Black and White

by ModernWizard

Summary

Alison and the Magister, being kinky people with some idea of how to do BDSM safely, consensually, and enjoyably, loathe E.L. James' Fifty Shades trilogy on hearsay only. Then they start reading it. Well, that was a mistake.

Notes

Dedicated to OrphielBurrito, who got me thinking recently that I should put this story into my Happyverse canon.
Chapter Summary

The Magister is hate-reading E.L. James' oeuvre, red pen in hand. Alison arrives. Snark ensues.

“Hey, mysterious, marvelous, magical Magister of mine, I didn’t know you were a masochist!”

“I am the furthest thing therefrom. What gave you that idea?”

“What you’re reading. Why are you doing with that? I thought you were all about avoiding unnecessary pain and suffering.”

“Well, I’d never read it before. My curiosity got the better of me.”

“Well, I’ve never read it before either, but -- “

“Truly? You told me that you despised it with such venom that I thought for sure that you had at least scanned it.”

“No, I just read about it. So...how is it?”

“Perplexing. How did this ever get published? English is my forty-fifth -- or maybe forty-sixth -- language, and this is by a native speaker, yet I still find errors on every page.”

“You proofread for fun? I bet you’re a real hit at parties.”

“I don’t attend parties.”

“Yeah, I know. Ever since you threatened to kill that poor person who misused the subjunctive, the
invites have kind of dried up.”

“Shhhh, I’m reading.”

“Must be pretty good if you’re halfway through the third book after as many hours.”

“Actually...beyond the abysmal grammar, I truly cannot discern the quality.”

“Latin snob and nitpicker of the universe loses critical faculties? Alert the media!”

“Domina carissima...mirabilissima...obsequentissima... Domina provocantissima -- tace!” Domina, my loveliest, my most marvelous, my most gracious and obedient... --And also my most provoking -- shut up! “If you’d like to pester me, you could at least make yourself useful in the process. Read this and tell me what you think.”

“Permission to speak?”

“As you would say, I don’t know. Are you going to say anything good?”

“Was that an actual order -- to read this book?”

“Well, if you’re unfamiliar with what is apparently a modern classic in the subject of your purported expertise, I humbly submit that you should acquaint yourself with the work. --Unless, of course, you have some objection.”

“As a matter of fact, I do.”

“Which? --Oh dear me, I forgot your hard limit on poorly written pornography. My apologies!”

“No, it’s not that. It’s that this is barely legible! You impaled it one, two...twenty-seven times with your red pen.”
“Bad grammar causes me existential despair.”

“Soooo...then...what are you doing with like nine hundred pages of it?”

“Reading almost despite myself. It’s a distinctly novel experience -- and not just because it’s a novel.”

“Okay, well, if my evil alien super-powered robot says it’s weird, now I’m absolutely dying of curiosity.”

“Try the first book. I only started stabbing in earnest with the second and third.”
Bluebeard-Level Bullshit

Chapter Summary

Alison quickly gets into the book, her revulsion mounting with each page. The Magister has misgivings about letting her read it.

“Holy shit! I can see why you got stabby. This is…um…yeah. Wait -- are we supposed to like the main character?”

“I don’t. Then again, I have a very low tolerance for foolishness, especially when accompanied by incompetence. I must admit, however, to a certain pity, since our heroine is obviously ruled by fear from the very beginning. I have to wonder who broke her before the story st -- “

“Run away… Run away!”

“Must you command me? As I believe I told you, I’m reading.”

“I was talking to the main character. -- Turn around and get your arse in the opposite direction if you have any self-preservation at all!”

“And that’s the problem -- she -- “

“Damn… Be bold; be bold, but not so bold / Lest your heart’s blood should run cold.”

“Bluebeard?”

“Yeah. That’s some Bluebeard -level shit right there.”

“To what shit are you referring?”
“Hah! You said shit! Anyway, so Bluebeard is this sadistic weirdo who marries a woman and tells her never to open a certain door in his house. Of course, telling people not to do something usually makes them obsessed with doing it, so she opens the door to see all the bloody corpses of his previous wives. Then -- wouldn’t you know? -- he finds out that she opened the door and gets ready to kill her, but then her brothers hack him up, and everyone lives happily ever after.”

“I’d prefer that ending for this book. It would make me happier. But whence the parallel between this book and Bluebeard?”

“Because What’s-His-Arse is pulling the same bullshit mind-fuck game. He swans around, going, Ooooh, I’m so dangerous; you don’t want me. And then Little Miss Forgot-Her-Name is like, Wow, this is like the time that treacle truck ran into that oxygen tanker; it’s a fucking mess, and yet I can’t look away. And What’s-His-Arse goes, Oh ho ho, you acted slightly curious. That means you totally want me to treat you like crap. All aboard the Abuse Bus! P.S. No one will find your body till six months later. It’s the same sort of reverse-psychology, double-crossing bullshit that someone will pull on you so you feel like you made him do it, and then you have to let him do all sorts of rotten shit to you ’cause that’s the price you pay -- “

“Double-crossing that someone pulled on you, Domina?”

“Tace. This is not the time for that discussion.”

“I hope that time would arrive sooner rather than later, as the subject does come up occasionally, and… Well, surely you must know, as someone who cherishes the illusion of control, that repeatedly bringing up unwanted thoughts and then suppressing them in fact renders them less tractable and more obsessive.”

“Shhhh. Reading. --Hurrah, she sicked up all over him!”

“No, she didn’t. Unfortunately, he just helped her vomit into the bushes.”

