

The Pop-up Book

by shellsnapeluver

Severus warned her--she just failed to listen.

One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

Severus warned her--she just failed to listen.

A/N: I make no money from this--it is all JKR's.

This story is for my friend, Cruel_Crush. I was highly inspired to write a story based on her imaginative pieces, Pop-up Book and Just a bit of Fiction. Her creativity on these took my breath away, and I just had to write a one-shot to go along with them. Thank you, CC, for all of your fabulous drawing--you know how much I adore your work. A special thanks to Lulabelle72 for more than just fixing my grammar and sentence mistakes. You always motivate me to do my best, and I couldn't have finished this without you.

You can find the art here:

<http://cruel-crush.deviantart.com/art/Pop-up-books-110157975>

<http://cruel-crush.deviantart.com/art/Just-a-bit-of-Fiction-111228952>

I distinctly remember warning my new bride about keeping her habitual snooping to a minimum. I had even placed a protective ward around that area of the room to keep her away. But no, she hadn't listened. And I know she'll blame me for her current dilemma, as if this were *my* fault for having such... oddities kept in the house--oddities kept within the reach of the woman who would be the death of me and whose curiosity might be the death of her.

I should have known she would choose to overlook my advice, as she had on so many occasions before. And so, fifteen years after the first time she dismantled my wards in search of ingredients for a batch of Polyjuice Potion, she did it again--to far worse consequences this time around.

*****HG~HG~HG*****

This was *entirely* his fault! How had he ever thought I would listen to his bloody rules the day I had moved into Spinner's End? I was too busy undressing him with my eyes, his baritone voice the cause of my damp knickers. And yet, he had continued to prattle on and on about... something.

"Hermione, kindly remove your hand from my trousers. Now, as I was saying, the ones on the top shelf--"

"Severus," I grumbled, standing on my tip-toes, snaking my arms around his neck. "Enough of the rules, Professor. I'm ready for you to take me to our bed."

I gently ran my tongue across his bottom lip, pressing my breasts into his chest, hoping he would take the hint.

He grinned. "Of course, Madam Snape."

See. This was *his* fault. This was why I was going to die. Because Severus Snape felt it more important to bed his wife than to make certain she was adequately warned about the presence of murderous objects in his home.

It was one week after our wedding, when I moved into *our* summer home at Spinner's End, and already, I was antsy. My new career as editor for Flourish and Blotts' new line of children's books wouldn't start until the next Monday, and Severus had mandatory meetings at Hogwarts, as the new term started in one week. I hadn't bothered unpacking, as in a week, we would be moving back into the castle. Harry and Ron were busy with their careers as Aurors, Ginny with Quidditch, while Luna and Neville were off gallivanting around the world in search of rare plants and snorks... whatever those might be. Hanging around in Diagon Alley was out of the question, as I wasn't one to find pleasure in shopping all day. I spent one entertaining afternoon with the Weasley twins, getting a special preview of their new shop in Hogsmeade. I even did some light cleaning of our new home, visited my parents, read my books, and did a few other mundane errands just to keep me from going mad.

I was bored. I missed Severus during the days, and I couldn't wait to begin my new job. So, to occupy my time, I... rummaged through Severus' books. I couldn't help it--he had more than I did! Technically, since these were half *mine* now, I explored my new books.

The steady rain and charcoal-gray skies influenced my choices of where to begin. The restricted books--wards wavering invisibly, malevolently, taunting me with their mystery. The clinking of the rain against the metal gutters was the music to my choreographed wand-waving as I studiously broke spell after spell that kept the books away from my touch. And as the last charm fell away, I inhaled deeply, taking in the old-leather-binding aroma.

Ah, where to start?

I scanned the titles printed on the thick spines, drinking in every word with wonderment. A few times my fingers hovered over the ones that seemed the most interesting, but I refrained, attempting to slowly take in this new world of knowledge and enjoy the moment. I could sense the magic radiating from the books, and oh, how that turned me on! Giddy with excitement, I hastily ran my fingers through my long hair, quickly braiding it to keep my unruly curls out of my eyes.

I fell more in love with the man I married as I noticed that the bookshelves were organized in same way I would've done: by subject, in alphabetical order, smallest to largest from left to right. Brilliant.

I did, however, realize that most of the books were not only about Dark magic, but were actually a form of Dark magic themselves...

I rolled my eyes (I've heard just about every cliché there is about my husband... They're mostly true. Of course, I would never tell him that), glided the wheeled, wooden ladder to the center of the shelves and began climbing. To my surprise, on the very top shelf, hidden away (for I was at least ten feet off the floor), there were at least twenty or so books that, by the titles alone, I could tell were children's books.

I gasped with joy, bouncing up and down on the ladder rung.

Images of my Severus as a little boy, reading his books in a corner of his room, filled my head as I ran the pads of my fingers across the spines, feeling each ridge and crease of the books. More visions filled my mind as I thought about reading his childhood books to our children! But that would be far into the future...

And as I was going to be immersed in children's books next week, I thought it was quite fitting that I had found these. I grabbed two, for they were as thick as textbooks, and headed down the ladder. I wondered why he hadn't shared these with me earlier--he knew I had got that job weeks before we were married!

