A Fairy Tale About Little Ready and Bewitched Books

Little Ready lived in a library, on the main street of a small town. She adored every page and every book cover. There were three thousand books in her library. Little Ready knew every title and every author. She even knew which shelf and which row each book stood.

Books were her best friends, they made her happy when she was sad, and they gave her the best advice. But books weren't Ready's only friends. She loved to read with the adorable sloth Speedy. Their friendship was unusual, they spoke little to each other, but they often read same book together.

Every day many children came to the Little Ready's Library. She read books aloud to them. If the children felt really captivated by the story, then high under the dome of the library, they could see the events of the book — just like in a movie or a cartoon. Sometimes fairy dragons flew under the dome, sometimes princesses circled in a dance, and sometimes a girl in a beautiful dress talked to a smiling cat.

Little Ready would have lived very happily if it weren't for one thing that worried her. The evil

sorceress Noise did not like the library and hated Little Ready

— Someday, Little Ready, you will come to your library and won't find a single book, — the witch threatened.

Noise had her own opinion about how children must spend their free time. She gathered children in the meadow and told them scary stories. When the children were scared, Noise fed on their fear. Little Ready's books fascinated children and made them dream and laugh. The kids who started reading refused to go to the witch's glade, which made Noise unhappy and very angry.

But it was not only that, children who had heard too many of Noise's stories turned into shivery white rabbits. The rabbits stopped recognising those they knew when they were children, they always trembled with fear and were horrified at every crunch. Evil Noise no longer needed to lure them into the glade and frighten them with her stories. The rabbits lived in dense bushes around the clearing, and constantly fed the villain with their continuous fear.

Flown Away Books

Once, while Little Ready and Speedy the sloth were reading as usual in a tree, hiding in the foliage from the sunlight, they heard weird noises!

— What is that strange sound? — asked Little Ready.

Speedy took his eyes from the page and looked into the sky. A huge birds flock was flying there. It was the source of this rustling sound. But the birds seemed not to be ordinary at all… The pair could not believe their eyes! Books were flying in a wedge high in the sky. A huge flock of books! Little Ready recognised the leader of the pack, it was a large Explanatory Dictionary from her library, which she adored and could flip through for hours.

— Speedy, those are our books! Hurry, let's run to the library! It seems that Noise turned them into birds and made them fly away!

As she ran into the library, Ready froze in a daze… Completely empty shelves were staring at her.

Wasting no time, Ready rushed into the witch's glade. Noise was there, she had just started telling the children another scary story.

— Noise, what have you done with my books?!

— I warned you, petty bookworm, do not fool children with your books! You didn't listen to me, and now your

books have become wild and skittish like birds. They are scattered all around the neighbourhood. And your three most beloved books flew to places where you will never find them: to the crater of the volcano, to the bottom of the ocean and to the Orange Planet. Without these three books, you will never attract so many children to your library. Finally, you and your reading will stop bothering me. — shouted the witch, through her sinister laugh.

Little Ready couldn't imagine her life without books and reading. And she didn't know how else she could save the children from Noise.

— Oh, my poor books, they do not know how to live in the wild, they will get wet in the rains, and their pages will be ruffled by winds. They will perish without our cosy library, — cried Ready. — I will hit the road to catch every single book, tame them, and teach them to live in the library again! — she decided.

Little Ready was confused because she had never caught any birds... But she knew how to catch grasshoppers with a butterfly net. Why not try the same way with the winged books?

Little Ready and Speedy the sloth went to the kind shopkeeper to buy a butterfly net and whatever else they would need on the hike.

— Sure, I have a butterfly net, — said the Shopkeeper, — But how will you carry the captured books? You have 3,000 books, right, you won't budge them. And I hope you're not going to return to the library one by one? That will take many years.

— How could I not think about it? — Ready despaired, — I have no time, every day, more and more children turn into rabbits bewitched by Noise's terrible stories.

The kind Shopkeeper looked at Ready thoughtfully and shuffled into the pantry.

— I think I have something to help you collect and carry your books, — he shouted from the pantry. The Shopkeeper came back, holding a small outlandish device.

