

CAUTION: LIBRARIANS AHEAD

By Bradley Walton

Copyright © 2010 by Bradley Walton, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 1-60003-563-9

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

CHARACTERS

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL THOMAS

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL REXRODE

MR. VANDORING

Deeply concerned with the meaning behind words

MR. VASSER

A taxidermist

MS. JACKSON

A book thief

MS. BATES

Would rather not talk about that

MS. PERRY

Likes to use books as weapons

MR. BRIDGES

Really wants to be a garbage collector

MS. FRANKLIN

Likes to drink regular soda

MS. HARTMAN

Hates kids

MR. BALLARD

Hates censorship

MS. BUTLER

Wants to start a fire breathing club

MS. FUNKHOUSER

A strong proponent of book burning

MS. HARRISON

Very scatterbrained

MR. STONE

Very highly unqualified

MS. SANDBOURNE

A connoisseur of pens

16 roles either gender; with doubling, the play can be performed with as few as 4 actors. All characters may be male or female. Please change titles and pronouns as necessary.

DOUBLING

VANDORING, JACKSON, PERRY, FRANKLIN, BALLARD, FUNKHOUSER, and STONE can be played by the same actor. (PERRY to FRANKLIN would require a *very* quick costume change.)

VASSER, BATES, BRIDGES, HARTMAN, BUTLER, HARRISON and SANDBOURNE can be played by the same actor.

STAGING

There are two medium-sized office desks, one at stage right and one at stage left. There is one chair behind and one chair beside each desk, for a total of four chairs. These represent the two principals' offices. There are papers and various desktop-type items on each desk. The action alternates back and forth between the two offices in scenes 2 through 15. A simple lighting shift from one side of the stage to the other is recommended to keep things moving as quickly as possible.

PROPERTIES

A Cupful of Pens

COSTUMES

THOMAS and REXRODE are dressed professionally as high school assistant principals. The other characters' costumes may reflect their personalities to some extent, though most of them would attempt to look nice for a job interview.

AUTHOR NOTES

I work in a school library. Bits and pieces of *Caution: Librarians Ahead* were inspired by my experiences. And then exaggerated. A lot.

Shortly after I wrote this, one of our librarians moved to another school. They recently conducted interviews for her replacement. I hope the applicants were nothing like these. I'm going to have to work with whoever they hire.

CAUTION: LIBRARIANS AHEAD

by
Bradley Walton

SCENE 1

AT RISE: Two medium-sized desks, one at stage right and one at stage left. There is one chair behind and one chair beside each desk (a total of four chairs). These represent the two principals' offices. There are papers and various desktop-type items on each desk, and REXRODE's desk should have a cup full of pens. ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS THOMAS and REXRODE stand at center.

THOMAS: You ready to do this?

REXRODE: Yeah, let's get it over with.

THOMAS: We shouldn't complain.

REXRODE: No, I guess not.

THOMAS: The one silver lining to come out of the budget cuts is that we haven't had to interview for any new staff positions this year.

REXRODE: Except for this one.

THOMAS: Hey, it's only one.

REXRODE: Shame we can't just pass over this and make it a perfect hiring cycle.

THOMAS: There have been years we've had to conduct interviews to fill twenty or thirty positions in the school.

REXRODE: Don't remind me.

THOMAS: We can handle interviews for one position. It won't be that bad. Heck, it'll be a breeze.

REXRODE: I still hate interviews.

THOMAS: I'm not crazy about them either, but compared to past years, this'll be a walk in the park.

REXRODE: I mean, I really hate interviews. The only thing that scares me more than some of these people is the prospect of them teaching our kids.

THOMAS: Well, we're interviewing for a new school librarian, so you don't have to worry about the teaching part.

REXRODE: Librarians still teach.

THOMAS: Yeah, but they're not right there with the same group of kids every day.

REXRODE: This is the person who's going to be putting books on the library shelves for the entire student body to read for the next who-knows-how-many years. The potential for damage to young minds is...it's... (*Gestures to indicate something big, but can't come up with a word to match the size of "big" HE's imagining.*)

Caution: Librarians Ahead – Page 5

THOMAS: It's huge. Definitely.

