

How I Met Your Grandmother

by Proulxes

A sequel to Damned House Elves! by braye27. Severus Snape has done many things under pressure. This is probably the hardest. A tale of ogres, princesses, and magic beans....

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This is a work of fanfiction, and I do not own the Harry Potter universe because JK Rowling does. My grateful thanks go to beaweasley2, Clairvoyant, and nagandsev for their help in bringing this story to you.

This is a story for braye27 a very generous reviewer who faithfully commented upon every chapter of my epic story Anima Mea and she requested the following:

"In 2008, I wrote a little one-shot called "Damned House-Elves!", and it's posted here at TPP. It's around 6000 words, so it's not very long.

What would Severus and Hermione say to their grandchildren when asked about how they came to fall in love?"

Please go and read braye's fic first; it's very, *very* funny, and she has actually been credited with inventing a new brand of fan-fiction entirely.... In fact, it is fair to say that if you *don't* read her story, you'll miss the key in-joke that runs throughout *this* one.

This sequel begins about thirty-seven years after braye's finishes.

Hermione and Severus are still professors at Hogwarts, and their grandchildren, Libby and Marcus, have come to stay for the weekend....

*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*

How I Met Your Grandmother

In a darkened room, ten feet off the ground, hanging onto an open bookshelf while balancing precariously on another, a child was slowly opening a wooden box.

It was slightly larger than a standard Muggle shoebox and made from a darkly hued, highly polished cherry wood. Carvings were etched around the box's sides and across the lid, and small gemstones were inlaid carefully into the carvings in an intricate pattern. It was heavy and ungainly, and the child knew that she would not be able to lift it easily down from its resting place on her grandmother's bookshelves because it was far bigger on the inside than it appeared to be on the outside. And so the little girl, a spry and athletic seven year old, had bravely scaled the bureau's solid mahogany shelves and reached the box in order to open it and withdraw the treasure from within.

After all, how else was she going to be able to investigate the enigma of her grandmother's bracelet? Grandpapa would have agreed that it was the only *logical* solution to the problem. But she didn't want *him* to know what she was doing either....

The box opened easily and silently as the girl carefully levered the lid upwards on its hinges. She held her breath and closed her eyes for a moment, pushing a wayward lock of thick black hair out of her eyes, thinking hard about the object that she was searching for before reaching a hopeful, questing hand inside.

A moment later, her face lit up in triumph, and she withdrew her fingers from the casket's innards, gingerly holding up the item that she sought, letting her breath out as her chest thumped wildly with the thrill of her success.

It was such a beautiful bracelet!

As she lifted it up to the light, Elizabeth Penn-Snape watched in rapturous fascination as the light from the little lamp by the fireplace played over the thick links of goblin-made silver.

For as long as she could remember, Libby had been fascinated by her grandmother's trinket box. Every time she visited, her grandmother would take the beautifully carved casket down from its place on the bookshelves above her antique bureau in the sitting room, sit her and the box solemnly on her knee and allow the little girl to open the cherry wood casket and reveal the silk-lined drawers and compartments, which moved magically to one side or another to allow eager exploration.

There were treasures within: strange amulets and scarabs, rings with beautiful stones or thick enamelled designs, fine chains and thicker ones, silver and gold charms and crystals. Hidden in each compartment, there were also strange charms and curios, a stone with a hole in it, a lock of fine black hair, a dragon's claw, a baby tooth, a small piece of engraved wood in the shape of a Hippogriff, a fragment of coloured glass from a stained glass window, a scrap of fine cloth, a lemon drop. Each item had a history and a story to tell. Elizabeth and her younger brother Marcus would sit for hours on their grandmother's knee, or perched on the arms of her great wing-backed chair, listening to the tales that she could spin about each one.

But it was the charm bracelet that held Libby's attention the most, for every time she or her little brother asked her grandmother about it, Grandmamma Hermione would smile a little enigmatic smile, and her eyes would lift to meet the gaze of her husband, and she would murmur something to change the subject, diverting the children onto another treasure and its tale.

