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## Why I Hate Librarians

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## WHY I HATE LIBRARIANS

Cody Kapocsi

AS A VERY RATIONAL BEING, I STRUGGLE with the people and situations that are inherently irrational. I'm the guy who is constantly saying, "Why do it in four steps, when you could do it in just two?" or "Why wait until the last minute, when it would be far easier to work on it bit-by-bit over a large period of time? Hmm?" Which makes me a fan favorite, I assure you.

Anyways, it was the summer between my junior and senior years of high school. I was 17, had a car that was only a year old, and was generally enjoying the freedom that only 17-year-olds with a car could enjoy. Namely: bumming around the house. It's real hot in Texas in the summer, and going anywhere took a great deal of effort, especially just summoning the courage to open the door and face the near literal waves of heat.

So, it was an extra special occasion when I asked my sister if she would like to go to the library. We had been going since we were very young, both of us having library cards that dated back to our earliest memories, and perhaps beyond. Mine was evidence that I had been very young once, my name written in shoddy cursive, my letters connected but ugly. Nevertheless, we both enjoyed getting books, and it had been something of a summer tradition before my mother had gone back to work, teaching during the year and during the summer at local colleges.

It was one of those days where you had done everything you wanted to do earlier in the week, leaving nothing to fill the time. Which made books all the more enticing, since it would give us something to fill the next hour, and hopefully entertain us through the weekend. It all seemed to be going fine: we got to the library with no trouble, it wasn't too crowded, and the checkout lines were short. I had no problems at all; there weren't even fines to pay, despite the fact that I was notoriously bad at returning things on time.

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But then my sister wanted to check out. Now she didn't have her card, because she was fourteen, and had always gone with my mother, who kept my sister's card in her purse. Today, my mother was at work, but that shouldn't have been any special problem. Cards had been forgotten in the past, and always, always, the solution had been to give a librarian our phone number and have them look up the account info. It should have been the same today.

Of course, it wasn't.

"Does she have any I.D.?" the librarian asked.

I'm sure that she didn't sound like Roz from *Monsters, Inc.*, but that's how I remember her voice, and if you imagine her that way, I won't be offended.

"No," I said. "Can't we just look up the phone number on the account?"

"No," she replied, defying convention.

Which was crazy, given that librarians are the drug dealers of the educational world. They want you to be addicted to books, to read for the rest of your life, possibly at the expense of your health and sanity. Don't believe me? Think back to your elementary- and middle-school years.

I bet you anything, that one day a teacher stopped in the middle of class to allow the school librarian to give a speech. It always said something about how wonderful books are, how much you'll enjoy them if you try them, how "hooked" you'll become if you just read just a single one.

One day, a librarian corners you in the hall.

"Hey kid," the librarian says.

"Yeah?" you reply.

"Ever tried any Tolkien?"

"Well, no," you admit, looking around to make sure no one overhears this conversation.

"Why not?"

"I guess I'm a bit scared. They're pretty big books, you know, and I just don't think I can handle it. Besides, my parents always say fantasy is bad for you."

"Nonsense! If fantasy was bad for you, all the cool kids wouldn't do it. Besides, it's not as dangerous as they say.

## WIRELESS MASTER

Sean Ferrier-Watson

small & portable  
resting @ the hip  
my wireless Master  
beckons

straight out of Star-Trek  
this handy gadget  
receiving & transmitting  
signals from space

transceiver of thought  
compeller of language  
instrument of narration

it rings & summons me  
to the Call

There's a reason that all the celebrities do it, 'cause it gives you such a rush."

"Um, I don't think I should be talking to you anymore."

"Look, kid. I can see you're scared of the Tolkien. I get it, trust me. I wouldn't start on the Tolkien, either, oh no. Here, try this J.K. Rowling. The high you'll feel isn't as great as the Tolkien, but it's easier on the system. And besides, your parents don't ever have to know."

She hands you the book.

You reach for your wallet.

"No, no. No need to pay me, this one's free."