REXRODE: I think I'd rather be hiring an entire department full of teachers.

THOMAS: Well, I don't know about that.

REXRODE: We've never had to hire for this position before.

THOMAS: Mrs. Hammel has been here for thirty-six years.

REXRODE: Are you sure we can't get her to stay for thirty-seven?

THOMAS: She's earned her retirement.

REXRODE: We have no idea what the pool of applicants could be like.

THOMAS: You might be surprised.

REXRODE: That's what scares me. This is unknown territory here.

People fear the unknown. I fear the unknown. I admit it. And this—if you went to Applebee's (*restaurant reference may be changed as needed*) and ordered a big steaming plate of the unknown with a side of fries—this is what you'd get served.

THOMAS: Actually, we serve that in the cafeteria here on Wednesdays.

REXRODE: Be serious!

THOMAS: It's hard to be serious when you're being melodramatic. It won't be that bad.

REXRODE: I hope you're right.

THOMAS: You'll see.

REXRODE: I *really* hope you're right.

THOMAS: Relax.

REXRODE: I'm an assistant principal. I don't get to relax.

THOMAS: I'm an assistant principal, too. And you know what? I make time to relax. Little moments. I just stop, close my eyes, clear my head, take a deep breath, and then I'm ready to move on with my day.

REXRODE: Those are the moments when the upper classmen clog the toilets with freshmen (*if performed at a middle school, the lowest grade level may be substituted here*) and coat the stairwells with spray butter.

(*Beat. THOMAS gives REXRODE a dirty look.*)

How many applicants have we got?

THOMAS: Fourteen.

REXRODE: Fourteen?!

THOMAS: What?

REXRODE: How are there fourteen applicants? I thought the state had a shortage of people with library science degrees.

THOMAS: They may not all have library science degrees. Some may be hoping to do the job on a provisional license while they go to grad school.

REXRODE: Did anybody make an effort to narrow down the pool of applicants?

THOMAS: This the only position the school is hiring for this year. I think the principal wanted to give everybody a chance.

REXRODE: Then why isn't she the one doing this?

THOMAS: Because she hates conducting interviews and she's got us to do it for her. Plus, she's on vacation.

REXRODE: Fourteen. This is going take forever.

THOMAS: This is a fraction of what we've had to deal with in the past.

REXRODE: Oh, hooray. It's only going to seem like forever.

THOMAS: Tell you what. Divide and conquer. I'll take half and you take half. Then we'll compare notes.

REXRODE: Seven is less than fourteen.

THOMAS: It is.

REXRODE: I like seven better than fourteen.

THOMAS: I do, too.

REXRODE: Not that I like seven that much.

THOMAS: I'm not doing them all.

REXRODE: I'll buy you a cookie.

THOMAS: You're not bribing me with a cookie.

REXRODE: I'm willing to negotiate.

THOMAS: No.

REXRODE: A Happy Meal? Ice cream? Pizza?

THOMAS: No.

REXRODE: I'll clean your desk for you.

(Beat.)

THOMAS: You'd just throw everything in the trash.

REXRODE: Your desk would be clean.

THOMAS: We're professionals. We have a job to do. Let's just do it.

REXRODE: All right. Hopefully there'll be somebody worth hiring.

THOMAS: We'll probably have a tough time choosing.

REXRODE: If not, I guess we can always shut down the library and sell the books on eBay. *(Update reference as necessary.)*

SCENE 2

MR. VANDORING shakes hands with ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL THOMAS.

THOMAS: Good morning, Mr. VanDoring.

VANDORING: Hello.

THOMAS: Pleasure to meet you.

VANDORING: Why?

THOMAS: I beg your pardon?

VANDORING: Why is it a pleasure to meet me?

THOMAS: Um...because I'm pleased that you're interested in working for our school system and it makes me happy that people want to work here?

VANDORING: I see. So it is actually a positive experience for you to make my acquaintance?

THOMAS: *(speaking slowly)* Yes.

VANDORING: Good. That's very good. So often people say these things and don't really mean them. The words become meaningless.

THOMAS: Words are very important.

