

## One Last Night

It had been many years since Millie had jumped out of bed but on this night there was some extra vigor that flowed through her constantly aching bones. Millie moved with the life of her younger self as she dressed in her completely black outfit with matching black stocking cap for her moonlight mission.

As Millie enters her living/dining/kitchen/ everything room that her dear children call home for her now, she pauses at the multitude of pictures that make this new home bearable. They show a life fully lived: children, dear husband, and teaching. Her stomach tightens as her family, her legacy, stare at her.

“What am I doing?” She ponders. “I am a 80 year old woman clad in burglary clothes; they will think I’ve finally lost it. It was a foolish idea.”

Millie shoulders lower as she begins to turn when the moon perfectly illuminates the newspaper article tacked to her fridge: “LIBRARY SET TO CLOSE: NO MONEY. NO NEED IN THIS DIGITAL AGE.”

Millie straightens her back and resolves to complete her mission as she vacates the Elderly Happy Ending Complexes. The night air is crisp as she thinks, “one last night.” One last night in a place that breathes her life as much as those framed pictures. She bristles at the phrase “NO NEED” plastered in the headline.

“NO NEED,” she mumbles. “No Need! Have our elected officials even met people who ever read? Had they ever experienced the thrill of losing oneself in a different world to come up gasping forever changed? Have they seen children eagerly point out the balloon on each page as you repeatedly read Goodnight Gorilla? Have they seen her generation gather to keep learning because you never stop?”

“NO NEED.” She says louder. Her anger apparently among the minority as the powers that be voted to allocate the money to digital services and no longer a physical place with physical books.

This midnight journey to her library is not resistance just remembrance. A time to fully be surrounded by her library before it is boxed, barred and bolted.

She slides the electronic key stolen from her friend’s grandson, the custodian, and enters the pin code. All the lights turn green and the click announces her arrival once again to her library. The security lights give a different glow, but all Millie sees is her life here. The primary colored story time rug, where she sat through endless picture books with her children, still brightly invites all to come sit. The picture books and early chapter books she read endlessly out loud to her children as they adventured to the BIG WOODS and fought Monsters, and discovered Narnia. Millie swells with pride knowing each of her children are avid readers and then pangs with the loss, knowing the library was big part of their continued passion.

She finds a well-worn chair and plops down suddenly exhausted by the wild night pilgrimage. Millie breathes in deep at thought of all the memories here as she hears the metal click of the door.

Her pulse quickens at the thought of being captured, but it is not a policeman just two girls clothed in pajamas and robes entering the library. Millie thinks, “sisters perhaps.”

Smiling at the quest completed of entering the library at night, the girls scan the room as they finally take note of Millie. Millie watches as the girls’ smiles drop to a wide-eyed shock upon seeing her, but Millie just beams.

“Did you come for one last night too?” Mille asks.

The girls slowly nod their heads and return Millie’s open grin. “Well, I can’t think of a better way to say goodbye to our library than reading a story together,” Millie continues.

The girls’ face thrilled at the invitation. The younger one speaks, “Do you know Wayside School series. We just finished the third one and there is one more.”

Millie’s eyes sparkle, “Well we better get reading to find out what happens to those kiddos on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor.”

The girls’ squeak with anticipation and run to gather the book.

“Chapter 1: The Bells of Wayside,” Millie starts as the metal click of the door echoes once again. Three heads turn to see a lanky teenage boy. Mille clears her throat, “We are just getting started, would you like to help us say goodbye to the library?”

The boy’s puzzled look relaxes into a nod and joins the trio.

Millie breathes in deep and starts, “It is very important that the children at Wayside...”