She was still hanging on to the bookshelf with one hand as she hefted the bracelet in the other, holding it up to the light from the fireplace. The bracelet was heavy in Libby's hand, and her eyes feasted on the little charms attached to the links of its chain. They were all of the same shape, although made from different materials. Each charm was ovoid in nature, about the size of Libby's thumbnail, with an indentation on one side. She stared at a particularly beautiful one made from a shimmering mother-of-pearl-like material. She was *sure* that this one had not been there before Christmas; each time she looked at the bracelet, she was sure that there were more charms on it than there had been before.

Carefully, she counted up the number of the little gems, holding each in her fingers as she did so to help her keep count. She furrowed her brow as she concentrated. Twelve... sixteen... twenty-three... the little charms passed through her fingers as she carefully moved around the bracelet's chain thirty-one... thirty-seven.

Thirty-seven.

Libby watched, entranced, as the little charms spun gently in the glow from the fire, the light refracting from some of them onto the skin of her pale arms, turning the pale flesh into a rainbow of colours.

Grandmamma did not usually allow her to look for very long at the bracelet before carefully tucking it back into its nesting case in the trinket box. Libby narrowed her eyes as she stared at the little amulets. What were they? Doxy eggs? Nooooo. She had a new book on magical creatures, and Doxy eggs were longer and thinner than these little things. Miniature Quaffles? No. Quaffles were round with regular indentations on three sides. Her Great-uncle Ron had given her a Quaffle for her seventh birthday, although it would still be *years* before she'd be allowed to ride a broom. Libby wracked her memory. They definitely did remind her of something... something that she had read....

Her memory cleared.

Beans. They were like tiny glistening beans! Like the beans in *Jack in the Beanstalk* from the Muggle book of fairy tales that Grandpapa sometimes read to them when Marcus and she were getting ready for bed.

She gasped. Perhaps they were *magic* beans... And that was why Grandmamma would not let her look at them or tell her their story! Elizabeth's heart raced. What if she could make magic with the bracelet? She wasn't allowed to do magic yet, even though Grandfather allowed her to cast little spells with him when mother wasn't looking. Perhaps that was why Grandmamma wouldn't let her hold the bracelet for long!

The thought made her wobble a bit in her precarious position, and she grabbed onto the lip of the bookshelf she was balancing on to steady herself before returning to study the bracelet's charms once again, her mind full of monsters and demons, brave princesses and valiant heroes.

*

She knew that she shouldn't be looking through her grandmother's trinket box unsupervised, but she had not been able to resist the temptation of the polished wooden box and the forbidden treasure that lay within it any longer.... So she had waited for what had seemed like hours after she had been put to bed, listening to the sounds of her grandmother shushing and singing to her younger brother, Marcus, in the adjoining room as the fretful little boy fussed over his bedtime routine.

Libby had lain, heart thumping in excitement and trepidation at the thought of what she was about to do, sweat prickling on her upper lip, fingers plucking at the blankets on her bed, whispering, "Go to sleep... Go to sleep, Marcus," as a kind of charm to urge her little brother to settle.

After a few minutes, Marcus had ceased his protestations and Libby had heard her grandmother close the door to her brother's room and then move across the corridor into her own rooms. Hermione's musical voice rose and fell in conversation with her grandfather Severus' deeper and richer tones. Libby had strained to hear what they were saying to one another but could not make out exact words, just gentle teasing laughter and low conversation before the door had shut with heavy finality on her grandparents' room.

Silence.

Carefully, Libby had counted to sixty in English, French, and Mermish (just to be sure) before pushing back the covers of her bed and tiptoeing over to the door of her bedroom. She had waited there at the unopened door, listening for ages (Grandpapa Severus had taught her well), before she had gently eased the door open and padded lightly across the corridor, down the circular flight of stone steps from the bedrooms of her grandparents' suite of rooms in the castle and into the living room.

The room had been in darkness, save the light flickering from the fire in the grate, still burning merrily behind the charmed fireguard, and a tall standard lamp to the side of the fireplace.

Her eyes had adjusted to the low light from the dying embers in the large grate on the opposite side of the room, and she'd quickly scanned the room, searching for *yes!* She had been right! Grandmother hadn't taken it upstairs! The cherry wood box still rested on the tall bookshelves above the elaborately carved wooden bureau desk.

