

My Safe Haven
By Olivia Scott-Berry

A magical place. Somewhere I can call home. A world where I can lose myself for hours.
A safe haven made of wood and nails and glue.

A place where I can run hand in hand with friends of ink, a boy wizard, three orphans, a girl in a checkered dress with ruby-red slippers, a child bookworm and little men with hairy feet and insatiable appetites.

I can keep pace with the most illustrious and lofty of kings, and the most lowly and humble of peasants. I can sail away in search of bountiful booty with a one-legged pirate, fly alongside a boy who never wants to grow up, scuttle amongst struggling pairs as five armies fight a raging battle.

I can feel the wind on my face as I soar on the back of a dragon, am filled with sorrow as a grey-bearded, half-moon-spectacled wizard crashes to the ground, and lies there, quite still. I can smell charred flesh as a fire rages through an inky-world, sniff the waft of a delectable pie sitting temptingly in the shadow of an open window.

I can hear the terrible scream as the bereavement of a ring from a derelict shack is discovered, catch the sound of a boy all in green crowing in victory as a scarlet-clad pirate tumbles into the waiting mouth of a crocodile.

I can even hear the converse of great men and women and creatures, an ashen-blond girl with a slinking daemon at her side, a battered, weather-beaten ranger, transformed into an eminent king, a magnificent, majestic lion, his roar shaking the hearts of the bravest warriors.

And the ordinary people who became heroes, a girl lifted from the slums and elevated to the level of novice at a guild of magicians, proving the worth of her birth, an orphaned boy, destroying a malevolent wizard, who was bent on annihilating all that is good. I have walked beside each and every one of these extraordinary individuals.

I can travel the lush jade forests, rollicking sapphire seas, harsh golden deserts, towering ivory mountains- I can flick from scene to scene with remarkable ease

I am free to explore a wardrobe, through which lies another world. I can walk the squalid, seedy streets of old London, the alluring, dazzling ballrooms of 1800s New York. I can sneak, unnoticed into a soaring, terrible tower, which holds captive a languishing princess, a thieves hideout, hung with hankchiefs, I can be anywhere if I want to be.

The only place they all come together, bound in well-thumbed tomes. My bookshelf.

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