

The Story Thief

By

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1 INT. STORY BOOK ROOM - PRESENT

On a table of old leather books, a giant one reads:

The Story Thief's Apprentice

The cover opens to the first page, an illustration of a bright cobblestone alley.

ENTER:

QUAINT TOWN STREET

The bright cobblestone alley with a hanging wooden sign reading:

Baba Yaga's Books

"Where Stories Come to Life"

Under the sign, a long line of TOWNSPEOPLE wait eagerly to enter the shop.

A WOMAN WITH YELLOW HAT walks into...

2 INT. BOOKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

A small room with books to the ceiling.

The townspeople crowd around BABA YAGA, ancient, calm, magical, GRIMROSE, 8, but thinks she's 48, and the BLACK CAT, huddled together.

BABA YAGA

Now, puppet, remember what I told you?

GRIMROSE

Mm-hm. Look for the unusual, the traveler.

BABA YAGA

And?

GRIMROSE

...the alone.

BABA YAGA

Exactly. You must watch for me.

(CONTINUED)

GRIMROSE

Can't I read the story? Please!

BABA YAGA

(chuckling)

You're not even close to ready. Now go, signal me if you see any good stories.

Grimrose fights her way into the crowd.

Baba Yaga stands up onto a chair, opens a book, twists her hand over it.

BABA YAGA

"Once Upon a Time, in a town much like this one, there lived a stubborn little girl and her name was Muriel."

White smoke spirals up from the book. Baba Yaga grabs it, twists her hand, blows on it.

The cat, on a stack of books behind her, paws at her hair.

The smoke swirls around the audience. They go into a trance.

BABA YAGA

"Muriel laughed, 'No Papa, I'm going to be a dancer.'"

Grimrose weaves between legs, searching.

BABA YAGA

"She whirled, a flurry of white petals. After so many years, she was finally a ballerina."

Grimrose stops in front of a WRINKLED OLD MAN. The smoke around him forms the shape of a boat.

GRIMROSE

Baba! I found one.

Baba Yaga hops off the chair, slithers over.

GRIMROSE

Can I do it this time?

BABA YAGA

No, puppet. You don't know how.

Baba Yaga grabs the smoke boat, twists it with her hand. The man stares ahead. The smoke becomes parchment, words begin to form:

...bravely left his wife & children to sail...

...those he had saved called him 'the mighty...

Baba Yaga hands the papers to Grimrose.

BABA YAGA

But you can sew these into a new
book for me.

She returns to her chair, finishes the story.

BABA YAGA

"And Muriel still dreamt of her
favorite pink dance shoes."

She SNAPS the book shut, the audience wakes from the trance.

All clap and cheer except the wrinkled man. He stares blankly, confused.

Baba Yaga bows.

Grimrose grabs the man's hand.

GRIMROSE

Do you remember anything?

The man shakes his head, confused.

GRIMROSE

Go find a new book. Don't worry,
you'll make new memories soon.

The man nods, heads towards the shelves.

Grimrose looks down at the cat, twists her hand over the papers like Baba Yaga. No smoke appears.

The cat yawns, walks off. Grimrose huffs in frustration.

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INT. BOOKSHOP - NIGHT

Grimrose sits on a stack of books, pretends to sword fight the cat with a large needle.

Baba Yaga appears behind her.

(CONTINUED)

BABA YAGA

You're three days behind.
Inventory's getting low.

Grimrose sighs, uses the needle to sew pages into an empty book spine.

GRIMROSE

I don't want to sew books Baba, I
want to use magic.

BABA YAGA

I've told you a thousand times. You
have to learn one step before the
next. When you finish this, come
upstairs. I'll tell you a story
before bed.

GRIMROSE

But I'm not even close to done!

Baba Yaga walks off.

Grimrose GRUMBLES, continues to sew. She pokes her finger
with the needle, a small wisp of white smoke rises from it.

She puts aside the book, checks Baba Yaga isn't watching.

She sneaks a book from her finished stack, opens it, checks
she's alone.

Grimrose twists her hand over the open page. Nothing
happens.