Eagerly, Libby had walked past the high-backed chairs, which flanked the dying fire, her eyes fixed on her prize, her heart hammering in her chest. A little voice inside her head had questioned whether what she was about to do was sensible, but she'd been far too excited by the prospect of studying the bracelet up close for as long as she wanted that she'd pushed her worries to one side, reasoning that the climb was not much more challenging than scaling the old apple tree in her back garden at home. She could clearly see where she could put her hands and feet, after all!

So she had pulled a low stool towards her, stood on it, wobbled a bit, steadied herself on the bureau and climbed onto the desk before pulling herself higher to climb the bookshelves above.

"Shouldn't you be *in bed*, young lady?"

Libby jumped in surprise and shock at the first percussive syllable that sounded out in the silent room behind her.

"Eeek!" She made a grab for the shelf's edge, missed her grip and flailed backwards with no hope of stopping herself, crying out in fear as she slipped from her precarious perch and plummeted towards the ground.

She tensed her body as she fell, bracing for the impact on the hard stone floor of the sitting room, hoping that she would not hurt herself too badly, clutching her grandmother's precious bracelet to her chest.

But...!

Before she could hit the flagstones, Libby felt herself cushioned and levitated safely away from the floor, upside down, her nightie bunching about her waist and revealing her knickers. She squeaked in surprised outrage and tried to wrestle her night things into some sort of order while twisting about in midair, trying to see who had cast the spell that had saved her from smashing into the hard floor.

It was hard to see upside down, but as Libby spun about in midair, one hand on her nightie, her grandmother's bracelet still dangling damningly from the fingers of the other, she found herself staring into the upside down face of her grandfather, who was leaning forward in his wing backed chair, one arm flung forwards and his fingers outstretched.

Uh-oh.

She must have walked right past him as she had approached the bureau.

Belatedly, she pulled the hand with the bracelet behind her back, trying to think of an excuse to explain why she had been climbing on the furniture and rooting about in her grandmother's trinket box when she was supposed to be asleep.

She opened her mouth but inspiration escaped her.

"I repeat," her grandfather said firmly, pulling his outstretched fingers into a fist and drawing the hand slowly towards him. Libby felt herself pulled inexorably towards the armchair. Grandfather's face was half in shadow, the fire's light playing on his left cheek and making his hawkish nose even more crooked and hooked. The firelight glinted off his square glasses, turning them mirror like and frightening.

Libby could feel tears beginning to gather, and her heart raced. She hadn't been stealing! She had just wanted to look at the bracelet again.

Grandfather Severus turned his fist over, and she felt herself flip in the air, drifting closer towards him.

"Grandpapa...,\" she began, her mind racing but still coming up blank for any excuses for her behaviour. \"I didn't know that you had come downstairs...\"

\"Clearly, you did not,\" he replied, raising an eyebrow as he watched her spin lazily in the air before him. She searched his face for a clue to how badly she was in trouble, but it was impossible to read.

She drifted closer towards him and was surprised when he moved back in his chair, opening up his arms to catch hold of her about the waist and lowering her onto his lap. As she landed on his knee, she adopted the best tactic that she could (given the circumstances of her rescue), and she began to cry.

\"I'm...I'm s-sorry, Grandpapa,\" she hiccupped.

His arms came around her, and she buried her face in his bony shoulder, sobbing and shaking from the shock of being discovered and her subsequent fall. She felt his strong hands awkwardly pat her shoulder and begin to stroke her back.

\"There... there,\" he rumbled after a few seconds. \"I have you, child. You are perfectly safe now. What in Merlin's name were you doing pretending to be an anthropoid on my furniture?\"

Libby frowned mid-sniffle. *A-a what?* She pushed herself away from his (now rather soggy) shirt and furrowed her brows at him. He removed his reading glasses with one hand, and she stared into his dark eyes. After a few moments, his eyebrow raised sharply. He looked pointedly down to the beautiful bracelet in her hands and then met her guilty stare once more.

Libby could feel her face burning with embarrassment. \"I... I just wanted to look at the bracelet, Grandpapa,\" she explained. \"It's so beautiful, and... But Grandmamma won't tell us about it.\"

Her grandfather's body seemed to be very still suddenly. There was a small pause. \"In-deed...,\" he eventually let out but did not offer anything else.

