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Awful Afternoons

Afternoons among ancient anthologies and angled aisles are admittedly awful. Academics and adolescents alike: annoying. Acquiring an agreeable attitude amidst an arrogant audience alleviates any authentic affection.

Bribery

A bookkeeper admits below average athleticism, a bibliomaniac after all. Books are a better alternative against basketball. Boys are adamant about basketball's ascendancy, and argue against an apathetic audience. Almost begging, boys blatantly bargain before an annoyed adult. A bribe allowing a bout about bookshelves. Bemused, a bookkeeper asks about bargaining. A blatant buttering begins: buddy, bro, beloved bookkeeper.

“Boundless amusement awaits after approval.”

“Assure a bookcase broken as a bookcase amended.”

Although assurances are bound, an accountable adult begets alarming aftereffects by agreeing. Apologies are brushed aside as a basketball bounces against a bin. A blatantly awful attempt.

“Buckets.”

Cotton Candy

Concerned adults complain about breathing a cotton candy aroma. Bathrooms are closed, blocked by a certain crooked cohort. Abandoned cigarette butts and artificial containers back customer claims.

Demonic Cultivation

Dear Bookkeeper,

Another appeal. A blooming concern demands a blunt ask. A curse developed despite all defense, and a book contains a cure. At a beggar's behest, collect a book: Demonic Cultivation by Dorothy Bradford. Dastardly angels are defeated by demons alone.

Discretion advised, as angels are degenerate beings and disguise curses as biblical blessings. Beware, but don't be afraid.

Best,

Dana Choi

“A bizarre child, Dana.”

Everyone Calm Down

Error. Error. Error. Error. Err–

“Clicking can’t amend a broken computer. Calm down.”

A desperate college academic apologizes, clicking again despite being chastised. All dozen computers, broken. Everyone expects easy entry and effortless browsing, but alas. Definitely a dark day as an employee.

An electric crew arrives, “Computers?”

“Broken.” Duh.

Freak Accident

Foresight’s always discussed following freak accidents, but even foolhardy adolescents can discern a free bolt from a fastened bolt. Any conversation around caution creates a bunch eager for action, and climbing bookshelves ceased attention for future antics.

Fluorescent bulbs flicker above fallen bookshelves and bruised delinquents.

Foresight doesn’t avert children acting against authority.

Gambling

Greed can be all-consuming. Folks forget caution easily, fame and fortune formidable foes against good conscience. Borderline absurd, finding a group—children—actively gambling away behind a bookcase barricade.

Hell

A blinding heat encompasses a chamber fried from a draining day. Air conditioning cannot combat hell forever, hence a broken AC and fortitude. A few guests arrive, but exit fast. Baking alive, faculty admit defeat. Closing for a day can’t harm anyone.

Imposter

Infant children in colorful astronaut costumes dash back and forth in between aisles, escaping an assigned “imposter.”

Jared

“Jared, I’m busy.”

“Just gimme another chance, Carla. I can do better!”

Carla ignores him, directing her attention elsewhere. Jared grabs her iPhone, effectively holding it hostage.

“Jackass!”

He holds it just above her grasp, begging and crying for her forgiveness,

Carla holds her ground, “Jesus, don’t be a baby! Just go away and go home!”

“I can change. I’ll ditch Brianna. I’ll—I’ll get a job!”

“Carla isn’t coming, Jared. Just accept it,” I interject.

In a huff, Jared accepts his defeat, brooding as he exits.

“Jerk.”

“He’s all bark, don’t fret,” Carla concludes.

Kindling

40° Fahrenheit isn’t an excuse, burgling books for kindling isn’t allowed. 451 excluded.

Live Laugh Love

Librarian decor doesn’t entertain even in boredom.

Live. I live alone. I have a cat.

Laugh. I guess I like a good laugh.

“Carla, do I joke around enough?”

“A comic jokes less.”

Hm... Love. I love...

“Carla, I lo—”

“Denied.”

Movie Magic

Mean Girls masquerades as *Memento*. DVDs must have been mixed. Alas, a *Mean Girls* case cannot be found. *Memento* fans are in for a confusing film.

Night Events

Library events are always more fun for guests. Employees like myself are busy as ever, looking after children and adults alike, making sure nothing bad happens. Movie nights are a new challenge. Hidden couples canoodling, kids darting around, and adults blatantly ignoring everyone's little ankle-biters and enjoying complimentary beverages.

Energy is high in everyone but Carla and I. Her and I commiserate during breaks, but are forced back into chaos eventually. Carla isn't much for good conversation anyway.

Nevertheless, movie night ends. Carla goes home early, leaving me alone chasing hidden children and lovers away. Kiss at home, I beg.

