

Unhappy Surprise

by Celisnebula

This is for the "page 394 challenge" posted at Doomspark's livejournal. It's a moment of reflection after everything seems to have gone south in a relationship.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He stood at the window staring at the hot hillside, wondering how this could have gone so wrong. Children ran across the yellowing grass, screaming and yelling as they passed below in the shadow of the building, heedlessly ignoring the hot humid air, as children are often wont to do. In the distance a dog yipped, its bark reverberating along the asphalt city, until it shook against the window.

He watched as she exited the building, past the noisy children, and down the vaporous tarmac street. She never once looked up at him, never once turned back. He had a strange urge to run after her, to explain, but words were never his forte. He stood there at the window, staring at her retreating figure until she became nothing more than a hazy speck in the distance.

It would have never worked; she was too different. She wanted things he was just not capable of providing -- those little niceties of normality, white picket fences and Saturday afternoon carpools. He knew enough about himself to understand that it was a cage he could never be comfortable in, the fact that the bars were gilded with love notwithstanding.

That he loved her was not the issue in doubt; what tickled in the back of his mind was whether she truly loved him. Oh, she said the words often enough, and went through the motions, but for some reason he could never really believe the whispered words she shared on those long nights as their passion drenched flesh cooled in the darkness.

What did she expect him to say? She had been standing in the bathroom naked when he walked in. She turned to glance at her profile in the mirror; her hands framed her belly in a way that made him want to scramble back in fear. His position on children had been something he made very clear; it was a point of honor with him.

Perhaps he could have been more tactful in that moment; however, he was too startled to think of anything; panic surged through his veins, and he spoke without thought. Her rage at him exploded. Nothing was safe from her fury, as items whirled past his head. Granted, bringing up the idea of an abortion was probably not the wisest course of action, but her response was uncalled for.

He tried to calm her down; he grabbed her tight so she couldn't hit him with anything else. But her face was deep purple; her eyes shone with a painful light; and her body shook as with fever. Careening sobs wracked her body as she tried to fight his embrace, her stilted words harsh and bitter.

She would keep the baby, with or without his help, she swore as she pulled out of his grip. He walked right to the table, leaned his hand on it, tried to say something, but could not; only incoherent sounds were audible. Fatherhood was not in his plans for life; it required more that he was able to give.

She stood there, silently damning him for his cowardice, as he tried to come up with a proper response. The hell of it was he had no proper response. Without another word, she turned from him, the bathroom door shaking the rafters as it slammed.

He walked over to the window, listening to her in the bathroom, presumably getting dressed. She said not a word as she emerged, the only sounds in the apartment coming from outside. He didn't know what to say; much less what to do, and apparently she didn't expect much from him, because the door closed quietly.

So he stood at the window staring at the hot hillside, listening to the children romp outside as he waited for her to leave the building. He watched her disappear down the street, confused by all the feelings swimming in his brain, until he pressed his head against the cool glass.

On the street below a child screamed, loud piercing squeals that made him jump back from the window. Perhaps... perhaps tomorrow they could try to work things out.

A/N:

This was the Page 394 challenge, snagged from Doomspark's livejournal. This has not been run by any beta's, so, fair warning, it's not in tiptop shape. Any and all fubar portions are mine, and mine alone.

Instructions:

1. Take the nearest five thick books. If you don't have five thick books near you, go to the bookshelf. If you're too lazy to do that, use fewer than five.

1a. None of the Harry Potter books are allowed, however. Anyone doing that will have a week's detention with Snape, and it won't be that sort of detention. It will involve scrubbing cauldrons and pickling pig fetuses.

2. Turn to page 394.

3. Take the second sentence on that page of each book.

4. Arrange the sentences to form as coherent a story as possible.

5. Post your wacky tale in your LJ with these instructions.

(I haven't got a livejournal only a blog that pretty much gathers dust so y'all will be subjected to this.)

Lines used:

Within an Inch of His Life by Émile Gaboriau

But her face was deep purple; her dry eyes shone with a
painful light; and her body shook as with fever.

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

He walked right to the table, leaned his hand on it, tried to say something, but could not; only incoherent sounds were audible.

Nothing Wagered by JoAnn Ferguson

Her rage at him exploded.

The Prize by Brenda Joyce

She turned to glance at her profile.

Works of H.G Wells exerpt from the Invisible Man by H.G. Wells

He stood at the window staring at the hot hillside.