— This is a magical pocket library. It was created to preserve the souls of books, and you know, the soul is the most important thing in a book. — he said — Just get as close as possible to the book without scaring it away, press this button and the book will be inside. The pocket library won't get any heavier, no matter how many hundreds of books you catch in it. Wherever you go, it can always be in your pocket.

She took the magic library and looked at it from all sides with curiosity. Ready was so happy she wanted to

kiss the Shopkeeper, but there was no time for that — Little Ready and Speedy the sloth needed to set off on a long journey.

The Book Catchers

Little Ready and Speedy the sloth armed themselves with a map of the neighbourhood and marked three points: the crater of the volcano, the bottom of the ocean and the Orange Planet.

They started on their way. Speedy could not walk

very fast, so Little Ready always patiently waited for her friend and was so glad that she was not alone on this journey.

As soon as they left their small town, the friends began to meet here and there the winged books. Exhausted, they sat down to rest on the fields, roads and the branches of trees.

Little Ready, neatly crept up to them, took the magic library out of her pocket, pressed the button and the winged book immediately appeared inside.

They walked week after week. They ate berries, drank water from streams, and in the evenings read books they had already caught.

The path was difficult, but soon, they counted that they had already caught more than half of the winged books. This gave them the strength to keep going!

Meanwhile, many children in their small town had already become white rabbits and were hiding in the bushes around the enchanted glade. Since the books flew away, and Little Ready left the town, the children stopped reading, and nothing held back the spell of the evil Noise.

Little Ready, did not know what was happening in her hometown, but she knew that they needed to hurry. The friends walked day and night, stopped their evening reading and hardly slept. But each captured book inspired them.

And so, the day came when 2,997 books were caught. The remaining three were the children's most favourite, and lots of kids loved to listen when Ready read them aloud. The two friends bent over the map, where three points were marked: the

crater of the volcano, the bottom of the ocean and the Orange Planet.

— Oh, — sighed Speedy the sloth wearily.

— We are so close to collecting all the books, and we are not far from the volcano, Speedy, keep your head up, — Ready encouraged him, although she could hardly stand on her feet.

Very soon, the little book-catchers got to a huge volcano, which looked like a giant chimney. The bluish-black smoke was continuously pouring from its crater.

— You know, in one of the books that we read, the hero climbed onto the top of a tall tree and the tree carried him across a fast-flowing river, — said Speedy, looking around.

Little Ready didn't have time to say anything as Speedy snatched the magic library from her pocket. He grabbed a heavy stone with him and went to the tallest tree near the volcano.

All night long Speedy climbed to the top of the tree. And finally, in the morning, he waved his hand to Ready from the very top of the trunk. At that very moment,

the tree swayed under his weight. And he began to lean slowly until Speedy was directly above the crater. The sloth pulled out the magic library, held it out towards the crater and pressed a button. But nothing happened.

Ready worried, what if the witch had deceived them, and there was no book in the crater. But after several attempts, the book, all smeared with soot, rose from the crater, and disappeared into the pocket library. Speedy threw out the heavy stone, and the tree trunk unfolded.

— Hurray, hurray, there are only two left, — rejoiced Speedy.

The next day, Ready and Speedy came to the ocean.

— But how am I going to sink to the bottom of the ocean? — Ready lamented, walking back and forth along the shore.

— Speedy, what do the brave heroes in the books do when they find themselves in a desperate situation?

— Ask someone for help? — Speedy suggested uncertainly.

At that very moment, the friends saw a large pink octopus, which had just washed ashore by a wave, and he was in a hurry to return to the ocean. The pair looked at each other surprised.

— Mister Octopus, wait, we need your help! We must go to the bottom of the ocean and find our book that has flown away! — Ready yelled.

Suddenly the Octopus stopped, turned in confusion to Ready, and in one swift movement dived into the oncoming wave.

— Oh no, it seems he did not understand me, or was frightened, — sobbed Ready.

But a minute later, the Octopus returned with a small scuba dive suit covered with corals and shells, in just the perfect size for Ready.

Ready did not know what to say! Embracing the big Octopus with gratitude, Ready put on her scuba gear and swam, holding the tentacle of her new sea friend. Sea turtles, jellyfish and schools of fish, — small yellow and big dark blue, — swam towards them. Ready looked at the

corals and the giant ocean shells, which hid amazing white pearls inside.

