



“Trapped in Ink” by Lucy Treanor
3rd Place, Short Story 10-12

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Trapped In Ink
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The strong scent of London's bookstores were a wonderful break from the thick oily scent that flooded through the streets. My mother grabbed my arm to keep me from wandering. She knew I couldn't be left unsupervised in a bookstore. I smiled at the towering shelves and started tugging my mother like a dog on a leash. A strange dizziness was bursting inside me to see all the worn out spines, and there were tables stained with coffee rings. It was a bookworm's dream come true.

"Remember," my mother said, "only one book. I can't afford this hobby of yours for much longer." I looked at my mother reproachfully and pulled out my own purse.

"I can pay for any others I take a fancy for," I said, calmly letting my mother go and wandering down the long isles.

I wandered the isles, some full of new books, most full of old ones with cracked spines and pages full of marks where a thousand different people flipped through the story with almost as much glee as I had.

My mother followed behind me, glaring at some of the books I stopped to look at.

“None of them seem very respectable,” she said, and I scoffed quietly to myself. Not respectable? She didn’t see books the way I did.

“Any adventure is respectable, mother,” I said, and slid a particularly big book off a shelf. It had a very attractive cover, leather bound, with old silver clasps windy and designed like vines. The print looked fairly old, and the inky words were fading. There was an old red velvet cloth bookmark sewn into the spine of the book with a small black stain on the bottom.

It only took me a few sentences to fall in love with the story, and as I tried to flip the thin page over an old wrinkled hand stopped me.

I jumped and looked up to see an old man with wispy hair and a long white beard. His eyes were a brilliant blue and glistening with fear and anger.

“Don’t read this book my dear!” he whispered, and turned my head gently to the side, sending my dark hair tumbling over my shoulders.

“What do you mean, sir?” I asked.

The old man shook his head and tried to snatch the book.

“It draws you in, it does! Then when you least expect it, it wraps around you and pulls you in!” The old man seemed so genuinely concerned and

frightened I wondered at his story.

“Sir, if you wanted this book you could have just asked me not to buy it.” The old man shook his head and took his hands away.

“I won't buy it. I'm the man who owns it. This is my bookstore. But by all means take it, just remember my warnings.” I smiled weakly trying to dismiss the man's remark.

I pulled a coin sack out and handed it to the man. He took it in his wrinkly hand and hobbled away.

“Who was that gentleman?” My mother asked, making me jump as her chin suddenly appeared over my shoulder.

“The book keeper, I never got a proper name,” I said, still somewhat dazed.

“Probably for the best. Is that all you want?” I nodded, and let my mother drag me out into the busy streets of London again.

My father was waiting for us in the coach and as soon as we clambered in he asked to see the book I had picked out.

I let him take it from my hands, almost sad as the soft old pages slid past my fingers. He looked at it for a moment, but the silver clasps wouldn't let him

open it the way they had for me. His eyes darkened, and a mysterious glint appeared.

Despite the darkness in his face he laughed saying, "It's almost like the book doesn't want me to get in, Ivy!" as I slid the silver clasps apart easily. I forced a small chuckle out, what my father said only concerned me further.

What if the old man really did mean what he said to me?

The all day ride home was strange and full of stress to me. I clutched the book tightly in my arms, wishing that I could take it back to the bookstore.

It is too late for that now. It thought, and leaned on my mother gently.

She put her hand gently on my shoulder and sighed, gazing out her window.

My eyes were fixated on the book, like it really was consuming me. My every thought suddenly about it, and nothing else.

My heart rate suddenly rocketed higher, should I dispose of the book? My eyes flicked to the coaches window, wide open. All I would have to do is throw it. All I would have to do is throw it and never look back. No. Then some poor fool might come upon it and be torched the same way. I would take it home and lock it away.

The decision did little to calm me however, and as we got home late at night I hurriedly walked inside and into my room. Shutting myself inside hurriedly. I put the book on my desk and turned around. My elbow knocked it down, and it fell open on my floor. As I leaned down to pick it up my eyes wandered down the words, drinking them all up. Before I could stop myself I was cradling my book in my arms and sitting in bed, lost so deeply in the pages I doubted I would ever be found. I felt a breeze when the heroine did, I felt hungry when the heroine was starving in the mountains. Soon my emotions and the characters were one. When she cried I cried, when she was happy I was happy.

I finally finished the fourth chapter and managed to tear my gaze from the book's pages.

Something sparkly on my finger attracted my attention, it was the heroine's ring, in perfect description from the book. I blinked and took it off, turning it over in my hands.

"How peculiar." I muttered, and opened my drawer, dropping it in and closing it hurriedly. The old man's warnings suddenly resurfaced in my mind.

I blinked and looked back down at my hands. The book seemed to be coming out to me, not the other way around.

I closed the story and locked the silver clasps. Climbing in bed I drifted off.

I woke up, and something hard was underneath me. I propped myself up and looked around. There was a tree in my room!

Not my room. . .

There was a tree in the forest. I smiled to myself and laid back down.

Wait, why was there a forest. . .

I bolted up and stood. I was in the middle of a clearing. Moss tickling my toes, and my nightgown blowing with the breeze that smelt of dirt and tree bark. I gaped around me. Where was I?

The book.

My head whispered to me. I stumbled backwards and looked around me again. I *was* in the book. The forest I had envisioned so well while flipping through pages was in front of me. I was in it! I twirled a smile lighting up my face. The trees smelt just like I had thought, the streams were sweet and crystal clear and cool. The moss was covered in dew, birds all sang along with

me! I had gotten into the book!

Then a looming fear settled in.

What was I supposed to do? How was I supposed to escape?

A snap from nearby trees drew my attention away from my tangled thoughts and I twirled on my heel knowing very well that it could be the Earl of Quailton, the antagonist of the story, and Fable's father.

What happened next was beyond my wildest imagination. Fable, the heroine ran out of the woods and tripped, falling on top of me and sending us both rolling into the hollow underneath a tree.

"Who are you?" she whispered her voice calm but demanding.

"I'm Ivy, I . . .I'm not supposed to be here," I whispered back, wishing I could keep my voice as steady as hers. Fable frowned at me and then put her finger to her lips pointing outside. I crept over to the edge of the hole and stared at the men in black armor marching around and inspecting everything.

One of them turned around and stared directly into my eyes. The color drained from my face as he stalked forward with his sword raised.

I should have listened to the old man's warnings. I should have left the book

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alone, but it was too late now.