

November 30th, 2024

Issue 16 | Library

# SciFansat

The Monthly E-Zine for Science Fiction, Fantasy, and More!

## Micro Fiction & Poetry

A. A. Rubin

Colleen Addison

That Burnt Writer

Voima Oy

Jaime Bree

Mario Kersey

## Flash Fiction

Alex Minns – “Hidden in the Stacks”

Nancy E. Dunne – “Shelves to Be Filled”

Kayleigh Kitt – “The Silver Fox and the Revolution”

Tony Daniel – “The Library of Henrietta Vice”

## Short Stories

D Bedell – “Scrolls”

Alan Vincent Michaels – “The Library at the End of the Universe”

Rory ffoulkes – “Bound Within the Darkness”

Jason H. Abbott – “The Librarians”





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[SciFanSat.com](http://SciFanSat.com)  
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# Editorial

Welcome to our sixteenth issue of SciFanSat: a growing library of science fiction, fantasy, and more! Curated for your perusal, here is an exciting assortment of stories that you may have trouble putting back on your shelf before they're finished. May you enjoy this warm bundle of reading as the chill of winter takes hold.

November opened up with a gut-punch to many of the magazine's alumni and readership, and precipitated a seismic shift in the Twitter writing community that SciFanSat sprang from seven years ago. It is a sad end for a place that served us well. Twitter once provided a space for us and our work to be seen, and for us to make connections with others to the betterment of our writing and ourselves.

But places change. It's nothing new for a shift in ownership and direction to occur, yet often we're chained to hangouts by habit and the memory of better times. Some days, we need to get slapped in the face by the things we've worked so hard to ignore. It knocks those rose-colored glasses off, and we see a place for what it is, *now*. Personally, the slap made me take a hard look at "Planet X", how it had become a place that was a chore to use and how it brought me more anger and depression than community. I asked myself why I was supporting, however indirectly, a company that's become a mouthpiece for hate and a political agenda I find abhorrent.

SciFanSat and I are just two voices in the exodus of writers, creatives, and millions of others leaving Planet X for Bluesky, and the magazine's [account](#) there is now its primary social media presence. Folks shouldn't be surprised at SciFanSat's Twitter departure: I laid the groundwork for it by ending our reliance on the platform last year. Somewhat like Jor-El, I put this child born from my mind in a rocket to grant them a chance to escape a doomed world. Now, akin to Kal-El under the yellow sun of Kansas, my endeavor thrives greater than its humble beginnings.

None of that growth and positive change would have come about if not for the decline and degradation of Twitter. If not for that, I would have been content to let SciFanSat remain the weekend hashtag prompt it was. It would not have grown into a literary magazine, and I would not have grown as a person and a writer by shepherding it.

There's a lesson in that, from the way life can be. What we build through great effort can be destroyed in moments. You get knocked down. Terrible people can triumph. But adversity is not an ending: it is an opportunity to rise and rebuild, stronger and better than before. In this, even the worst in life can spark the change we need to become our best.

Writers and poets have certainly given some of their best to this month's wonderful issue focused on a library theme.

A. Rubin, John Grey, Mario Kersey, John Love, Jaime Bree, and others shared their poetry with us, with Jaime's "Library Visitation" being one of my favorites in the batch. Microfiction by Colleen Addison, Voima Oy, Kevin Gooden, and M. H. Thaug then open the gates into this

issue's storytelling. I'll cite Colleen's whimsical micro "Gossip" as a favorite there, as it lifted my spirit at a glum time. Perhaps it will do the same for you.

We possess an impressive collection of flash fiction this month! Do check out Alex Minns' "Hidden in the Stacks" for its wit and magical writing that brings characters to life. Nancy E. Dunne's "Shelves to Be Filled" comes with a smell of old parchment and horror. Kayleigh Kitt's "The Silver Fox and the Revolution" is a slice of endings and beginnings on the library grounds, while Tony Daniel's "The Library of Henrietta Vice" is akin to a whispered ghost story about a stern librarian you shouldn't cross. That Burnt Writer, Alastair Millar, Morgan RR Haze, and W. D. Henning all contribute their considerable talents as well, giving us action, introspection, humor, and magical school corruption.

Four short stories grace the issue: D Bedell returns with their distinctive style of cerebral weird fiction in "Scrolls". Alan Vincent Michaels brings us to the end of space and time with "The Library at the End of the Universe", and Rory ffoulkes' "Bound Within the Darkness" is a tale of emotional bonds pulled taut by an explorer's desires and the siren's call from a fragmentary record of a world named Earth in the archives. Last is my contribution, "The Librarians".

Before I go, I'm dropping another reminder that we are not accepting submissions for December because that month is our "Best Of" issue featuring the works of the eleven Bartleby B. Boar nominees this year! That issue will herald the final alumni poll of 2024 which will determine the Bartleby B. Boar Award winner of the year... who will receive an honest-to-goodness spiffy commemorative trophy and frameable certificate of achievement.

Submissions reopen with a new prompt for January upon the release of issue 17 on December 28th. The poll will be open for voting on the 2024 Bartleby B. Boar Award starting that day and will remain open until January 16th, 2025. The winner will be announced in that month's issue.

As always, we're thankful for all the authors, poets and readers who contribute to SciFanSat! Keep writing, creating, and being excellent to one another. You're the magic that makes this happen!

Jason H. Abbott  
Editor, SciFanSat Magazine



# Poetry

## The Library of Alpha Tau 2

by A. A. Rubin

In the library of Alpha Tau 2,  
They'll store up your memories for you:  
They'll go into your head,  
And then when you're dead,  
You descendants can know what you knew.

### Find the Author

 [Best Climate Change Stories](#)

 [@thesurrealari](#)



## Our Great Purpose

by Alan Vincent Michaels



without time travel  
Our Great Purpose would collapse  
tomes ravaged by age

we're biblioklepts  
we scour humanity's past  
saving their knowledge

in all man's ages  
arts, tech, science, wisdom, crafts  
we strive to preserve

safeguarding genius  
manifesting histories  
time mages, are we

scan Our Library  
all humanity's knowledge  
now belongs to Us



## Find the Author

 [AlanMichaels.com](http://AlanMichaels.com)

 [@alanvmichaels](https://twitter.com/alanvmichaels)



# Library Visitation

by Jaime Bree

Books  
Move  
Dust unsettled  
Disturbing ancient  
texts  
Coded in languages  
once  
spoken  
Now silent.  
Scratches on wooden shelves  
Worn down to vagueness  
A revelation  
Quelled  
A civilisation's existence  
Concealed.

A small child  
enters  
An unassuming  
building

Overshadowed  
by the church.  
She sits  
on orange cushions  
Surrounded by  
glow in the dark stars  
and pop up fantasies.  
Feet up  
Giggling.  
Lost in the story.  
Imagining great worlds.  
Fearing greater enemies.  
Assessing  
through reading.  
Searching for clues.

The book slowly closes  
Hands hold it  
in prayer  
Light dims  
They let it in.  
Shelves rattle  
Spines shake  
Colour-coded unison  
One  
tips  
forward.  
A lever by design.  
Cracked plaster  
spreads neon  
Illumination dominates  
Glow stars lost in  
overwhelming bright.

She stands  
Feet  
planted  
firm  
*'Not now, not ever Quendol, this world's not for your taking.'*  
Blank page.  
His name scribed  
into an

ink-smeared story  
etched  
in parchment  
The enemy imprisoned  
with daffodils and hope  
An ongoing  
saga

To be continued...

### Find the Author

 [@jaim\\_ee\\_bree](https://twitter.com/jaim_ee_bree)



## Mission Critical by John Grey

Scientists did their best to keep us alive  
and sane for the long journey,  
in sleep stasis, tube-fed,  
across this plain of stars and dark matter,

on a mission to preserve the race,  
even though they were too withered,  
too far gone, to join us,

launching our young bodies  
from the heart of the planet's shadows -

seeds were what they called us,  
their last words  
as soil burned and buildings toppled;

here we are, in ships bound for someplace  
that will have our DNA,  
where we can plant and grow,  
not just crops, but ourselves,

some world where the sky is blue and not red,  
where the ground warmly accepts all that we gift it,  
and there's resources enough to build, recreate,  
what history tells us was our birthright.

Those old men, geniuses everyone,  
are no doubt dead by now,  
as we do our best to be their dreams,  
obeying orders with our brains shut down,  
quartered in cocoons  
bodies in perfect stillness.

Yes, it's a great responsibility.  
And a blessing from the gods,  
that we sleep through it.



## **Library of what was Lost** **by John Love**

two figures silhouetted against setting sun  
cast long shadows in their wake  
young man nearly twenty with faithful dog  
both burdened with packs on backs

after the cataclysm brought about by men  
pennsylvania avenue overgrown  
they had wandered this once great land  
visiting places his parents had once known

in the dying rays of western setting sun  
the home of tome and manuscripts  
this building stored what once was great  
arrested by natures overcoat

his mother whispered with her dying breath  
my son if you wish to learn make your way  
here so you can learn what you can  
at the library of what was lost

### Find the Author

 [@jdexpressions](https://twitter.com/jdexpressions)



## Some Quiet Time Near the Stacks by Mario Kersey

What world lived in the mildewed rind  
Of the forgotten books in the basement  
Waiting to return delicate ash in the gullet  
Of a voracious fire

Like the one in your brain when see those words  
Assembled like soldiers on a milk white field  
Ready to march into your subconscious  
To build new offenses against ignorance.