She tries again, smoke rises.

She twists her hand again, it rises high, forms the image of
the wrinkled man's boat.

The smoke grows larger, the boat more real. Grimrose, proud
of herself, reaches out, surprised to find it tangible.

She gets into the boat, pretends to captain it.

She twists her hand over the book again.

Smoke pours out, turning into water, begins to fill the
bookshop floor.

Book after book is carried from the shelves, floating. The
boat begins to rise, bobs with the waves.

Grimrose panics, SLAMS the book shut.

GRIMROSE

No, no no. Stop!

Smoke continues to pour from it.

GRIMROSE

What do I do now? How can- wait! I know!

She takes a paddle from the boat, rows down the aisle.

She searches, grabs a book with burned edges. It's titled:

The Thirsty Dragon

She opens it, squints her eyes, twists her hand over a page.

Smoke erupts into flames. Out flies a giant dragon that circles the shop.

GRIMROSE

Yoo-hoo! Dragon, please drink this!

The dragon lands, begins to drink.

Water almost gone, Grimrose sighs with relief.

She reaches out, pets the dragon, who startles and takes off, carries Grimrose with him.

GRIMROSE

Ahh! Let me down!

The dragon throws her onto the top of a bookshelf, begins to spit white smoke fire. The fire catches in the corner of the shop and books begin to burn.

GRIMROSE

Oh no!

She opens book after book nearby, twisting her hand over each page.

GRIMROSE

There's got to be something here!

Smoke birds, swords, flowers, and odd trinkets are thrown from the pages.

The creatures and objects begin to cover the bookshop.

The dragon chases the birds, knocking the remaining books off the shelves. The fire still burns in the corner.

(CONTINUED)

Grimrose looks on in horror, panics. A vine creeps up the bookshelf, wraps around her leg.

GRIMROSE

What have I done?! Get back in your books! Please, I'm begging you! Go away!

Suddenly, all the objects become smoke, the books float back onto shelves and the smoke disappears inside them.

Baba Yaga stands at the bottom of the stairs, hands raised, out of sight of Grimrose.

Grimrose climbs down the shelf, dusts herself off.

GRIMROSE

Phew. That was close.

She hears a SQUOOSH, sees Baba Yaga reach for a book from the floor. Water pours out as she lifts it.

BABA YAGA

Finish the sewing?

Baba Yaga raises an eyebrow, looks to Grimrose.

GRIMROSE

I- I was just-

Grimrose nods, ashamed.

Baba Yaga returns the wet book to the shelf, turns to climb the stairs.

Grimrose looks up, surprised, runs after her.

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INT. GRIMROSE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Baba Yaga and Grimrose sit cuddled on the girl's bed, book open in front of them.

BABA YAGA

"...and they lived happily ever after."

GRIMROSE

Baba?

BABA YAGA

Puppet.

(CONTINUED)

GRIMROSE

I'm never going to use magic again.
I'm sorry I didn't listen.

BABA YAGA

Well...maybe not never.

Baba Yaga takes the girl's hand, twists it over the page with her own.

BABA YAGA

Gently.

Baba Yaga lifts her hand, small wisps of smoke appear.

BABA YAGA

Now, the other way.

She turns Grimrose's hand the opposite direction, presses it flat on the page.

The smoke disappears into the book.

Grimrose GIGGLES.

BABA YAGA

See? One step at a time, puppet.

Grimrose hugs Baba Yaga.

BABA YAGA

I think that's all for tonight.
Goodnight, little one.

GRIMROSE

Goodnight Baba.

Baba Yaga blows out the lamp, leaves.

Grimrose lays down, squirms, sits back up, lights a candle.

She opens the book again, raises her hand, slowly twists it.

Smoke rises, blows out the candle. Darkness.

5

END CREDITS

Books of different colors fall past the screen, open to reveal a name for each of the credits.

Every other book opens to reveal scary smoke creations. A saber-toothed tiger, a tornado.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

8.

Finally a dragon, who breathes smoke fire that covers the screen.

THE END