

A large, menacing monster with a fiery left side and a bubbly right side, roaring with sharp teeth. The monster's left side is engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames, while its right side is covered in numerous translucent blue bubbles. Its eyes are glowing red, and its mouth is wide open, revealing sharp, pointed teeth. The monster's skin appears dark and textured. The background is dark and smoky, with some debris visible at the bottom.

THREATS THWARTED AT THE LINCOLN LIBRARY

Written by the campers of "It Could Happen Here"

Threats Thwarted at the Lincoln Library
A Co-Written book crafted by the campers of "It Could Happen Here."
a SummerWrite 2025 camp.

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Preface:

Our story is set in 2025, when new threats crop up in the Lincoln Branch Library—but nothing our cast of unusual heroes can't handle! (With the help, of course, of their creative authors and the staff and books of the Library.) In the beginning you will read an introduction to each main participant. Then there will be Prologues to provide further background.

Please note that the main story sections, the testimonies of the participants, is divided into three parts: Beginning, Middle, and Climax. Some participants wrote their scenes like a diary, in the first person. Others chose to write about themselves as if they were a journalist reporting on someone else. It was way too complicated to try and figure out an exact timeline and place every scene in time order. When you switch to a new section, you may need to notice that you are going back a bit to an earlier time.

Some scenes are told more than once, from various points of view. Don't expect all the witnesses to agree on all the details!

We hope you enjoy the adventures!



Part I: our main characters, in alphabetical order

Agena, a D&D character come to life, by Elwyn

Agena is a mindflayer that emerged from a Dungeons & Dragons (DnD) character sheet left behind on a magic shelf in the Lincoln Library. They had been an artificer and are extremely logical and intelligent. They are able to appear human with the help of a magical talisman in the shape of a D20 roleplaying die. They are extremely noise sensitive, and at the slightest hint at small talk will leave without a word. They carry a notepad in which they note down the behaviors of any intelligent creature they meet. They are unsettlingly insightful yet inept at pointless interactions. They are almost always reading, sometimes while listening to an audiobook. They also will occasionally zone out, thinking about philosophy. They will very often randomly resume a conversation from weeks or months ago. Their greatest fear is being manipulated, but spiders are a close second, tied with things not going to plan. They are a university student, and they pay their school fees with the gold pieces on their character sheet. They are studying for their PhD. in biophysics; they also collect art.

Artemis, the Alien, written by Myles

Artemis is a ten-year-old boy with shoulder-length black hair. He is actually an alien from a planet called Fharare, and finds himself on Earth by surprise. He has been here before (it was not a good experience) and is not at all sure why he has been teleported here again.

Crowley, the Pokémon trainer, written by Crowley

Crowley Potyey is 10 years old and has gray hair. She is a Pokémon trainer and has a Ditto as her main Pokémon. She is always on a search for new Pokémon to capture, as she is sure that she wants to be a champion!

Emma, the Ghost Lady, written by Cyntea

About Emma (the Indian-American ghost, the perfect girl who died as an old lady and misses her family and friends):

- Emma is skinny and has long black hair all the way down her back.
- From India, she wears an Indian dress.
- Loves to read.
- Wanted a trillion dollars and a mansion.
- Born in 1925, she died in a plane accident in 2016. She is 91 years old today. (She stays the age she was when she died.)
- Has six siblings, three sisters and three brothers
- Swam in her pool at home when alive.
- Has a grey cat.
- A fear of heights and holes.
- Wanted a trillion dollars and a mansion.
- Emma's mother hated her, even when she was a baby. Her dad loved her, but her mother didn't because she was TOO PRETTY.
- She has four lifelong friends.
- She is now a ghost.

Ghost Emma sees in black and white.

Ghost Emma hears people chatting.

Ghost Emma feels herself flying and people going through her body.

Emma is a ghost from a long time ago. She was on a plane and it crashed. But how? Well it happened because she was in the front instead of the back. And then POW! She died. She woke up in the library she had gone to all her life. She read books, and then she went to the play area and then the lunch area and then she read books again. When no one could see or hear her, she realized she was a ghost.

NOTES:

- People can't see ghosts. They can see you, but you can't see them, because ghosts are clear or black and white.
- People can't smell her because she smells like nothing. But she can smell you, because you're a human, right?
- People can't hear her because she is quiet like a mouse...plus you still couldn't hear her. But she can hear you, right?

- People can't feel her because she's a ghost. But she can feel you.
- People can't hear her heart beating or her tummy growling because she's a ghost (and she's far away...or close to you and when her tummy is growling from steps away from you, you still can't hear her tummy—or her heart.
- People can't hear her fly because she's a ghost. But you're not a ghost, right?

Joy, a preteen girl, written by Wendy

Joy is a human 12-year-old girl, skinny with big brown eyes—which she hides behind her long brown hair because she is shy. She is always looking down, and speaks with a very quiet voice, often saying “I dunno” when anyone asks her a question. She walks on her tiptoes often. Other than that mumbled phrase, she usually has good manners and speaks rather formally, in full sentences like a book. She doesn't use contractions. For example, she would say “I do not have enough books,” rather than “I don't.” She has a mother who works all day. She has no siblings. Although she is fond of animals and good with them, she has only a goldfish for a pet. (Her mother says pets are too much extra work.) The worst day of Joy's life was when her father didn't come home. She is afraid she might lose her mother someday. She comes to the library every day that it is open and finds a chair in a corner to read. She wants to be left alone to read. Fortunately, the children's librarian, Matt, and the clerk, Natale, know her tastes and recommend new books for her each week. She is currently working through the shelf of Bruce Coville books.

O'Malley, the cat, written by Grace

O'Malley is an orange cat who once had a family that loved him and read to him, but when they moved he got left behind. Now, O'Malley sneaks into the library each day for comfort and safety.

Aaron/Timothy/William etc., the Shapeshifter, written by Aaron

- A shapeshifter who does not know their true species. As far as they know, they have always existed.
- He wants, and tries, to blend in
- Originated in an alternate dimension where magic is common. Came to Earth by accident because of a space-time warp caused by acceleration of matter faster than the speed of light.
- Comes to the library in order to continue studies of human culture in order to better blend in.
- Is always looking around to try and observe surroundings. Does not shape shift around others.
- He will try to completely understand anything.
- Often takes the form of a child because he does not know as much about adults. Mostly reads picture books because they are easiest to understand and are meant for children who are still learning basic things about the world.
- Is very science-minded. Tends to over-explain things.
- Ultimate goal is to open a portal to his home world. He has no known family, never met his parents that he recalls.
- Doesn't always think ahead about his false identities and ends up making up silly-sounding names on the spot.
- Is only afraid of being discovered for what he really is.
- Even though he shapeshifts into animals and even objects, he always retains a minimum of his human senses and gains any senses of an animal or alien he sees and imitates.
- The laws of physics are different in his home dimension, so sometimes he tries to do things that are not possible, like walking through walls.
- The best thing that happened to him was when he tried pizza for the first time. He doesn't eat it often, though, as he does not need to eat, despite adapting the appearances of creatures that do.
- The worst thing was being stranded in an alien universe.

Part II: PROLOGUES

Aaron/Timothy/ William Shapeshifter Prologue

In a dimension adjacent to ours, actually in overlapping yet separate space-time, radiation worked differently. It interacted with matter in a way not seen in our universe, and it was what we would call magic. In our universe, governed by similar but not identical laws of physics, this magic enabled a select few to shape shift—these creatures were born with their power.

One such creature, being an orphan, knew not what species he really was, nor his name. He lived mostly in isolation until an incredible thing happened. Somehow, a particle was accelerated faster than the speed of light, ripping a hole through space-time and sending the shape-shifter to Earth. The shape-shifter wandered for months before finally gaining a basic understanding of Earth, its physics, and its population of humans.

Afraid of being discovered, the shapeshifter assumed a variety of human identities until finally he came upon the Lincoln Branch Library, and upon realizing the vast amount of knowledge it contained on human culture, the shapeshifter decided to stay and learn. Two weeks later, this story starts. (Well, two weeks, three hours, ten minutes, and 32.28492 seconds later, but I rounded down because that is apparently an acceptable option in this society, which I completely fit in with, because I am human and not the shapeshifter this story is about.)

