

LEVELED Book • S

FINDING THE TOME



Written by Rus Buyok • Illustrated by Thomas Boatwright



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“It’s Saturday afternoon,” Sarah whines.
“Why are we spending it at the library?”

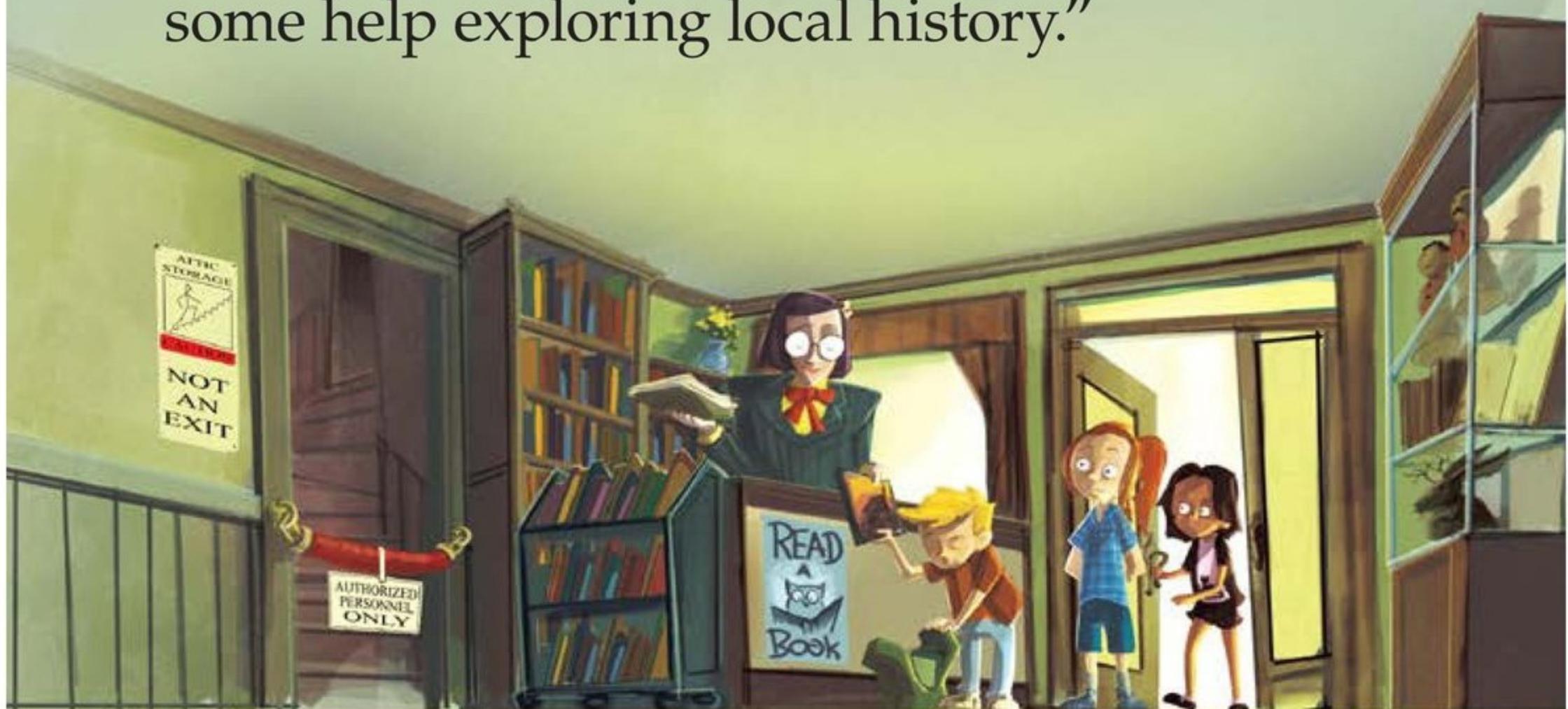
“I figured this would be the best place to piece together an **explanation** of why all these weird things have been happening lately,” I reply.

“Learning on a Saturday should be illegal,” she retorts. “In fact, Qynn, I’m making it illegal as of this moment, and if you pass through those doors, you’ll be breaking the law.”

“Stop being so dramatic,” I say as I walk up the steps with Jake, my little brother, bounding behind me. His backpack is crammed with books to return.

Inside, the comforting scent of books fills my nostrils as Jake unloads his backpack onto the counter before **meandering** to the children's section.

Sarah and I step up to the counter, and I say to the librarian, "Excuse me, but we need some help exploring local history."



"Oh, are you **researching** a report for school?" she asks as she scans Jake's books.

"Something like that," I reply, "except we were wondering if you have any historical records of strange events happening around town."