VANDORING: The words are nothing.

THOMAS: Oh?

VANDORING: It's the meaning behind the words that matters. The thought. The emotion. The subtleties. For example, take the word "cheese."

THOMAS: Cheese.

VANDORING: Now, right there, the way you said the word "cheese." That's one way of saying it. Very bland, boring, and unimaginative, but perfectly legitimate nonetheless. A million times better than all those poor fools who yell "Cheese!" when their picture is taken. That becomes repetitive to the point of meaninglessness. Classic example. But if you were a starving man in a desert and you stumbled across an oasis of cheese, think how you might say it.

THOMAS: I see.

VANDORING: No! "Cheese!" With vigor!

THOMAS: *(with stilted and forced enthusiasm)* Cheese!

VANDORING: As if your life depended on it!

THOMAS: *(feeling foolish)* Cheese!

VANDORING: Cheese!

THOMAS: *(getting resentful)* Cheese!

VANDORING: Now, say you've eaten five pounds of Vermont cheddar and your bowels are bound up tighter than a rubber band around a sumo wrestler. Think how you'd say it then. The word is the same, but the meaning completely changes. There's no taking that one for granted. So full of misery, pain, and loathing for cows. *(In a deep, long moan.)* Cheeeese!

SCENE 3

REXRODE: What is it that attracts you to this profession, Mr. Vasser?

VASSER: There are very few things that human beings find as enabling and motivating as a sense of accomplishment.

REXRODE: I agree completely. It's a sense that we hope everyone will experience here.

VASSER: There's a lot of pride to be found in gazing upon the fruits of your labor and saying, "I did that." Especially if you didn't think you could do it.

REXRODE: So very true.

VASSER: And people deserve to be able to appreciate their accomplishments for a lifetime.

REXRODE: Thereby building a foundation for future successes.

(Beat. VASSER thinks over REXRODE's comment, then elaborates on it.)

VASSER: The trophy that starts off a collection that eventually fills the whole room.

REXRODE: I like the way you think.

VASSER: Thank you.

REXRODE: Do you enjoy working with kids?

VASSER: Well, truth be told, I've never worked with a kid before. Do you want to mount their heads, or are we talking about removing the skin from the whole body?

REXRODE: Mount their heads?

VASSER: Either way, it would be something new for me. I've done some adult mountain goats, but never a kid.

REXRODE: I'm talking about students...*human* students...not goats.

(Beat.)

VASSER: Why?

REXRODE: Because that's what we do here. We instruct the children of our community.

VASSER: So the heads you'd be mounting...are these the star athletes and honor roll kids who get perfect SAT scores and you want to hang onto them for sentimental reasons, or are they juvenile delinquents you want to display as a warning for the other kids who don't behave?

REXRODE: I don't want to display the heads of any of our students!

VASSER: Okay...good...'cause that would be kind of creepy.

REXRODE: Why would you think that?

VASSER: Well, you said working with kids, and I just assumed—oh! I completely misunderstood you. I am so sorry. Wow, this is really embarrassing. My brain gets into this tunnel vision mode sometimes. Of course you don't want me to mount the students' heads...you want me to teach them *how* to mount heads. I completely misinterpreted you.

REXRODE: Actually, no. I don't want you to teach them how to mount heads, either.

VASSER: Then why are you hiring for a taxidermist?

REXRODE: We're not. We're hiring for a librarian.

VASSER: A librarian?

REXRODE: Yes.

VASSER: (*to himself*) Then why did she say...? (*To REXRODE.*) Look, I'm real sorry. My sister just said you were hiring. I thought she was suggesting that I apply here. Now that I think about it, though, she never actually finished the sentence. She's a little scatter brained. (*Beat.*) Maybe she meant *she* was going to apply.

SCENE 4

THOMAS: Your resumé is very impressive.

JACKSON: Thank you.

THOMAS: What made you decide to leave your position at the university library after twenty years?

JACKSON: I love books.

THOMAS: I'm sure you do. I was just curious as to why you decided to switch gears from higher education to public education.

JACKSON: I really love books.

THOMAS: And you feel that the books in a public school library might somehow be superior to the books in a university library?