Artemis Prologue:

Artemis is a ten-year-old boy with shoulder-length black hair. He is from a planet called Fharare (pronounced “F-har-AR-ay”) which has been his hometown for the past few years. He was the smartest being on Fharare. He takes any chance to get smarter and loves to read, play sports, and paint. His goal is to gain information and find a way to teleport. He looks like the average human but has very sensitive senses, especially an enhanced sense of touch, as he can feel anything that comes within an inch of him and sense heat signatures. Because of his senses he is a very bright student in many subjects, including P.E. On the day our story starts, he was teleported to earth while sitting in his room and staring at a mirror.

Part III: Our Stories Begin

Aaron/Timothy/ William Shapeshifter (written by Aaron):

Aaron, as he was going by that day, decided to visit the library. Even though it was where he went every day, it still was hard to decide whether to risk being discovered—so he could read—or to play it safe and stay home, which for him was currently an antique store where he turned into old coins or lamps or other objects for the night.

Right that morning, Aaron had been in the form of an antique uranium glass lemon juicer hiding in a display case. (It was bright green and glowed under a blacklight, which is very cool, but it's not really important information, which is why it is in parentheses.) As soon as no one was around, he quickly turned into a human—a blond boy with very short hair, dressed in jeans and a plain white t-shirt, so as not to stand out—and walked at a brisk pace through the unusually cool summer morning until he arrived at the library.

A particularly large crowd of people was waiting to go in the library today, and Aaron used the crowd to slip in unnoticed. The library was quiet, of course, but still somewhat louder than usual. Aaron felt his pulse quicken whenever he passed a person, expecting to be discovered for what he really was, but he received only friendly greetings and he was able to calm down.

Now, with little fear of being discovered, he headed towards the children's section, only to discover an entire empty shelf that normally had some of his favorite books. Of course, one or two books were often missing, having been checked out, but an entire bookshelf? This was highly unusual. Something was happening, and it couldn't be good.

For now, he decided on a different book, but he still couldn't concentrate. He couldn't focus on the new book smell, or the sound of turning pages, or the story itself. With these books missing, it was as if a part of Aaron was missing as well. (Of course, this refers to a strictly metaphorical part, and not a more literal part such as a spleen. Emotional pain, not physical.)

Aaron managed to concentrate enough to finish reading three short books, and that was when he couldn't take it anymore. He stood up from the chair he was sitting in and walked over to the same shelf again. It was still empty, of course. Noticing again the large amount of books gone, Aaron decided to do some investigating. He knew it was risky, but he really wanted those books back. So he halfheartedly hobbled up to the front desk and asked, "Who checked out all those books over there?" while pointing at the shelf (Which was visible from the front desk, although not obvious enough for the people at the desk to notice the absence of books on the shelf.) The librarian, clearly confused, looked through the checkout history and realized the books had not been checked out! The librarian told Aaron the books had been stolen and thanked him for telling someone.

The librarian asked him if he had a library card, and when Aaron reluctantly replied "no," the librarian gave him one and asked him to write his name and age on the card. Aaron knew he couldn't. Even if he made up an age for himself, the card would be utterly unusable tomorrow when he was in a different form. So he asked for a pen to sign his name with and, while the librarian's back was turned, he quickly transformed into a large beetle and flew out the library door as soon as it was open.

His go-to escape form was a beetle, and sometimes when he was particularly afraid of being noticed, he would transform into it to avoid being seen. Flying above the sidewalk, Aaron decided to return to the library. So ten minutes later, in walked a slightly older-looking boy, a little taller and with different facial features and hair. It was enough to fool most people, and only one or two really needed to be tricked with this deliberate disguise deception.

The librarian at the desk clearly didn't recognize him, and asked him for his name. Panicking, he looked around the room and blurted out "Book—no—uh...mirror...guy?" The librarian could tell he was making it up, but thought he was just a shy kid who didn't like talking to people. Aaron, however—or Timothy, which was the name he just made up for himself—still thought the librarian might be onto him and quickly grabbed a book at random off the shelf. He sat down and pretended to read it while glancing around to make sure no one else was watching him. Only after three minutes did he notice that he was holding the book upside down. He decided to actually read it, and it turned out to be pretty good. He was really absorbed in it when he heard footsteps behind him.

Turning around, he noticed a man filling a bag with all the books on one shelf. No one else seemed to realize. Then, the man walked out the front door without checking out the books. Timothy, abandoning all caution, bolted towards the book burglar, yelling, "Hey! You can't steal those books!" The man was out of the library by now, and upon realizing he had been discovered as the thief, ran as fast as he could, dropping a small card. Guiltily, Timothy realized he could have saved those books. He could've turned into a cheetah, or a car, or something else to catch that man, but he had been held back by his fear.

He decided to look on the bright side: at least he had been bold enough to try to make the man stop. Then he noticed that the card the man dropped was a business card.

O'Malley (written by Grace):

O'Malley wakes up suddenly to the movement of people's shoes walking and the sound of good morning exchanges between the people who pass by him. It rained most of the night, and though O'Malley fell asleep soaking in the early hours of the morning sun, his fur is still a little bit damp. O'Malley makes his way down the block to the Lincoln Library in hopes of slipping in once the library doors open. O'Malley finds himself peering out the side of the library building, waiting for someone to walk inside.

After an hour goes by, O'Malley nods off to sleep until he is startled by the sound of a young girl putting her bike in the bright yellow bike rack in front of the library. O'Malley thinks this must be his chance to sneak into the library; however, the young girl just stands there, outside the library. After about ten minutes had passed, O'Malley began to lose hope in the young girl heading into the library. Suddenly, he noticed a shift in her shadow as she was moving towards the door. O'Malley followed close behind, in his best attempt to be as light on his paws as possible, ever so careful not to make a sound. O'Malley slipped in the door and walked with his fur brushing against the library front desk so the librarian could not see below, and hurried over to settle behind a bookshelf in the toy library.

The same young girl that O'Malley had snuck in behind was reading in a comfy chair in the toy library. The girl called out to O'Malley, "Here kitty, kitty." O'Malley was startled by the young girl's attention and instantly perked up before dashing to a hide behind a bookshelf on the other end of the library. O'Malley had not been noticed by anyone in quite a long time, not since he lived with the Russells.

O'Malley once had a big, loving family that raised him from kittenhood. They found him in a box all alone. The Russell family was a lovely couple with two little girls who loved to read, and they especially loved reading to O'Malley. In the first six years of O'Malley's life before living outside, he grew up with the Russell family, and he loved his two girls, and he LOVED when they would read to them. When the Russell family moved, O'Malley got left behind. Now, O'Malley finds comfort in the company of books and the library's warmth in the winter and cool air in the summer.

Agena (written by Elwyn):

I'm at my house, a loft bed over a desk which is bordered by rocks, pottery items, and a light in the shape of a lion's head. A huge bookshelf takes up one wall, and paintings cover the other, the only window a vast transparent clock taking up one wall. The room is very bright. Partitioned off by a translucent screen, is another room with a large worktable strewn with tools, and a 3D printer. Across from that is a box full of items from the DnD world.

I look out my window and see that cat going by, closely following the shapeshifter. Perhaps I should tell that one to alter his stride. I step over to my bookshelf only to find it is void of books I have not read. I quickly put on my roller skates and strap the bookshelf onto my back. At least university only resumes next week, so I have time. The professors try so hard but their lack of knowledge of aliens is so pitiful. Stepping out the front door I flinch at the sound of traffic, but once I put on my headphones I can relax. Several people leap out of my way, although they would not have been hit.

I catch up to the cat and shapeshifter just as they enter the door. I put my shelf down next to the check in and look to find the shapeshifter. He is in the guise of a preteen boy, and I tap him on

the shoulder. He jumps and then tries to seem unsurprised, yet he is evidently faking. “You need to adopt the mannerisms of the people you appear to be, otherwise it is easy to see through your act,” I say, “although humans are quite oblivious.” He nervously looks around “What are you talking about? Who are you?” Seeing that he may attempt small talk, I turn and leave.