Libby frowned, then nodded urgently. \"There is a story for everything else in Grandmamma's special box,\" she explained. \"But whenever Marcus and I look at *this*, Grandmamma always puts it away again, and she won't talk about it at all! It's beautiful, isn't it? They are all different, but the same! Look at this one it's like a diamond... and this one, look... It's all twinkly, like a star!\"

She took a deep breath, heedless of his silence and the odd, tense set of his body. \"Do you know the story of the bracelet, Grandpapa?\" she asked in a rush. \"These charms look just like magic beans... and... and... I was wondering...\"

\"Beans?\" His voice sounded strangled. It was hard to tell, but she suddenly had the strangest idea that Grandpapa was *blushing*.

Libby nodded enthusiastically. \"Oh, yes! They are just like the magic beans in those stories that those mad brothers wrote. See?\"

\"The Weasley's wrote stories?\" her grandfather asked weakly.

Libby laughed and pushed him playfully in the chest, her tears forgotten. \"No, silly! I mean fairy stories! Are these the *real* beans that Jack planted? Are they? How do they grow? Can we plant some? Do they really grow overnight?\" She spun the bracelet in her fingers so that the little amulets spun and danced in the firelight.

\"Shhhh, little one, you'll wake your brother up!\" Grandpapa put his hand up and caught hold of the bracelet lightly in his fingers. \"And your grandmother too,\" he added, his voice strangely inflected.

\"But *are* they magic beans, Grandpapa?\" Libby was practically bouncing on his lap now, her chest thundering with the excitement of her discovery. She put on her most pleading tone. \"Can *you* tell me the story of the bracelet, Grandpapa? Please? *Pleeeeeeease?*\"

Grandpapa Snape hushed her once more, flicking a glance towards the staircase that led to the bedrooms.

Libby stared at him in hopeful entreaty. *Would* he tell her? She held her breath.

"If I tell you the secret of the beans, will you promise to go to bed and go to sleep, Elizabeth?" he said eventually, his voice pitched lower, almost in a whisper.

Libby nodded, her eyes wide with excitement.

Grandpapa Snape looked at her again, long and hard. "And also to never tell your grandmother that I told you about them? A Witch's Oath?" he asked challengingly.

Libby nodded so hard that she thought her head might come loose. She looked at him as seriously as she was able to. "I so do swear it," she said solemnly and traced a wiggly cross on her chest.

"Very well," Grandpapa intoned and cleared his throat, the high colour of his blush still evident on his thin bristly cheeks.

"Once upon a time...", he began but then fell silent, as if he was thinking very carefully about something. He shifted in his seat, like he was wriggling his bottom to get more comfortable.

The seconds ticked by and Libby grew impatient. "Once upon a time, Grandpapa?" she eventually prompted him.

Grandpapa cleared his throat again. "Erm... yes... once upon a time... there was, erm... an evil ogre who lived in a cave..."

"Ogres aren't evil."

"What?"

"Ogres aren't evil. I've seen *Shrek*."

"What?"

"Shrek. He's lovely. And he doesn't live in a cave. He lives in a swamp with a donkey."

Her grandfather made an exasperated noise and shifted her on his knee a little. "This ~~is~~*my* story, and in *my* story, the ogre was wicked," he reminded her firmly.

Libby wiggled around on his lap and twisted around to stare at him. She stared at him hard. "They don't live in caves," she stated again, certain of her facts. It was a nice house made out of a giant tree with a huge chimney.

Grandfather made an exasperated noise, and she heard him whisper something like "stubborn child" before his arms tightened again fractionally around her, and she saw him nod.

"A dungeon, then," he corrected, and before she could protest, he held up his hand to stop her, adding, "A clean and well-kept dungeon with a proper bedroom ~~and~~ *and* a fire *and* furniture. Now, may I continue?"

Libby nodded. She could let that one go; she really wanted to hear the story about the bracelet. Grandpapa grunted and relaxed back into the chair.

"Very well, as I was saying. Once upon a time, there was a wicked ogre who lived in a dungeon." Grandpapa cleared his throat and paused for a moment before continuing.