Onomatopoeia

Bam! Loud noises can be heard from a few aisles over. *Crash! Bang! Kaboom!*
My expectations of carnage are met by a group in costume. An amalgamation of lanky limbs hovering as if mid-fight. *Gulp.*

"Everything okay over here?"

Batgirl answers, "Mhm!"

"And... costumes?"

"Homework," chimes Joker. *Hm.*

Everyone goes down a moment later, balance lost. *Boom!* Makeshift armories clatter on carpet, books falling alongside it. *Clang! Oof!* Batgirl has a difficult ascent, her cape getting caught on Aquaman's harpoon. Hulk has lost his green, color covering carpet and allies alike. Joker finds her face on a discarded book. *Groan.*

"Let's keep our crime fighting homework at home, okay?"

Perch

"Anthony, please come down."

"No!"

I clutch my hair in a panic. If he falls, I'm doomed. I'm accountable if any injuries befall Anthony on his descent.

I ask if he can come down on his own, but only get a meek "no" back.

God, help me.

Quilting Club

Mondays are booked for our Quilting Club. A quirky group of old ladies gossiping over fabric and cookies. Few meetings procure any finished quilts. In a library lacking quilting machines, not much could get done anyways.

But as a busybody myself, I quite enjoy a good gabfest. And boy, do quilters love a juicy affair. I'm often in poor luck, as I periodically find myself an area of focus.

Really?

"I can read an entire book in one minute."

"Oh, really?"

"Mhm, look."

He opens up a book I know he grabbed at random, as I'm not positive 1984 is generally a child's first choice. Pages flip quickly, making catching any context impossible. His plan of action revealed, he "finishes" his book, looking proud.

"Good job."

Spanish 101

Four girls study for a Spanish presentation, loudly rehearsing a skit.

"¿Dónde está la biblioteca?"

"Está atrás con el park-parque."

"Much-as gracias, señora."

"De nada, amiga."

"¿Qual libro necesitas?"

"Necesito a libro para my clase de español."

I put my headphones on, but even my loudest music can't drown it out.

"¿Quiero ir a una store para un snack, amigas?"

"¡Sí!"

Territorial

Every few days, there's a territory dispute that requires a tense treaty meeting. The kids find themselves in a Treaty of Tordesillas situation, and I play the pope.

Uncomfortable

In an attempt to teach students about the importance of sexual health and safety, the library hosted a series of lessons. Students sit stiffly under the gaze of their parents, while others ignore the presentation entirely, deciding that stealing the complimentary deodorant sticks proved more entertaining. It's difficult to get angry, as they need deodorant more than everyone else here.

Venezuela

Sign up now for the chance at an all-expense paid trip to Venezuela!

"Ugh, junk mail."

Carla leans over to view my screen, "It's free to sign up. No harm, right?"

"Carla, please tell me that's a joke."

Carla spent the next few days clearing a virus from her phone.

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

I came upon a sign displayed on the door of the employee break room: "Please Knock Before Entering." I oblige.

"Who is it?" A child answers.

"What's going on over here?"

"What does it matter?"

"I work here."

"Since when?"

"Since a decade ago."

"Wow, that's a long time. How old are—"

"—What's going on here, again?"

"Reading."

"I don't see a book anywhere."

"I'm writing a book."

"Where is this book, then?"

"Up here." She gestures to her head.

"Why don't we move this 'writing session' to a place that isn't restricted."

XXIV

With disdain, I place *Fast and the Furious XXIV* on the shelf. I wonder, if after the world ultimately ends, that this franchise will be the only thing to survive.

You Come Here Often?

“Come here often?”

“Fiona, I’m working.”

“It’s okay, girlie, I can wait.”

“What is wrong with you today?”

“I can’t be happy to see you, babe?”

“Babe?”

Fiona jokingly wraps an arm around my shoulders. “Call me James the way I Bond with the ladies.”

I laugh, “What? Gross.”

“Suit yourself. You don’t know what you’re missing!”

“I’ll try not to regret my decision.”

Zoomers

I catch a group of teenagers giggling amongst themselves, every once in a while glancing up at me. This usually doesn’t mean anything, but today has been worse than usual. High school and elementary school kids alike point at me for reasons I can’t discern. Whenever I pass by, their lips magically zip shut.

I ask Carla her opinion.

“Maybe it’s your outfit. Gen Z can be pretty brutal about that stuff.”

I look down at my outfit: green shirt, brown pants, black shoes.

“Zoinks.”

Afterword

An apologetic author alters an assignment after analyzing attempts at alliteration. Attempting an arduous assignment again, against all advice. Although another attempt allows an auspicious alternative, anymore A’s are an assault at an amazing afternoon. Adieu.