JACKSON: I really love books a lot.

THOMAS: You...read all the books in your old library and were looking for something new?

JACKSON: You have no idea how much I love books.

THOMAS: You were caught stealing books from the university library?

(*Pause. JACKSON twitches nervously in her seat.*)

You were caught stealing books from the university library.

JACKSON: I love books.

SCENE 5

REXRODE: What made you decide to leave your position as the librarian of Freeman High?

BATES: Well, I loved my job, and I hated to go, but the school board thought it would be for the best.

REXRODE: Why so?

BATES: I'd rather not talk about it.

REXRODE: You wouldn't?

BATES: No.

REXRODE: I know job interviews can be highly stressful for the applicant, and I don't want to make you uncomfortable, but if there's something that you don't want to talk about—

BATES: I don't.

REXRODE: I understand, but if you come across as unwilling to discuss something, that raises a bit of a red flag.

BATES: You think I'm hiding something?

REXRODE: Of course not.

BATES: Good. Because I'd really rather not talk about it.

REXRODE: I just need to ask about it, just as a formality, to help me decide if you're right for our school.

BATES: If you ask, does that mean I have to talk about it?

REXRODE: (*giving up*) No. Not at all. What would you like to talk about?

(*Beat.*)

BATES: I'd rather not talk about that, either.

SCENE 6

THOMAS: Tell me, Ms. Perry, what do you think is the best part about working in a school library?

PERRY: That's easy. There's always a book around when you need one.

THOMAS: Books are pretty great.

PERRY: I've found that the big ones work best.

THOMAS: (*suddenly concerned*) Work best for what?

PERRY: Whacking the students when they're acting like little jerks.

THOMAS: When you say "whacking" do you mean—

PERRY: Pow! Right upside the head! It's such a great feeling. I've found that encyclopedias work best. They've got a nice weight to them, and they don't get used that much anymore on account of the internet, so nobody really cares if they get dented or have a little blood on them. Although people usually just assume it's ketchup anyway.

SCENE 7

BRIDGES: What I really want to do is drive a garbage truck, but the city didn't have any openings for that, so y'know...time for plan B.

SCENE 8

THOMAS: Your application says that you were featured on the cover of last January's issue of "School Library Monthly." That's very impressive, Miss Franklin.

FRANKLIN: Thank you.

THOMAS: I'm sure your school must have been very proud.

FRANKLIN: Um...well...

THOMAS: Yes?

FRANKLIN: Yes and no.

THOMAS: No?

FRANKLIN: Well...

THOMAS: I'm listening.

FRANKLIN: There was just the teensiest bit of controversy.

THOMAS: Controversy?

FRANKLIN: Just a little.

THOMAS: Over what?

FRANKLIN: The picture on the cover of the magazine.

THOMAS: The picture...of you.

FRANKLIN: Mm hmm.

THOMAS: What was it about the picture that was...controversial?

FRANKLIN: It was the drink I was holding.

THOMAS: A drink?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

THOMAS: Alcohol?

FRANKLIN: Oh, no. No.

THOMAS: So not alcohol.

FRANKLIN: Definitely not.

THOMAS: And it was...?

FRANKLIN: A soda.

THOMAS: A soda.

FRANKLIN: Yes.

THOMAS: What kind of soda?

FRANKLIN: (*uncomfortably*) A regular soda.

THOMAS: And by regular you mean...

FRANKLIN: Not diet.

THOMAS: You were pictured on the cover of a professional educators' magazine holding a can of regular soda?

FRANKLIN: Actually, it was a glass.

THOMAS: How did people know it wasn't diet?

FRANKLIN: The can was in the frame.

THOMAS: That's...unfortunate.

FRANKLIN: I didn't know.

THOMAS: Still...

FRANKLIN: I trusted the photographer and he...he betrayed me. I asked him...I practically begged him, in a courteous and fairly dignified sort of way...to make sure the can wasn't in the picture. I figured if anyone asked...I could tell them it was diet.

THOMAS: So your intention was to lie.

FRANKLIN: I'm not proud of it, but yes.

THOMAS: Why?