"He did not have any friends. The other... inhabitants... of the castle above did not like him very much, and the ogre did not care. He spent his days... erm... wandering around the forest, gathering herbs and animals to grind up into potions and making magic from them. Occasionally, young... erm... children used to come into the ogre's den, and he would frighten them away with his bad temper and unpleasant manners."

"Did he eat them?"

"Pardon?"

"I bet he didn't!" She stuck her lower lip out. It trembled a bit, but she scowled at him. "He wouldn't have actually *eaten* them that's trolls. Grandmamma told me all about trolls. Trolls eat children. She was nearly eaten by one, once... in a toilet. That is why she keeps a little tap in her trinket box to remind her about nearly being eaten by one. Ogres don't eat people. They eat slugs that go 'pop!' and then make candles out of earwax." Shrek would never actually *eat* anyone, she was *certain*.

Her grandfather stared at her with his I-can't-believe-that-you-are-part-of-my-family look that he normally reserved for her father. "No!" Grandpapa said with an exaggerated degree of patience. "He didn't eat them, child. I just told you that he frightened them away." He cleared his throat again and looked into the fire. "He was very good at it."

Libby made an unhappy noise in her throat. "He sounds very sad," she said in a small voice.

"Ahhh no, child. The ogre was content to be disliked," grandfather reassured her. "In fact, he didn't care one bit that nobody liked him because, you see, his heart was all dried up, like a..."

"Dried-up shrivelfig?" supplied Libby helpfully.

She heard her grandfather make a strangely strangled sound like before. "No, child, like a dried-up *bean*, all husk and shell. You see?"

He shifted her a little bit on his knee, taking the little bracelet from her and twirling the bracelet in his fingers. Libby watched as the firelight sparkled off the facets of one of the beans on the chain.

She nudged him again, and he continued softly, almost to himself. "So, the ogre was happy in his solitude, never thinking for a moment that he was missing something that was going to become so very important from his life."

Libby frowned. "Like a... *bean*?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes, like a *bean*," he said a bit testily.

"His heart was a bean," Libby repeated slowly. Frankly, she thought the idea of the magic beans in *Jack and the Beanstalk* was a bit better.

Grandpapa made an exasperated noise, as if picking up on her scepticism. "*Like* a bean. Yes," he said flatly, as if daring her to disagree. "His heart was a dried up bean, all shrivelled up and dead. And it did not matter what anybody said to him, child or adult, he remained unpleasantly nasty to everyone. He made lots of people miserable... *including himself*...", he added almost under his breath.

He twirled the bracelet in the firelight again, and Libby was fascinated by the way that the reflected light from the little amulets played over his face.

"Until...", he continued, "an... erm... *princess*... came back to the castle."

Her grandfather's voice was very expressive. He had managed to imbue that single word with great danger and excitement. She stared back at the jewelled beans and felt

her heartbeat pick up again.

Perhaps this story would be better than she had thought.

She nudged her grandfather in the ribs. "Go on, Grandpapa!" she urged. Her mind was racing with armour-clad heroines, waving their wands and fighting for good over evil....

Grandpapa rubbed his temple with one long finger and pursed his lips. "Well, at first, the ogre behaved just as he did to everybody else. You see, he had found the princess intensely annoying when she had been a child, and he could not see beyond her... irritating habits."

"Oooh! Was she running away from a curse? Or an evil father who was trying to marry her off to a horrible person with six fingers and nasty haircut? Or was she on a quest? Did she have a sword *and* a wand? Or a blaster?"

"What?"

"A blaster? Did she shoot people? I saw a bit of a programme about a princess who blasted baddies once. The baddies were all wearing white plastic armour, apart from a very tall person who had a black bucket on his head and problems breathing properly, but then Mum came into the room and said that I had to go to bed."

"Blasting baddies?" Grandpapa's eyes were round. "What on earth have you been watching on that infernal Muggle contraption of your father's?"

Libby rolled her eyes. "It's called a television, and a lot of the films are really good, actually," she responded primly. "Wizards should make television shows. Daddy says that they are educational."

"Educational? *How*, exactly?" he said sarcastically.

