

THE LIBRARY

INT. DAY 1PM. PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Clarke (26, librarian) is standing at the main desk sorting a pile of books. He is wearing perfectly shined shoes and propped up next to them is an upturned sign from a union march with 'Save Our Library' written on it. He picks up the books and leaves the desk.

He walks through the aisles of an immaculate, empty library placing the books back on the shelves. Straightening them meticulously as he goes. He passes a sign that says "Due to thieves, DVDs can be collected from reception". He stops at the bookshelf labelled 'Fiction'. He picks out a thick book entitled 'The Count of Monte Cristo' By Alexandre Dumas. He opens it to a page with a tiny fold in the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY 1:30PM. PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Clarke is standing at the library desk on the phone. The book is open, sat on top of a clipboard holding a petition form with no names.

CLARKE

Yes, tomorrow so you'll need to bring them back between 9 and 4.

(pause)

Well if no one's available you can return them using the self service machines.

A young woman (Brook, 23) walks in carrying a bag full of books. Clarke greets her with a smile, she ignores him and pours the books out over the counter. He starts to process them whilst on the phone. Brook walks off into the library

CLARKE (CONT'D)

I know, me neither but that's technology for you. Imagine where we'll be ten years from now.

(pause)

No, I mean 'we' as in humanity as a whole, not just you and m--awww don't, that's--you'll still be around.

(confused)

Okay... Why? What of?

(pause)

'Breasts'?!
(pause)

Errrrm, just off the top of my head... 'Basters' or maybe 'Brasset' which is borderline because it's just an old word for 'brassard' which wouldn't work.

One of the young woman's books flashes up on screen as being overdue.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
Oh, you mean a 'mammogram'.
(calling out)
Excuse me!
(then back on the phone)
Sorry could you hold on for one moment, thanks.

He rests the phone down on the counter. The young woman returns.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
Hi, sorry, this one is overdue.
It's a day late. There's a late charge of 30p.

BROOK
Yeah sorry, it takes me half an hour to walk here so it seemed silly to come in to return one book and then come all the way back the next day with the others.

CLARKE
Okay, but it's the rules.

She smiles.

BROOK
What if I got hit by a bus on my way here and was in a coma for 3 years?

CLARKE
When you woke up you could apply for special dispensation.

BROOK
Okay well I'm not asking for special dispensation. Just normal, run of the mill dispensation. 30p's worth of dispensation.

CLARKE
You can apply for it, I can print you off a form.

BROOK
...Great.

She walks back into the library. He puts the book back on the pile and notices its title. 'The Carers Handbook' he looks at the other books on the pile, most are about caring for someone who's ill but one is about coping with stress and depression. He turns and looks at her in the library.

He takes the book about depression and opens the cover to scan it. It has been taken out so many times the stamps have gone onto the next page. He opens the cover of his book 'The Count of Monte Cristo'. It's only been taken out twice.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN LIBRARY.

Brook is looking at the 'Health and Wellbeing' section. Clarke stands near her sorting books and straightening things, trying to think of a way to approach her. Brook turns to him. (The following dialogue is spoken in hushed tones)

BROOK

Can you recommend any books about depression, anxiety, mental health stuff?

CLARKE

(taken aback)

Is it for you or...?

BROOK

Yeah.

CLARKE

Err, I can tell you which are the most popular.

He starts to walk back to the desk but stops.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

Oh, are you aware of the library closure the day after tomorrow? Which means you wont be able to withdraw any books, you can read them here though.

BROOK

Closing for...?

CLARKE

For good. Closing down.

BROOK

Why?

CLARKE

No money.

She turns and looks at the books.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

People not paying their late fees.

She smiles.

BROOK

I don't think 30p will save the library.

CLARKE

No. It's symbolic though. People stopped caring. Still, it's a library, you'd think the people in charge could read a book on how to run a business.

He reaches for a nearby bookshelf.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

There's enough of them.

He starts picking some out.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

"Running Your Business Into the Pound", "Business as yo...usual" spelt 'Y.O.Usual'. Why does every book have to have a joke on the cover now? Desperate for attention.

He picks out another.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

See, *this* is a proper book. No fancy colours and a statement title. That book to me says "Keep your best sellers lists, I'm a good book whether you read me or not"

Brook takes the book from him and reads the title.

BROOK

"Once You Go Black You'll Never Go Back (Into The Red)."

She looks up at Clarke. He nods, completely oblivious. She smiles and puts the book back on the shelf. He picks it up and puts it in it's correct place.

BROOK (CONT'D)

What are you going to do when this place closes?

CLARKE

I'll find something.

BROOK

And it's the day after tomorrow?

CLARKE

Yeah. Why do you think no one's here?