I find several books and settle in to read. The innocuous looking (at first) chair next to the computers is unusually normal looking, and I pull the lever on it several times. At first it becomes a tentacled mass of limbs supporting a large chamber, then a glass vial, then a mass of extremely comfortable tiny blue spheres. But the books I have chosen seem strange, and once I finish them the reason is clear. Each one is unfinished, the final pages blank. And these stories are conspicuously absent from the catalogue (which I have memorized as well as most of the books) in fact, the books I expect to be there are all missing and replaced with these unfinished ones.

Tapping absently at my notepad I consider my options. If only the druid was here. Her wisdom score was much higher than mine. The screensaver spiraling on computer 3.1415926535... reminds me of the detect magic spell. When I open the computer a bafflingly long script that seems vaguely familiar fills the screen. My eyes are drawn to a line which says “(opens door) how did you escape this time (to empty room)?” Why does this seem familiar to me? I imagine some sort of real life Dungeon Master typing away here, yet the elusive memories of this I have suggest otherwise. Again, I feel like something is hidden from me.

I begin to skate to the check-in desk, and once again the cat darts past me, ginger fur on end. On my shelf I find that no books have been swapped, but to my annoyance I see that an illusory volcano has sprouted. A light flickers in the ceiling, and one of the librarians mutters about a toad in the ductwork. She puts a sheet in the photocopier and several invoices for illumination insects come out. When I ask her about the books she says, “if this is about the ones that have been stolen, you should ask him,” pointing to a teenager in boots.

“The books seem to have been swapped for unfinished ones,” I say. She writes this down on a piece of paper and pins it to a board. When she connects it to the theft of the books it turns into a small pinkish fish and falls to the floor. Unsurprised by this she picks it (perhaps a herring?) up, and it reverts to a piece of paper. When she pins it to a board dominated by reports of water spontaneously boiling, but also a few reports of intellectual property theft, the number 536.71¹ appears spontaneously on the Librarian’s evolving evidence board.

“That would be our colleagues in the probability physics department, superimposed to the supernatural beings department” she says. The bead track is the most likely path, I think. I bend down and place a sheet of paper—a note for the cat—in one of the books on my shelf, then leave.

Joy (written by Wendy):

Joy dismounted her bike and locked it up to the yellow part of the bike rack ten minutes before the Library would open. She always got there early—she wanted to get her spot on the artsy bike rack, which was shaped like three bicycles, red, yellow, and blue. She had a superstition of her own making that the sunshine yellow bike would bring her a happy day, but the blue one brought sorrow and the red one brought anger.

It was fairly cool—only 72 degrees outside, but it was humid from last night’s rain shower, and she could feel her Pikachu t-shirt sticking to her back. Mr. David, the security guard, smiled at her and waved hello. She waved back shyly and then looked down at her feet and turned around. She knew the librarians wouldn’t let her in early. There was a worm on the damp sidewalk next to the garden. She picked it up—so it wouldn’t turn into worm toast—and placed it back on top of the soil, and it quickly dug in and disappeared. The sun glared down at her, and heated up the stinky exhaust from the cars that were lined up at the streetlight.

Across Joseph Avenue, on the block to the North of Avenue D, a blond boy in jeans and a white t-shirt came strolling up the street. She was always the first person waiting to get in, but there was always someone coming just on time from that direction. Oddly, it was never the same person. One day a grandfatherly man with suspenders and a cane, the next a teen boy with earbuds, and a

¹ Theories and Laws of Thermodynamics in the Dewey Decimal system (used to organize books in libraries). The number to find Maxwell’s demon (a thought experiment meant to contradict the second law of thermodynamics.)

hoodie even though it was summer. Another time it was a woman in a suit who looked like she was on her way to work, but turned in at the library. Only once had no one arrived just as the doors were being opened. But as Mr. David had held the door, a large beetle had flown in. What was that about?

She didn't want the approaching boy to talk to her, so she pulled a book out of her backpack. "Skull of Truth," by Bruce Coville. She had already finished it, but the last chapter had been really good and would allow her mind to escape into her reading. She didn't even notice when a girl, a bit shorter than her, came up beside her, until the girl spoke. "I like the Pikachu shirt," she said.

Crowley and Joy (Cowritten by Crowley and Wendy)

Crowley Potyey is 10 years old. She has a Ditto. Crowley is going out to catch two Pokémon. Pink Princky appeared. Pink Princky was caught. ??? (a mysterious Pokémon) appeared. ??? ran away. Crowley rushed to the library. She found out that the mystery Pokémon's name was Eternatus.

Then she took "The Sword and Shield" Book off the shelf and read it. She flipped to pages 106 and 109 and found out more about Eternatus, Zacian and Zamazenta. At 12:47. When Crowley was crossing the library, Spiritomb came out of his pokeball and noticed Diglett and Dugtrio.

Crowley saw a girl that was leaning over putting a worm in the soil. She finally stood up and took out a book to read. And then Crowley noticed that she had a Pikachu shirt.

"I like the Pikachu shirt," Crowley said. "That is Ash's Pokémon. Ash is my rival. Ash is also a champion, but I beat him in a Pokémon battle."

Joy was conflicted. She had always wanted to meet a Pokémon trainer. But did she believe that this little girl in front of her was a Pokémon champ? "Okay..." she said, and turned to go into the library.

"Thanks for putting the worm back in the soil. That helps all the grass types like Bulbasaur, Iron Leaf, Arboliva, Floragato, and Shroomish."

Joy quickly stopped and said "Oh, you like grass type, too? I have a wonderful garden at home. I like to pretend the plants are Pokémon."

Pokémon are not pretend, they are real"

"I have not seen a Pokémon."

"I know. I did not see one until I was ten...Ditto go!" Crowley said.

Ditto came out of the pokeball that she tossed.

"Wow! I have never seen a Pokémon for real?"

"Have you ever gone to the wild area? It's a place where Pokémon go, so there's a lot of higher level Pokémon which is bad because the Pokémon are harder to catch. Because the higher level they are, the harder they are to catch. I only have level 60 Pokémon. I can't catch the higher level ones without level 100."

Joy dropped some of her shyness. Here was a girl who liked some of the same things that she did, and knew way more about them. She had an overwhelming curiosity to see what else Crowley could teach her. She flipped her hair back from her face and asked "Is there anything else that is real that people don't know about?"

Crowley thought for a second. "Well, ghosts, of course. Some people get it that there really are ghosts, but most people don't"

Joy was excited "I thought so! I thought I saw a ghost in our attic one time."

Crowley smiled. "If you've glimpsed one before, I'm sure you have the gift. It just takes practice and you'll start seeing them on a regular basis. Would you like me to show you how?"

Joy said sure. Crowley said, "Well, not today. I'm busy. It has been nice meeting you, but I have to find more Pokémon to catch."

"Okay, but will I see you here again?" Joy asked, her brow wrinkled just thinking about losing this intriguing new friend. "I'm here every day that it's open."

"Don't worry, Joy, I'll be back. I can sense that this library is attracting lots of Pokémon. And we still haven't found the ghosts that I sense are here. I'll find you next time I'm here!" Joy watched Crowley run and jump through the library door. So much energy! She felt exhausted by watching Crowley and, after being more social than she was used to, decided to not even look for a new book, but find a chair in the back of the toy library where no one would bother her and just reread **Skull of Truth** from the beginning. It was that good!

As she sank into a comfy chair, her eye caught on something orange under the shelf of board games. Orange and...fuzzy? Had someone dropped a stuffed animal? It flopped over on its side, showing two triangular ears and a striped tail. A cat!? In the library. She called out softly “here kitty, kitty.” The cat instantly perked up and ran away.

She read quietly for an hour or so and then thought about the cat again. What would the poor thing eat if it was stuck in the library? Thinking of that she got hungry and went to the community room to see what the free lunch was that day.

My Life, by Emma (written by Cyntea)

As a child:

When I was ten I already had the four friends who would be my lifelong friends. They were also in fourth grade with me, and we did classroom projects and for gym we had to do soccer and basketball. And I loved basketball, but my friends hated it. And I was short. How surprising that I can do basketball well, but I’m short.

College:

Then, when I was 18, I was going to college and I was having a math test coming up. The good news is that I studied. On the test day I was at the test with my friends—we were behind each other. The teacher prepared us: “Now it’s time to start your test. Now check your desk before we start,” Mrs Daisy said, very serious. My tummy started to have afraid butterflies inside it. Then I checked my desk two times and the test started. We had 120 minutes until it ended. Question 1 said “Multiply 200x18” My answer said 3,600, so I circled B and went to the next question, which wasn’t easy...

119 minutes later. One minute left. I had two questions left, but I was happy. Before it was lunch time and PARTY TIME, I finished my test. And good news—I did pass! My friends passed also, and we all were happy to pass.

For lunch we had mac & cheese and Coca-Cola. I asked for more.

“Excuse me, can I have some more?” I begged with my puppy eyes.

“Fine, but you need to go to a party after this,” the lunch lady said playfully.

I got my seconds and ate it and went to the party at 3 p.m. at the Lincoln branch library, with cake and fruit punch. I ate it and had a good time. The party was great!

After College: Now I have twins, feeding them and giving them their bottles and they said “Mama” to me. We have to take care of them and stuff, you know? So I named them: Luna and Bella.

Bella: Bella is eight years old and she’s in second grade learning how to multiply—well, maybe. And sometimes she’s lazy but she still helps me. And sometimes she bullies Luna...or Luna bullies Bella!

Luna: Luna has curly-wavy hair and I love her hair. Now she is 9 years old and she cleans with me and her hair is all the way down her back and she loves her hair. She combs it and she goes to school in the third grade.

Both of My Kids: Well, it depends. They sometimes are lazy because they be on their phones, but I still love them. As a family we love each other

This Is Me Now: I wake up in the morning exploring the library like I have since when I was in high school, doing projects with my friends and making those memories! I miss those memories from when I was thirteen years old, hanging out with my old friends. But they’re like 93 or 94 years old now. And I can’t speak to them because I am a ghost.

I’ve known them since I was in pre-K. I met them by saying “Hello, what’s your name? I’m Emma from India.”

“Ruby.”

“Elizabeth.”

“Camilla.”

“Mary.”

Now they are old, old ladies—almost 100 years old. I see them come to the library. I hear them talk, but I can’t communicate with them, because I’m a ghost. I read a lot, but I never get to talk with anyone.

Artemis (written by Myles):

I was just coming to my senses.

One second ago I was sitting in my room with my mirror. The next, I am here in this library. My memories come flooding back: talking to my father, being sent to my room...I wondered where I was.

Suddenly I noticed someone sitting reading my favorite book: "The Skull of Truth." Since I am shy, I ignored her, but take it to note. Observing my surroundings, I see a teenager wearing earmuffs and a ginger cat hiding below a bookshelf.

As I try to figure out where I am, I stumble upon some weird, blue beanbag-like creatures. Then I realize I've been here before, on a failed mission to trap an alien, "Earth, Planet of the humans."

As I try to push those memories from my head, I get distracted by a weird conversation going on to my left. The girl who was reading the *Skull of Truth* is talking to a shorter (ten-year-old old, I estimate) girl with shortish grey hair. They're talking about Pokémon and ghosts. The younger one seems to be a Pokémon trainer, and the only thing I get about the older one is that her name is Joy. I decided to find somewhere to sleep for the night. I printed myself some money and went to a hotel.

Part IV: Our Adventures Continue

Aaron/Timothy/ William Shapeshifter Continued (written by Aaron):

Timothy picked up the business card that the burglar had dropped. It said “Robert XXXXX, CEO of the XXXX XXXXXX Children’s Book Company.” But part of it was scribbled out with a pencil! However, the available information was enough to figure out the person’s motives: Money was the obvious explanation. All the stolen books were children’s books, meaning the library would have to pay that company for more, which would eventually bankrupt the library. Meaning people would be forced to buy books they would normally take out from the library! This would give the company even more money.

It was a truly diabolical scheme, and a very evil one too. Especially because of the large number of people who would be affected. Without a library, many people who wanted to read would be forced to either not read or to buy the books. This would also hurt him, which he realized quickly. He decided to investigate more tomorrow.

Reading a few more books before leaving, Timothy decided to sleep in the Antique store again. It wasn’t very busy, and the owners didn’t keep track of their wares, so it was easy to hide. Timothy enjoyed being a lemon juicer and was actually looking forward to doing it again. That was when he had an idea; it would have occurred to most people sooner, but having only been on Earth for a few months, Timothy was not used to it. So he walked to the library again, grabbed the librarian’s pencil at the first distraction, and snuck away to execute his brilliant plan.

It actually was not that brilliant and really just obvious. Timothy was going to use the eraser to try to erase the scribbles from the business card. After around 10 minutes of eager erasing, Timothy had uncovered a layer of pen scribbles under the pencil ones. Thoroughly disappointed, Timothy sadly headed to the antique shop. Soon, the lemon juicer was back on its shelf, and the antique store was closing for the night.

The next day was the first day of preparing and thinking about how to prevent the books from being stolen in the first place, and what his name would be tomorrow. He decided on William. The next day after that, he finally had a plan. He would set a trap for the man who was stealing the books. So he walked to the library twenty minutes earlier than it opened.

Then, waiting until he could be sure he wasn’t being observed, he turned into a bacterium and crawled under the library door. He turned into a large rug. All that was left to do was wait. The library opened. People came in and went out. The thief didn’t come, so William waited. He stayed for days as a rug until finally he looked up and noticed the thief! The man stepped on the rug, going out the door with a bag of burgled books, and William suddenly snapped up and caught him. The man tossed the tote bag of taken tomes & tales and cried out. (Meaning he dropped the books, in case that wasn’t clear.)

A few people ran to behold the botched book burglary. The librarian was among them and recognized the man. The books were quickly returned, and the man was arrested. And although no one remembered seeing that rug before, and although it had disappeared again, everyone was thankful for what had happened, and no one questioned it.

After that no more books were stolen. The man’s identity was discovered, and the library switched which company it bought its books from. They did decide they would spend time looking for the stolen ones before deciding whether to buy replacements, though. There were no more problems once they stopped buying books from the evil company, and with no motivation to steal books, the evil company stopped their schemes and left the library alone. Finally Aaron (as he was going by again) was able to relax and read a little.

That is the end of this adventure, but not the end of Aaron’s story. After that he started noticing more strange things in the library. Sometimes he would see a cat darting between the shelves. One time someone tapped him on the shoulder and spoke as if he knew Aaron’s secret, and around that time Aaron noticed the endings of some of his books were missing. Strange-looking worms kept popping up around the library, and one time he thought he saw one of the characters from that Scarlet+Violet Pokémon book. His adventures continued, but this story is done.

(Except it isn't really, but I just spent a paragraph explaining that, so if you still don't understand, just go read it again. And if you already did, and you think that is a preposterously perplexing paragraph, then maybe go read something else instead.)

The End

(Again, just for now.)

(Goodbye.)

(Seriously, this the last sentence in the story.)

(See?)

(Oops.)

(Okay, NOW the story is done.)

(For real this time.)

O'Malley, continued (written by Grace with Myles)

O'Malley settles in the corner of the library for a cozy late morning nap. While O'Malley tries to fall asleep, the worry of getting caught and losing the warmth of the library makes it difficult for him to relax. Cats are not allowed in the library, and O'Malley knows that if he were caught, he would have to leave. O'Malley has nowhere else to go, and he fears what would happen if he had to leave. Soon, O'Malley nods off to sleep with his tail peaking out from the bookshelf.

When O'Malley woke up, it was right before the library's closing time. O'Malley sneaked out behind the same girl he had followed in as it seemed that although she knew there was a cat in the library, she would keep it a secret. O'Malley wondered if there were more people he could trust to keep his secret.