"Well, *I* know more about ogres than *you* do from watching tele," Libby responded promptly, unabashed, then returned to the matter at hand. "Was *she* a hero who rode about on a white stallion and beheaded people?"

Grandfather made another strangled noise in his throat. "No, she did not!" he yelped. "And she wasn't really a princess, either. But she was kind and clever... And she did have a wicked sense of humour, if I remember rightly." He chuckled.

Libby scowled. She nudged him again. "Come on, Grandpapa! What happened next?" she whined. She was getting pretty tired, and so far, she had a sad ogre who was mean to everyone and happy about that... and a princess who was, to be honest, a bit rubbish sounding. And not even a princess.

"Well," Grandpapa said and shifted again in his seat. "Do you remember what I told you about the ogre's heart?"

"Of course, Grandpapa! He had a heart like a bean...."

He cleared his throat. "Yes... well. The ogre began to take his meals next to the princess..."

"I thought she wasn't a princess?" Libby said accusingly. Now he was changing the story *again!*

"She was a sort of princess. She had helped to defeat a powerful, evil sorcerer with two of her... erm... *associates*... and so to many people, she was a princess, even though she was Mug...humbly born."

Libby nodded sagely. *Oh, that was all right, then* She motioned for him to continue.

"The ogre took his meals in the castle with the princess, and very slowly... day by day, she began to work her magic on him."

"Oooh....," breathed Libby quietly. "*Magic*..."

Grandpapa smiled, a quick twist of his lips, but she saw it. "Yes, child, *mmmmagic*..." His eyes danced as he saw her expression.

Libby bounced a bit on his knee. "What spells did she cast, Grandpapa? Did she Obliviate him or make him drink a potion to become nicer? Or did she cast a charm to change his mind about liking people? Or..."

"Erm... In a manner of speaking, little one," he replied, still smiling at her. "Do you know what happens to seeds in the desert, young lady?" he asked.

The little girl shook her head, confused by the sudden change of subject. Was the ogre in a desert now? She thought he was living in a castle in a forest!

She opened her mouth to protest, but carefully, Grandpapa detached one of the beans from the bracelet, laying the rest on the side table beside him. "Hold out your hand," he instructed her.

Libby shut her mouth and complied, and Grandpapa placed the little bean a pale rose quartz in her upturned hand. She stared at the little stone, heavy in her palm.

"Without water, a seed lies underground, dormant," her grandfather explained. He paused and looked at her again. "You *do* understand what dormant means, Elizabeth?" he added. "It means quiescent or inactive...."

Libby gave him her best 'you're kidding' look. "*Please*, Grandpapa," she said. "I am *seven*, you know. Of course I know what *dormant* means. The seed is asleep in the earth. I saw a programme about it on TV. The Muggles had speeded everything up so the plants moved about like Venomous Tentaculas. Great-uncle Neville was very excited about it." Her tone gave away what she thought of Great-uncle Neville's enthusiasm.

The corner of his mouth quirked slightly. "Just so," he agreed, and then he touched his wand's tip to the bean in her hand. "The seed can be dormant for years... until the rains come, and the water makes the bean come to life... causing it to germinate and begin to grow."

She felt the thrilling tingle of magic on her palm, and her breath caught as she saw the bean begin to change. It deepened in colour to a reddish purple, and then it rocked sharply against her skin and split open, to her delighted cry, pushing a shoot upwards... six inches tall... ten inches tall. She twisted her hand to catch the stem lightly in her fingers as it continued to grow. Buds formed and burst from its stem, producing crystal-covered leaves, which unfurled and shone brightly in the firelight. Soon, a lovely flower emerged at the tip of the stem, its long, slim petals a pale, bright pink. The flower nodded gently on its stalk.

"Oooh, it's beautiful!" Libby breathed, watching as the flower shivered and preened in her hand.

"So, you see," said Grandpapa rather smugly.

Her eyebrows knitted together. "So the ogre needed to drink some water, and the bean in his tummy would grow into a flower?" she suggested eventually. "But how did the princess help him with that? He could just have decided to drink something sensible beforehand."

Grandpapa made a noise like a snort. The magical flower in her hand twisted around to face her, lifting its leaves in a movement that was uncannily like Grandpapa's expression when she had said something maddening.

