



## **BOOKS HAVE IT ALL**

What can be in the books? This is the questions I puzzled over when I was three or four and used to sit on a little stool in my grandparents' bookshop. My grandmother sat at the cash desk and my mother waited behind the counter for the customers. Behind here there were rows of bookshelves reaching up to the ceiling, and a big ladder with curved ends which hooked over an iron rod, so that the ladder could slide from right to left making even the books on the very top shelf accessible.

Don't think for a moment that I was bored! If a customer came into the shop, I tried to guess whether he would ask for a book on the lower shelves, or if he was interested in the higher shelves. My clever, agile mother knew the place of every book in the shop, and if necessary, she climbed up the ladder to bring down for the customer the blue, red or purple-covered books from the top shelf. I was proud of my mother, and I became more and more keen to know what could be in the books. There were blue, red and purple books full of tiny black letters on the lower shelves too, but not one of them had nice colourful pictures like my books had.

At home everybody read. My mother, my father and my grandparents. As I looked at their faces bending over their books, I noticed that sometimes they looked grave, and sometimes they turned the page tense with excitement. I wondered what was happening to them while they read. They didn't seem to hear if I spoke to them, and if they did eventually listen to me, it was as if they had come back from somewhere. Why didn't they take me with them?

What was in the books? What was that secret they didn't share with me?

Then I learnt to read. I learnt the secret of the books. That they have everything in them. Not just fairies, goblins, princesses and wicked witches, but you and me, too. Our joys, our worries, our hopes, our sorrows; good and bad, true and false, nature and the universe – it's all there in the books.

Open your books! Let them share all their secrets with you!

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