BROOK
There's no one else here?

CLARKE
No.

She looks him in the eye.

BROOK
It's just me and you, in here?

CLARKE
(nervously)
...Yeah.

There is a long pause as they look at one another. Then suddenly...

BROOK
(shouting at the top of
her voice)
TITS!

Clarke is in a state of shock.

BROOK (CONT'D)
(smiling)
You do it.

CLARKE
Why? No, I can't.

BROOK
Yes you can.

CLARKE
What, 'tits'?

BROOK
No choose your own.

A cheeky grin creeps across his face.

CLARKE
COCK!

They both laugh.

BROOK
FUCK!

They laugh again. Clarke's smile fades as he looks at a sign on the bookshelf reading "No book withdrawals after the 23rd due to library closure".

BROOK (CONT'D)
Your turn.

He looks back at her with a questioning gaze. She smiles.

BROOK (CONT'D)
Together.

They both take a deep breath.

BROOK (CONT'D) CLARKE
CUNT! CUNT!

They both laugh and relax. Suddenly Clarke's face drops and he goes completely white.

BROOK (CONT'D)
What?

He sprints off and Brook follows him. He runs straight back to the desk and picks up the phone that's still resting on the counter.

CLARKE
Hello? Hi, sorry to keep you waiting.
(pause)
Yes...that was... er--

The phone cuts out, he turns around to see Brook smiling with her finger on the hook.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
Why did you do that?

BROOK
I've always wanted to. Besides who cares? What are they going to do fire you?

CLARKE
Yes, I could lose my redundancy money.

BROOK
Oh. Sorry.

He walks past her back into the library.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY. HEALTH AND WELLBEING SECTION.

Brook is watching with a pile of books in her arms as Clarke looks through the bookshelf.

CLARKE
That doesn't belong here either.

He adds another to her pile.

BROOK

So far we've found lots of books in the wrong place but none that I should actually read.

CLARKE

We could spend half an hour looking for one book and find it. Or we can spend half an hour sorting the books and be able to find them all.

BROOK

I only want one book.

CLARKE

For now, yeah.

BROOK

You close the day after tomorrow.

He stops looking and takes half of her pile. They walk around the library putting the books they've collected back in their correct places. He points out where hers should go.

BROOK (CONT'D)

Have you made any plans for after?

CLARKE

Why are you so interested in what I do after the closure?

BROOK

I don't know I'm just trying to relieve you of some of the shock, when the time comes.

CLARKE

Well I can assure you, when the time comes I will relieve myself.

She smiles but doesn't say anything.

BROOK

What do you think about it? Do people need libraries anymore? I'm not being flippant, I want to know what you think.

He stops putting away books and turns to her.

CLARKE

Look at those books you're holding. Do any of them look interesting?

BROOK

They're all fiction, I don't really read fiction books.

CLARKE

Just skim read the blurbs, which one seems the most interesting to you?

She reads the blurbs of each of them and holds one out.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

That might be the last book that ever finds you.

BROOK

What do you mean?

CLARKE

The libraries are going, then it'll be the bookshops. Soon people will have to find their books. They'll have to search for them online.

BROOK

What's wrong with that?

CLARKE

What happens when they don't know what to look for? They search 'Top ten books', 'best sellers list'. Soon enough everyone's going to the same list. Everyone's reading the same books.

(pause)

Who's going to be writing the list?

He points to the book she's holding out.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

This might be exactly what you didn't know you needed.

Brook thinks about it.

BROOK

Come on. Let's leave the rest. You don't start an essay on the last day of school. We have this whole place to ourselves. Let's do something interesting.

CLARKE

Like what?

She has a mischievous look in her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY.

They are standing at the reception area facing the main library.

BROOK

So I'll take the computer and you take books. The question is...

(thinking)

What is the biggest iceberg ever recorded? Ready? 3...2...

Brook jolts as if she's going to set off early. Clarke is so eager that he sets off.

BROOK (CONT'D)

Just kidding, come back, we'll go on zero.

CLARKE

I thought you were going to go early. You seem like the kind of person who would do it as a bit of harmless fun but it would actually jeopardise the experiment.

BROOK

Stop calling it an experiment, it's a race. 3...2...1...0.

They both sprint off, Brook towards the computers and Clarke towards the geography section. She turns one on and he scans the shelves.

Clarke starts frantically pulling out books, reading their index and discarding them on the floor. Brooke is still waiting for the computer to boot up, tapping her feet, willing it to go faster. The log in page comes up but she rushes the password and gets it wrong.

BROOK (CONT'D)

Ahh! I got the password wrong. It's asking me to copy a code or something.