Suddenly the Octopus slowed down, he pointed to one of the shells. Ready looked inside and saw not a pearl there, but her favourite green-bound book, which flew into her pocket library in a second! The Octopus happily released air bubbles and waved all its tentacles to Ready.

— Speedy, we almost did it! The last book remains, and we then can go home! — Ready shouted joyfully, jumping in the waves.

— But how do we get to the Orange Planet? It seems completely impossible, — Speedy doubted.

The Orange Planet was situated right over a large lavender field. Ready and Speedy walked across the field, enjoying the view of the lilac valley and the wonderful smell until they saw an orange dot high in the sky. It was the Orange Planet.

— Speedy, what else do the books heroes do in desperate situations, if there is absolutely no one to ask for help?

— Probably, wait for a miracle, — Speedy said, and sat down on the lavender field.

— Speedy, look! — suddenly exclaimed Ready, pointing to the sky.

— What is it?!

— It's a miracle… — Ready said dreamily.

A huge air balloon floated across the sky, so indescribably bright and beautiful that it was impossible to take your eyes off it. The balloon flew closer and closer and became larger and larger, more and more amazing… And then the ball exclaimed:

— What are you doing in my field!?

The voice was so loud that it really seemed to the friends that the balloon itself was speaking to them.

— We're… we're… thinking here. — Ready was confused.

— Thinking about picking up my lavender?! — shouted the balloon again.

— No, we don't need lavender, especially cut lavender. We are thinking about how to get to the Orange Planet! — Ready said resentfully.

The balloon came down and stopped right above the friends, who lifted their heads in amazement staring at its motley ornament. A little chubby Bear looked out from the basket of the balloon.

— Why is that? — he asked.

Finally, Ready and Speedy noticed whom they were talking to.

— The lost book from our library is hiding on the Orange Planet. That book is the most loved by the children of our town. Without it, neither the library nor the children can be saved.

— Help us to get there, — Speedy asked hesitantly.

— I don’t like to read, and I need to fly around and check the entire field — said the Bear, and was about to fly on.

— Wait, but we can't do it without you. Please, don't fly away! You are… our miracle. — Ready said hopefully.

— From the Orange Planet, you can see the entire field at once, and you don't have to fly around it! — said Speedy.

— And if you don't like reading, maybe you just haven't found your favourite book yet? — added Ready, — I'll read a story we like the most to you, and if you like it too, you help us! Deal?

— Hmmmm… Ok, I agree, — said the Bear, jumping out of the basket and holding the balloon by the rope.

Ready turned on the magic pocket library and found one of her favourite books. It was about a boy-prince who travelled to different planets.

Ready started reading, but the Bear was indifferent, he looked around, and Ready wasn't even sure if he was listening to her.

She began to read about the prince talking to a rose flower. And at that moment the chubby Bear looked at her pensively.

— I wish I could also speak with my lavender plants. I look after them and care for them every day, and I would like to have a word with them too.

— What do you think they would tell you?

— Probably, that they are grateful to me that I take care of them, and guard them flying on this balloon.

— That is exactly why we need books, to learn how to imagine and to talk to those who we can't speak to in reality. — said Ready.

The Bear lay down between his lavender plants and listened to the book looking into the sky. When Ready finished, and her voice was quiet, the Bear lay looking in

front of him dreamingly. Everyone was afraid to break the silence.

Well, I'll take you to the Orange Planet. I liked your book. But only one of you can fly. My balloon won't lift the three of us that high.

The two friends looked at each other and Ready quickly jumped into the basket. The Bear threw Speedy a gigantic coil of rope on which the balloon was tied.

Hold it tight and spin it until we are next to the Orange Planet.

The balloon rose higher and higher… The Orange Planet approached, looking like an orange fruit thrown into the sky. And below they could see a purple lavender field.

The balloon reached the planet and froze as Speedy stopped unwinding the rope. Ready looked at the surface of the planet, and now it still looked like an orange fruit, the same bright colour with a smooth surface and small bumps. Ready and the Bear jumped from the basket of the balloon to the planet.

