

Would I Dare: Melissa Hickey

“Closing time in fifteen minutes,” a pre-recorded message announced. I glanced around the library. Only a spattering of people remained. Some stood in aisles with their noses stuck in open books, others sat at desks, weary faced, slumped shouldered, poised pens in their hands.

One by one, books snapped shut, pencils and pens collected and zipped away into secure cases. People stood, stretched and headed towards the exit. Not me though. I snuggled deeper in my chair, wondering if I dared....

What if instead of departing I sneaked behind a nearby row of books and stood silent, holding my breath? What if the librarians didn't see me and turned out the lights, and disappeared out the main entrance, leaving me locked in?

Oh, my lips trembled. Alone in the dark, amongst the books, all by myself. Would I dare? And what if I did? What then? Would I sneak on tiptoes down the aisles, selecting first one book, then another? Would I hold the books with shaking hands and give them a vigorous shake?

Imagine if I did, imagine if all the characters tumbled from the pages and fell kerplunk to the floor.

Crazy stuff. All those characters, the distinguished, the formidable, the humble, the scary, now scattered all around the library. Oh, I can see them now, rising up from the ground, shadowy figures in the dark, their eyes flashing, their cheeks puffy and red, their screams of agony.

Pinpricks shivered down my spine. The poor characters forced to spend eternity stuck in the pages of books, living the same storyline over and over and over.

Yes, yes, their pain, their anger. But oh, what if I let those characters escape, then I'd be alone with them, here in the dark? What if they crept up behind me? What if I felt their hot, stale breath on the back of my neck? What then? Yikes, what then? What if a character from a Stephen King novel, say, that creepy clown, what if he jumped up from behind a photocopier and shouted BOO? What then?

I leapt from my seat and headed towards the exit. Goodness, the wretched characters. My heart bled for them. It really did. I waved goodnight to the librarian and skipped out the door. Yes, my heart bled, but as far as I was concerned, those characters were where they needed to be.

Stuck forever in the pages of their books.