"You certainly live in the perfect town for that. Since the founding of Porter's Mill, people have experienced many odd occurrences."

"You know about this stuff?" Sarah asks.

"Only a tidbit or two, but we have some excellent reference material that might help." The librarian gestures for us to follow her to a table on the opposite side of the building. Large, old leather-bound books line the shelves surrounding us.

"I don't think I could even lift some of these massive books," Sarah whispers. The librarian **saunters** over and starts running her finger down one shelf. She pauses at an empty space and makes an annoyed face.





"It appears that the **tome** I'm searching for is missing. These books aren't allowed off the **premises**, so I can't imagine who would have taken it." It seems as though she is talking to herself now. "Perhaps Mr. Himmel moved it to the attic as part of the reorganization—it certainly wouldn't be a very popular read."

The librarian returns to us and says, "Sorry dears, but I believe Mr. Himmel, the head librarian, has placed the book somewhere. Unfortunately, he's on vacation for the next two weeks. If you'd like to return then, I'm sure he could assist you."

With that, she strolls back to the desk to assist someone else.

"Looks like our visit to the library was pointless," Sarah says as she stands up to leave.

“You heard her about the book possibly being in the attic,” I say. “We should investigate up there.”

Sarah **assesses** the doorway behind the librarian’s desk. Narrow stairs lead upward, but suspended on a rope in front of them is a sign that says “Authorized Personnel Only.”



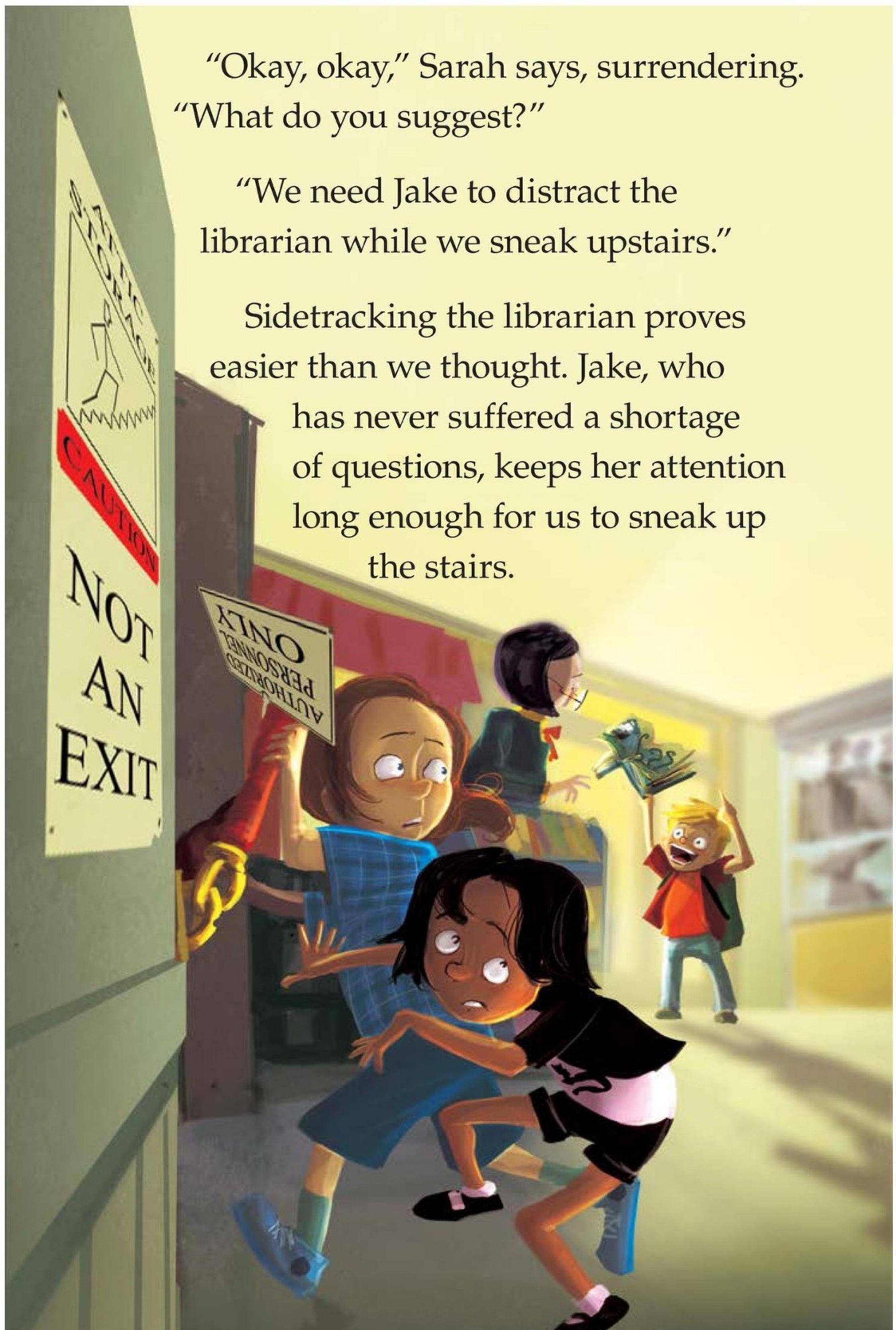
Sarah shoots me her “This is a bad idea” glare.