O'Malley wandered behind a restaurant and found some leftover chicken before wandering to the park to sleep for the night. The next day, O'Malley wandered down to the library again, waiting for someone to open the door. O'Malley noticed a young boy with shoulder-length black hair. O'Malley felt that maybe he could trust the boy since he was young, just like the girl he had met yesterday. The boy seemed to sense O'Malley even though he was not looking at him. The boy reached his hand out to pet O'Malley. O'Malley is startled and jerks away from the boy. The boy reaches out again, this time much slower, and O'Malley lets the boy pet him as he can tell he was kind. The boy's kind gesture made O'Malley feel safe, and he began to rub his head against the boy's leg. The boy whispers to the cat, "I'm going inside the library now. Come on— it's okay." O'Malley couldn't believe that boy had invited him inside the library, and he eagerly followed the boy inside.

O'Malley wandered to a bookshelf that he typically did not sleep behind since it's positioned on the wall rather than a corner, making it only slightly more noticeable to the librarian, but O'Malley was feeling a little extra confident, knowing that two people in the library were okay that he was there. As O'Malley tries to get a comfy position to sleep, his tail knocks over a bookmark with a note written on it. The note reads, "To the library cat, I recommend this book to you; it's checked out on my card." O'Malley wondered if there was a third person who knew about him in the library? O'Malley decided to read the book rather than nap. Eventually, the library hours neared closing.

Crowley, Continued (Cowritten by Crowley and Wendy):

Crowley, while she ran down the sidewalk outside the library, tripped and fell into a hole that led to an underground city. Crowley found a Bidoof. She wondered who had abandoned it, since it was still in its pokeball. She carried the Bidoof's ball to the library. In order to get out of the abandoned town she had to defeat a Pokémon King Mario at the doorstep.

At the library, Crowley found Joy in the back reading **Skull of Truth**.

"Joy," Crowley said, "Did you know that there's an underground town under this town?"

"No. But since I've met you, nothing would surprise me!"

"And also. I have a Bidoof for you. I found it in the underground town. I think someone abandoned it. You could come to the underground town with me and use your Bidoof to catch another Pokémon. You just have to go to this hole..."

"I'm sorry. I'm not into falling or holes. Dark. Damp. Spiders. Rats."

“There aren’t spiders or rats down there, just lots of Pokémon. Chandelure can get us down. Chandelure can fly, which is nice.”

“Would it be okay if I said no to that today? I really want to learn how to detect ghosts.”

“Oh, I know! You just have to trade your Bidoof for my Gengar. He can literally detect any ghost and he can talk to ghosts. It’s weird that he is a poison type, since ghosts can’t touch humans, so how can he poison them? And the poison can’t touch ghosts, so what’s the use of him being poison? Unless it wants to defeat a water or grass type. There’s also a lot of ghosts down in that town...”

“You aren’t going to lure me down there. I know there must be ghosts here in this library. I did my research! There was a school on this property once, and a factory and—”

“I know. That’s why I’m offering you the Gengar Do you have a Rotom Phone?”

“No....why do you ask?”

“You don’t have one? You can’t have a Pokémon without a Rotom Phone. Here, take this one. It’s old but it works.”

“Thank you”

They traded Pokémon and Crowley showed Joy how to use a pokeball. She tossed it and said “Gengar Go.”

“Now put the pokeball on your forehead and close your eyes and think deep into your mind and you will see the ghost that your Gengar is seeing.”

Joy used the technique. She saw a small boy in a shabby old-fashioned outfit—suspenders holding up pants that looked too short, and a newsboy cap. He saw her staring and walked through the wall. She described him to Crowley. He told her to put her Gengar back in his ball and try again later. The boy would need to get used to her being able to see and hear him.

They then went outside and tried again on the sidewalk along Avenue D. She saw a ghost man talking to his ghost dog. “Good girl, Rosie! Now fetch. He threw a ball down the sidewalk in the other direction. He looked like a nice man—in fact he looked like Edgar Santa-Cruz, the man in the tribute mural on the side of the library, but she was too shy to interrupt him.

Finally, Crowley said, “Well, it has been nice seeing you again, but I still have to find more Pokémon to catch.”

Okay,” Joy said, “but be sure you return when you are done,” she shouted to Crowley’s back.

After falling down the hole into the underground town (on purpose this time), Crowley was trying to catch a Cosmog in the crystal pool there. She realized that the crystal pool was actually directly under the swimming pool at the Avenue D Recreation center, and that she was the only person who knew that. She could see the concrete bottom of the Avenue D pool above the crystal pool. She saw that a Cosmog was stuck up there in the cement. It was only a level one, but she could evolve it into a Cosmoem and then a Sogaleo or a Lunala. A psychic Pokémon would come in handy! She sent out a pokeball and caught it.

Then she saw that a bunch of Diglett and Dugtrio were gathering at the crystal pool and chanting together. She tried to talk to them, and to touch them to see what they felt like, but they dove into the crystal pool. She took out her ground type, Bibarel who told her “They are chanting to become Great Tusks and Donphans so that they can go on to destroy all knowledge everywhere, starting with the nearest schools and libraries, and then the rec centers and gyms to destroy people’s health.

Crowley told the whole story later:

I wasn’t going to let that happen. The Cosmog that I just caught came out and used teleport to take me and my pokeballs to the library. In the library there were already a bunch of Diglett, Dugtrio, and a few Great Tusks and Donphans everywhere, and a ginger cat who was hiding from them under one of the adult nonfiction shelves. I quickly picked up the ginger cat. He seemed stunned and didn’t struggle. We went to find Joy. She was sitting in the toy room, waiting for someone to come.

“Did you see all those Diglett, Dugtrio, Great Tusks and Donphans?” I asked her. “Those guys are not so good to deal with. I dealt with 16 of all of them once.”

The cat was over its shock and started purring. It didn't speak, but it sure was nice. I put it on a comfy couch and it started to read a book that I put there. I was surprised. Maybe it could understand the speech of a Pokémon. I gave the cat one of my pokeballs. It batted it off the couch and out came Meowscarada. My Rotom started to speak:

"Meowscarada. The trick Pokémon. Meowscarada has a flower that has a mind of its own." Rotom stopped and said, "Why is there a lion here?"

I went to the 500 shelves, to the 590 section (Zoology) and took out "Big Book of Animals" and read on the lion page: "A lion mother carries her cub gently in her mouth. Pet cats carry their babies the same way."

"I don't think we should try that, Crowley." said Joy. "But maybe Meowscarada is hungry, and I am sure this kitty is. Maybe we should figure out how to feed them."

As I flipped through the book, I saw cheetahs and meercats and other savannah animals. But when I came to the ocean section, to a page with a school of hundreds of blue-striped grunt fish, Meowscarada started to drool and the cat mewed softly. I went across Joseph Avenue to the CNN Food & Deli and bought fish cat food to feed them both.

Mr. David, the security guard, glanced at my armful of cat food as I returned, but just smiled and didn't ask me any questions. I wonder if he knows about the cat? Lots of libraries have official library cats but this one doesn't seem very public. Then I remember the Diglett and Dugtrios: Can Mr. David see those? I doubt it. He would have tried to protect the library if he could see them.

O'Malley and Artemis, Continued

O'Malley settles in the corner of the library for a cozy late morning nap. While O'Malley tries to fall asleep, the worry of getting caught and losing the warmth of the library makes it difficult for him to relax. Cats are not allowed in the library, and O'Malley knows that if he were caught, he would have to leave. O'Malley has nowhere else to go, and he fears what would happen if he had to leave. Soon, O'Malley nods off to sleep with his tail peeking out from the bookshelf.

When O'Malley woke up, it was right before the library's closing time. O'Malley sneaked out behind the same girl he had followed in, as it seemed that although she knew there was a cat in the library, she would keep it a secret. O'Malley wondered if there were more people he could trust to keep his secret.

O'Malley wanders behind a restaurant and finds some leftover chicken before wandering to the park to sleep for the night. The next day, O'Malley wandered down to the library again, waiting for someone to open the door. O'Malley noticed a young boy with shoulder-length black hair. O'Malley felt that maybe he could trust the boy since he was young, just like the girl he had met yesterday. The boy seemed to sense O'Malley even though he was not looking at him. The boy reached his hand out to pet O'Malley. O'Malley is startled and jerks away from the boy. The boy reaches out again, this time much slower, and O'Malley lets the boy pet him as he can tell he was kind. The boy's kind gesture made O'Malley feel safe, and he began to rub his head against the boy's leg. The boy whispers to the cat, "I'm going inside the library now. Come on—it's okay." O'Malley couldn't believe that boy had invited him inside the library, and he eagerly followed the boy inside.