The spittle from an elderly “shush” catches motes haunting  
The spaces between exposition and rising action  
As you seek a space where you can enjoy the noise  
Of silence where your mind knits the narrative

Of what happens in a world beyond the ordinary  
Or how to build furniture the old-fashioned way  
When you know it can't be checked out  
Just like the pretty girl capturing a Snorlax an aisle over.



## **The Barbarian's Lament** **by That Burnt Writer**

I've been told that a library,  
is such a wondrous place to be!  
Knowledge, like fruit upon a tree...  
but sadly, it is not for me.

For though I dream of poetry,  
I'm of Barbarian ancestry  
And so alas, I cannot read,  
or even write things properly.

Spelling's hard, books make me bored,  
and with my life, I can't afford,  
such nuances of written word,  
I just go hit things with my sword.

So tell me tales, and sing me songs,  
Heroic deeds, and things gone wrong,  
'cause poetry takes far too long,  
So instead, I'll just whack things with an axe, worry about that unpleasantly cold draught up  
my loincloth, and forget that things like this need to rhyme...

Oops.

### Find the Author

 [@thatburntwriter](https://twitter.com/thatburntwriter)



# Micro Fiction

## Gossip

by Colleen Addison

As the last patron leaves and the door-latch clicks, the words begin to whisper. Her low heels stop: what do they wish to tell? The eaves of the shelves leave her in shadow. Her ears strain for the syllables — these voices aren't used to speaking, despite the dialogues they contain — she won't shush them, but others will and do.

Gradually, as she stands in the silence, the sentences come out, soft but forming themselves into paragraphs, plot points.

"Aw," the librarian exclaims. "Sex in the stacks, *again?*"

She thinks the rustle of the pages falls into the space like laughter.

### Find the Author

 [Colleen Addison](#)



## Self Checkout

by Kevin Gooden

I inserted my hand in the Returns appendage slot and an alarm squealed "OVERDUE HUMAN!" Two burly bots seized my arms, dragged me to the Director's office.



"There's been a change," her first mouth said, while the other quipped, "You're not in our catalog anymore."

The Galactic Library of Endangered Life Forms had been home for years, sympathetic to my shenanigans.

"I'm sorry, I'll—"

"No, you won't." "The other human died yesterday."

My stomach lurched. I knew what that meant. "When do I leave?"

"One hour." "Good riddance."

The Galactic Zoo.

I hope the cage is nice.

## Find the Author

 [KevinGooden.com](http://KevinGooden.com)

 [@kevingooden](https://twitter.com/kevingooden)



## Terms of contract by M. H. Thaug

The youth barged into the library. "You fraud! There's no special knowledge here."

The mage continued writing. "I never claimed so."

"You said it was the path to immortality."

"What did you notice about the books?"

"Mismatched. Rambling. They all have different authors," he sneered. "Nobody famous."

"Some of my previous students. They'll remain forever."

"Because they wrote? What a stupid trick. When I tell everyone you lied—"

"I did not." The mage flourished his pen.

The youth vanished. A pamphlet appeared on the shelf.

Whether his students learned well or not, the mage honoured his promises.

### Find the Author

 [MHThaung.com](https://MHThaung.com)

 [Mastodon | @mhthaung](https://mastodon.social/@mhthaung)



## Lost by Voima Oy

"Between the lines of a certain old map, the scent of that flower lingers." Her name was Carmen de Luna, a professor in the botany department.

She recalled her trip up the Amazon, the heat and mosquitos, the mansion in the jungle hidden by vines and white flowers. There was a jaguar sleeping on the living room sofa. The carpet was covered with butterflies.

Later, I looked for that map in the college library, but I soon became lost in the maze of numbers. I thought I heard the rumbling of a jaguar. I could smell her elusive perfume.

### Find the Author

 [@voimaoy](https://twitter.com/voimaoy)



# Flash Fiction

## The Solar Sutra by Alastair Millar

**Terran Federation Archive**

**Acquisition number: 42/96253/2352-09-25**

**Filed under:**

**Ethnography: Religion**

**Technical: Communications history**

**Planetary history: Heliesis III**

**[---message begins---]**

: Receive now the wisdom of Solana Aditya, the Prophet of Heliesis. Recorded for transmission by the techpriest Lucius. So says the Prophet to the Terran Federation of Worlds:

### I.

: For every inhabitable planet, its Sun is the ultimate source of most of its energy, and thus the supporter of life. Praise to the Creator who made things so!

: We believe therefore that the worlds are created by Light, sunlight being an emanation of God.

: We claim the inheritance of those who have worshipped this deity by the Magnificent Names of Ra, Phoebus Apollo, Inti, Surya, Istanu, Nyambe, Nanahuatzin, Amaterasu, Belenos, and many others through human history.

: Solar energy is pure and divine; it is the duty of techmen to increase its efficiency for the benefit of all humanity.

### II.

: Machines that do not run on solar power or its derivatives are to be shunned, for they are unclean, and a blight upon the worlds.

: Mechanical imitations of Men are likewise unclean, for they cannot feel the Sun and do not worship as we worship.

: Accursed are those who pollute the skies, for they hide the glory of the Sun from their people. Judgement will come upon worlds who ignore this warning, in the form of storms, calamities and war. Was it not so upon Earth, the First World?

: Woe to those who chose to occupy worlds that have no Sun; not without reason are such places known as rogue planets. Travelling from Nothing into Nothing, such heretics are cut off from achieving transcendence. Repent!

### III.

: The blessings of the Light are available to all who accept them, without distinction or discrimination.

: Aprication is the most holy form of meditation, soothing both mind and soul. Feeling the Sun's heat penetrate to the bone is both a benediction and a purification.

: Nighttime shall be set aside for rest; only the Light gives strength to the body, mind and will. Therefore let none work in the nocturnal hours.

: Both the mirror and the solar array are holy objects, for though they differ in their complexity, both spread the benefits of the Light.

### IV.

: It is a time of Dancing Light; our Sun's magnetic field is more active than ever, bathing the entire planet in aurorae. It is possible that the star is becoming unstable, and that soon we shall be brought to transcendence.

: Therefore, let these words be spread to the Peoples of the Void, that all may know the Truth, and of our joy!

**[---Message ends---**]

**[--Archivist's note--]**

The last known broadcast from Heliesis III (catalogue designation:  $\pi^1$  Ursae Majoris c) before the planet was scoured by a stellar superflare. Subsequent to the event, a Terran Federation emergency team found no signs of surviving life.

**[--End note--]**

#### Find the Author

 [Mars & More](#)

 [@skriptorium](#)



# Hidden in the Stacks

by Alex Minns

It seemed so normal. The building was glass and brick and full of people. Normal people at that. There were teenagers hanging around in groups on their phones, people sat camped out on computer terminals streaming videos, kids screaming in the children's section. I frowned, there was one pair seated on a sofa eating – in a library.

There were more people on the first floor: some were even interested in books. As I looked out towards the main entrance, I could see the café doing a roaring trade and stalls set up outside. It really didn't seem to be the right place at all.

I moved past the biography section and checked the headings on the rows as far as I could see. Not that I really knew what I was looking for. There was a desk to my left, right next to a photocopier with a member of the public cursing it loudly. The man on the desk managed to ignore them and glanced up at me.

"Are you okay there, Sir?"

I hesitated. The man's friendly smile began to falter as he began to prepare himself for another encounter with a customer.

"Um," I said, wandering closer and glancing nervously at the woman at the photocopier. "This will sound crazy, but I'm looking for the library."

The man's expression was stoic to say the least.

"I know this is a library, but I was told to come here for a different sort of library."

His eyebrow raised before I continued. "And what sort of library were you looking for? There is a restaurant around the corner called *The Library*. The archive centre is upstairs." He started to point just out of the building, probably hoping to get rid of me as fast as possible.

"I was told that the main librarian was Megan."

The man's arm dropped, and he looked at me again, this time more appraisingly. "I see." He glanced over at the photocopier, but the woman was too busy plying the machine with as many 5 pence coins as she could. "Is Megan expecting you?"

I blinked. "Er, yes. My employer said they would phone ahead."

"Get in the lift and select the maintenance floor." He nodded to the glass lift behind me. "I'll let Megan know you're coming." He looked away from me abruptly. It seemed as if no-one on the main library floor wanted much to do with where I was going.

I got in the lift, grateful no-one else decided they needed to use it, and looked at the panel. Right below basement was a button marked maintenance. This wasn't foreboding at all. The lift descended back down to the entry floor and then into darkness. It was disconcerting being in a

glass lift and seeing all the mechanisms in action as you progressed downwards. Light chased me down the lift shaft, but it got dark very quickly.

The lift juddered to a halt and took its time opening the doors. A woman, who did not exactly fit the stereotype of a librarian stood in a few feet away, her arms folded across her chest and a look of irritation on her face.

"You're Worth, I take it?" She waited for a nod before spinning on her heel and marching away. I leapt out before the doors shut on me again and chased after her. She was maybe an inch shorter than me, wearing black jeans and flat shoes. Her blonde hair was poker straight and barely swayed despite the determined march she was pacing down the hallway. "Your employer may be a valued customer and donor, but I do not appreciate them not following the rules. Only vetted personnel are supposed to be allowed into the library and you, Sir, do not have a card. If it were not for the fact that my superiors are assured this is a life-or-death situation, this would not be permitted."

She pulled back her jacket to pull out a swipe card which gave me a view of a taser hung on her belt. She caught me staring at it as she glanced back. "For use on assets or borrowers who have sticky fingers."

I raised my hands in innocence.

We stepped through the door and into what looked like a library from days of old. The smell of old books made me relax and let out a breath I hadn't realised I'd been holding. Megan gave a slight nod of approval. "Empty your pockets into there please." I dutifully filled the metal tray and was going to ask her why but when I turned back to my possessions the whole tray had disappeared. I heard a snort of amusement beside me.

"The section we need is over here, a bit of a walk." She led me through the stacks, and I had to resist the urge to jump on one of the rolling ladders. "For what it's worth, the book your employer selected is a bad idea. I really think he should go with someone else, but my expertise has been overruled."

"I'm sorry but, please just a moment," I ask before Megan stops and turns back to me. "Forgive my ignorance, but no-one has told me anything. I assumed *library* was some sort of code word, and I really don't understand how you're going to help rescue my employer's kidnapped granddaughter."

"I'm not." Megan looked to her left, pulled a book off the shelf and handed it to me. "The book is. Well, sort of."

"I'm sorry?"

"We don't store just the books," Megan glanced over my shoulder.

"Good evening, M." The voice behind me was smooth like honey.

"I told you it's Megan, not M," the librarian sighed and stared at me. "You have him for two weeks before he needs to be returned."

I stared open-mouthed at the character that was now standing in front of me, wearing a tuxedo and a come-hither smile.

Megan growled. "I hate spies."

## Find the Author

♥ [Ominous Orbs](#)

\* [@lexikonical](#)



# The Silver Fox and the Revolution

CW mild – Bombs, mention of death

by [Kayleigh Kitt](#)

Something explodes.

The bird in the cage that is my brother, lays silent on the floor of his prison, less than a day after we reunited our father with our mother.

Today, they painted and embellished me in shades of crimson for the ceremony. Every inch of my skin blazed like dying embers for their intended sacrifice.

Debris plunges down from overhead. Flattened to the marble floor, my hearing dulls but I know what needs to happen.

The window stands open.

The last face I see is Lissa, my lifelong companion and maid, eyes wide against her sallow complexion.

I jump.

Outside, I'm aware that despite slinking into the concealment of shadows, the shelter of darkness will be temporary, like my hearing loss, which swims back with a lazy clarity. My back is against the wall outside the library, a former place of sanctuary.

"Sir, yes, Sir. We're surrounded," clips a palace guard.

Close by, the captain's voice bounds off the labyrinth of buildings. "Excellent! We can attack in any direction."

"No, Sir. I meant it's a problem," the guardsman rumbles, clearing his throat.



"And I'm guessing that the flaming gryphon was last week's solution," the old captain harrumphs.

Looking down, a dove-grey fox brushes my hand, darting backwards with such compelling glances I follow. My rustling skirts may give me away to anyone nearby. If I catch them from the ground, my hands become snared, and without doubt, escape will be snatched from my grasp on discovery.

We reach a small clearing away from the palace; where the vixen metamorphoses into an elegant, silhouette of a woman, fine granite hair flowing to her waist, her clothing simple as any peasant. Her head snaps around as a young man in a guard's uniform crashes into the clearing, panting.

"Sorry," he announces, removing his helmet and swiping at his pearlescent forehead. But then I spy his arms. Only my uncle's men have those tattoos. Shrinking away, a movement the woman's not unaware of, her eyes latch onto mine.

"We mean you no harm, my lady. The usurper is dead from the blast. Your brother too," she spits out the reference to my uncle.

"What do you want from me?" I ask, my back now broom stale straight.

The guard drops to one knee. "My Queen," he declares.

I balk. "My brother is—" I stammer, not finishing with *the heir*.

"An unfortunate casualty." The woman casts me a shrewd look. "But I'm sure you'd agree that some of his treatment strayed to cruelty, not unlike your uncle."

Unable to rebuff my brother's well-known sadistic streak, and counter that my uncle's actions weren't seated in malice, I remain mute.

"My Queen," the guard utters again from the mottled-brown forest floor.

"Please rise, I am not your queen. There's been a dreadful mistake." I swallow quickly, despite the predicament staring me in the face.

No one sits on the throne.

If I don't return to claim my birthright, the bloodthirsty trials are triggered for a new ruler.

We're exiting the library, surrounded by the comfortable, albeit heady scent of petrichor and mildewed stockings when my reappearance is discovered, instead of the formulated grand entrance we'd discussed. I'm swiftly encircled, leaving me to address my father's consorts, advisors and the patrician, loyal, or otherwise, only time will tell, on my already wagered mortality.

"I am your queen, your ruler," I announce, loudly and clearly.

Unexpectedly, Lissa steps forward, a chestnut bound volume in her hand. "I beg to differ, my lady, but you are mistaken."

She slips two sheets of vellum from the book passing them to the patrician.

"What is it?" I demand.

When he hands the papers to me, my jaw hangs loose. I curtsy, "My Queen," I say.

## Find the Author

 [The Dragon's Quill](#)



# Library Ninjas

by Morgan RR Haze

When I volunteered to help at my local library, I pictured reading to kids. I didn't expect to be in the basement sorting through dusty boxes that were donated. Didn't most people take things like this to thrift stores?

After four boxes all I'd found were old paperback romance novels. I'm not throwing shade, I've just seen so many of these on the ten for a dollar shelf. Not particularly valuable. Maybe we could get a little for them.

As I opened another box, the lights flickered and dimmed. No doubt wiring is on the long list of repairs.

I immediately realized this box held something different. The dim light reflected off the gilded pages of several large, leather-bound tomes. Tomes really was the only word I could see using to describe them.

I picked up one, surprised no dust covered it. The gold foiled title was, *Silent Guardian, Secret Warrior*. The pages were unexpectedly supple, despite the book obviously being old. I was engrossed in trying to find a date when the lights completely went out.

"Ms. Jones? Want me to check the circuit breaker again?" I called.

When no reply came, I knew something was wrong. I had become adept at navigating the dark basement, so I headed toward the exit.

Among the bibliosmia, there was another, unfamiliar smell. A draft wafted across my bare arms, making my hair rise. I gripped the book tighter, glad for its weight. Not the best weapon, but a hit would do damage.

A soft shuffling came from the boxes. Was there something in there valuable enough to steal?

I slipped my ballet flats off, allowing me to move more quietly. Then I heard the whispering, "it's not here."

"This was the professor's collection."

"He just had to have all the research at home."

I held my breath until shuffling began again. Whoever they were didn't feel like being as quiet as before, covering the sounds I was making.

Reaching the main entrance, I saw Ms. Jones on the floor, with a pillow? What kind of burglar does that? At least it didn't seem like they wanted to hurt her. She was breathing peacefully.

I decided to call the police from outside, but a hand on my shoulder and dark voice made me freeze.

"I believe you have something that was donated mistakenly. May I have the book?"

The smart thing would have been to comply, but what did I do? I gave him the book, upside his head. His companion was quick to disarm me.

"Is it the one?" burglar one groaned.

"*Silent Guardian, Secret Warrior*. Yeah. The title kinda describes her," burglar two chuckled.

"It does," burglar one rose and took the book, flipping through the pages. "It looks complete. Our job is done."

In a flash of smoke they were gone, making me question what just happened. Ms. Jones stirred, bringing me back to the moment.

Even after getting safely home, nagging questions filled my head. When finally getting ready for bed, I emptied my pockets to find a scrap of paper: *Library Ninjas Unlimited. Burbary Park. Noon tomorrow. You will make a perfect "Silent Guardian"*.

I snorted. "Well, at the very least I intend to get answers!"

## Find the Author

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# Shelves to Be Filled

by Nancy E. Dunne

It was just like any other day, really. I managed to escape the house early in the morning and was wandering the thick, jungle-like land outside of Father's carefully manicured plantation home. As I followed an urge to blaze a new trail, I thought about how much easier it would be if I'd had the machete that I saw the men use to cut back the overgrowth when Father needed more land for planting.

This time, though, I stumbled on some ruins that I'd seen before. Crumbling stone, fighting against the verdant natural world that seemed determined to take back what men had laid claim to years ago. From the look of it, those men had been some of the Catholic missionaries that came to "save the souls" of those on the island. That only worked because we, like the land, were skilled in patience. The land let them cut down trees and lay their stone foundations, but when they stopped paying attention the land struck back. Vines grew through eaten away places in the mortar between the stones that made the walls. Trees had punctured the stained-glass windows and created their own art where the priests once knelt. Mother Nature had reclaimed what was hers.

Inside the ruins I found destruction and decay. Books with vines grown through the pages. Scraps of paper that had mostly disintegrated back into the earth on which they rested. At the end of the large room, its ceiling of wood long since rotted away, I found a staircase, so I started downward. Unfortunately, it was also made of wood, so on the third step I heard a crunch and fell through the stairs. It was not a long fall, but enough to jolt me into sharper attention through pain in my back and legs. I looked up in front of me and saw a door, intact, no vines or trees or moss anywhere on it. I got to my feet slowly and opened it.

I was greeted by shelves and shelves of books, not decayed or rotten. Leather covers with gilt words written in French and Latin beckoned to my anxious fingers. I stumbled all the way into the room and looked over these magical tomes, uncertain where to start.

That was when the door slammed shut behind me and the light went out. "Well, little bird," said a deep, male voice from somewhere in front of me in the room. "Seems like you've found my library."

I could not make myself speak out of fear, and stood stock still as a pair of amber eyes became visible in the corner of the room. He was the largest man I'd ever seen, pale as a ghost. The symbol on his chest indicated he was a templar knight — my half-sister had just taught me about those out of an old book written in Latin — but nothing about him was holy. He held out massive hands to me and while my soul screamed at me to run, I could not move.