I dropped the books on the table with a thunk. *I can't imagine why anyone would write children's books that were so damn heavy!* Dust from the undisturbed books puffed up, clouding the air. I coughed.

After I refilled my tea and lit several candles, I settled in to read. The heavy rain beating against the windows filled the cozy sitting room with an orchestra of weary tones, and I was half-tempted to take a nap. The shadows from the fire dancing throughout the room, shrouding the corners and some of the furniture in heavy darkness, didn't help my drowsiness either.

Nevertheless, I picked up the first book, a deep crimson with silver text, and propped it up on my wooden book holder. I easily unlocked the brass hinge that kept the book closed, took a sip of tea and was ready for my adventure.

I flipped opened the front cover and was surprised that the illustrations sprang up--the story popping up, coming alive. I giggled as I watched three friends, two boys and a girl, hike through a forest in search of a rare flower.

No wonder this book was so heavy and thick--it had to be to hold all the pop-up pages! I had never seen a wizard pop-up book. This is fabulous! I thought.

The intricacies of the drawings mesmerized me. Each detailed illustration was drawn in a scratchy ink, the lines a spidery sketch. The watercolours were vibrant, the tones nearly jumping off the pages.

I continued on and reached the scene in which the three kids (who, now that I looked closely, reminded me of Harry, Ron and myself) found the flower, picked it and began making their way out of the depths of the forest. On the next page, I was a bit taken aback as the rich colours from the previous pages became muted, darker. I sensed danger for the three, and my concern was an uneasy fluttering in the pit of my stomach.

A spine-chilling breeze emitted from the pages of the book, bringing along the smell of pine and something... humid. I briefly wondered what the lesson of this story was when out of the trees a... what the *fuck* was that?

With my heart racing, I frantically flipped the page to see what would happen next--if the three friends would encounter the disgusting monster I had glimpsed lurking in the trees, watching them. They were oblivious fools, skipping around happily, not realizing the danger prowling in the shadows alongside the woodland path.

I turned over the next page, desperate to see what would transpire. But the pages were blank--completely black. At first I thought that perhaps the book was never finished, but a slow, rotting stench secreted from the depths of the darkness. I wrinkled my nose and gagged. But before I could turn the page, something white appeared at the center of the page. Closer and closer it came, growing larger, and I was unable to either look away or shut the book. Not even when a roar of thunder shook our tiny house did I remove my eyes from that black page.

My mouth was drier than a desert, and I croaked like a frog when the *thing's* face and body became fully visible. Whatever horrid monster it was--for I hadn't ever seen such a despicable creature--it was shuffling toward me, its right, skeletal leg dragging slightly behind, scraping the ground with its scabby foot.

I'd seen enough. Just as I prepared to slam the book shut, I was startled when the monster became a pop-up page like the rest. I screamed when the beast's clawed hand sliced through the air, catching a wisp of my hair, yanking it from my scalp.

Shoving away from the monstrosity, I tilted my chair backwards onto two legs, my slippers flinging off my feet as I closed my eyes, frantically searching for my wand, which, I realized with sudden dismay, was on the table near the sofa.

Before I fell off the chair, the monster's bony arms clutched at me, tendrils of slick, rotted muscles wrapping around my neck, my face, drawing me towards the book--towards the elongated skull of the monster. A flicking tongue snaked through yellow, pointed teeth and licked the air in front of my face, drool splattering onto my lap.

A horrific growl emerged from gruesome creature as it stepped out of the book. Its piercing, bright-purple eyes bored into my own. The hand-like and reddened muscles

tightened around my face, nearly blinding me. As I clawed against the decayed flesh on its arm, I was yanked forward; the only thing I could see was the creature's jaw opening, unhinging like a snake to swallow me whole.

*****SS~SS~SS*****

When I walked through my front door, I heard (and smelled) something that was out of the ordinary. None of my protective wards had been broken, so I knew nothing could have harmed Hermione while I was away, leaving me a bit confused. The smell--well, I thought for a moment that she had tried her hand at cooking again, but then... We had discussed that incident once--she had promised to stay out of my kitchen upon penalty of having to eat her own food.

Panicked, I flew into the sitting room. The putrid smell invaded my nostrils, but that wasn't what made me sick to my stomach.

The table had been knocked over; two books, tea, ink and my papers were jumbled across the room, the chair on its side. Hermione was disheveled and screaming as she tried to fight off a hideous carcass that had walked out of the pages of a book. I snatched the opened book, abandoned by the creature in its pursuit of my wife, and pointed my wand, shouting a blasting curse at the back of its head. Brain matter and bone exploded, spraying us and the walls. The creature crumpled; its grip around her neck brought Hermione down with it.

"Get it off! Get it off!" she screamed, scrabbling at the putrid body. I pried a hand from her neck, and she bolted backwards. She crawled into a corner and curled into a ball, shaking as large tears streamed down her reddened cheeks.

I was at her side in an instant, falling to one knee and cradling her. "You're safe now; it's okay. Shhhh... Come, let's clean you up."

