

Thirteen Steps to the Attic

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Two twelve-year-olds, EMILY and PATRICIA, ascend the dark-lacquered stairs leading to an attic door.

Their shoulders brush the stairwell walls: narrow, water-stained, chalky, long-abandoned.

Patricia's cellphone lights the way. Shadows waver and shift.

They stop midway and exchange glances. Emily wary and mousy, Patricia haughty, superior.

PATRICIA

Okay, go to the top by yourself.

Emily clutches the railing, but doesn't go upward.

PATRICIA

The faster you do this, the faster you can get out of here.

The door above them: dark, scratched, ancient.

PATRICIA

Once you get to the top, knock.

A hesitant nod from Emily.

PATRICIA

Knock hard. Ask if you can come in. Then wait.

EMILY

For how long?

Patricia pulls her cell phone under her chin, bathing herself in ghoulis light.

PATRICIA

For as long as it takes.

Confusion from Emily.

PATRICIA

Maybe the lady who died and rotted up there will let you in. Maybe she won't.

(a grin)

Better for you if she doesn't.

EMILY

I don't wanna do this.

PATRICIA

(fires back)

Then you'll fail your initiation.  
That means you can't sit with us at  
lunch. We won't talk to you. We  
won't text. Bye-bye Instagram.

The pain of rejection flashes over Emily's face.

PATRICIA

You'll be by yourself. You won't  
matter.

Emily frowns at Patricia, looks up to the door.

PATRICIA

Make sure you pound on that door.  
Ask the hag to let you in.

One cautious step. Another. Up Emily goes. The old boards  
groan under her weight. Shadows deepen.

She reaches the door--the wood even more ancient and gnarled  
up close.

PATRICA

Now knock. Ask to come in.

Emily reaches, stops. She can't.

PATRICIA

Knock or you fail.

Knuckles brushing wood, Emily knocks weakly.

PATRICA

Harder, coward.

A good hard knock this time. Loud.

PATRICA

Ask the hag to let you inside.

Emily mutters a few soft words.

PATRICIA

Louder!

EMILY

Can I come in?

PATRICIA  
It's--May I come in?--stupid.

EMILY  
May I come in?

Nothing. Silence. Emily stands. Waits. Agonizes.

A small creak from behind the door. Hardly a sound at all.

Emily moves one step down.

EMILY  
Did I pass? Can we go now?

PATRICIA  
Not yet.

Another creak from behind the door. Emily's eyes widen like two dark moons. Horrified and fascinated at the same time.

PATRICA  
The hag's still up there, you know.  
Waiting for the right kid to come  
knocking. We know the stories.

Emily closes her eyes.

EMILY  
Yes. I know them.

PATRICIA  
Keep standing there until I count  
to ten. Then we can leave.

It takes Patricia forever to start counting...

PATRICA  
One...Two...

As both girls fixate on the attic door, something moves beneath them on the landing of the stairs.

The shadow of THE HAG looms, but neither girls sees...

PATRICIA  
Three...Four...Four and a half.

Emily turns.

The Hag ascends the stairs, reaches for Patricia's neck--

EMILY  
Behind you--

Patricia turns, comes face to face with the Hag--eye sockets stuffed with cobwebs, dead, waxy skin, teeth jagged, rotten.

Patricia cries out, rushes up the steps, joining Emily.

The Hag follows, slobbering with unspeakable hunger.

Both girls push on the attic door, desperate to get inside--away from Hag. They push the door. Spin the knob.

PATRICIA

Let us in. Let us in.

Whoosh--the door flies open, revealing the HAG TWIN--just as ugly and imposing as the version coming up the steps.

The girls are trapped between one horrific entity and another.

The Hag Twin pulls the girls into the attic with her clawed hand.

Patricia's cell phone drops onto the top step.

The Hag Twin slams the door, shaking the entire stairwell.

The girls scream from behind the door. Then silence.

The Hag approaching from the steps vanishes from sight.

Patricia's cell phone glows, flickers, fades, and dies.

The stairwell falls into abysmal darkness.

LATER

Stirring from behind the door. It opens.

Out steps Emily, her face shaded.

She steps down. Light from the attic catches her. There's something a little different about her looks...

Emily's mousy, frightened expression is gone, replaced by aggression and a sneer. Her eyes seem darker and harder than before. She calls out to the two Hags.

EMILY

I brought that girl to you. Now I want my reward.

Her lips curl.

EMILY  
Make me like you.

The shadows of the two Hags grow on the wall. They whisper in a strange, indecipherable language.

EMILY  
Do you know how humiliating this is? To play scared? To act dumb? To beg for friends? To bring them here?

Emily's anger flares.

EMILY  
Well, I got her here for you. And you swallowed her up.

Desperate.

EMILY  
Now reward me. Share your powers.

The attic door slowly closes.

EMILY  
You promised.

The door clicks shut. Emily is lost in the darkness.

EMILY  
You promised.

Emily descends the stairs. She lingers at the bottom.

She calls out to the hags.

EMILY  
I'll bring you her friends.  
Tonight. All of them. Would you like that? Would you share with me then?

One small creak sounds from the attic.

Emily nods. That's all the affirmation she needs.

She slips off into the darkness, soon to be back with more fresh souls.

She leaves behind an empty stairwell and a closed attic door.

FADE OUT: