

Paper Trail

Proof of Concept

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Autumn. Chicago, 1935.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

CARY (m, late 20s) a librarian with round dorky glasses sits among stacks of books at the front desk. He's looking in deep thought at the cover of the CLOSED BOOK he's holding, its title written in GREEK.

CARY
(decidedly)
"A".

Categorically sets the book in a pile to his right. Picking up another one from the pile on his left.

A coquettish LADY (early 20s) briskly walks in the library. She's wearing a ruffly fishtail dress and carrying a folder with paper hanging out the sides. She approaches the front desk.

GRACEY
Would you please tell me where 'non-fiction' is?

CARY
(gesturing)
Yes, at the end of the galley on the first floor take the stairs to the second, then go left past history and it's to the right next to the reading area.

GRACEY
Got it, thank you.

The lady walks off. A moment goes by and she returns.

GRACEY (cont'd)
I'm not so great with directions.

CARY
Sorry but I'm rather busy.

GRACEY
Doing what?

CARY
I'm alphabetizing the books.

GRACEY
What for?

CARY

So people like you can find them.

GRACEY

How am I supposed to find them if I don't even know where to look?

CARY

Everything here is arranged intuitively so that you may-

GRACEY

Whose intuition?

CARY

Well, yours.

GRACEY

Not mine.

CARY

Miss, please.

GRACEY

That's "ma'am".

CARY

Ma'am.

GRACEY

If it were intuitive, would I be having this trouble?

CARY

Trouble? You hardly made an attempt to look!

GRACEY

Why should I roam around aimlessly when I could find what I'm looking for in half the time by receiving your warm escort and accompaniment?

CARY

Because I have books to sort. (*places book in pile to right*).

GRACEY

Mr. Librarian.

CARY

Oh fine.

Cary moves around the maze of stacks of books and around the desk.

CARY (cont'd)

This way.

The lady follows.

GRACEY

(looking around)

There must be a million books here! I don't see how you could possibly keep track of them all.

CARY

You see, we keep a book for that.

GRACEY

Have you read all of them?

CARY

Heavens no.

GRACEY

You'd probably be the smartest person in the world if you had.

CARY

I don't think the brain could handle that much information.

GRACEY

I'll bet yours can.

Cary notices the DRAGONFLY PIN in Gracey's hair.

CARY

That's a colorful pin you have.

GRACEY

Thank you.

CARY

Dragonflies are a fascinating animal.

GRACEY

Animal? Are insects animals?

CARY

Of course.

GRACEY

That sounds funny to say.

CARY
What else would they be?

GRACEY
Well... insects?

CARY
You know, the dragonfly has been around for over 300 million years. They've hardly evolved since then because they're such successful hunters of the sky. Although, they used to be almost 2 feet in length in prehistoric times! Can you imagine that?

GRACEY
(pats the pin in her hair)
I think I prefer this size.

The two at the section.

CARY
Here you are. It's the whole isle, and the next two over.

Gracey goes to the first book in the row at eye level with her. She looks intently at the horizontal binding, moving her fingers along the letters.

GRACEY
No, no.

She points to the book next to it.

GRACEY (cont'd)
Nooo....

She points to the book next to it.

GRACEY (cont'd)
Aha!- ... Mmm. No.

CARY
Eh- Ma'am.

GRACEY
Yes?

CARY
You do know the books are arranged in alphabetical order?

GRACEY
(aghast)
You think this is my first time in a
library?

Cary watches Gracey as she continues looking book by book.

CARY
Is there something I can help you
find?

GRACEY
Yes. I'm looking for the Declaration
of Independence.

CARY
(surprised)
The Declaration-... Ma'am this is the
'non-fiction' section.

GRACEY
Well, it happened didn't it?

CARY
Yes but that's not exactly how things
are categorically arranged!

GRACEY
Well then where is it?

CARY
In 'American History'.

GRACEY
Where's that?

CARY
Here...

The two walk over two rows.

CARY (cont'd)
This is 'American History'.

GRACEY
(looking down the
long isle)
Ohh.

Gracey looks at Cary, making the subtle request for him to
find the book for her.

CARY
(rolling his eyes)
It's right over here.

Cary hands Gracey the book. She inspects it.

CARY (cont'd)
Pardon me for asking... might I ask
why you are looking for the
Declaration of Independence?

GRACEY
Is that an unusual request for a
citizen of this country?

CARY
Well, no I guess not.

GRACEY
Ok then.

CARY
Before I leave then is there anything
else I can help you with?

GRACEY
(swiftly)
I'm getting a divorce.

CARY
(surprised)
A divorce??

GRACEY
(flipping the page)
Yes.

CARY
Then what on earth are you reading
that for?

