

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.

3

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  
Yoohoo! 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.

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.

4 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.

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:

8.

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

THE END