

# Trash writing

- A muted, gray autumn morning settles over the small-town library.\

Lionel jolted awake to a harsh blaring and managed to slam the sleep button on his childhood alarm clock by the second blare.

Five more minutes.

He let his mind slowly float its way to the surface as those blessed minutes ticked by. He felt both dread and a longing pull to start the day. If only he could jump directly from his dreams to the books in the library. When he braved his first peak at the day, a depressingly weak, cold light filtered through the gaps in his blinds.

Fitting.

The alarm blared again and he managed to silence it before its second honk and dragged himself out of his warm bed into the chilly air of the room. After his usual morning routine, he was out the door with a sandwich squashed into his leather satchel.

It was a brisk 15 minute walk from his home to the small town library where he worked. That morning was the first that the chill of autumn had begun to bite at his neck and nip through his sweater. He'd have to start layering up.

As he approached the squat brick building with its large windows to let in natural light, he breathed a quiet sigh to sooth himself. There was already a patron waiting for him to unlock the doors.

She was a stout woman, drowning in a wool cap and scarf against the cold. Short wisps of gray hair snuck out from cover and stuck straight out from her in static attention. There was an agitated tenseness in her shoulders. Whether from irritation or excitement, he couldn't decide. The turned as his footsteps alerted her.

"Oh, there you are, my sweet Lionel! I was hoping to catch you before my first class this morning!"

He pulled out his keys and reached past her to unlock the door. "How can I help you today, Mrs. Braum."

He couldn't force himself to match her chipperness, but he was able to keep his tone neutral and filter out any hint of annoyance.

- The librarian moves through his routines with ritualistic precision: unlocking doors, straightening displays, checking returns.\

The older woman happily toddled after him into the empty library. It was warmer but not by much as the thermostat's timer waited for the 15 minute mark before opening to switch to something more comfortable to the public.

She stood politely on the public-side of the counter as she watched him put away his briefcase and tidy up.

"You see, my dear, today I'm reviewing the Great Emu War of 1932-

"Oh?" He said as he flipped on the lights from the master switchboard on his office wall.

"-and I was hoping we had some physical history books I could have them look at."

"I see." He checked the bin positioned under the dropslot and leaned in to grab the single book to have appeared there overnight.

"I'll be showing a video, of course; but to keep them from writing essays with some 'help' online, I got the idea to require they use the books, in class only."

He reached under the counter to boot up the old computer.

"Really, I just want to give them something tangible, something real they can hold in their hands. You understand."

He stood and met her eyes for the first time. Their cheerfulness managed to pierce his gloom, ever so slightly.

"I do understand." And he rewarded her with a little smile, as well.\

- Patrons drift in—eccentric, oblivious, needy in small ways. They ask for obscure books, complain about the temperature, ask him to fix the printer, chatter loudly.\
- None of them mean harm, but each interaction chips at his quiet equilibrium.\
- The library is his sanctuary, but people—ironically—are the price of admission.\
- He longs for silence, order, and the company of books alone. Tone: gentle melancholy, introverted claustrophobia, the sense of a man living in the margins of his own life.\

---

Revision #7

Created 2026-02-05 05:05:32 UTC by Ayla

Updated 2026-02-06 05:59:15 UTC by Ayla