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One common male fantasy is making love to a female librarian. The perquisites are that she hides her beauty behind large horn-rimmed glasses; keeps her long, dark hair in a bun that can be unraveled with a slight pull; wears prim and proper clothing; and has been so sexually repressed that a handsome stranger's touch sends her into a frenzied state of animalistic heat. While I wondered whether Dewey had encountered such a vixen in disguise, I heard a book page being turned.

When I walked back to the front desk, I saw the unexpected. Attired in the white calico "school marm" dress that she wore in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, a beautiful woman raised her head and looked at me through the lenses of her horn-rimmed glasses.

Katharine Ross.

What could be better than a woman for whom I had an obsession?

Nothing.

Katharine looked at me and sighed in disgust. "Can I dispense with the glasses? I don't need to see your drool with crystal clarity."

What could be worse than a woman who could read my thoughts?

Nothing.

"My apologies," I said. "It's just that I've lusted after you ever since I saw *The Graduate*."

"Perhaps already being in love with two other women isn't enough?" she asked as she tossed her glasses into a wastebasket.

"I'm only in love with one woman."

"This is a reference library that deals in truth," she said matter-of-factly. "And your statement is—how should I put it tactfully—a lie."

Perhaps she had a good point.

And not just a Dewey decimal point.

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"You're like Cher, Heaven's gatekeeper?" I asked. "An illusion based on reality?"

"I represent your version of the perfect librarian," Katharine responded. "A beautiful, intelligent woman who remains elusive. Cher, on the other hand, represents the last person you fantasized about before you died. God thought that would be the most comforting vision for each human adult confronting death—seeing the person he or she last wanted to bang. Children, of course, see their mothers and fathers."

"So, I've conjured a librarian to help me?"

"I'm here because you decided you had to have me," she replied. She paused as her irritation surfaced. "When I said, 'having me,' I meant in the professional *research* sense."

I still hate it when my expression blabs thoughts that should remain private. So, I did my best to suppress my primal yearnings and change the subject. "What's the purpose of the library?"

"The archive was designed to be the place that chosen members of a fully evolved human race were supposed to discover on their own. God is certain that you're not part of that group. Nevertheless, He allowed you to travel here when you assumed your arm position. It's the position you were in when you were returning to Earth in the vortex during your near-death experience. It will be how you'll be traveling to and from the library."

I looked at Katharine with a questioning expression.

"Yes, we have a lot of work to do," she said as she took the parchment and read it. "On Earth, you're frozen in the arm position for five seconds unless you choose to return from here sooner. The five seconds equates to eight hours in the library. Nevertheless, I suspect our task will require many trips unless we just happen to get lucky."

"Lucky?" I asked.

"In determining how to repair humanity and save everything in the Universe from eternal extinction," she said. "Shall we get started?"

I sat down in the chair in front of Katharine's desk and scratched the back of my head. "Maybe we should have lunch first," I suggested.