FRANKLIN: I freaking hate diet soda.

THOMAS: I feel your pain. But you must understand. This is a public school. We serve young people. And obesity is a very serious problem among young people. The state has been very specific about this. We're not allowed to have regular sodas on school grounds.

FRANKLIN: I know.

THOMAS: We are not allowed to promote or glorify non-diet sodas in any way. We are not allowed to show movies in which there is any kind of product placement for non-diet sodas, or in which anyone willingly consumes a non-diet soft drink. Which is to say that teachers are no longer allowed to show movies in their classrooms.

FRANKLIN: I know. I'm so sorry.

THOMAS: For an education professional to be pictured on a magazine cover drinking a high-test soft drink...it's...

FRANKLIN: I know.

THOMAS: It's...

FRANKLIN: I know.

THOMAS: It's beyond irresponsible. It's beyond reprehensible. It sets a completely unacceptable example for our young people.

FRANKLIN: I'll never do it again. I promise if you hire me, I will drink only diet soda, and I will learn to love it. I will smile. I will be happy on the outside even though my taste buds are crying on the inside and my mouth is so unhappy that my teeth are borderline suicidal. And if there's any question...any question at all that I'm really drinking diet soda...I'll even...I'll...*(almost hysterical)* I'll drink water! Even though I'm not a fish. Even though I'm not freaking Nemo, I'll drink water! From a bottle. Even though it's the same old water from the same old faucets that everyone else is drinking, except that it's got a label and the price is marked up a thousand percent, whereas if I was drinking an actual regular soda, at least I'd be getting some artificial color and some kind of sugar or corn syrup or something that actually tastes good for my money. I'll do it. That's how much I love my work. That's how much I love the kids. That's how much I love books. Please! I need this job. I'll beg if I have to!

THOMAS: You're already begging.

(Beat.)

FRANKLIN: See how well-prepared I am?

SCENE 9

HARTMAN: I guess I was what you would call a late bloomer. It took me years to figure out a direction in my life. I tried all sorts of jobs... construction...retail...llama breeding...manufacturing...but they never made me feel like I was doing something really worthwhile. Like I was doing something that mattered. I had to think long and hard about what's most important to me...and I finally realized...it's our young people.

REXRODE: I know how you feel.

HARTMAN: Kids are just amazing aren't they?

REXRODE: They really are.

HARTMAN: Being around kids, it's just...wow.

REXRODE: Definitely.

HARTMAN: Don't you just want to wrap your hands around their necks and strangle them?

REXRODE: Every day. I—what did you just say?

HARTMAN: Strangle them. With your hands. Around their necks.

Because that's where you'd have to put your hands to strangle somebody, which is good, because I don't want to get accused of bad touching or anything...not that I would ever actually strangle a

student, but if I did cave in to temptation one day, it's a comforting thought at least that I wouldn't be ridiculed on CNN as having some kind of warped mind.

REXRODE: If you love young people, why would you want strangle them?

HARTMAN: Love them? What gave you that idea? I hate kids.

REXRODE: You hate them?

HARTMAN: Sure. Don't you?

REXRODE: I'd be lying if I said my job didn't have its share of stressful moments, but...no. I don't hate kids.

HARTMAN: Really?

REXRODE: Really.

HARTMAN: Huh. I thought everybody who worked in public education hated kids.

REXRODE: What on Earth would make you think that?

HARTMAN: That was always the vibe I got when I was in school.

REXRODE: That your teachers hated you?

HARTMAN: That they hated everybody. And I kind of resented it at the time. But I got older and worked in retail for a few years...got some experience dealing with the public...and I realized that my teachers were right. Kids suck (*or "are awful"*). I can't stand the little bastards (*or "monsters"*). The really young ones are like leeches with vocal cords, and teenagers are like cockroaches with hormones. I just want to stomp their heads in. Which, unfortunately, I can't do, 'cause, y'know...I'd go to jail and stuff...even though I don't see why. It's not like teenagers are real people. Working in education seemed like a great way to do something that was not only really productive, but really fun. Terrorize the little dirtbags! Put some fear into 'em. Teach 'em some respect for their elders. And y'know...work out some aggression in the process. It's healthy. And I realized that if I was a librarian, I'd be able to mess with *all* the kids in the school, as opposed to teaching and just being around the same small group all the time. So I got my library science degree and here we are.