O'Malley wandered to a bookshelf that he typically does not sleep behind since it's positioned on the wall rather than a corner, making it only slightly more noticeable to the librarian, but O'Malley was feeling a little extra confident, knowing that two people in the library were okay that he was there. As O'Malley tries to get a comfy position to sleep, his tail knocks over a bookmark with a note written on it. The note reads, "To the library cat, I recommend this book to you; it's checked out on my card." O'Malley wondered if there was a third person who knew about him in the library? O'Malley decided to read the book rather than nap. Eventually, the library hours would near closing.

Artemis the Alien, Continued (written by Myles)

The next morning, I went straight back to the library. I need to find more information, and I'm the first one there as I'm twenty minutes early. Ten minutes later, Joy got there. She seemed surprised that I was there and acted kind of shy towards me, because as soon as she locked her bike up, she said a quick hi and sat down to read. I say hi back and interrupt her soon after she starts

reading, as I want to know more about their conversation. “Excuse me,” I say. “What exactly is a Pokémon?”

She looks at me, startled, then down at her feet. She stutters a little and starts to explain, “Pokémon are basically creatures or monsters that trainers collect in order to win battles.”

“Oh, and you found some ghosts, I hope?”

She just hides behind her hair and goes back to reading, only realizing a little while later that she is holding her book upside down.

Just as the library was opening, the library cat arrived. I reach out to pet him, and he jerks away before I reach out more slowly, and he rubs his cheek against my leg. I bend down and whisper: I’m going into the library now, come on. It’s okay. The cat seemed surprised that I invited him in, though he followed and seemed to sense he could trust me. I wander over to the non-fiction section and decide to find out more about cats. The book talks about how cats are carnivores and how many relatives they have. It also talks about their sharp teeth and rough tongues. I found out a little more and then decided to go find a hotel. I decided to invite the cat home, and she seemed to be in need of one.

When I asked, the cat looked shocked, but slowly followed as I left to go to the hotel. Later, I showed her the cat book and then went to bed. She slept very well, but I woke up around 10 times.

Agena, written by Elwyn

When I reach the toy library the absence of people hits me like a sledgehammer. Yet the absence of books from the shelves is like a mortal wound in the library. Handprints reaching up the pillars are like those of prisoners struggling to escape. When I see the bead track I begin to cast a spell, but then I remember the consequences of doing so in this world. Becoming real is like doors opening in one’s mind, but the backlash as the world cancels out the impossibility is the opposite of that. Yet somehow this library not only remains but thrives. I decide to attempt to try again, until I see the user’s manual for the bead track. When I open it however, the only words I see are “D13494 prolate 2,7 \supset 46B6C7 oblate 1,5 \therefore 536 390’. An image of a key shows up, with a riddle

*A numeric whisper, a web designer’s hue,
Followed by a sphere’s form, reshaped for view.
Lastly, a place of being, a location to be,
The riddle’s final piece, where all can agree.’*

I am confused by this, seeing as a user’s manual should be designed to be helpful, and I say so to myself. I think back to my translation classes, and I remember a technique for figuring out what people mean. As my teacher used to say “synonyms, synonyms, synonyms. Now get me a cinnamon bun!” Okay... numbers talking, developer color, sphere shape alterations, a place and what seems to be closing lines.

Simpler than I thought, at least. Red prolate spheroid to position 2,7 and the oblate spheroid to position 1,5 will send me to the department of probabilistic physics combined with the supernatural beings department.

As I move the colorful beads along the track into position, I notice a room full of ringing telephones forming around me. A frantic librarian is sorting through newspaper clippings similar to the contents of the board. When he spots me, he says “are you the new assistant? Good. Deal with those authors” he points to a glass set of double doors where hundreds of thousands of enraged people are desperately trying to write. A PA system is sitting in front of the doors, and I make an announcement “Why are all of you here? Can anyone explain?”

One author steps forward. “This is writer’s block. All of our books, and the ideas we had for them, have disappeared, and have been replaced by finished ones that are completely different. I was writing a tragedy, and now I have a rom com.” Another one says, “I was trying to write a children’s book, and it has been replaced by Ulysses!”

I take my wallet out and locate the Dewey decimal chart. When I find the number 536.71, Maxwell's demon, the answer is clear. When I tap the librarian on his shoulder, he jumps and turns around. "You already fixed it? But then why are they still there?"

"I can't get them out unless you contact Maxwell's demon. But on the plus side I think it will eventually come and put us on that side of the doors," I say.

The librarian just says "Maxwell's demon, Maxwell's demon, Maxwell's demon". Suddenly all the air in the room goes to one side, then comes rushing back. "Speak of the demon" the librarian whispers.

The demon appears, very anticlimactically in the center of the room. It looks like a man in Victorian era clothing, with a large beard. "So. You want to undo my hard work. Do you have any idea how long it takes to sort all authors into one room? Or put all unfinished writing in the same place?" it says. "I will make you a bet. If you can find something that I cannot reduce the entropy of, I will free the authors and return their writing. If you fail, I will reduce your whole planet to a state of zero entropy. You have ten minutes."

"Fine," I say.

It responds, "You never had any choice about this."

The seconds tick by, and the tension is palpable. What exists that cannot have its entropy reduced, and does not have zero entropy?

9 minutes left: There must be something.

8: I cannot concentrate with this pressure.

7: Is there even an answer.

6: Think, think!

5: Are there any loopholes?

4: It never said the thing had to be physical.

3: But what?

2: Information? But Maxwell's demon destroys information.

1: Set s.

"I hope you are ready," it thunders.

"Yes," I say, even as I desperately examine my idea for flaws.

"Tell it to me. **NOW.**"

"I have a marble run. The marbles cannot escape the run, and when they enter it, they must go down it. The run splits and does not merge again. Each marble represents a set of sets. One of the marbles represents a set of sets that do not contain themselves. If a marble enters the wrong side, it doubles. And the marbles at the endpoint are scrambled (including all duplicates) to the maximum entropy they can have. The marbles are indivisible, and you must minimize the entropy of the arrangement of the marbles by sorting them into a track, the right one of which is for sets which contain themselves, and the left one which is for sets that do not contain themselves. The marbles are indivisible and cannot be merged. The start and end points contain two identical boxes, but the starting points are arranged with maximum entropy. How can you make it so that the ends have less entropy than the beginning?"

Slowly the demon smiles. "You have tricked me" it says "there is no way to reduce the entropy further. I suppose that a deal is a deal." It hands me a small cube.

"I suppose I have to free the authors."

"And return their books" I say.

"Indeed. That was an enjoyable puzzle,"

A sudden silence alerts me to the fact that, in accordance with its word, the demon has returned the authors.

"Since you are the first one to defeat me, I will tell you one helpful piece of information. The corkboard has come up with a name behind the chaos in the library. An agnoia."

Before it leaves, it adds, "Furthermore, the doors to the library need guarding."

Part V: Some Threats Are Resolved

Aaron/Timothy/ William Shapeshifter (written by Aaron):

The next day was the first day of preparing and thinking about how to prevent the books from being stolen in the first place, and what his name would be tomorrow. He decided on William. The next day after that, he finally had a plan. He would set a trap for the man who was stealing the books. So he walked to the library twenty minutes earlier than it opened.

Then, waiting until he could be sure he wasn't being observed, he turned into a bacterium and crawled under the library door. He turned into a large rug. All that was left to do was wait. The library opened. People came in and went out. The thief didn't come, so William waited. He stayed for days as a rug until finally he looked up and noticed the thief! The man stepped on the rug, going out the door with a bag of burgled books, and William suddenly snapped up and caught him. The man tossed the tote bag of taken tomes & tales and cried out. (Meaning he dropped the books, in case that wasn't clear.)