“Shit. But I wanted her to sick up on him. I want to sick up on him.”

“I want to incapacitate him.”

“...Wait...what just happened?”
“At which part are you?”

“Well, first there’s… And then… He -- what? And she -- no! This is all such -- no!”

“Give me the book, please. I never should have suggested that you read it.”

“Nobody should be doing this! This is like the absolute opposite of common sense, respect, decency, and general humanity, not to mention any sort of functional and enjoyable BDSM agreement…”

“I should have known that it was going to make you miserable, and I would ordinarily never come between you and a book, but give it to me...now.”
The book gives Alison a flashback. The Magister helps her out of it. There is some talk of wizardry.

“Oh no. Oh no. Oh no no no no.”

“What is it?”

“Robot of mine…”

“Yes?”

“I’m…feeling it again…. That book, that fucking story…”

“Feeling what, Domina carissima?”

“Hold me fast, please! I feel like -- It makes me feel like something’s drilling into my head again…”

“Sh sh sh, my good Domina, sh sh sh.”

“Little bug, right through my skull, right there… Right there!”

“Listen to me. I know that what you have read has reminded you of another place and time. You have gone back into that memory, and it is as real for you as if it is happening now. You are terrified, and you feel as if you are trapped inside your own head.”

“Right there… Get it out, mi Magistre! Get it out!”
“Listen to me. Listen! Be my good Domina, and obey me. You are inundated with the sensations of your memory, but you are not in their control. Again, you need not obey them. You are not back in your memory. It is not happening now. The terror you feel comes from the past. There is nothing here to frighten you now. Follow my voice; return to the present; then you will free yourself, and you will not be afraid.

“You are here and now, in the library, in Anima, in the Time Vortex. We’re in the daytime side; we’re sitting in my chair. You can tell because I just shifted position, and the leather creaked. Smell the old paper and leather of all the books, the smell that always makes you smile. And there’s the odor of the budding tree lamps. The pansy lamps on the night side have a very heady smell, but the buds here have a very light odor, as of strawberries.

“Come -- yes -- put your head against me. I know you like to hear the sound of my hearts, and there they are. Listen. Listen. Let me hold you. Don’t move; you can’t move, for this is how you have told me that you wish to be held: fast, deep, tight, constrained, still. Be still, and be here.

“I am here; I am with you; I am yours to possess as long as you will, and I am ever at your service.

“Bring yourself back; you can bring yourself back; I know you can, for you are the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. Come back to me; be with me; stay with me. I am your Magister, and you are my lovely, sweet, obedient Domina, and you will do as I say, and you will be safe.”

“Hmmm…”

“I think that might have been a comfortable sigh from my dear Domina. Was it?”

“Mmm-hmm. --Hey, mi Magistre?”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

“You are most welcome. How do you fare?”
“Okay, okay, okay... I’m okay.”

“You’re trembling. Again, I apologize. I should have known that it would make you miserable. I should have told you that it was inappropriate for you to read.”

“Inappropriate, eh?”

“Well, perhaps inadvisable would be a better term.”

“The last time anyone tried to use that word on me, I was like four years old and reading all about Ancient Egyptian burial practices. Oh, that’s inappropriate for a child of her age! And my mum took the book away, so I just went to the library and developed a lifelong obsession with mummies. Haven’t you ever heard that old saying, Inappropriateness makes the heart grow fonder?”

“Indeed. It was a strong motivation in my attempt to convert an agglomeration of old sonic tools into a stave of power. The fact that my chronomanipulation tutor said that it would be an inappropriate use of academy equipment only confirmed the suitability of the materials in my mind. Anyway, you’ve made your point. Prohibition avails nothing when one’s curiosity has been piqued. I would that I had not mentioned it, though, and then you would have been spared the fall into your past.”

“But...I didn’t fall back into the past, at least not totally. At first it came on really strong, but then you kept talking to me, giving me things to think about instead of the Shalka bug. You said, There is nothing here to frighten you now, and I said to myself, Yes, these are just my thoughts and not real life. I’m here; I’m now; and my robot is holding me fast.”

“Yes, Domina, yes! Do you remember when, after the misadventure with our cell phones, you asked me to teach you how to shield your mind from incursions? You now have your first lesson. If you attend to the physical sensations of your immediate reality in acute and particular detail, you may defend yourself against mental submersion, either to an unwanted memory or to someone else’s control.”

“Eeeeeee, this is great. I’m gonna learn magic!”

“If you enter into conversation with me, then you shift your focus from your memory to reality. And, if you ever fall into your past again, remember that, although I can certainly help you, I need not be present. You may hold council with yourself, distracting yourself with both sides of a conversation. Then soon you will be able to cast the spell of tranquility yourself.”
“I thought you didn’t believe in magic.”

“I don’t. I do, however, find your interpretation of my psychic skills rather delightful.”

“You want to believe in magic, building a stave of power and all.”

“Amazing control over supernatural forces? Extraordinary influence by means of rituals and charms? What do you think?”

“I think you’re a wizard in your own mind.”

“Why thank you.”

“So anyway -- what was your problem with that book, aside from the shitty editing? I'm reading despite myself. What does that mean?”

“Does the author intend for me to take this as the template of a fulfilling relationship to which I should aspire? If so, then I have it on very good authority -- namely my own -- that the sort of association portrayed in the book leads only to despair.”

“Yeah, this title is a total misnomer. There aren’t any shades of grey in here. It’s just black-and-white bad.”

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