CLARKE

Just look at the picture and write what you think it says. It's just a security thing to test that you're a human.

She carefully types in the code but gets it wrong.

BROOK

I got it wrong.

She sits back, lifts her hands up and studies them.

BROOK (CONT'D)
(worried)
What does that mean?

Clarke laughs before returning to the hunt. He spots a promising book.

CLARKE
Here we go.

Brook gathers herself and logs in. She opens a web browser but it's too late.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
11,000 square kilometers! 11,000
square kilometers. Iceberg B-15.
Ha!

He kisses the book in excitement. Brook walks over.

BROOK
You were lucky.

CLARKE
A real man makes his own luck. I
plan to breed magpies and keep them
in pairs.

BROOK
Well congratulations, it's a
victory for books.

He looks around him at the discarded books scattered across the floor. His smile fades.

CLARKE
But at what cost?

She laughs then takes his arm and leads him away.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY.

Brook and Clarke are standing at opposite sides of a long bookshelf. On the floor directly below they have constructed 'battleships' using books on either side. They are taking it in turns to push a book through, trying to make it drop onto the other's 'battleship'.

CLARKE
I'll go first.

He pushes one through.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
What's your name?

BROOK

Don't.

CLARKE

What?

BROOK

It's a rubbish question. Is my name going to tell you much about who I am?

He is shocked.

CLARKE

No, I guess not.

BROOK

Miss.

She takes her turn.

CLARKE

Miss. So why did you come here? I've never seen you before.

BROOK

My Internet got... my Internet has gone down temporarily. I came to use the computer and thought I'd take some books back so I had something to do at home. Why does a man in his twenties become a librarian?

CLARKE

Because I like it. I like books.

He pushes one through.

BROOK

Don't you have books at home?

CLARKE

Yeah.

BROOK

Miss. So it's not the books.

CLARKE

I don't really read them at home though.

BROOK

Why not?

CLARKE

I don't know.

BROOK

Don't just answer 'I don't know'
straight away. If you don't know,
find out, think about it, then
answer. Why don't you read at home?

CLARKE

But I don't know. Miss.

BROOK

I believe you, but you answered
straight away again. Why don't you
read at home?

CLARKE

(pauses)
...It's too noisy.

She pushes one through.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

Are you a carer for someone?

BROOK

Yes. My mum. She has Parkinson's.
Why is your house noisy?

CLARKE

(pause)
I have a big family. Two brothers,
a sister and two step sisters,
mixture of ages. Chaos.
Do you look after her on your own?
Miss.

BROOK

Yes. Why do you like reading?

He pushes a book through.

CLARKE

I can't explain it to someone who
doesn't read fiction. Why don't you
read fiction?

BROOK

I'm not a big reader so I feel
like, if I'm going to do something
as boring as reading I might as
well learn from it. Miss.

CLARKE

Just because it's not written in
bullet points and facts doesn't
mean you won't learn something.
Every single story has a different
message in it.

(MORE)

CLARKE (CONT'D)

You're only ever one new experience away from being a slightly different person. That's what books are, that's what this place is, a gateway to thousands of tiny new experiences.

She takes her turn.

BROOK

That's nice. Did you come up with that?

CLARKE

I read it. You should try one. Miss.

BROOK

Maybe.

He takes his turn.

CLARKE

Why won't you tell me your name?
Why don't you want to know mine?

BROOK

I like the simplicity of this. It's undiluted. Just one afternoon. I know I'm romanticising it but why not? Let's romanticise it. Let's never see each other again.

CLARKE

What?

BROOK

Let's protect it. A perfect, unspoilt, oasis of a memory. No matter who we meet or what we go on to do, we'll always think about this afternoon and wonder about that stranger, who knew me better than anyone.

CLARKE

But it could be more than one afternoon, we might have a perfect week, month...who knows?

BROOK

I don't have a week or a month. I have an afternoon.

Brook pushes another book through.

CLARKE

What about your dad? Where's he?

BROOK
Now you're asking good questions.

CLARKE
Are you depressed?

They stop pushing books through.

BROOK
(pauses)
...I don't know.

There's a silence between them.

BROOK (CONT'D)
Oh this is useless.

She uses both hands and pushes as many books through as she can.

CLARKE
Oi!

BROOK
The loser has to tidy up.

She continues pushing books through. Clarke runs to the end of the bookshelf and round to her side.

CLARKE
Tsunami!

He charges towards her 'battleships' then very gently knocks them over with his foot.

BROOK
Disqualified. You're disqualified.

CLARKE
You broke the rules of engagement first, you're disqualified.

She pauses, knowing she can't argue. Then runs off.

BROOK
Abandon ship.

Clarke follows.