A few people ran to behold the botched book burglary. The librarian was among them and recognized the man. The books were quickly returned, and the man was arrested. And although no one remembered seeing that rug before, and although it had disappeared again, everyone was thankful for what had happened, and no one questioned it.

After that no more books were stolen. The man's identity was discovered, and the library switched which company it bought its books from. They did decide they would spend time looking for the stolen ones before deciding whether to buy replacements, though. There were no more problems once they stopped buying books from the evil company, and with no motivation to steal books, the evil company stopped their schemes and left the library alone. Finally Aaron (as he was going by again) was able to relax and read a little.

That is the end of this adventure, but not the end of Aaron's story. After that he started noticing more strange things in the library. Sometimes he would see a cat darting between the shelves. One time someone tapped him on the shoulder and spoke as if he knew Aaron's secret, and around that time Aaron noticed the endings of some of his books were missing. Strange-looking worms kept popping up around the library, and one time he thought he saw one of the characters from that Scarlet+Violet Pokémon book. His adventures continued, but this story is done.

(Except it isn't really, but I just spent a paragraph explaining that, so if you still don't understand, just go read it again. And if you already did, and you think that is a preposterously perplexing paragraph, then maybe go read something else instead.)

The End

(Again, just for now.)

(Goodbye.)

(Seriously, this the last sentence in the story.)

(See?)

(Oops.)

(Okay, NOW the story is done.)

(For real this time.)

Crowley and Joy

Crowley scratched her head "I guess we better take care of this invasion of earth Pokémon. They could undermine the whole library. Or fill it with dirt."

"More arrived while you were gone. I had no idea if my Gengar would be any use against them. Meanwhile, I found another ghost. She looks Indian—she is wearing a beautiful dress with a flower on it, but because she is a ghost I can't see what color it is. We made eye contact, and I said, "I would love to be your friend." She looked puzzled and nodded her head, but then looked frightened and glided away into the children's room. I hope she meets the little ghost boy. He definitely needs a friend."

"The ghosts can take care of themselves, Joy. We need to conquer these bad Pokemon and get them out of the library forever. Watch and learn." Crowley threw a pokeball and yelled

“Cosmog go!” Cosmog teleported all the Digletts, Dugtrios, Great Tusks, and Donphans back to their base. Cosmog died in the effort, but a Nurse showed up immediately to heal him.

“Now, Joy, you throw your Gengar into battle and I’ll throw my Bibarel and they will together make a protection shield and then I’ll send out my Alakazam and expand that protection around the whole Library, so they can never come back!”

And so they succeeded!

Part VI: The Climax

Emma:

A new monster appeared in the city—at our library. He had fire on one side of him, and on the other he had blue goo that looked edible. Everyone wanted to eat him. He said “Why? Why do people want to eat me like this? Why?”

I knew he was nothing to fool around with. As a ghost, I instantly sense evil. But as a ghost, I can’t touch reality, so I could do nothing. So I had to depend on my author.

She was a girl named Cyntea, who saw him and had a fork from lunch and picked out his eyes, to not let him see her. She also chopped him in half and then used the fire side on the goo side to make rock candy. And everyone said “Wow, Cyntea, you did it!”

“Hip, hip, hurray for Cyntea,” they said happily while carrying Cyntea on their shoulders.

“Hip, hip”

“Hoo-ray”

“Now we’ll live happily ever after!”

Joy:

Unfortunately the two sides of the monster were so opposite that they pulled back together like magnets. The reunited monster no longer had glowing red eyes but that did not seem to stop him. Maybe he navigated by smell...or hearing?

When he got close to Crowley and I the monster began to roar out with anger “I am Agnoia, and you are not going to foil my plans!” He sounded outraged, and his low gravelly voice would have had me running away if he wasn’t between me and the door. And if I wasn’t glued to the floor by my fear.

“You exiled the Digletts I sent to undermine the library! You brought back the books my thief stole! You gave the authors back their stories to finish! How can I expand this experimental project to foster ignorance to the rest of the city and then around the world if you keep meddling? Now you all must DIE!”

The librarians started looking around for somewhere to get the patrons safe. There was no way out, only deeper in.

O’Malley:

The following morning, O’Malley and the boy rushed to the library together. O’Malley had been so sound asleep that the boy almost forgot to wake him up before leaving. As they approached the library, they could hear a lot of commotion coming from within.

Once they walked in, there was a creature terrorizing everyone in the library. The large creature had red eyes, a robotic arm, a half-blue, gummy body, and the other half made of flames. The creature growled out loudly in frustration, “I’m going to kill you as you have killed my plans! I can’t believe everyone in the library has fought against every evil I have sent!”

O’Malley had never seen anything like this. The boy joined in the battle along with many familiar faces from the library.

O’Malley saw the library staff frightened and heading to the back of the library to hide. Although O’Malley didn’t know the library staff very well, he had grown to enjoy their company and felt he could comfort them during this battle, hoping they would enjoy his company as he had enjoyed theirs. The young girl Joy, plus staff members Ms. Vee, Ms. Natalie, Mr. Matt, Mr. Salen, Ms. Cormel, Ms. Jess, Jalen, Saniyah, and Milan gathered in the corner close together, with the security guard, Mr. David, standing bravely in front of them.

Though O’Malley felt frightened, he did his best to comfort the others. O’Malley hopped on his tiptoes to brush up against everyone’s hands to get their attention. Mr. David started to pet O’Malley, and soon the others joined in. Even with all the chaos coming from the next room, the library staff’s anxiety seemed to ease while petting O’Malley.

Crowley:

Joy was too scared and escaped to the back of the Toy Library, where O' Malley had herded the staff and patrons.

Crowley saw that the battle had begun and the only way to defeat Agnoia was to stop him in his tracks. He sent out Ceruledge to cut off his feet. But the monster soldiered on on his stumps.

Artemis:

The next morning while brushing teeth I feel a vibration in the earth—like a drakeobore² bursting from its egg. It's coming from the library and I sense a huge heat signature even though the place seems closed. I rush there at once, almost forgetting the cat!

When we arrive there's a big commotion going on in the library. We rush in and the cat scampers away. When I reach the commotion, I see a weird creature, well, more of a monster. It seems to have a weird body—half jelly and half fire with a mechanical arm. Suddenly it bellows: "My name is Doug the Agnoia and I am going to kill you as you killed my plans!" Suddenly an icy wind whips up and the monster goes blind. (I think a ghost must have passed through him.) Then my friend William (Who I had helped catch the book thief) lured him into a room and took off his mechanical arm with a butter knife (which in the end was dripping with what I thought was blood but was actually make-your-own-pizza sauce)! Then I smelled something herb-ish on his right hip. I squared up: A five-foot child against a twelve foot monster. I went up and punched him lightly in the hip. He looked at me, stunned then fell to the floor, seemingly unconscious.

Agena:

Suddenly I find myself by the doors to the library, and a glowing bubble surrounding it. Crowds are gathering outside the glowing bubble. A roar tears through the silence that is normally so diligently maintained. The shapeshifter, slightly charred, emerges from the toy library clutching an enormous robotic hand. "The surgery didn't go as planned. The patient is still alive!" Suddenly the wall behind him begins to crack, and a huge, scaly hand blasts through, groping with meter long claws.

The sound of Styrofoam being rubbed blasts through the room, and I scream. The pain cripples me. I am vaguely aware of the monster bursting through the wall. I try to concentrate through the pain, and I remember Maxwell's demon giving me something. Pulling the cube from my pocket, I throw it, and the horrible sound is trapped in half of the room. My relief at the sound being over is only matched by my anger at the monster. I once severely injured someone for making that sound, and now I release my rage. I no longer care about the pain of spells in this world, and I allow my anger to form a burst of psychic energy.

The monster stumbles, letting the others regroup, yet then it laughs. "Every book that is destroyed makes me stronger. You can never win." The flames on its body flare, igniting a shelf with a burst of sound. "I will guard the newspapers with my life" it says, "they are so inaccurate that if you destroy them, it injures me."