GRACEY
I'm preparing my case.

CARY
For what?

GRACEY
(glancing at Cary)
My divorce.

CARY
Yes, but I don't think that's the
appropriate literature.

GRACEY

Why is it not appropriate?

CARY

I think it regards a slightly different matter.

GRACEY

How so?

CARY

How so- ... Are you telling me you don't know what the Declaration of Independence is?

GRACEY

(swiftly)

The document expressing a people's severance from unfair and oppressive monarchic rule... I think it suitable, don't you?

CARY

I suppose in *some* a way.

Gracey pages through the book.

GRACEY

This is much too long for me to read right now. I must be going.

Gracey begins walking back to the door. Cary follows.

CARY

Wouldn't you like to at least check it out?

GRACEY

No thank you I think I get the idea.

CARY

Just like that you get the idea?

GRACEY

Well the title pretty much summarizes the main point doesn't it?

CARY

So that's what you came here for?

GRACEY

No actually I came here to learn about the evolutionary success of dragonflies.

CARY
... You're lying.

GRACEY
Correct. Really I was just passing
by. Though I do have a recital
tonight I really must be going.

CARY
A recital? Are you a musician?

GRACEY
(proudly)
A *composer* you might say.

CARY
(gesturing to her
folder)
Is that your music.

GRACEY
Yes it is. Goodbye.

Gracey walks to the library entrance, Cary moseys around
behind the front desk. As Gracey exits the door, a PIECE OF
PAPER falls from her folder and is blown across the path of
the entryway.

CARY
Excuse me! Ma'am!

Cary picks up the paper and goes outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Gracey is entering a cab. Cary just misses her as she drives
off. He runs down the sidewalk trying to get her attention.

CARY
Wait! You dropped this!

Cary in poor judgment passes into the intersection at the
corner. A CAR slams on its breaks. ANOTHER CAR crashes into
its back end.

TWO UNDERCOVER DETECTIVES, dressed casually and standing on
the other side of the street, rush to the accident. TWO MEN
in topcoats and hats in the front car see Cary waving a
piece of paper and pointing.

One detective peers around the back and sees A CLEAR LIQUID dripping from the trunk wreckage. Takes a sample with his finger.

DETECTIVE #2
It's moonshine alright!

The detectives wrestle the men out of the car.

GANGSTER #1
Hey! What'd I do!?

DETECTIVE #1
Think you could sneak by us eh?

GANGSTER #1
You're arresting me!? That guy just hit us! That guy just ran into the street! (*pointing at Cary*)

The detectives are joined by a nearby COP CAR. The force takes the gangsters into custody. The gangsters get a look at Cary as they get hauled off.

GANGSTER #2
Who is this guy? (*at Cary*)

GANGSTER #1
(*getting hauled off,*
at Cary)
YOU! ... You're done kid! You're dead meat! You're chopped suey! You're a fried egg!

Cary very confused taking in the whole situation. An adorable OLD LADY (60s) lady pushing a stroller passes by.

ADORABLE OLD LADY PUSHING STROLLER
Jeez. That boy must be hungry.

DETECTIVE #1 (O'Reilly) (~45, mustache) returns to Cary and shakes his hand.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
Detective O'Reilly. (*flashes badge*).
We had a tip there might be a handoff going on around here. Thanks for helping us out.

CARY
I didn't exactly intend to.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
What were you doing running into the street like that?

CARY
Oh- a lady dropped this and drove off before I could get to her.

Cary holds out the piece of paper.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
A piece of paper.

CARY
Yes. I think.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
So you ran into the street?

CARY
It appears so.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
Must be some lady you're after.

CARY
After?- I just met her, I'm not-

The Detective cuts him off.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
What is this matter. (*gestures to piece of paper*).

CARY
She's a composer. I think it's her music. (*hands to officer*)

Detective #1 inspects the paper.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
Mhmm, sure is... Interesting quartal harmony. A-flat, good key for allegro string ensemble. Looks like an original draft. I like it. (*hands paper back*)

CARY
You're some detective.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY
Sure am.

CARY

She mentioned she's performing tonight. I think she might really need this.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY

Here. (*points to bottom*). "Chicago Symphony Orchestra".

CARY

I must to get this to her.

DETECTIVE O'REILLY

Mhmm, tell you what, I'm gona be headed downtown just now. I'll give you a lift.

CARY

Fine!

Cary and Detective O'Reilly get in his nearby car. An old librarian lady steps out of the library.

LIBRARIAN

Where are you going!?

CARY

(*getting in car*)
I'll be back shortly!

LIBRARIAN

The books aren't going to alphabetize themselves!

CARY

(*out window*)
You never know they just might!

The two drive off.

To be continued...