— And here it is, — exclaimed Reedy and ran to the book, which wasn't quick enough to jump aside and appeared in the arms of her hostess.

Ready petted the frightened book, and it calmed down, ceasing to flutter its winged-pages. Ready took out the magic library, and the last of the scattered books returned home.

Very soon Ready and Speedy hugged the chubby Bear goodbye.

— Sweet Bear, come with us! The kids of our town will love your balloon.

— I will not leave my lavender plants. I love them. And who will guard them without me? But I will fly to you to listen to Ready reading books. — said the Bear dreamily, and, having thrown the rope into the basket, soared up on his balloon.

The Glade of White Rabbits

Early in the morning, Little Ready and Speedy the sloth entered their little town.

— The children will be so delighted when we tell them that we have returned all the books! — said Speedy with a smile.

But the town was suspiciously quiet and deserted. Ready and Speedy walked around all the places where children used to play. But everywhere was empty.

— We haven't been to the glade of the evil witch! I hope all the children are not there? — worried Ready.

Coming to the clearing, Ready and Speedy heard the tremendously loud witch's voice, and her story was especially terrible. And worst of all, the two friends began to notice tiny, frightened white rabbits everywhere. They huddled together under the bushes. Their round tails and long ears fluttered with fear. Ready tried to come closer to one of them, but it ran away and hid in the thicket.

— Ready, what a terrible story, do you hear, — suddenly Speedy could not resist. — How scary it is!

— No, Speedy, don’t listen to her. She will turn you into a rabbit too. — Ready took a magic library out of her pocket and turned it on, — Listen to me!

Continuing to walk to the glade, Ready opened one of her exciting books and began to read it as loudly as she could.

Finally, the friends came to the clearing. The Noise’s voice sounded deafeningly loud! The last five children who had not turned into rabbits sat in the glade. But they were already bewitched by the terrible story, they froze, and did not take their frightened eyes off Noise, repeating after her.

Ready heard the witch’s terrible tale and felt that fear was seizing her, she began to forget why she was here, and what she had to do.

— Ready, help me, — Speedy’s voice suddenly awakened her. But turning around, she saw only a little rabbit in the place where her friend had just stood.

Ready gripped the book more and more and read her favourite kind and funny story louder and louder.

The louder she read, the fainter the voice of the sorceress was. Rabbits began to come out the bushes at Ready’s voice. Hundreds of

cute white bunnies converged to Ready's feet. They were still afraid and timidly looked around. But they listened with interest to Ready's voice.

Meanwhile, the children who were listening to Noise also turned to Ready's voice. She continued to read, and as the children's faces thawed, they began to smile.

— You, nasty bookworm, shut up! — Noise shouted.

She ran to Ready, kicking the poor rabbits with her legs.

— Give it to me. — And Noise grabbed the magic library and pulled with all her might.

Ready desperately tried to hold onto the library, clenching her fingers so hard that she accidentally pressed the button, the one she pressed to catch her books. Suddenly, the witch froze, and after another moment she soared into the air. Her shoulders and arms, clad in a black shawl, turned into bird's wings, and then — into book pages. And Noise disappeared into the pocket library.

Unable to believe her eyes, Ready opened the library and noticed that among her other books, there was another one. The title of that new book was "The Story of Noise the Witch Who Hated Books". Ready had never seen or read this book before, but she knew very well what the story was about.

—Even an evil witch can become a good book, —Ready thought.

At the very moment, when the witch turned into a book, all the rabbits became children again. They looked at each other in surprise as they came out of the bushes. Among them was Speedy, who didn't remember anything since he got scared of Noise's story.

The children were so happy to see Ready, and they were even more delighted at the news that all the books were back in town and can be read again. They went to the library to read aloud to each other and share the latest news.

The captured books, from now on, lived in the magic or, better to say, an electronic library. They were replaced by three thousand new books, which were brought by people from around the world when they learned how the brave Ready and Speedy returned the books and saved the children from the witch.

And once a week a special guest came to visit the library. He flew into the town in a fabulously beautiful hot air balloon to listen to his favourite book, where a boy-prince speaks to a rose.

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