"W-what was that?" she mumbled as I scooped her into my arms, carrying her towards the bathroom and stepping over the death that spoiled my clean floor.

I ignored her questions, waiting until she was clean, comfortable, and most importantly, calm and away from her wand, before I explained what it was that had attempted to kill her.

"Well, if you would have hidden those horrible... I can't even call them books, because they are just nightmares with binding! If they had been put away, hidden inside a vault at Gringotts, then this wouldn't have happened!"

I knew she would blame me.

"Hermione, I *did* warn you--"

My beautiful, spit-fire wife leapt from the sofa, tossing her wool blanket to the ground and fixing me with a murderous glare.

"And what are you doing with those anyhow? What type of enjoyment could you possibly get from them?"

She was really asking why I kept such oddities.

"I've had them for a very long time, Hermione. I simply enjoy them." I added, quietly, "And as long as they are in my possession and not someone else's, they are unlikely to cause anyone harm. Usually."

She gawked at me.

Pacing around the room, straightening the bric-a-brac on my mantel, shuffling the papers on my desk so that each corner lined up perfectly, trying to keep herself busy... She was trying to keep her temper from getting the best of her.

I smirked, knowing how this would go.

I would say the wrong thing, and she would explode--it's what we do. The best part would be the shag I would get later that night.

"And can you *imagine* the type of person who would write that nonsense? Who would draw such ghastly images and bring them to life? No child should ever be subjected to a story like that! I am completely appalled!"

I sauntered into the kitchen, hoping a glass of scotch would help, Hermione following so that she could continue her tirade.

"I would appreciate it if you would dispose of those books, Severus!"

I slowly poured the golden brown liquid into the glass tumbler, tipped my head back and let the cool booze fill my mouth before I let it slide leisurely down my throat, burning away the foul words that had formulated in defense of *my* books.

"I will not get rid of them." I grinned before I finished my drink, listening to her huffing behind me, knowing that what I was about to say would really chap that sweet arse of hers.

"Severus, please."

"I will not get rid of them," I declared, strolling towards her, pausing to whisper in her ear, the stubble on my cheek prickling against her soft skin, "because I wrote them."

*****HG~HG~HG*****

He left me standing in the kitchen, rooted to the ground, staring dumbly at the pewter knob on the cupboard.

With great difficulty, I unglued my feet from the floor and followed him.

"Y-you wrote them?" I whispered, my voice quivering at an octave higher than usual.

He picked up the book that I hadn't opened, running his long fingers over the title before settling into his favorite chair, smirking. "Indeed."

Dazed, I slumped onto the sofa, breathing out my question: "Why?"

"How long have I been teaching?" he casually asked.

I counted back in my head. "Twenty-five years."

"And how many 'children's' books were on that top shelf--and might I add, purposely out of your reach?"

"At least twenty. From what I noticed..."

"There are exactly twenty-five. One for each year."

I didn't like the way this conversation was headed.

*****SS~SS~SS*****

Never in all my years had I imagined that I would spill my most guarded secret to anyone, especially to her. It's not as if I was concerned that she would leave me over this guilty pleasure of mine, but I didn't want her to stay and be repulsed either.

"I have always enjoyed drawing, Hermione. I would sketch on anything I could get my hands on."

"What would you sketch?"

"Mostly things found only in your nightmares. Nothing little girls would ever deem acceptable. I would also write short paragraphs to go along with my latest creations.

"Of course this fascination of mine died down once I finished school--more important things came up. But once I began teaching, I needed a way to... release my frustrations."

"So you wrote and illustrated horror stories about the children you taught?"

Silent, I sat, my smug smirk barely concealed by my glass as I took another sip.

Hermione tore her eyes from mine, latching them upon the crimson book that had come to life. "And that? That book was about me, Harry, and Ron, wasn't it? The three friends: one girl and two boys! What was that creature going to do to them?"

"Well, if I do say so myself, that was one of my more brilliant creations. Bringing the monster to life. Even though I wrote this during your first year, I had intended to set it loose on Potter the day he finished school and was out of my sight for good."

"Severus Snape! You wouldn't have!"

I placed my now-empty tumbler on the small, round table next to me, stood, and glided my way over to her. In moments, I had pinned her against the sofa. I leaned over, tipping my head slightly, brushing my lips against her ear. "Oh, but I would have."

Her breath hitched. "W-what changed your mind?"

"Who says I have?" I nibbled at her earlobe. "Changed my mind, that is." My tongue licked lightly over the shell of her ear, and she shuddered, helpless against this particular attack. "Perhaps, Hermione," I said, bringing my mouth to hers, "you could try to convince me."

We kissed, deepening until I could release her arms, knowing they would unfailingly come to circle my neck. I pulled her gently up from the couch, our lips still moving against one another.

"What do you think? Give it a go?"

"Oh, I think I know a way to convince you," she said with all the confidence of a woman who had her husband's erection under her palm. "Shall we?"

I followed her to the bedroom, already hard thinking of all the ways she would have to convince me. After all, this was only one book.

There were twenty-four more on the shelf.

FiN

A/N: I have to add a special thank you to Lariope. She went through this piece with a very fine-tooth comb and saved the day. Love you, doll.