REXRODE: That's...very interesting.

HARTMAN: Thank you.

REXRODE: Let me ask you something.

HARTMAN: Sure.

REXRODE: Do you remember what it was like to be a teenager?

HARTMAN: Yeah. I was awful. I look back on it now and I can't believe it. All the stuff I did...the way I treated grown-ups...I'm so glad I grew up and got my attitude turned around.

SCENE 10

THOMAS: How do you feel about censorship, Mr. Ballard?

BALLARD: I'm completely against it.

THOMAS: Completely and utterly?

BALLARD: Anything restricting the flow of information from one person to another has no right to exist.

THOMAS: What about in the case of the internet?

BALLARD: Same thing goes.

THOMAS: You realize, of course that the school does employ filtering software to keep students from viewing inappropriate websites.

BALLARD: Yeah, I know. We need to get rid of that filtering stuff. It has no place in an educational facility. How are these kids supposed to learn anything if we're blocking inappropriate websites? And tell me, what's your position on compliance with copyright laws?

THOMAS: We observe them strictly.

BALLARD: Then there's something else that needs to be addressed.

Copyright's worse than internet filters. The idea of exchanging money for words and ideas...it's so last century. I tell you, authors can be real jerks.

SCENE 11

REXRODE: How do you see yourself fitting in with the life of the school...the things that go on outside of the library?

BUTLER: I love sports. I'd see myself attending a lot of sporting events to cheer the kids on. Football, volleyball, basketball...you name it. I think I also might like to sponsor a club.

REXRODE: Our retiring librarian sponsored a reading club.

BUTLER: I would love to be able to keep that going for you. There are a lot of things that teens don't read. I think I could maybe nudge them towards some books that would really open their eyes.

REXRODE: *(nervously)* Oh. Really? What sort of things did you have in mind?

BUTLER: Cormac McCarthy, definitely. Probably some John Updike.

(These may be updated with other respected, contemporary authors as necessary.)

REXRODE: *(clearly relieved)* Excellent choices. Challenging, perhaps.

But I think it's good to expand the students' horizons.

BUTLER: I might also like to sponsor another club or two.

REXRODE: Wonderful. We're extremely open to providing diverse co-curricular activities for our students. What else do you think you'd like to sponsor?

BUTLER: Well, if you don't already have one, I'd like to start a fire breathing club.

REXRODE: A fire—fire...breathing?

BUTLER: Mm hmm.

REXRODE: Fire...like...*fire* fire. Like you'd get from matches?

BUTLER: Yes. Exactly. That kind of fire.

REXRODE: Fire *breathing*. Like Godzilla?

BUTLER: Well, truthfully, if I may respectfully correct you, Godzilla's breath was more concentrated radioactive nuclear something-or-other than it was actual flame.

REXRODE: Sorry, my mistake.

BUTLER: I would never dream of having the students handle anything radioactive. That would be completely irresponsible.

REXRODE: Of course.

BUTLER: I think circus fire breathing is fascinating, and I'm betting there would be a lot of interest if there was a club for it. There isn't yet, is there?

REXRODE: (*trying to repress his horror*) Not presently.

BUTLER: Oh, good.

REXRODE: (*morbidly curious*) Do you have...experience with fire breathing?

BUTLER: Actually, no. I've always wanted to learn, though. Do you know anyone who could teach me?

REXRODE: I'm afraid not.

BUTLER: Maybe I could find an instructor online.

REXRODE: The matter of having open flames in the school might be a bit of a problem. Definitely not something we'd want to try in the library. Might burn the books. (*Laughs weakly.*)

BUTLER: I was thinking maybe we could use the household and consumer science rooms.

REXRODE: The cooking classrooms?

BUTLER: Sure. They have stoves and ovens. If you've got students doing cooking, stuff probably lights up in there all the time.

REXRODE: More often than I'd like.

BUTLER: So it's probably fireproofed out the wazoo. It would be a great place for fire breathing.