“Things are getting weirder around here, and I see no sign of them letting up. It’s time to be **proactive** and start figuring things out for ourselves,” I snap.

"Okay, okay," Sarah says, surrendering.
"What do you suggest?"

"We need Jake to distract the
librarian while we sneak upstairs."

Sidetracking the librarian proves
easier than we thought. Jake, who
has never suffered a shortage
of questions, keeps her attention
long enough for us to sneak up
the stairs.





The stairwell is longer and steeper than I expected, curving around the outside of the building. After ascending for some time, we emerge into a long, musty room. At the far end, a small, round window allows in the afternoon light. It's **gloomy** and dusty, but we can see row after row of books on old shelves.

“Compared to where we’ve been recently, this might as well be the playground at midday,” Sarah says, and I have to agree. Thinking about the Hollow and the Cave of the Lost, the room almost seems comfortable, practically cozy.

"C'mon," I say, "the book must be up here somewhere. Scan the titles for anything that looks promising."

Sarah takes one side and I the other, working our way down the shelves. None of the titles seem as though they would contain anything helpful. We're just about to the end of the shelves when we hear it—footsteps on the stairs.





We have no good place to hide, so we quickly cross the room and press ourselves into the dark space behind the open door. We wait as the footsteps grow louder. They sound too soft and **tentative** to be made by an adult, and for a moment I wonder if Jake has followed us.

Looking through the crack where the door hangs on its hinges, we watch. The footsteps reach the landing at the top of the stairs and suddenly stop. No one steps inside, but we can hear shallow breathing.

Sarah presses closer to the crack, trying to catch a glimpse of whoever is on the landing. When she brushes against the door, it moves with a creak that sounds like an explosion in the silence. We hold our breath and wait for whoever it is to pull back the door and catch us.

It doesn't happen, and after some time we move out from behind the door. No one stands on the landing, even though we never heard anyone go back down or enter the room. I carefully go down the steps to the first bend and peer around the corner. Nothing.





A loud thump explodes upstairs, so I quickly climb back up to find Sarah, **terrified**, staring at a large book on the floor.

"I don't know what happened," she says.
"I was waiting for you, and I just heard it fall."

I pick up the heavy book and examine the title: *Porter's Mill: A History* by John Porter III. Small text fills the yellowing pages, broken up in a few places by drawings. Someone tore out a few pages here and there, but it looks as though it will provide a lot of information.

Suddenly, we hear the **thunderous** sounds of many feet rushing up the stairs. I hold the book to my chest as the noise grows. I can hear something like children's laughter, but it's hard to tell. Sarah and I look at each other and then close our eyes, bracing for whatever is about to happen.



The door slams shut, startling us, and then everything falls silent. We look around, but we're alone in the room, and after a few moments we're able to move again.

"What's going on?" Sarah asks. "I'm so tired of all this."

"I am, too, but maybe this book will help," I say, trying to soothe her. "Let's get out of here."

Sarah nods and we cautiously make our way back down the stairs, where the librarian waits.



Glossary

assesses (<i>v.</i>)	evaluates or measures something (p. 7)
explanation (<i>n.</i>)	a statement or action that makes something clear and easy to understand (p. 3)
gloomy (<i>adj.</i>)	dark; causing a sad or unhappy mood (p. 9)
meandering (<i>v.</i>)	following a winding path or course; wandering without a destination (p. 4)
premises (<i>n.</i>)	a structure and the land that it sits on (p. 6)
proactive (<i>adj.</i>)	making something happen to control a situation or prepare for future situations (p. 7)
researching (<i>v.</i>)	studying or investigating, especially to discover new information or to find facts (p. 4)
saunters (<i>v.</i>)	walks at a relaxed speed; strolls (p. 5)
tentative (<i>adj.</i>)	not yet decided; hesitant (p. 11)
terrified (<i>adj.</i>)	greatly frightened (p. 13)
thunderous (<i>adj.</i>)	very loud; relating to thunder (p. 14)
tome (<i>n.</i>)	a large, thick, usually old book (p. 6)

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