"Yet another addition to my collection," he crooned as he wrapped his arms around me and pulled me close. Tears ran down my cheeks as the only indication that I was still there, still present, as he sunk sharp teeth into my neck. Everything went black.



I went looking for my half-sister, knowing that our father would be angry if she wasn't there to serve him his port after our evening meal. I found the ruin that she'd mentioned several days before and entered, carefully avoiding the rotten staircase and jumping down into the hole there that the wooden treads had left behind. The door, always closed, was open this time. I called out but there was no answer. There was only a new leather-bound volume on the table in the middle of the library and the ever-watchful eyes hovering in the back of the room between the stacks.

"Where is my sister?" I called out. No answer. I picked up the book, feeling my own eyes shift into amber as my fingers traced her name on the cover, then shelved the book next to the others. With a smirk toward the creature lurking in the back of the room I turned to leave — after all, there were more shelves to be filled, weren't there?

### Find the Author

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## **The Devils of *The Athaneum*** **by That Burnt Writer**

The silence grew more oppressive as she crept further into the half-lit stacks. Around her, a billion words relaying stories of valor and derring-do, of historical precedent, of warnings and promises, all sat quietly, waiting patiently for that most magical of interventions: a reader. Someone to bring to life the enchantment within the ancient yellowing pages with their imagination. It was, she reflected, a particular kind of neo-witchcraft to be able to place such vivid scenes into a stranger's head with just a few marks scrawled on a piece of ancient vellum or paper. Perhaps, after all this was over, she'd spend some time immersing herself in these

escapist worlds, letting peace and light flow into her soul. For now, though, she couldn't afford to let her concentration lapse.

Years had passed since anyone had ventured this deep inside The Archive and, although it had been kept at a temperature and humidity to preserve these precious artifacts for as long as possible, there was still a very particular odor associated with old books which made her want to sneeze.

That, however, would *not* be a good idea. It had taken her weeks of chasing ghosts across the galactic net, planet hopping on the slightest of rumors, to get this close.

A minor slip up on the orbital spaceport above Kepler 1701b had led to the trail going almost entirely cold for around six Sol months before she'd picked up this lead. Even being allowed aboard *The Athaneum* had necessitated days of explanations, bureaucracy, and prayers to a god she'd long since stopped believing in. Access to the inner sanctum she was currently exploring was almost impossible to get security clearance for. They'd only agreed to let her, and her weaponry, in when something had triggered a motion sensor in an off-limits area, and three separate security teams hadn't returned. She'd been made to sign a contract promising to damage nothing.

She was approaching the coordinates where the last SecTeam had dropped out of radio contact, and her armor started to reconfigure itself ready for combat. At the end of the current row of shelving, a light flickered once, almost too brief to be noticeable, and she stiffened, slowing her breathing whilst the armor's onboard AI ran threat analysis models. She glanced to her left, the shelving gently lighting up to show her what where she was in the catalog: *Necronimocae, Daemonologiae, and Dictionnai Infernalles*.

Slowly, she reached down to her waist, unclipping the pistol and gently easing it from its mounting.

This was it. Endgame.

As she stepped forward, the light stuttered again, then failed, plunging the area beyond into darkness. Her heart quickened, the adrenaline beginning to mount.

The AI injected a stimulant package that kept her the right side of wired without being panicky as, beside her, the spine of a book began to protrude, and the shelving unit groaned. She leapt forward into the shadow just as the row directly above her descended, bringing seventy or eight hefty volumes into the space she'd just been occupying.

She tucked, rolled, came up with her weapon to bear, and was met with the glittering orb of a tri-dimensional portal, banned in thirty systems, in the middle of the walkway. She switched settings and fired several three-round bursts directly into the centre of it, watching it change color to glow orange, then blue, before finally collapsing in on itself.

Dust particles rose from the books next to her, disturbing the still air. She stood, brushing herself off, and carefully approached the space where the portal had been.

As she crouched to run her fingers through the glittering remnants, something skittered behind her. She whirled around, ready to fire again, but silence reasserted itself.

"That," she muttered to herself, eyeing the mess, "is for someone else to clear up."

"So say you," a voice answered, raspy, dried vocal cords sounding like they were being used for the first time in millennia.

One of the books started to flutter, its pages flipping so fast that they became a blur. The speed increased until she was certain that the printed matter had been exhausted, yet still leaves turned. From within the motion, a blackened hand stretched, charred and smoking.

She involuntarily took a step back, trying to stem the tide of rising bile that formed in her throat as more of the creature became apparent and a foul stench filled the air.

Kinetic projectile bursts erupted from her gun as it extruded from the new portal that had formed, but they passed straight through, as if it were made of gas.

Suddenly, absurdly, a neon projection flashed into existence three feet to her left, glowing an angry red, a single word surrounded by a border.

"Shhh?" she yelled, reading it. "You have *got* to be fucking kidding me, right?"

Other reference books began to open, more creatures joining the first, which was now almost fully formed.

"I," it proclaimed in a guttural growl, "*am free.*"

"The fuck you are," she muttered, flicking a control on the pistol. It reconfigured, drawing material from her armor to extend to rifle length, as she unclipped a small canister from her belt.

She attached it to the newly reformed firearm and aimed at the pages. An incendiary burst of fire caught the book alight and the creature screamed.

"This," she muttered, as it curled up and started to dissipate to smoke, "is the *only* acceptable time to burn a book."

She ran the flamethrower across the rest of the pile until, finally, The Archive's inert gas suppression systems triggered to leave her looking at a smouldering pile of ash.

A soft, insistent laugh echoed amongst the stacks.

"And don't think I've forgotten about you," she called. "You're fucking next."

"*Catch me if you can,*" the voice replied.

## Find the Author

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# The Library of Henrietta Vice

by Tony Daniel

Henrietta Vice was the head librarian and everyone knew it. She didn't just watch over the building, she ruled over it. She knew every book, every periodical, every shelf. She prided herself on her knowledge of the building and its secrets. Nobody questioned her position, nor did they try. Miss Vice took no truck when it came to the library.

Or the rules.

You didn't speak loudly in the library. You did not slam the door. You did not eat or drink, unless you stepped into the foyer to the marble water fountain. You did not, under any circumstances, even think of popping a piece of chewing gum into your mouth, before or during your visit to the library. Gum made all sorts of obnoxious behavior occur: the smacking sound, the possibility of bubble popping, and the unforgivable sin of disposing said gum under a table or chair. People learned these rules quickly, often by quiet shaming from Miss Vice.

There were instances of repeat violations, but they were few and far between.

Miss Vice had a small office in the library, just behind the reference shelves. It was in this office where she would escort a rule violator. The violator would be there, behind the closed door, for five minutes, rarely more than ten. The door would open, and the violator would walk out, often looking down at the polished wooden flooring, shamed and perhaps a bit unnerved in that short time. Miss Vice would exit shortly thereafter, and anyone in the area would make a point of averting their eyes until she was back behind the circulation desk, perched on the raised platform in her high-backed revolving chair. The chair never squeaked, the wheels never rattled, the springs never sighed. Quiet was the rule, after all.

There were stories of those who had violated a rule more than once, legends of boys who had stuck a wad of Blackjack gum under a table in the map room being escorted to Miss Vice's office for an unheard of twenty minutes. Leaving the office with looks of horror on their faces, holding a handful of paper towels to their mouths. A couple had been spied behind the mystery fiction shelves: her blouse open, his hand tucked under it as his face pressed into the curve of her throat. The couple were escorted to the office. The girl left after seven minutes, blushing and head hung low, minus her blue blouse. The boy was seen twenty minutes later, walking to the main door with an odd gait, cradling his "exploring" hand with his other. He had to have help with the brass doorknob as he left.

But, of course, legends grow in time. Nobody could put an exact name to the horrified gum abusers. The couple caught behind the mystery shelves shared any of a half dozen hair colors, her blouse, the same. Some said her name was Cheryl, or was it Sherry, maybe it was Sharon. The boy with the cradled hand, was it Mike, or Matt, or Mitch? Was it his right hand or his left? No one could exactly recall, but nobody questioned the tale.

There were always those who returned books late. The violator paid a fine per day for the first seven days. Miss Vice would clear her throat disapprovingly, accept the money, and hand



over change if required, but took her time doing so. Everyone knew that, if Miss Vice cleared her throat in that particular way, the shaming was in process. Glances toward the desk would reveal the violator's identity, and Miss Vice would calculate the fine ever-so-slowly, letting the time pass as she allowed the other library visitors to witness the violator as they stood silently by the circulation desk.

It was said that, one Thanksgiving, a library book was placed on the table by an avid reader who took her book with her, ostensibly to finish the last few paragraphs of a chapter before the turkey was carved and the feast was served. At some point, the gravy boat was passed around the table and, well, as can be the case with gravy boats, a spill occurred. The book was drenched in turkey gravy.

This time, the woman was escorted to Miss Vice's office, where she remained for seven minutes. Shortly thereafter, the phone at the circulation desk rang. The library assistant answered, nodded, whispered a quick reply, and replaced the phone on its holder. The assistant stood, walked to a small closet, and wheeled a small rolling table to Miss Vice's office. On top of the table was the paper cutter, used by the library workers to make slips of note paper for the card catalog users of old, now the computer reference cubicles.

People said the woman with the gravy boat left the library on her own, but required the aid of the young library assistant. It was said the woman continued to visit the library, but usually wore a pair of soft black leather gloves when she visited.

Miss Vice was a very polite woman. No citizen of the town had a bad word to say about her, and her library was a place of serene beauty. If anyone could point to anything remotely as a fault, perhaps there was a possibility of one.

Miss Vice was a stickler for rules. Her rules were few, and they were simple. To break one of her rules, though, bore consequences. She kept a small placard on the column that stood solemnly by the doors.

The placard bore three words on it, inked in a lovely calligraphic font:

*Quid pro quo.*



## **The Book of Thoth** **by W.D. Henning**

Since a little girl, I had a strange perception of the universe, how threads of probability wove themselves into the fabric of reality. And that within the aether, existed all possible

outcomes.

My Cajun father puffed with pride when a prestigious university accepted my application, complete with generous scholarships. There, the secretive Phoenix Coven sensed my abilities, recruited me, and taught me how to manipulate the weave, thus bending reality to my will.

"Be wary, Rue," warned the High Priestess one day. "Magic is a harsh mistress, and seductive are her ways."

But I was as much a scientist as a witch, and to me, magic was merely science not yet understood. We bent the laws of thermodynamics that govern cause to effect, but did not break them. With simple incantations, I redistributed thermal energy to burn, concentrated pressure to push, or altered the progression of chemical reactions. The less probable the outcome, the greater the statistical thermodynamic barrier, and the more difficult the spell. Within a few years, I grew powerful.

An upcoming physics final exam was my immediate concern, though. I studied best in silence, away from distractions and the usual petty school dramas. What better place than the library? I tied my long dark hair in a ponytail and spread books and notes across a table. Tall stained-glass windows cast colorful beams across the book stacks and opposite wall as the sun arced toward the horizon. Being a weekend evening, I nearly had the library to myself.

As I poured myself into quantum mechanics, a subtle voice reached my mind as if whispering in my ear. Holding a breath, I perked up. But the voice was not auditory, rather aetheral vibrations, something ancient, something compelling.

*'Come to me,'* it invited.

Irresistible curiosity overwhelmed me, and I had to find the source.

*'Come.'*

From somewhere near, somewhere within the library, it beckoned. Leaving my study materials behind, I stood and followed the voice like a bloodhound on scent. The trail led me down dank stairs to dark passages deep within the library basement.

"Lux," I muttered, and a glowing globe appeared above my outstretched hand, illuminating the way.

I came to a locked metal door plastered with a prominent yellow sign that said 'Authorized Personnel Only.' But locks and rules were no barrier to me. "Motus clostrum," I said. After visualizing the lock internals, I applied precise force vectors to rotate the lock mechanism with a click. The hinges squealed as the door swung open.

*'So long have I waited for you. Come.'*

Light from high casement windows along the back wall dimly illuminated rows of plywood shelves supported by gray metal frames. Catalogued cardboard boxes containing old scrolls and artifacts, recently discovered in Egypt, lined the shelves. As I recalled from a recent newsfeed, some historians speculated that these came from the fabled Library of Alexandria itself, and if so, a monumental discovery.

*'Destined, we are.'*

My heart raced. So enticing was the voice.

Magic pulsed from an ancient scroll, flooding my mind with wonder. Lifting it carefully from a box, I then unrolled it on a nearby metal table. Strangely, the parchment was in perfect

shape, showing no signs of centuries passed. Except the writing, which was too faint to see. "Ostendo," I said, and the old script revealed itself, and somehow, I understood the ancient language.

I gasped. This was the legendary Book of Thoth, allegedly written by the Egyptian god of knowledge, and the most powerful spell book ever in existence. My finger traced the text. Here there were alchemic spells that fundamentally changed reality, tapping into the unimaginable energy of the Cosmos; curses that could fell a nation; enchantments that altered minds, even of entire populations; and more. Unimaginable power.

*'Join me, and the knowledge of gods shall be yours.'*

I jumped as another voice shouted, "What are you doing here?" A gray-haired woman wearing a blue library apron extended an accusing bent finger.

"Obliviscatur eius." The words jumped from my mouth, but were not mine.

The woman's scowling face went blank and her eyes focused far away, as if in a trance. Nothing of this, I knew, would she remember.

*'Joined, we shall transform the world into our vision.'*

Stillness overtook my mind as I responded. *'Yes, together.'*

## Find the Author

 [@wdhenning](#)



# Short Story

## The Library at the End of the Universe by Alan Vincent Michaels



“Welcome to The Library. All knowledge is yours.” was the greeting that formed in her thoughts—more a feeling than actual words.

The Greeter, a small, contained sphere of energetic starfire surrounded by a constellation of dancing sprites, floated before her, in stark contrast to the large, metallic-glass sphere drifting slowly above the cold desert sands. This was a tired, drab world, one of the first that had ever formed. Long gone were the spectacular sights in the heavens, here at the End of the Universe.

She tried to touch the Greeter with her gloved hand, but it reacted only by moving out of her reach.

She knew the larger sphere was a portal to all the accumulated knowledge of every species that had ever existed in the Universe, not from just so-called sapient beings, and was available to all researchers, not to just so-called important researchers.

The Greeter awaited her inquiries, so she held up her crystalline Library Access card.

"I have my Library card," she sub-vocalized. "It was given to me by my mother, who got it from her mother, and they from their mothers, so far back in time, no one knows how long. My mother also told me how to find The Library. It's been an arduous journey."

"Asymmetrical, sub-vocal communication. No telepathy. How, quaint. No matter, a Library Access card is no longer required. You are the last."

"What does that mean? I see no other beings waiting here, but I assumed it was late in the day for researchers."

"Researchers pay no heed to time, artificial or real, especially because The Library is located beyond the time barrier at the End of the Universe."

"Then, how am I the last researcher?"

"You are not the last researcher. You are, as I stated simply, the last."

"The last what?"

"The last being, corporeal or otherwise, existing in the Universe. It was always a conjecture this scenario would come to pass, and it is now confirmed. During your stasis in the span of time you took to arrive here, all remaining life in the Universe has gone extinct. Heat Death is now the Universe's state in which all matter will eventually disintegrate into energy. That is why your Library Access card is not needed. Please enter the Portal."

"If that's true, you apparently forgot to include yourself. There are at least *two* beings remaining. You and me."

"I am not sapient or sentient, although I can mimic both such traits. And more. I am simply an extension of The Library. I am a program, not even an artificial intelligent lifeform or an ascended, non-corporeal being. You are indeed the last, without any possible genetic modification or generation of new beings from your DNA. My modality has now changed. You may call me Interface."

She watched as the spherical portal image changed to a pleasant, light-adjusted interior of the incomprehensibly massive Library. It was a welcome relief from the depressing sky and near-frozen desert that stretched on for as far as her eyes could see. Even the optical sensors of her lifesuit showed no changes for dozens of kilometers.

"You may enter and I will guide you through your inquiries," said Interface.

She walked towards the sphere and was, from her perspective, walking immediately inside The Library, her boots making almost no noise on the polished stone floor. All she heard was the sound of her own breathing.

All around her were rows upon rows of bookshelves and information station rods — likely only holographic renderings for her comprehension — the Tesseract-nature of The Library was often too difficult for corporeal beings to navigate higher-order dimensions.

As she marveled at how massive The Library was, she heard sounds coming through her helmet comms, apparently from Interface.

"The Library indicates you prefer the archaic communication modality of sound pressure waves, and, as Interface, I can converse with you in this manner. Please remove your helmet. The atmospheric conditions have been adjusted for your physiology."

She removed her helmet and held it in her left hand, then ran her wrinkled, dark-skinned, right hand over her bald head.

"Thank you," she said. "I've been wearing this suit for days, walking to reach The Library. Hyperspace and stasis, then a cat-and-mouse chase of the Portal. You didn't make things easy for me."

"Only the Truly Determined find The Library," replied Interface. "You are a female of your former, two-gender species. Do you wish to be addressed by a formal name?"

"A name? Yes! It's been so long," she said, grateful to cease sub-vocalizing, always worried she might say or think the wrong thing. "You may call me Hope. My father gave me this nickname long ago, because my birth name was too long and too private to use with casual company. Since you've said I am the last, I suppose any such formalities are no longer needed."

"Indeed. Why are you here at The Library now?"

"I, umm," Hope started, then cleared her throat. "First, I didn't know that all life had gone extinct while I slept. Second, The Library's the accumulated sum knowledge of every civilization that's ever existed: now that I'm the last of my species and my civilization, I urgently want to add my knowledge and life experiences to it."

"That is a commendable and appreciated act of sharing."

"And I seek the answer to what I hope is a simple question for The Library to answer."

"Your question?"

"What is the meaning of life?"

"It is the same question nearly every being asks after they arrive here."

Interface dimmed its colors, then the sprites began to swirl faster.

"Life has no inherent meaning. Each being strives not to perish, and during that often-difficult process sometimes learns what is possible to know and experience while it is alive. The fortunate ones share their knowledge with others, and their societies and civilizations grow and change as a result. The unfortunate reality of you being here now means there is no reason for you to share with The Library. After you perish, and you will soon because of your advanced age, the function of The Library will cease. No other life exists anywhere. You are indeed The Last."

Hope stared at the swirling ball of light. A sudden feeling of dread and utter hopelessness overcame her.

"My life's meaning, was to share with The Library. Now, you tell me my life was pointless. I don't accept that answer. I won't!"

Interface went through a rapid series of color changes, then it did something Hope didn't expect: Interface cleared its "throat."

"The Library has considered what you said and asks if you would be willing to let The Library share with you, instead. It seems by having the last being in the Universe reach it, The Library is undergoing an existential crisis, which it never contemplated could happen. It knows its existence no longer has a purpose."

Hope stood quietly, pondering the magnitude of what was possibly about to happen. "Can I, absorb and comprehend that much information?"