REXRODE: It might be less fireproof than you think.

BUTLER: Really?

REXRODE: I'm afraid so.

BUTLER: Bummer.

REXRODE: Sorry.

BUTLER: How about a sword swallowing club?

SCENE 12

THOMAS: What sorts of criteria would you use in selecting new books for the library, Ms. Funkhouser?

FUNKHOUSER: Very strict.

THOMAS: How so?

FUNKHOUSER: It's simply a matter of whether the book has any merit.

THOMAS: What do you feel constitutes merit?

FUNKHOUSER: Lots of things. It's more a matter of what doesn't constitute merit.

THOMAS: And what sorts of things would those be?

FUNKHOUSER: Foul language, obviously. Sex. Vampires.

Werewolves. Witches. Demons. Any kind of horror. Guns.

Violence. Child abuse. Domestic violence. Subversion of authority.

Disrespectful depictions of teachers or the clergy. Homosexuality.

Drugs. Alcohol. Tobacco. Racism. References to any movies that

aren't G-rated. Characters throwing papers in trash cans when

there's a recycling bin close by. Wasting water or electricity. Eating

meat. Stories involving food preservatives. Communism. Excessive

nose hair. Books with fewer than 250 or more than 400 words to a

page. Possibly one or two other things.

THOMAS: How about puppies?

FUNKHOUSER: Depends on the breed.

THOMAS: Babies?

FUNKHOUSER: Babies imply sex, so they're out.

THOMAS: What would you do if you found any of the books in the library to be...lacking merit?

FUNKHOUSER: I'd burn them, of course.

THOMAS: (*sardonic*) Use them as fuel for the bonfire at the homecoming game?

FUNKHOUSER: Heavens, no. I wouldn't want to risk the students absorbing inappropriate ideas by breathing smoke from the books. I'd have to do it myself after regular school hours. With appropriate protective gear provided by the school, of course. Tell me, are the cooking classrooms well-fireproofed?

SCENE 13

REXRODE looks very bored, as if HARRISON has been running her mouth for quite some time already.

HARRISON: ...and so I was telling my brother that the school was hiring and he seemed awfully interested but I don't know why because he's a taxidermist and of course you don't need one of those but he's been out of work for a while now which is really a shame because he's had such a run of bad luck you see his wife ran out on him she was such a nasty woman we always called her the Wicked Witch of the West behind her back (or "he was so nasty he'd have given the Wicked Witch of the West a run for her money" if VASSER is female) I dressed up as a witch once for Halloween when I was a child we had this neighbor who gave us pens instead of candy and I actually thought that pens were something that you ate can you believe that it's so silly how a child's mind can work I took some psychology classes in college and for while a while I considered becoming a psychologist but I decided to become a librarian instead because there are books on so many different subjects and I just love it when my brain can skip from one topic to another it's like my head is flipping through the Dewey Decimal System like when I was talking about psychology that would be in the 150's whereas witches are 133.4 but Halloween is with holidays under 394 and my ex sister-in-law would be under 649.62 with the books about toilet training, because she's nothing but a pile of—

SCENE 14

THOMAS: I'm having some trouble finding your educational background on your resumé, Mr. Stone.

STONE: Oh, don't worry about it none. I got lots of learning.

THOMAS: I'm sure it must be on here somewhere...

STONE: That page mighta got lost in the mail.

THOMAS: It "mighta." Perhaps you could fill me in?

STONE: I'm real educated and real qualified.

THOMAS: That's extremely reassuring. Could you be more specific?

STONE: I got through almost all four years of high school.

THOMAS: Almost?

STONE: So close you'd never know the difference.

THOMAS: Did you get a G.E.D.?

STONE: Got some D's. But don't you worry none about the G's and the E's...I never got nothin' lower than an F.

THOMAS: So...no higher education?

STONE: Nah...school's school. I was there from the time I was five 'til the day I turned 21. Four more years ain't gonna make that much difference.

THOMAS: Vocational training?

STONE: Vocation...you mean like going to the beach?

THOMAS: Tell me about your qualifications to be our librarian.

STONE: Well, I read a book once.

