

Muggled

by Mike Mariano

(CHRIS enters his bedroom, carrying a book. He is distressed.)

CHRIS
Rose?

ROSE
(Calling, from the bathroom:)
Yes?

CHRIS
Rose, I need to speak with you.

ROSE
(Still offstage:)
Just a sec.

(ROSE enters, drying her hands with a towel.)

Honey, what is it?

(CHRIS pulls the towel from her hands and replaces it with the book.)

CHRIS
Did you know she had this?

(ROSE looks at the book. She rolls her eyes and smiles.)

ROSE
Ohhh.... Honey—

CHRIS
You're laughing! Rose, this is serious.

ROSE
Chris....

CHRIS
We've talked to Morgan many times about this: She doesn't read this book! She doesn't see the movies at a friend's house. She doesn't get to use those birthday decorations—Morgan is to stay away from Harry Potter.

ROSE

(Smiling:)

Chris. It's not Morgan.

CHRIS

Huh?

ROSE

It's not her book.

(CHRIS absorbs this.)

CHRIS

Rose, that's not funny.

ROSE

Honey, I know—

CHRIS

No. That's really not funny! You brought this book into this house?

ROSE

I didn't ("*bring it in to read*")—I brought the book, Chris. Do you want to know why?

CHRIS

I do, but first let me say that I'm not comfortable. Rose, I'm not comfortable at all, and I am shocked by you.

(ROSE, wordless, gives the book back to CHRIS.)

ROSE

You're right, Chris; it's a book of witchcraft. The world's most popular teenage demon worshipper. And he's advertising himself right at our Morgan.

CHRIS

I hope you're not trying to make a point—that Harry Potter is only dangerous for children—because that's not true and I don't like this.

ROSE

I know he's dangerous. I don't want him any closer to us than I do to Morgan, but now we can do something about it. Chris? Do you hate Harry Potter?

CHRIS

Well that's strong. I'm certainly afraid of what he can do.
But I don't know.

ROSE

Let me show you something.

(ROSE picks up a plastic broomstick from next to the bed. It is a children's toy, but CHRIS recoils.)

Chris!

CHRIS

How far does this need to go, Rose? I mean it!

ROSE

You know what this is.

CHRIS

Yes.

ROSE

I didn't think you would know; I didn't.

CHRIS

It's a broomstick.

ROSE

It's a Nimbus Two-Thousand.

CHRIS

Oh, Rose, no, no, no! It's a broomstick! It's how witches ride off with the devil and it's what Harry Potter disguises to our daughter as a harmless game of soccer.

ROSE

"Ride off with the devil?"

CHRIS

It's what they'd call it, and it's whatever sexually depraved heathenism you can think of to perform with a broomstick.

ROSE

Coincidentally, honey, I have been thinking of that.

CHRIS

(Advancing:)

Rose, in God's name what's gotten into you?!

(CHRIS grabs the broomstick, ready to tear it from her hands. He stops and pulls back his hand. It is covered in blood.)

Rose, Rose; this is bloody....

ROSE

Yes.

CHRIS

Rose, what have you been doing to yourself?!

ROSE

Myself? Nothing.

CHRIS

Oh my God—Morgan!

ROSE

Morgan is at swimming; Chris, calm down. Let me ask you again: Do you hate Harry Potter?

CHRIS

Rose, what kind of a—?

ROSE

Do you hate Harry Potter?

CHRIS

Yes! Oh, God, yes!

ROSE

Then I have a present for you.

(ROSE takes the book from CHRIS's hand and throws it to the bed. The bed is unmade and the covers are ruffled. Something underneath stirs. Rose says sharply, to the bed:)

Get up!

(The figure moves and begins to make noise. ROSE approaches the bed.)

I didn't say you could sleep; now get up! Now!

(ROSE rips the covers off the bed. Bound to it, lying half-naked on his chest with duct tape over his mouth, is the unmistakable HARRY POTTER. He has the trademark round glasses and overgrown bangs.)

Let's get started.

(HARRY begins to speak, muffled. ROSE hits him—hard—with the broomstick.)

Quiet!

(She turns to her husband.)

Like what you see, Chris?

CHRIS
Rose....

ROSE
I can't take Morgan to the library. I have to supervise her every time she turns on the television. I work so hard to keep her away from the occult. From the friendly face *he* puts on it. Our daughter is in danger, honey, and we have to protect her.

(CHRIS, still speechless, crouches, looking at HARRY. Their eyes meet.)

CHRIS
This is Harry Potter?

ROSE
This is a threat.

CHRIS
Rose, why are you talking like this? Why do you have this boy tied to the bed?

ROSE
I won't lie to you, honey. I have captured this wizard, and I am punishing him. For the past few hours this boy has been beaten and...violated with his own broomstick.

CHRIS
Jesus.... Jesus, I don't believe this....

ROSE
Chris....

CHRIS
I don't know you like this, Rose.

ROSE
(Sitting on the bed, ignoring HARRY.)
Of course you do.

CHRIS
No; you always knew to hate the sin, love the sinner.

ROSE
Isn't the most popular modern witch steeped in sin; what would you have me do?

CHRIS
Not this! Rose, what's the point of this?

ROSE
I want a guarantee from him. I don't want to see his books, his movies, his Lego products—anything.

CHRIS
We've written letters saying as much to publishers and bookstores.

ROSE
And we've accomplished nothing. We've only had to fight harder. This afternoon I dropped Morgan at the community center. Then I saw him outside. Waiting for our daughter! Chris, this has gone on long enough! We have to fight back! And we have to take every measure.

(CHRIS turns to HARRY.)

CHRIS
You were waiting outside the community center?