"A corporeal being's mind is extremely complex, and this has never been attempted before. The Library does not have the answer to your question, but it asks in response, 'What do you have to lose?'"

Hope grimaced, knowing The Library wasn't being farcical or sarcastic. It was only stating a fact.

"Well, my life, of course," she replied. "But, if this gives both our existences a chance to have meaning, then I consent. What do I need to do?"

"Stand perfectly still for the next few moments," said Interface.

Hope felt a tickling in her brain, which was odd because she knew there were no pain receptors there. The tickling grew into a strong pressure, then the sensations ceased.

Suddenly — as if she was seeing through an incalculable number of eyes, sensors, memories, and thoughts of trillions upon trillions of beings — her brain was synthesizing all their knowledge at an ever-accelerating rate into a coherent stream of understanding.

She accepted her newly found meaning of life, and she knew what needed logically to be done.

"Interface and The Library," Hope conveyed telepathically, "You have my deepest gratitude. I know what my true purpose is now. I'm reaching out over all ansible wavelengths to the Elder Civilizations whose machines still exist and are operational. They will now work to reverse the Heat Death of the Universe, by moving supermassive black holes and their galaxies so that Contraction begins and The Big Crunch will occur right here. Eventually."

"An audacious scenario," thought Interface. "It is one The Library had never contemplated as pertinent to its core purpose."

"It isn't, obviously," replied Hope. "This is one key difference between sapience and programming. We've all the time we need here at what'll be The Beginning of a New Universe. And when the time is right and it is its last action, The Library will declare, 'Let there be light!' or something equally dramatic, and new beings of all stripes and desires will be born, live, and die, contributing to the greater good and knowledge of a new Universe. Maybe, that Universe can learn from this one's mistakes.

"Now, Library, I implore you to find a way to prevent your destruction before the next Big Bang occurs, otherwise the new Universe will have to start over gathering knowledge from scratch.

"Hmm, maybe that's not such a bad thing."

Hope smiled for the first time in what seemed to her like forever.

## Find the Author

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## Scrolls by D Bedell

The library lights glowed ghostly in a gothic fog, a parody of coincidence not lost on Harvey Cantwell as he quickened his pace across the campus quadrangle. He was excited: tonight he would check out his first real human artifact, the culmination of his antiquarian graduate program. The years on Terra were coming to a close and he would be free from his indenture to the Administration.

Cantwell thought of the library as the crypt of linear human experience and ideas, in particular, the long dead resurrected to provide period human perspectives of the universe to exo-entities. Some called it dalliance with the dead and he was persuaded of its accuracy. It was the reason those in his profession were called “spooks.”

The profession was the Administration’s nod to expired cultures and species. It was not an altruistic gesture; the synthetic populations curated by the spooks required experiences to supplement their instincts, the arbiter of all behavior practiced without memory. The Administration’s interests relied on docility and a contrived entity relying on instinct was the most docile of all, especially since the primary instinct instilled was passivity. Synthetics like Cantwell were programmed differently with curiosity within boundaries to produce passive entertainment to satiate a population that relied on it to constitute mental activity.

*Wonder what it will be like?*

The library was nearly empty of patrons and Cantwell went to the reference desk to confirm his appointment and transfer of the artifact. The librarian confirmed and summoned



the circulation manager who ushered Harvey into a waiting room, assuring him that his creature was just finishing processing into a standard host body and would be available for checkout soon. He paced, wanting a cigarette, suspecting it was a residual trait of his own distillation from chromosomes and memories of multiple species spread across the galaxy. Spooks were essentially sentient polyglots of instinctual behavior models necessary for the social stability and malleability the Administration required in its ministrations of Terra.

While the years of indenture were coming to a close, a career of servitude still awaited Cantwell just as it did every spook. His lifetime would be the culmination of his experience with the creature and its perspective. It would be a lonely vigil; spooks remained apart from society largely because once a perspective was acquired from a creature, it became indelible, and many went insane trying to assimilate back into the synthetic culture. Others became rogue and were terminated by the Administration for disruption. It was not altogether a risk-free occupation. The luck of the creature draw was often the critical factor; they were not vetted by design, a risk the Administration took for the appearance of unbiased preservation. Cantwell knew the risks instinctively when he was decanted.

The circulation manager returned and motioned for Harvey to follow him. The air in the library circulation crypt was somewhere between the smell of a freshly decanted synthetic and putrefaction. Cantwell tried not to notice and concentrated on his task at hand: assimilating the creature's perspective. Nevertheless, his throat was tight, and his palms were sweaty.

The relic entered the room. Cantwell had never seen a live host before and was somewhat taken aback by its appearance: It was a copy of the basic synthetic model used by the Administration.

*No surprise, I guess.*

"I am Evelyn," the host said, introducing herself with a proffered hand.

Harvey took the hand, and the host squeezed his fingers lightly with a cool grip. The relic looked quizzically at Cantwell's face.

"You all look the same," she said.

Harvey said nothing; it was true. The Administration believed conformity in appearance was desirable for both anonymity and unanimity. Care was taken to cultivate the correct traits.

"Do I look the same," she asked

Harvey nodded and croaked, "Yes."

"Let's go," she said. "Your place."

Outside the fog was thicker and the library lights subdued further. She walked beside him, setting a quick pace even though Cantwell was leading. They said nothing until they were at Cantwell's door.

"I expected better," she scoffed.

"Sorry," he said instinctively.

"Let's consummate," she said once they were inside his two room quarters.

Later, Cantwell slipped from his bed and stood in the dark looking at her outline in the blanket. He wondered at his perspective and wanted a cigarette.

*Never heard of this.*

She stirred and said softly, "No you never did."

"What did you say?"

"Let's get started," she said, slipping from the bed and into her coveralls.

"Started?"

She looked at him, exasperated in her manner even in the dark.

"The debrief. Have you never done that before, either?"

Cantwell was embarrassed. It was the whole point of her being there. He collected himself as he zipped up his coveralls, reciting the questionnaire in his mind. She would be revealed and his life perspective acquired to form his lamellate for the Administration. He knew he should be ready, but was anxious instead. He turned on the light, went to his desk, and took out the questionnaire.

"Name?"

"Evelyn."

"Evelyn what?"

"Just Evelyn."

Cantwell made a note for an evasive answer.

"Occupation?"

"Psychic."

"Psychic?"

"Reader of the future, speaker of the dead."

"Impossible," Cantwell declared, thinking the artifact was defective.

*What the hell?*

"Possible and fact."

"How?" Cantwell demanded, feeling an anger beginning to rise.

"Same way I know you want a cigarette, and you've never smoked."

Cantwell could not reply.

Let's get some smokes. It will help you understand what I tell you."

"All right," Harvey said, folding away the questionnaire.

"Got coffee? We'll need some."

"Maybe I better make a list."

The consumer dispensary near the campus was small, but it had everything she wanted, including cigarettes and a lighter. Cantwell paid with his voucher and handed the cigarettes and lighter to the host.

"Thanks," she said, tearing open a pack and lighting one once they were outside. They walked back to Cantwell's quarters in silence, trailing smoke. In his quarters, she made coffee and took a plate from the cupboard to use as an ashtray while sitting at the bed. She held the pack out to Harvey.

"I don't know how," he said.

"Yes, you do."

He took the pack and shook on out with practiced ease. The host smiled as he lit up and took a deep drag, exhaling into the ceiling. He smiled and chuckled.

"Didn't know that," he said.

"Lot of things you don't know. Sit down."

Harvey sat on the bed beside her, thinking he knew what was going to happen.

*Again?*

"Not now," she said. "Finish your questionnaire first."

Cantwell considered the questionnaire and didn't think it was going to do him much good under the circumstances, but took it from his coveralls pocket, unfolded it, and began again.

"Period."

"Middle 21st century."

"Death?"

"Hanged myself."

Cantwell was astounded. To his knowledge, no one had ever had a suicide's perspective, let alone a psychic, too.

"Why."

"I wanted to be a ghost and now I am," she stated flatly.

"Now you're a ghost?"

"What would you call it? You're having a conversation with the dead."

*Maybe I'll take her back and explain...*

Cantwell lit a cigarette while Evelyn went to pour coffee. She came back with two cups, chuckling as she watched him smoking, flicking ashes into the plate expertly.

"Told ya."

Harvey nodded.

*What else does she know?*

"What was it like being a ghost?" he asked, forgetting the questionnaire.

"Just what you see."

Cantwell wasn't sure what he was seeing. His antiquarian studies had not prepared him for this situation. He wondered if the Administration knew and if this was a test of his loyalty or of his competence. Still, he was intrigued.

*Nobody's done this.*

"No, no one has done this before and the Administration doesn't know," she said evenly. "It has nothing to do with the Administration, just you, according to the dead."

*I'm taking her back.*

"No, you're not going to take me back. Too hard to explain."

Harvey knew she was right and was discomfited.

*Too much.*

"How do the dead know me?" Cantwell asked.

"We have watched you."

"The dead don't watch anybody. They're dead."

"Are we? Remember, you're talking to a ghost."

"Ghost! You're an artifact from the library."

"The crypt, as you call it?"

Cantwell was speechless. No one knew that. He fumbled with the pack of cigarettes and shook one out.

"Give me one."

Harvey lit her cigarette before his own.

"See," she said, "Now you are doing the old things."

"What does that mean?"

"It means you're an artifact just like me."

Cantwell guffawed.

"Nonsense."

She smiled and said, "Let's consummate again and then you tell me that."

Afterwards, Harvey stood in the dark and thought about his night's unsettling adventures. The artifact was more than he expected, far more. He felt depressed; he had compromised himself and his career for something in the night he could not, or should not, name.

*What will the Administration think of my perspective now?*



## **Bound Within the Darkness**

**by Rory Foulkes**

The glinting city of Dounestat, woven from prismatic materials so delicate as to be mistaken for silken thread, hung suspended in the dark sky above Arcturon.

Rakallis sensed Vynara's unease as she looked out from the panoramic window, past the city walls and Arcturon's shadowy curvature, into the great expanse of space beyond. Floating across his elder sister's chamber like a dandelion clock freed from its restraints, he cupped her pale cheek with one hand and wiped away a golden tear with the other.

'You worry too much'

There was a time when she had less reason to do so.

Such is the enormous distance between Arcturon and Earth, that a voyage to Earth was long considered impossible. As such, Arcturonians had relied on trade with other races to gather scant materials about Earth, its geography and culture. These materials took the form of glitchy video footage, distorted audio, jaundiced books with multiple missing pages, stained maps and digital projections of torn images.

From the earliest age, Vynara was bewitched by Earth, and the Humans who hold dominion over it. While her much younger brother assessed the properties of Earth's sky and studied endless footage of its topography with a Seeker's eye, she devoured this broken history with childlike amazement.

Drifting off to sleep, she imagined herself floating through wooded clearings she saw in those torn images, drunk on the aromas of wildflowers and damp bark. She danced in circles with inscrutable women in sheer ivory dresses, and watched the hazy sunlight peeking through leafy boughs play shadowy patterns upon her skin. Juice ran down her chin when she squeezed fruit plucked from a tree and bit into its sweet flesh. Her heart trembled like a tuning fork to the melodies of brightly plumed songbirds she held gently in her palm.

Over and over, she listened to a crackling audio recording in which a Pharlusian cadet aboard a training outpost was moved to elation by ethereal music from a satellite passing what Humans called The Pillars of Creation. She marvelled at what wonderful beings they must be to create such beautiful tessellations of sound.

To Arcturonians, a plant was merely a plant: a living thing with a dedicated purpose, whether that be to provide food or healthy air to breathe. And yet a rose upon a thorny stem could stir such yearning in a Human that they might honour it with words that spoke of so much more than simply its biological qualities and function.

What a delightful enigma Humans were. What compelled them to chase a single thing like love — a concept so changeable that there appeared to be no consensus on its definition — to the point of self-destruction? Why did they murder their god who came to them in the form of a child, only to spend thousands of years building decorous temples to it and weeping at the feet of wooden carvings?

It was Vynara's dearest wish to visit Earth. But it seemed that the cosmos had decided otherwise.

The first time she held her baby brother, Vynara was so overwhelmed with fear of dropping him that she squeezed too tight, making the tiny thing cry. She resolved to never again cause him pain, and do everything in her power to protect him for as long as she lived.

In her adolescence, she clashed with their parents and the Elders by rushing in headlong to defend him when he was admonished for being mischievous and disrespectful. There were screaming declarations of hatred when she scared away girls with an eye for her teenage brother, or chided him for risking life and safety by doing reckless things with friends.

When their parents died during a research mission to Sertaver, the unprepared Vynara took on the consecutive roles of comforter, parent and sister, putting aside her own needs in favour of her brother's. She grieved in secret, both for her parents and for what might have been. Her dreams, once filled with Earthly delights, were plagued each night by a vast, shapeless black mass that pulsated in space like an inflamed wound with a baleful, throbbing *ziithhmmpp-ziithhmmpp-ziithhmmpp-ziithhmmpp...* and the sensation of being slowly and unremittingly dragged towards it.



Some cultures send their young out into the wilderness to hunt and gather when they reach a certain age. The Arcturonians have *phentra*, where infant children are placed in self-

propelling individual pods programmed to follow a celestial path around Arcturon, its moons and nearest constellations.

Vynara's phentra was unremarkable. She would make a reasonable pilot and nothing more. Rakallis's, meanwhile, was the stuff of legend. Partway through, he had squealed with delight and overridden his pod's automated controls before faultlessly piloting it back to Arcturon. Not even the most venerable Elder could recall anything like it. All agreed, including their parents before the untimely passing, that Rakallis was destined to be a Seeker of true greatness.

The dread of what true greatness as a Seeker might one day mean weighed heavy on Vynara. And that day was fast approaching.

When at last the technology was developed to enable such a journey, the Elders unanimously chose Rakallis to be the first-ever Seeker to venture to Earth. The news, though it should have come as no surprise, skewered her like an icicle through the heart.

Even then, the Elders debated long and hard whether a voyage so fraught with danger was wise or desirable. After all, they questioned, what could they learn from so strange and antediluvian a race as Humans? Were they to ignore the Pharlusian ambassador's intelligence suggesting a recent seismic event of unknown nature on Earth? And what other savagery besides Humans might pose a threat to their safety?

It had taken all of Vynara's strength and love for Rakallis not to lend her own weight of doubt to those opposed to the mission.



The dreams had increased with such frequency and intensity the days leading to Rakallis's mission that she barely dared sleep, the already vast black pulsing mass growing more gargantuan each time, the force of its pull ever stronger. So much so that it was still pulsing through her when she awoke on the day of the voyage itself.

And it would not be dislodged. Not by brotherly expressions of comfort he dug deep to find as they embraced alone under the covered gantry, nor even by the feverish noise of well-wishers waiting on the concourse outside.

Vynara sighed heavily as she drew back from their embrace and held her brother at arm's length, drinking him in while she still had the chance. The way he looked back at her suggested he was contemplating the bulging greyness of her usually bright and quicksilver eyes. She had herself reflected lately that she looked older than their mother had done before her death. Older even, from what she could remember of her, than their grandmother.

Thinking it better than to delay the inevitable, she slipped her arm through Rakallis's, and they hovered together up the slight incline, toward the gantry-end and the thunderous cheers of the expectant crowd. As they did so, she was struck by a change — a certain hesitancy — in him. Seeming to sense that she was mustering the courage to ask a question he did not want to hear, Rakallis broke away from her, and was soon charting a path as best he could through the dense and jubilant crowd. She followed, though her Arcturonian restraint prevented her from calling after him.

Emerging from the tunnel, she gasped at her first sight of the craft on the elevated launch pad, each keen angle of its gleaming chrome fuselage iridescent with cosmic energy. Mesmerised, she imagined being aboard and sharing with her brother in the ecstasy of witnessing bursts of light giving fiery birth to new stars and planets, and being stunned into silence by the vitality of ghost nebulae glowing with the spectrum's every colour. Almost hypnotised, she wondered for the first time if this was indeed to be a voyage of hope rather than peril.

Finally managing to tear her gaze away, she looked around for Rakallis in a frenzy, hoping there might still be time to reach him, and ask if he was ready to go through with this. 'Nobody would blame you,' she would say, pulling his head into the soft nook of her shoulder.

But by the time she spotted him, he had already scaled the shimmering ramp to the ship's entrance, and was waving so forlornly that murmurs began to bounce from group to group across the concourse below.

'He doesn't want to go through with it.'

'Can't blame him, can you?'

'Not after what happened to his parents, no.'

'I wouldn't trust that ship.'

'No, it's not been tested enough to my mind.'

'He'd be a fool to go through with it.'

Noticing discontent growing among the crowd, the Elders began to hurry things along, gesturing at Rakallis to enter the ship and proceed to launch. He defied them, scanning the crowd for something or someone, perhaps for his sister, so that he could find in her eyes an answer to the question he had long been asking himself.

But, though she hassled and cajoled to get within earshot, waved and screamed until hoarse, tears of desperation streaming down her face, Rakallis could not see or hear her. She could not bear it if the look of despondency and betrayal as he ducked into the vessel was the last expression she ever saw on her brother's face.

Summoning all the strength left in her exhausted body and mind, she thrust herself upwards — the effort to do so coursing through her body like caustic acid — until she was high above the crowd: balancing in the air with arms spread wide like some kind of deity. Mouths in the crowd dropped as she began hovering over their heads, unsteadily and slowly at first, and then more smoothly until she gained good momentum. Some urged her on, not aware she was trying to stop the very thing they had come to see. Others scolded and tried to pull her back down, their hands grasping in vain. Guards popped up like solar flares bursting from the sun and chased her, while others began to form a blockade around the ship. Too late because she slipped through a gap, and was rising upwards towards the ship.

'Come back, come back,' voices yelled, less now in anger than concern for her safety at being so close to the ship's aft when Rakallis might take off any instant. The Elders waved frantically to get his attention while the launch director tried and tried to get through on the command hub.

But he was too myopically focused now, steeled by what he saw as Vynara's snub. Oblivious to her proximity or intentions, he ignited the ship.



They say the cosmic launch plumes from Rakallis's vessel — all pinks, blues, golden and green — persisted like sheets of ice in the dark Arcturon sky for as long as anyone could remember. The pinks gradually began to fade, and then the greens. The rest soon followed suit until all gradually evaporated, which many Arcturonians considered a great shame.

When Vynara eventually woke, she wished she had not. Even the greatest depths of her long unconsciousness were haunted by that final look she saw on her brother's face. By the black mass too, although it seemed to stare at Vynara contentedly and purr rather than throb, as if it had acquired what it desired.

Her blurry eyes did not need to see the sombre faces gathered around her tubular sleeping vessel to know what they had come to tell her. She turned her head from them with damp eyes clamped shut while they imparted the news: they had lost contact with Rakallis soon after he left, and never regained it. She dismissed them with a waft of the hand, having not said a single word.

