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Thirst for Knowledge

Rebecca Jaffe
University of Central Florida

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“Remember to lock up when you’re done!” The aging woman reminded the assistant as she left, leaving the young girl alone under the fluorescents.

Strolling through the library’s aisles, she hummed to herself as she shelved and organized her cart’s contents. Horror novels were the genre of the week; attempting to immerse in the spookiness of the season, readers checked out all sorts of terrifying tales.

Unfortunately, this meant long hours of re-shelving.

The assistant, currently at the letter K, ignored the slight flickering of the lights in an aisle a few rows away. The building was old, with exposed brick in the interior and ivy growing along the front entrance’s walls. Many assistants and workers had entered and left the building over the years, but eventually it became just the head librarian and her assistant of the week. Book after book, the cart slowly emptied. Maybe she’d get out before midnight this time.

Around aisle Q, the lights went out.

Glancing up from the cart, she looked around in surprise. After a moment, the lights returned.

She continued shelving. When she reached Aisle T, she heard a noise. A low growl, almost like a dog was present. Slightly anxious, she muttered to herself, “You’re just tired, relax. You’re almost done, then you can go home and sleep.”

As she approached Aisle W, then Aisle X, then Aisle Y, the growling never stopped. It grew, louder and louder, until it seemed like a wolf was about to jump out from behind the books and attack her.

She hurried, not even stopping to double check if she was organizing correctly. Finally, *finally*, she reached Aisle Z. The growling was almost deafening. She grabbed the few books that went in the aisle and dumped them on the shelves. She’d put them away correctly in the morning, after she got some sleep. As she turned away to return the cart, she noticed a book was sticking out. It wasn’t on the cart.

Curious, she picked it up. It was old, like everything else in the building. There was no title, no author, not even a number to indicate its shelf order. Shriveled and black around the edges, the book looked as though it might turn to dust at the slightest movement.

It was then, in that moment, she thought the growling might be coming from the book. Shaking her head at the thought, she opened it and gasped at its contents.

“What the- “

The book fell to the floor, and the room was filled with silence once again.