(HARRY hesitates. ROSE cracks the broomstick across his head.)

ROSE
That was a question!

CHRIS
Rose, stop!

ROSE

No, he needs this. His whole life is sorcery and we need to take it out of him. He needs to be broken down.

CHRIS

By beating him?

ROSE

Well maybe by asking politely? Can you think of any ways to make him change that don't put our daughter at risk?

CHRIS

I don't know; I don't know.... But I can't look at him...looking at me like this.

ROSE

Here's a short-term solution.

(ROSE rips off HARRY's bloodied, ripped underwear and drapes them over his head. HARRY begins to whimper. ROSE swats him. CHRIS reacts.)

It's humiliating, right? It's what needs to happen.

CHRIS

Rose, Rose, I have no idea where you learned to think like this.

ROSE

Open your eyes, honey. This is how the world works. When our country is threatened, we deal with the threat—gloves off. When our family is threatened I hoped you'd respond the same way.

CHRIS

Like this?

ROSE

Yes, Chris, like this! And we already have—as a country. Against the terrorists. They wanted it to be our God against theirs and so help them our God won. And then we showed them why.

CHRIS

Rose.

ROSE

And then in the news all those months back we saw the pictures of it. I never told you this, but I was in the supermarket with Sherry, and she started on about the pictures, the soldiers, the prisoners and how awful it was. Sherry and I saw the same thing on the news. But I didn't find it awful.

(Lights begin to rise behind them along with distant music.)

I found it beautiful.

(Lights come up full on a "fashion runway" in ROSE's bedroom. Model-esque music—something like the Charlie's Angels theme—begins to play. A MAN, fully nude except for a black hood over his head, begins to walk to the foot of the runway. At points he casually exhibits his one piece of apparel—perhaps it sports a designer label.)

When you have right and power on your side and you show it, how can it be anything but beautiful?

(As the MAN returns upstage, a second MAN appears, also nude and hooded, wearing a dog collar and accompanied by a FEMALE GI.)

I don't care about the prisoners in the pictures, about their feelings. I don't need to. They are being shown justice.

(The second MAN and the GI remain downstage as the first MAN returns. He carries a bare fluorescent tube—perhaps it is lit. He hands it to the GI.)

And raw power is the only type of justice they know.

(With symbolic gestures—and probably no real violence—the GI drapes her end of the chain around the first MAN's neck. She taps them both with the tube and they fall on all fours. She sits on the back of the second MAN and taps the back of the first as they crawl back upstage and out of sight. Music and lights fade.)

You said you never looked at those pictures.

CHRIS

I never wanted to know.

ROSE

But now you see. Now you see the measures we have to take. As a country against extremists. And as a family, against a witch.

CHRIS

And he, he needs to be treated the same way.

ROSE

Honey, are you asking me or telling me?

CHRIS

Give me the book.

(ROSE does so. CHRIS crouches down next to HARRY.)

Harry?

(HARRY turns to him. Using the corners of the book, CHRIS attempts to remove the underwear from HARRY's head. HARRY flinches, but CHRIS gently exposes HARRY's face.)

Harry, I want your attention. I'm going to remove the tape over your mouth.

ROSE

Chris!

CHRIS

Rose, let me finish.

(To HARRY:)

I'm going to remove the tape, Harry, but when I do, you're going to do something for me. You're going to eat this book. Every page of your filthy siren-call, one by one. And if you spit any of it up you'll just have to swallow it again later. If you expected our Morgan to stomach this garbage so should you. Ready?

(CHRIS starts for the tape. He stops. He looks at his wife.)

You're right. Now, for the first time in years, I'm not afraid of Harry Potter.

(CHRIS rips off the tape.)

HARRY

Ow!

CHRIS

(Crumpling a page from the book:)

Now then....

HARRY

(In an American accent, his voice quaking:)

Mister, you've got to stop. Please. Your wife is all wrong!

I'm not Harry Potter!

ROSE

Chris....

CHRIS

What's that?

HARRY

There is no Harry Potter—he's just in books! I take piano lessons; I was just walking when your wife—

ROSE

Shut up!

HARRY

She attacked me!

ROSE

(Hitting HARRY with the broom:)

Put the tape back on!

HARRY

Please, mister! Please!

(CHRIS puts the tape back on. Muffled, HARRY continues to scream.)

CHRIS

(To ROSE:)

How much of that is true?

ROSE

You believe him?

CHRIS

Did he have this book when you found him?

ROSE
Yes.

CHRIS
And the broomstick?

ROSE
(Slight hesitation:)
I found it for him.

CHRIS
Rose, tell me this is more than just glasses. Tell me you're not crazy. Tell me that you *know* this is Harry Potter.

ROSE
I know for a fact.

CHRIS
How, Rose? Tell me how!

(Beat.)

ROSE
Because when I bring this stick down on him I see Morgan. And I'm protecting her. Isn't that what you want?

CHRIS
Yes....

ROSE
You want Morgan to grow up safe?

CHRIS
Yes....

ROSE
And can you believe in me, Chris? Believe what I believe?

CHRIS
Rose, I....

(CHRIS turns to HARRY. He rips off the tape. Both HARRY and ROSE are silent.)

CHRIS
Page One....

HARRY

No!

(HARRY's scream is stifled by the page CHRIS shoves into his mouth. HARRY struggles and is again struck by ROSE.)

CHRIS

Page Two....

(HARRY begins to bawl. CHRIS crumples another page.)

I have one more question.

ROSE

Yes, honey?

CHRIS

What time do I need to pick up Morgan?

ROSE

I'll let you know. You're a good father.

CHRIS

I have you to thank.

(CHRIS continues to force-feed HARRY the novel as the lights fade.)