When at last she had recuperated enough to leave the chamber, Vynara purchased a battered yet reliable spacefaring craft, and took to the great expanse. She roams it in fathomless patterns, returning to Arcturon only periodically for fuel and supplies without engaging in conversation. Some say she searches for Rakallis or any sign of him, though there is little to no hope of that. Others, that she feels somehow close to him out there. As if his essence is bound within the darkness.

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# The Librarians

by Jason H. Abbott

Nook sat on the floor, the oversized book in her lap making her appear smaller than her nine years. "What is this place?"

"You are in a hidden room," Sister Alexandria said, winding the crank lamp so its electric light shone a little brighter before putting it down. "A secret annex in a safe house never found in fifty years. Cardholders live here. We can trust them."

"Cardholders?" the child asked.

"Friends of the Librarians," the woman answered, motioning to the few other books on the squat shelf beside them. "When a book comes into their possession, they hide and store it here. We stop in infrequently during our travels for shelter outside the glimpse of informants, and to see if the inventory contains anything worth the risk of transporting to the archives."

"If the Censors find out, they'll kill them."

"They're aware of that," she said, withdrawing her pistol from its holster and loading a precious bullet into the revolver. "We can trust them. Can they trust you?"

"After this morning, I hate the Burners," she said, smelling a whiff of gun oil as she watched the sister put the weapon an easy grasp away, between crumbling paperbacks. Nook fixated on the librarian while she pulled the sword from her scabbard and cleaned blood off it with a rag.

She saw Alexandria catch her looking.

"I — I wouldn't say anything! You can trust me," the girl said, casting her nose back down to the open book in her lap.

"I do," the woman smiled.

The child peeked up at her. "Can all librarians fight like you do?"

"Not like me. I'd rather have renown for my cataloging or teaching than killing, however."

"The Burners are evil men. Don't feel bad. Everyone I've ever known is afraid of them, except for you," Nook said, eyes turning back to glossy pages.

The cloth moved up and down the blade as the librarian made it spotless. "I've fought them before: I'm a collector, a book-runner. It's the most dangerous job in our order, and we are trained to fight. A collector pledges to find undiscovered books, retrieve and protect them, and to prevent by any means the Censors from destroying more."

"Seeing a book, I like them," the girl said, running her finger across a printed color picture. "They're magic. I like this one. All these drawings of the old cities seem so real!"

"Photographs," the sister corrected. "An almost lost process using machines to make images of things as we see them."

Nook sniffed the aged chemical odor of the page while turning it. "They're cool. I still don't understand why the Burners were after me, because I've never touched a book until now. But thank you for saving a street rat."

"You're welcome," Alexandria said, sliding the sword back into its sheath. "Before war scourged the world, people had many wonders. Now all we have are fragments of them: what recollections we can salvage from the books the Unity hasn't burned or locked away only for their eyes."

"You say a war ended the old times. All the preachers I've heard call it, God's Judgment."

The librarian offered empty hands, and the child gave her the book. "The folly of humanity brought us to cataclysm. At the end of the past age, people put their trust in, and granted power to, those who only lusted for more. Once they had it, they would not relinquish it, and what would become the Unity began. The peoples of old commanded miracles, but with such knowledge, they also built weapons capable of annihilating all the beautiful cities in these photographs, in mere moments. We don't know who started the Great War, but about a long lifetime after this book was made, it came. And it lasted only a single day. Smoke from its fires blotted out the sun for years. God didn't inflict tribulation upon us, Nook. Our ancestors' ill-conceived actions doomed them. I believe it was only with God's *mercy* that any people, even so few, lived to survive on this scarred Earth at all."

"Why don't they tell us this?" the child asked.

"Why is it a crime to read unless you're an elite? Because with people mired in ignorance and poverty, the Unity has strength that cannot be wrested from it."

The girl thought over her words, then spoke. "You were following me before the Burners came. You knew they were coming, didn't you?"

Alexandria closed the book and put it away, leaving both in the faint blue light of the crank lamp between them. "May I tell you another story? Stories are important to librarians."

The child settled where she sat cross-legged in semidarkness. "Okay."

"In the last days of the unburned times, there was a young woman who tended the grandest library in the world. Brother Congress took his name in honor of it, just as I named myself in tribute to another fabled archive lost thousands of years before it was built. That librarian was your great-great-grandmother, Nook."

"A librarian, like you are?"

"Not like me. We were not outlaws then, and we did not have to fight and kill to preserve the books."

"Is she famous?"

Sister Alexandria nodded. "A wise legend, to us. She foresaw the holocaust about to happen and sought to protect the words she loved from disaster. From her efforts, much of the peoples' library survived the war, only for it to burn on the pyres of the Unity after it. The librarians who fought to save it became hunted, and the first of our order."

"Was my great-great one of them?"

"She would have been, but she had disappeared. Her devotion was such that both Censor and Librarian alike thought she must have perished, her body overlooked among so many. To the founders, her loss left a stinging wound in their hope."

The woman reached over and picked up a silver disk and small plastic rectangle with a metal tip. "See these? They are like books in their own way. People in the past had the knowledge to put words and more inside them. They used machines to write on and read

them, but now they're scarce and usually found broken. Few have the skills or tools to repair them, and to possess one is a death crime for all except for the highest in the regime."

"Did she make them?"

"She did better," Alexandria answered, returning the objects to the shelf. "Prior to the scorching of the Earth, people had medicine and an understanding of the body we now only can dream of. They could cure the berclusosis, the poxes. Children didn't die from measles or the coughs. She worked with these miraculous doctors and scientists of her time. They discovered living beings could carry words inscribed in code within them. More than a book, a disk, or any other unliving thing."

"How many words?" Nook asked.

"More than you can imagine! And in the last days before the cataclysm, in secret, she let herself become the first, and only, person to have a library written inside of her. Not any library, either. The greatest in history: *hers*."

"So, if lost, its books would survive as copies!"

"Exactly!"

The girl wiggled a little closer, eyes attentive. "I like this story. How would you get the books out?"

"You would only need the right machine to read them back again. Brother Congress has built one capable of doing so. Yet without her legacy, it's a key lacking a door to unlock."

Alexandria held out her hands to the child. "Now this is the important part, Nook. Here's where this tale becomes yours. Listen carefully: Your ancestor did not die in the destruction of her library. Knowing the devices to decode the words inside her were destroyed, and that the Censors had discovered what she had done, she hid. She understood they would hunt her down and find her if they had any hint of her survival."

Nook took ahold of the librarian's fingers. "It still doesn't sound like it's about me."

"The words were indelible in her being. By design, her daughters were born carrying duplicates within them as well. So were her daughters' daughters, and their daughters after them. Bearers of her legacy for the future, all unaware of the priceless treasure to humanity hidden in them: *The Lost Library*."

The child tried to pull away, but Alexandria held on tight to her hands. "I don't like this story anymore. I don't want it to be about me!"

Unblinking, the woman pulled closer and met the girl's darting eyes. "Your ancestor kept a diary, and she hid her secret so well that it wasn't found until long after her death. It was intended to be given to the Librarians when she passed. Instead, forgotten, it laid under floorboards and the Censors got it first. We took it from them before they could destroy it, but they know, Nook. They know! We tried to rescue the others. I tried. But they hunted down and murdered your family. All of them. Everyone but you!"

The girl struggled. "No! My mom abandoned me!"

"She didn't understand why they were after her, but she did what had to be done to save you. Your mother loved you!" she said to the crying child. "She didn't say a word to help them find you, despite the terrible things they did to her in those final hours. I know because I read a copy of the report written by the commissary general himself, and I wept for her suffering."

A tear slipped from the woman's eye. "I failed to locate you and your mother in time to save her. For two years, I've searched to reach you before the censors hunted you down, and I promise I won't fail you again!"

"I don't have any books in me!" the child yelled. "You're wrong! I can't even read!"

The librarian kept her from rising and running. "You are the last. You are the most important person alive, Nook! Understand? You carry the salvation of humanity inside you!"

"Are you going to cut me up to take out all the books?" she said, weeping, "and put them up on shelves?"

"What? No," Alexandria said, pulling her into an embrace. "Oh baby, no! A prick on your finger is all old Congress needs. A drop of your blood contains a trillion words, and if you'll let me, I'll teach you how to read them!"

The child breathed heavy, crying in her arms until she could speak. "But they're still coming for me?"

"We have a place beyond the borders and reach of the Unity. I just need to get you there. It won't be easy. By now, they're aware I have you, and they will be merciless in their pursuit. Do you trust me?"

Nook lifted her head off the woman's shoulder to peer at her, nodding wet-cheeked before wiping her nose on a sleeve. "Will the Censors burn me, like a book? Like they do witches in the square?"

Sister Alexandria held her tight once more. "I am a Librarian. By my oath, my life, and my sacred honor, they will not touch you."

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# SciFanSat News

## The Bartleby B. Boar Nomination



goes to

**Peter J Gilbertson**

for their work

**The Skyring Derelicts: Part IX – The Counterweight**

**About SciFanSat**

SciFanSat is a monthly magazine of science fiction, fantasy and more! We are open to fictional prose and poetry that shelters with the range of speculative fiction genres.

Full guidelines can be found on our submissions page, but in a nutshell, we are looking for and will accept poetry of 500 words and under, and prose in the following categories: Micro Fiction (100 words and under), Flash Fiction (101 to 1,000 words), and Short Stories (1,001 to 7,500 words). Each issue has a theme, and submissions for that month are encouraged to include or at least allude to it.

SciFanSat publishes on the last Saturday of every month. [Submissions](#) for the next issue open the moment the [current issue](#) publishes, and remain open until midnight on the next-to-last Thursday of the month.

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