"Thanks, I guess."

At this point you just want to run away, so you break eye contact, hoping to escape without any further questionable activity taking place.

"Hey kid," you hear her call out.

"If you like that one, just come see me. There's six more where that came from."

At this point, you're at a full run, just hoping to get through the day without getting caught with a, \*gulp,\* book in your backpack, intending to throw it away as soon as you get home. But you don't, because you glance at the cover, and you think:

"Just once can't hurt. And the librarian's right, my parents never have to know."

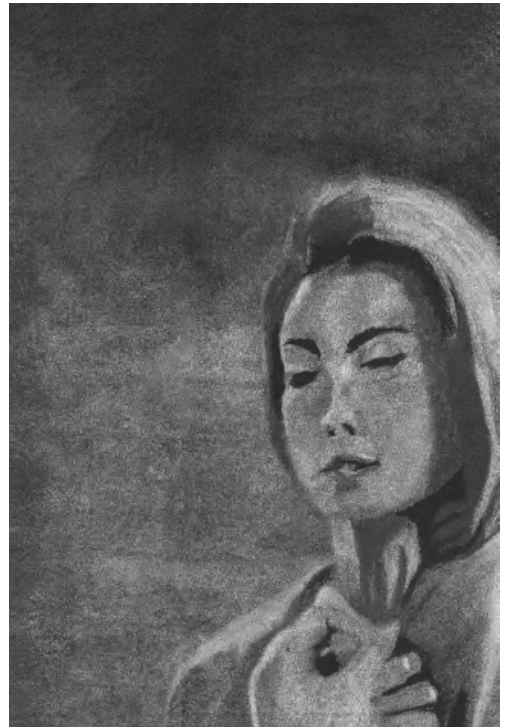
Later, you find yourself in your room, under both the cover of darkness and your actual covers, reading a book by flashlight.

And then you're hooked.

So, on the day that the librarian said, "no," I was shocked that a librarian wouldn't check my sister's books out. It would have made sense if we were trying to steal books, but we weren't, we were trying to put them on her card. But even if we were attempting to steal them, by my estimate, libraries are like food banks and donated-clothing storage facilities. If someone wants what is inside these places so desperately that they are willing to steal it, then you might as well let them keep whatever they stole. They clearly need it.

"I need her to show me some I.D." the librarian said.

"Like what?" I asked.



## DAYDREAMING NEAR THE WIDOW

Caleb Copin

d

“Driver’s License, School I.D.”

I looked questioningly at my sister, who responded with a negative shake of her head.

“She doesn’t have any I.D.” I said, racking my brain for a solution.

I thought of something, a bit of a dangerous gamble. After all, it’s like they say: desperate times call for desperate measures.

“What if I show you my Driver’s License?” I asked.

I could tell she didn’t want to see it, as the I.D. I proffered didn’t belong to the party who wanted the books, but ultimately I believe that her general desire to just see some I.D., anyone’s I.D., won out.

“Fine,” she said.

So I pulled out my card, and showed her, and then we checked out and left.

As I was walking away, I realized something funny. No 14-year-old has any valid I.D. during summer vacation. Each and every one is too young to have even a driver’s permit, and if their parents are smart, their Social Security Card and Birth Certificate are locked away in the bank. And the thing about that School Identification, well, it’s invalid in the summer. Clearly printed on it is the designation that it runs from 2012-2013, or 2013-2014. Valid during a school year, but not the summer, when school’s out of session.

Looking back, I’m not entirely sure what I.D. we could have shown. But I realized something else: if the librarian is a drug dealer, then I’m at best a user and an enabler. I can’t seem to kick the habit of reading, and I’m willing to vouch for the legality of others’ habits. I suspect I will be hooked for life, both using and adding to the collection of “street books,” despite the lure of other forms of media. And despite all that, there are worse things to have in your hands when you die than a book. I just hope I’m reading a good one.

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**GWEN STEFANI** Kerry Jeffrey