CUT TO:

INT. IN THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY.

They both collapse on bean bags, there is a short silence between them as they look up at the ceiling.

BROOK
I used to come here with my mum
when I was younger.

CLARKE
Me too.

BROOK
Maybe we've met before.

He smiles.

CLARKE
Maybe our parents have met before.

She smiles.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
What did you read?

BROOK
My favourite was 'The Tiger Who
Came To Tea'. It was silly. I loved
it.

CLARKE
Fiction.

BROOK
Probably the last one I read.
(smiles)
So what's the message in 'The Tiger
Who Came To Tea' then?

CLARKE
There will be one.

BROOK
What did you read?

CLARKE
A lot. Most of them probably.

BROOK
You've been coming here your whole
life?

CLARKE
Every week.

BROOK
That's such a big part of your life
just not being there anymore. Are
you not scared?

CLARKE
We've known for a while. I've had
time to prepare.

BROOK
Are you prepared?

CLARKE
No.

She reaches out and holds his hand. They both stare up at the ceiling.

Suddenly an alarm goes off in the main library.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
What's that?

She sits up.

BROOK
Shit! What's the time?

CLARKE
Half four.

She darts up and runs into the main library.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
Why?

He follows her. She retrieves her bag, the alarm is coming from her phone. She turns it off.

BROOK
I have to go.

CLARKE
Right now?

BROOK
Yes.

She walks to the door, he follows. She stops when she gets there and turns to him. She hugs him.

CLARKE
Bye, stranger.

She opens the door then stops.

BROOK
Maybe I should take a contact detail so I can get in touch to pay that 30p I owe.

CLARKE
Oh no, don't be silly. I was being a jobsworth. Honestly don't worry about it.

BROOK
Okay... but it's the rules.

CLARKE
(oblivious)
Forget it, please. It's the least I
can do.

She opens the door to leave.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
Hey. You should take this.

He holds out the fiction book she read the blurb of earlier.

BROOK
The library needs it.

CLARKE
Not any more. Besides, it's
damaged.

He goes to rip out the blank pages in the front of the book but can't bring himself to. Instead he makes a tiny tear in the corner of the page. She smiles and takes it.

BROOK
Do me one more favour?

He looks at her, questioningly.

BROOK (CONT'D)
Don't tidy up.

He smiles and she walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DAY OF CLOSURE. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY.

Workmen are measuring the windows and preparing to board them up. Brook walks past and enters the library.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE LIBRARY.

Brook walks in and looks around anxiously for Clarke. She can't see anyone except an old lady trying to use the self service machine. A female voice calls out.

LIBRARIAN
Hello there.

It's a different librarian, she is on the floor of the main library clearing up books from their game of 'bookshelf battleships' the day before. Brook is disappointed but politely responds.

BROOK
Good morning.

She looks at the books on the floor that he didn't tidy up and smiles.

LIBRARIAN
Are you aware that the library is closing today?

BROOK
Yes, is it okay to read one here?

LIBRARIAN
That's fine.

She smiles and walks past to the 'Health and Wellbeing' section. She looks at it for a while before moving on to another section, the fiction books. She stares at the bookshelf, deep in thought.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)
Are you looking for something in particular?

Brook turns to the librarian.

BROOK
No. I'm not. Thank you.

Her trance is broken by the sound of drilling from the builders outside. She looks up at the window as the light is blocked then around at the empty library.

She walks back over to the 'Health and Wellbeing' section, picks out a book called 'Stress, Anxiety and Depression' and walks off into the children's library.

CUT TO:

INT. CHILDREN'S LIBRARY.

She sits down on the bean bag and starts to read the book. As she settles, she notices something on the beanbag that Clarke sat on. It's a book. She picks it up, the book is entitled "The Tiger Who Came To Tea". She smiles and opens it. Inside the cover there is a piece of paper with a message written on it. It says:

"0784786885, incase you ever have another afternoon..."

P.S If you're reading this I assume it's because you changed your mind. If you're not reading this then I've wasted my time. Actually, if you're not reading this then I can just stop writing because you wont read it. I didn't even have to explain that, I could have just realised it in my head and stopped writing mid sen

Clarke (my name)"

She smiles. She takes out the piece of paper, puts it in her pocket and reads the book. The story follows a little girl and her mum having tea, their tea is ruined when it's interrupted by a tiger who eats and drinks everything. Her eyes fill with tears but she doesn't stop smiling as she reads. She finishes and returns the book, taking time to find its correct place on the correct shelf. She does the same for her book and walks to the exit. On her way out she stops and looks fondly around at the library for the last time. She reaches into her pocket and takes out 30p, she places it on the desk and leaves.

THE END.