

Scene: Main desk area at a small public library.
Closing time. A teenaged girl is busy straightening up for the day. She bends over to retrieve something she has dropped. MISS DENTON, the head librarian enters. Thirty-something, she is reading a book, the contents of which are seemingly all engrossing. She sits at her desk, still reading and does not notice the young woman until she suddenly straightens up and speaks.

ANNA

Hi, Miss Denton! I'm almost through here.

MISS DENTON

(Quickly putting the book down and moving papers to cover it.)

Anna! I didn't realize you were still here.

ANNA

I wanted to finish cataloguing those new travel books.

MISS DENTON

Splendid.

ANNA

I'll shelve them on Monday.

MISS DENTON

Good. That's fine.

ANNA

Are you okay, Miss Denton?

MISS DENTON

Don't use "okay," Anna. It's rather a vulgar term. And I'm just a little tired.

ANNA

Good thing it's Friday—or are you working tomorrow?

MISS DENTON

No. It's Edith tomorrow.

ANNA

So you have the whole weekend off?

MISS DENTON

Yes.

ANNA

Doing anything special?

MISS DENTON

Special? I wouldn't—

(The phone rings. MISS DENTON answers.)

Bracedon Public Library. Miss Denton speaking. Oh. (Pause.) Hello, Mr. Alexander. . . Yes, I can find that information for you, if you'll just. . . now? It's closing time, Mr. Alexander. It will have to wait until tomorrow. I'll leave a message at the desk for Edith. . . Edith Marsh. She's the weekend librarian. I'm sure she won't have any trouble—Excuse me? (Pause.) I won't forget to leave a note.

(Pause. She makes a face at ANNA and motions for her to leave. ANNA stays standing, openly eavesdropping.)

Well, that's certainly very nice of you, Mr. Alexander, but I'm afraid that I can't. No. I, uh, I have an engagement. Another time, perhaps. . . no, I don't have my calendar handy. Now, I must go. . . I won't forget to leave a note. You call in the morning. Goodbye. (Hangs up.) Really! That man is impossible!

ANNA

He likes you.

MISS DENTON

Nonsense.

ANNA

He asked you out again, didn't he?

MISS DENTON

He's lonely.

ANNA

That's why he asked you out. He only calls and asks for information so he can talk to you. He never calls when it's just Edith or me here.

MISS DENTON

You need to be going. Your mother will worry if you're late.

ANNA

My mother says that you should go out with him. He's a nice guy. You're both on your own. It makes sense.

MISS DENTON

Well, it's nice of your mother to be concerned, but I have no intention of going out with Mr. Alexander. He is a man of insufficient imagination.

ANNA

He keeps coming up with new questions.

MISS DENTON

Good night Anna!

ANNA

Okay—sure. I'll see you Monday. Don't stay too late. (Exits.)

(MISS DENTON watches her leave. She checks her watch. Sighs. Moves a few objects around on her desk then slides out the book she was reading from where she has stashed it. Just as she is finding her place again, a man comes half crashing through the doors. He slams them shut and fumbles at the lock. Turning he rests his back against them. MISS DENTON has stood in alarm and is starting to speak when he cuts her off.)

MAN

Lion!

MISS DENTON

I beg your pardon. It's after hours, sir, and I will have to ask you to leave.

MAN

There's a lion! (He gestures behind him.) Out there! In the street!

MISS DENTON

I said, it's after hours, sir.

MAN

The door's not locked.

MISS DENTON

I thought the girl had locked it. Now you'll have to come back another time.

MAN

Didn't you hear me? There's a lion. Right in front of the library.

MISS DENTON

We're open from ten till two on Saturdays.