Libby raised her eyebrows. "What?" she asked it challengingly. The flower turned its face to Snape's and then back to hers again.

"Well, it's a *metaphor*, isn't it?" said Grandpapa shortly, as if that explained everything, but at her blank expression, he continued. "The princess spoke to the ogre over lunch and breakfast... and eventually... over dinner too. She was so nice to him that he forgot to be nasty back, and slowly he realised that she was not so irritating after all, and he started to... well...", he shifted in his chair uncomfortably again, "he started to... ummm... like her a lot. Regardless of what they were both eating at the time... which was also pertinent to the ... erm..."

He was blushing again. Libby looked at him in sympathy, but he didn't say anything further, merely looking expectantly at her.

She sighed. He was truly terrible at telling fairy stories. She tried to cudgel her brains into action despite the lateness of the hour. He was trying to tell her something. "So...", she hazarded. "She poured water over his bean, and his heart was brought back to life, and it turned into a flower?"

Then the penny dropped. Libby could feel her eyebrows arch so highly up her forehead that it hurt. "Grandpapa! Are you talking about... *sex*!" she blurted out, shocked.

"What? No! Argh!" He was horrified, and the flower, too, recoiled in her fist. "I was most assuredly not talking about... about... *that*, young lady!" he blustered, his face flaming so deeply that it's colour almost matched the flower in Libby's hand. "I was talking about *beans* and *hearts* and ogres, and what on earth do you know about whatever with..."

A warm chuckle interrupted his flustered defence, and when she felt a firm grip encircle her shoulder, Libby jumped almost as far as she had when he had surprised her earlier as she was climbing on the bookcase.

"Relax, Severus. I think I'll take it from here...", her grandmother's amused voice halted her grandfather's protests, and she saw him sag in relief as his wife dipped her head down and kissed him lightly on the top of his forehead. Libby smiled as her grandmother's untameable hair ticked her cheek.

"What a lovely flower," Grandmamma said softly, her breath ghosting over the trembling leaves and petals of the enchanted plant.

Libby felt the flower flex and bow its head.

"But," Grandmamma continued, bringing her wand up and tapping it gently on an outstretched leaf. "I think it's time to return it to its natural form...."

Libby stifled her protest as the flower, with a shiver and a little squeak, rapidly shrank back again into its original shape, until the little jewelled bean was cradled once again in her palm. Hermione reached forward and plucked the bean from her granddaughter's hand and rejoined it to the chain of little crystal amulets.

"Now," said her grandmother carefully. "I think that's enough fairy stories for tonight, Elizabeth. Time for bed."

Libby opened her mouth to protest. She still wasn't entirely sure about Grandpapa's story, but she had taken a Witch's Oath never to let on what her grandfather had told her, and Witch's Oaths could *never* be broken.

"Goodnight, Grandpapa," she said and leaned over to kiss him on the cheek.

He hugged her briefly in return and helped her to wriggle off his lap and onto the floor.

Libby cast a last longing look at the bracelet, now firmly held in her Grandmamma's hand but then sighed and headed for the stairs and her bed.

When she reached the bottom banister, she heard a low giggle and turned to see her grandmother being pulled unresistingly into the lap of her husband.

"Severus," Libby heard Grandmamma Hermione say quietly as she slowly pulled herself up the wooden staircase. "Whyever didn't you just tell her the truth about the beans? I really don't understand why you are still embarrassed about how we came to be together, even after all these years!"

Her grandfather pulled his wife even more closely towards him, and Libby found herself straining to hear his murmured answer and wishing that she were old enough to own a set of Extendable Ears.

*

Back in her bedroom, Libby squirmed under her blankets, lowering her head back to her pillow. What, in Merlin's name, had Grandpapa meant when he had whispered to the giggling witch on his knee, 'I *thought*, my darling *princess*, that I *had*'?

Magic beans... ogres... princesses.... beans in a desert....

She rolled her eyes. It was all *most* confusing. Adults were completely bonkers. She would never understand them.

Anyone would think that Grandpapa's story had been about something else entirely....

finem fabarum

or

The End of The Beans....

*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*