy Peril Story

Zatanna woke up to the sounds of police radio chatter, and to the feeling of hair tickling her face. A set of delicate lips touched Zatanna's mouth, formed an airtight seal and breathed air into her lungs.

COUGH! COUGH!

"Zatanna! Zatanna!"

Her eyes opened and she saw a girl in a leather domino mask, a head full of red hair with two black pointy spikes.

"Thank God! That was a close one, Zatanna."

"...mmmnnn..."

Batgirl took out a small clear face mask and placed it over Zatanna's mouth. She pressed a button and Zatanna felt a breeze on her lips.

"Take a couple deep breaths."

"...mmmmnnn..."

"It's oxygen—you'll be fine."

"Hhhhhhhh...mmm...hhh...mmm..."

Thick glass shards covered the stage floor, now drenched with a layer of water. Zatanna shivered under her cold, damp corset and vest. Her hand was wrapped in bandages.

"Try saying a few words, Zatanna. The drug should be wearing off."

"K-Katie—"

"We caught her. She can't hurt you again."

"...Uhnnn...what...how..."

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“You’ve made some enemies in this town, Zatanna. They chloroformed you and tried to make it look like an accident. I’d definitely avoid the dangerous stunts for now.”

Batgirl grabbed Zatanna’s wrist and helped her off the ground.

“Thanks Batgirl...I...I owe you one.”

“Sure thing. I’ll take front row seats to your next magic show!”

Zatanna chuckled and surveyed the scene around her. The auditorium was empty, save for a handful of Gotham PD officers meandering about. The once majestic water tank had a massive hole blown through it, with twisted shards of metal sticking out. Pools of water gathered in the audience seating area.

Zatanna noticed a glimmering light through the corner of her eye, and looked at the far end of the auditorium. A stage girl was being led out in handcuffs.

KATIE!!!!

“Hey Zatanna, wait!!” Batgirl shouted as Zatanna stormed down the stage and sprinted toward the auditorium exit.

Katie looked over. “Oh oh, hey Zee! Long time no see.”

Zatanna raised her hand.

“Sorry, Zee, I needed the money—”

Zatanna shouted a spell.

“SEPOR!”

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A bundle of ropes materialized and hovered around Katie's neck.

"Whoa whoa whoa!" Katie shouted as the ropes started tightening themselves.

The police officers walked back slowly as Zatanna raised her arm, unleashing her revenge.

Forgive me father.

"YOU!!" Zatanna cried, twisting her raised hand in the air. The ropes tightened further, wrapping Katie's neck.

"Ack—Whoa Zee!! What are you doing?!"

"Zatanna STOP!!"

A yellow glove touched Zatanna's shoulder.

"This isn't the way."

Zatanna's hand trembled.

"We do things by the book," Batgirl continued.

Zatanna's anger faded and she let out a sigh, lowering her arm. The ropes around Katie's neck loosened.

With her principled moral code, Batgirl led Zatanna away, and the two walked side by side toward the stage. Zatanna stopped suddenly and turned around, a mischievous grin on her face. She glared at Katie one last time and readied a spell.

Sorry father.

“MROFOROLHC!!!”

Katie’s eyes opened in shock as a chloroform soaked handkerchief wrapped itself over her nose and mouth.

“Hrmmmmmph!”

Zatanna then embraced her arm around Batgirl and smiled, as they walked back to the stage.

Afterword

So what’d you guys think? This is the second story I wrote after “Sailor Guardians versus Hypnosia.” I originally intended this to be a practice piece, just to sharpen my writing skills a bit. Really wanted to prove to myself that I could write another story purely off a simple idea.

I knew I wanted to write a Zatanna story, as she has always been a favorite subject in my artworks. As I started thinking about my story, however, I realized I didn’t know a whole lot about Zatanna. I had a basic understanding of her powers and showmanship, but I’ll be honest...I’ve never actually read a Zatanna comic. So I simplified the narrative a ton to avoid any canonical issues. Zatanna and Batgirl are the only DC characters that make an appearance. The villain, Katie, was completely made up. I used Zatanna’s father as a motif throughout the story, to give her a bit more depth. This was an idea that came to me after I got feedback from an initial draft, that there wasn’t much emotional attachment to Zee during the drowning scene.

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One of the things I'm definitely going to do more of is show small blurbs of inner dialogue. I'm not a huge fan of describing a character's inner thoughts. I think they should be revealed through character actions and dialogue. However, since Zatanna spends much of the second half gagged, she couldn't speak. So having some inner dialogue helped characterize her more, and allow me to keep the pace moving.

Some of you will probably recognize that Katie feels like she could have been Harley Quinn. I explicitly chose to leave Harley and Joker out, because they would have introduced too much backstory and assumptions. My original draft did actually have Joker making an appearance at the end, as the guy ultimately behind all this, but it felt out of place. Sometimes you gotta leave characters out to tighten a story.

Katie herself wasn't even supposed to be the villain. My original idea had her being just an ordinary stage girl friend of Zatanna's. Katie was simply going to be the first sleepy victim in the story. Once I began writing Zatanna's chloroform scene, the idea came to me. What if...Katie just got up and betrayed Zatanna. It made Zatanna's situation even more dire, and I loved the effect. It also made for an amazing second part, because I could use Katie to continue tormenting Zatanna while they were on stage. I ended up adding some dialogue to hint that Katie was paid by organized crime to kill Zatanna. It added some motivation to her, other than sadistic pleasure.

The stage show scene was what I originally wanted to write as the opener. The story would have begun with Zatanna waking up gagged on stage, being forced to participate in a magic trick against her will. I then figured I'd just write her capture scene as well, and that's how the story got constructed. I use slow and fast pacing to generate emotion in the reader. In certain sections, I slow the pacing down so that the reader can experience Zatanna's feelings

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longer (the David scene was 4 paragraphs.) When Zatanna's drowning, I'm only using sounds and very short sentences. The reader reads faster as a result, and begins panicking like Zatanna.

The story ends very abruptly, with Batgirl swooping in and saving the day. This bothered me a little, because I don't like deus ex machina's, but I didn't have much of a choice. I escalated Zatanna's situation too much and I didn't want her to die. As a writer, ironically, I had no way out. My goal however wasn't necessarily to write a plot perfect story, rather, it was to heighten reader emotions. So yes, I wanted to bring Zatanna to the brink and back. It also allowed me to add a bit of character development, when Batgirl stops Zatanna from murdering Katie. Some Zatanna fans might call me out on the fact that, it would be very uncharacteristic of Zatanna to want to murder someone. However, I ended up deciding to keep this section because it feels like the appropriate human reaction to her situation. I think Zatanna would be enraged if she woke up and saw Katie standing there. I ended up toning this section down regardless (my original draft had Zatanna literally choke the lights out of Katie.)

Hope you enjoyed this, and thank you all for reading my story!

—Sleepy Comics