THOMAS: A whole book?

STONE: Most of one. *(Beat.)* Maybe half. *(Beat.)* Definitely made it through the first couple pages.

THOMAS: Good. Good.

STONE: I quit when the words stopped being in English.

THOMAS: The book was written in two languages?

STONE: Yeah. Maybe more. I don't know what they all were.

THOMAS: Just curious...do you remember the name of the book?

STONE: Nah. I threw it away after I got my TV hooked up.

THOMAS: Ever volunteer at the public library?

STONE: Why would I do a thing like that?

(Beat.)

THOMAS: Well, Mr. Stone, thank you for your time. Any other qualifications you'd like to share before we wrap things up?

STONE: My mother's cousin's roommate who's my dad's sister's ex-brother-in-law told me 'bout something called a provis'nal license that qual'fied you to do a job people might not think you'd be qual'fied to do otherwise, so I'm figuring if you give me one of those, I'd be highly qual'fied.

THOMAS: That's not exactly how a provisional license works, Mr. Stone.

STONE: But it's close?

THOMAS: Not really, no.

STONE: Huh.

THOMAS: Uh-huh.

STONE: Can't trust my mother's cousin's roommate who's my dad's sister's ex-brother-in-law for nothing. People got some nerve, I tell you.

THOMAS: Indeed they do.

STONE: I just wanna say before I go...I know I may not be *exactly* what you had in mind, but hey, you could always do worse.

SCENE 15

SANDBOURNE, the interviewee here, has a cheap disposable pen tucked behind her ear.

REXRODE: I see you've had five years of experience as a high school librarian.

SANDBOURNE: Yes indeed.

REXRODE: What do you feel was your most significant accomplishment during that time?

SANDBOURNE: Well, we started a graphic novel collection, improved the school's online database selection, and one year we actually managed to get every single book turned in before the last day of school. But the absolute best moment for me...there was this kid who'd never read a book all the way through. She hated reading. I handed her a copy of *Lost and Found*, the first book in the Bluford series. *(Feel free to substitute a different book if you like.)* She read the whole thing in one night. Came in the next morning and asked for another one. I know it was just one kid, but that was the absolute high point of my five years at Broadview High.

REXRODE: That's definitely something you should be very proud of.

SANDBOURNE: Thank you.

REXRODE: What have you found most challenging about working as a school librarian?

SANDBOURNE: I was in a situation where I had a very strong-willed coworker, and we didn't always see eye to eye. *(Pulls the pen out from behind her ear and begins chewing on it.)*

REXRODE: Did your school have a second librarian?

SANDBOURNE: Actually, it was my secretary. She'd already been there ten years when I started and she had very set ideas about how things should be run.

REXRODE: Did that influence your decision to leave?

SANDBOURNE: Eventually, yes.

REXRODE: If you had it to do over again, is there anything you'd do differently?

SANDBOURNE: No, I don't think so. *(Points at the cup of pens on the desk.)* Are those Bic pens?

REXRODE: Yes, they are.

SANDBOURNE: May I see one for a minute? I love Bic pens.

(REXRODE hands SANDBOURNE a pen from the cup. SHE examines it and continues speaking.)

I don't want to sound like I'm displacing responsibility or blame, but I truly believe that the problem was with her and not with me. (*Puts the second pen in her mouth and begins chewing both pens together.*) I mean, she called me "disgusting." That seems very unprofessional to me.

REXRODE: Any idea what might have led her to say that?

SANDBOURNE: No.

REXRODE: Is chewing pens a nervous habit for you?

SANDBOURNE: No, I don't have any nervous habits. Wow this is delicious. (*Reaches across the desk, grabs a handful of pens from the cup, stuffs them in her mouth, and then continues speaking with her mouth full.*) Theth aw da bes pens I ewuh tased. (*"These are the best pens I ever tasted."*)

REXRODE: Did you have a neighbor who put pens in your trick or treat bag when you were a child?

SANDBOURNE: How dih eyuh no? (*"How did you know?"*)

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from CAUTION: LIBRARIANS AHEAD (ONE-ACT VERSION) by Bradley Walton. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011

www.brookpub.com