Aaron/Timothy/William the Shapeshifter

Aaron led Doug the Agnoia to the Community Room where lunch was being served a few minutes ago and turned into a surgeon with a stained mask, crazed, bloodshot eyes, and a tattered, dirty outfit, and screamed in a deranged manner. "It's time for your appointment with DOCTOR AARON - Including your mandatory amputation!" Aaron grabbed a plastic butterknife right off a meal and screamed, "unfortunately for you, I'm not afraid to violate health codes! MWA HA HA HA!!!!" he opened his mouth, which was full of nasty rotting teeth dripping with ooze, and let out a blood curdling scream as he crazily threw himself at the villain. Everyone outside heard the sounds of a chainsaw, multiple shrieks, and crashing and banging. And then Aaron emerged from the room bruised and battered with his mask ripped off and his coat in shreds, grasping a plastic butterknife dripping with red fluid with an insane grin on his face. He said "the operation was a success" before going back to what he looked like that day. Before he had transformed into a deranged madman. Seeing his friends horrified looks upon seeing what he was holding, Aaron said, "I know it's unsanitary to perform an amputation with a tool covered in tomato sauce from a

² Planet Fharare has a lot of weird things

make-your-own-pizza meal, but it was a robotic arm, so I figured he wouldn't get infected." He held up the slightly charred hand.

Then a roar came from the community room "Oh he's waking back up!" said Aaron. "He got knocked out when I threw a chair at his head, but I guess the battle's not over yet. Get ready!!!"

Aaron & the crew

After the battle we turned Doug the Agnoia inside out by pulling on his tongue.³ Then we pickled him in his won digestive juices and then used his fire to dry him out until he was a raisin. Then we smoked him until he was done, and then we cured him, dry-aged him, boiled him, air-fried him, toasted him, microwaved him, sizzled him, blanched him, grilled him, steamed him, seasoned him, diced him, melted him, cooked him like a scrambled egg, poached him, parboiled him, stuffed him, sauteed him, flambéed him, dissolved him, strained him out, blended him, curdled him, hard-boiled him, crushed him, rehydrated him, kneaded him, butchered him, oiled him, salted him, fermented him, juiced him, basted him, prepared him, heated him, turned him to paste, solidified him, thickened him, froze him, thawed him, shredded him, whipped him, creamed him, flipped him, jellied him, drizzled him in flavoring, liquified him, de-seeded him, de-boned him, sliced him, spread him out, massaged him, ground him up, folded in spices, mashed him, tossed him, processed him, pounded him, sun-dried him, rinsed him, thickened him, zested him, garnished him, parched him, curried him, dunked him, soaked him, sprinkled him with spices, curried him, caramelized him, stewed him, griddled him, topped him, stir-fried him, pureed him, and then we reboiled him, mashed him, stuck him in a stew, braised him, simmered him, deep fried him, pressure cooked him, deglazed him, double boiled him, glazed him, sous vided him, marinated him, and bain-marié him. And then he was rock candy.

Agena

From what I saw, the shapeshifter turns into a kitchen, and the monster is so surprised it stumbles into the open oven. The equipment springs to life, washing it, turning it inside out, washing the insides, pickling it, roasting it, smoking it, curing it, dry-aging it, boiling it, baking it, air frying it, toasting it, microwaving it, sizzling it, blanching it, grilling it, scrambling it, poaching it, parboiling it, stuffing it, steaming it, seasoning it, dicing it, melting it, flambéing it, dissolving it, straining it, blending it, curdling it, hard-boiling it, crushing it, kneading it, leaving it to rise, and rehydrating it, at which point it came out as rock candy.

O'Malley:

Suddenly, the noise stopped. After a few seconds had passed, O'Malley and the library staff carefully made their way to the main part of the library, where Artemis, the Ghost Emma, the shapeshifter, and Agena are surrounding a pile of rock candy of what appears to be the creature, Doug the Agnoia. The creature was defeated, and the library was safe now.

O'Malley's anxiety seemed to rise given that his secret was out, and he would have to find another place to go. O'Malley began to walk toward the door when Joy called out, "Come back, kitty! Where will you go?" O'Malley started to turn back, when a librarian said, "We don't allow cats in the library."

Mr. David replied, "Maybe we could make an exception given this cat's help today."

Ms. Vee leaned down to O'Malley, "You are welcome here anytime you like," said Ms. Vee.

³ after washing him

Part VII: Epilogues

Artemis: 10 days later I bought the library (with the promise to keep it public) and O'Malley became the official library cat. All my friends came to live at the library, and I gave Joy's mom a job.

O'Malley: Artemis bought the library and made some expansions and updates. Artemis gave Joy's mom a job at the library so she didn't have to work so many long hours, which also meant they could have a pet other than a goldfish. O'Malley was named the official library cat. O'Malley came to the library with Joy and her mom every day in his role as the official library cat and then went home with them at night. Everyone knew O'Malley as the Library cat and part of Joy's family. O'Malley realizes that not every cat gets a second chance or a happy ending, and he sure didn't think that he would get a second chance at a happy ending. O'Malley doesn't take that for granted. O'Malley makes sure to comfort everyone who needs it at the library and to enjoy every minute with his new family.

Joy: I am so glad we defeated that horrible monster, Agnoia (which Librarian Matt told me means "Ignorance" in Greek) and there are no more threats to my precious library! No more book theft, no more worm Pokémon invasion, no more unfinished books stolen away from their authors.

But it is not just the defeat of the bad stuff that makes me happy. It's the good stuff: Now I'm friends with a Pokémon trainer, Crowley! And I met an actual shape-shifter from another dimension, William (at least that's who they were the day of the battle). I have a ghost friend who haunts this library, and as a kid "haunted" it almost as much as I do now. (Emma reminds me of my grandmother, who I don't get to see much because she lives in Atlanta. I know she will be very protective of the other ghost, the boy Jacob who died of the Spanish flu.) And I have an alien friend, Artemis, who shares my love of Bruce Coville books. He is so cool! I hope that now that he owns the library he stays here on Earth. I am getting to know Agena, a University student in biophysics who has said he will tutor me in chess. He says he is a mindflyer. I'll have to look that up what that is.

All my new friends are so smart, and they love the library as much as I do! The best part of all this, though, is that my mom is now worried that the library can be dangerous. At first I was worried that she would ban me from coming here every day. Instead, she has gotten a job here as a library assistant is quitting her other jobs and going to school to be a librarian! And the best part is that she let me now have a pet. O'Malley, the ginger cat is now the official library cat and comes home with us every night. I know that with the team that defeated (and literally de-feeted), we will all be quite safe here no matter what threatens us!

Emma: Emma had gone back with the staff and patrons to the toy library while the monster was on his rampage. She was very concerned for their safety.

She had not bothered to visit the toy library after it moved in; she thought she was too old for toys and had no one with whom she could play board games. (Besides, the books she wanted to read were in the adult section.) She was surprised to meet Jacob, the scruffy little boy ghost in a newsboy cap and suspenders. They were both glad to have someone to talk to. It turned out that he was older than he looked. His family were poor immigrants from Poland, and English had been difficult for him. He had started attending the Rochester shop school that had been on this property in 1918, hoping to get a factory job. But then the Spanish flu killed around 1,000 Rochesterians (including Jacob) in less than two months. In his years in the library he had read widely in the nonfiction, especially history, sticking with children's books. He liked discussing history with Emma, reminding her that he was technically older than her.

With the help of Crowley and Joy as "ghost interpreters," Emma has been able to let her friends know she is here. They have promised to try to join her at the library in the afterlife.

They always say "Hello Emma" out loud when they enter the library; since they seem to be speaking to thin air, some people suspect they have dementia, but they don't care.

Agena: I help hoist the sign for the library, indicating that anyone is welcome, and inviting anyone who needs a home or guidance. Our system has helped countless lost aliens, characters, cats, and really anyone. The university has offered me a professorship as head of the xenobiology department. And computer 3.1415926535 is acting up. Again.

Crowley: Ten years later, all Legendary Pokémon would be caught by Crowley. Also 10 years later her Spiritomb killed all the bad Pokémon in a 10-block radius.

NOTE: We never knew what became of the Shapeshifter, but as the hero of that day, he will never be forgotten. We would have erected a statue to him, but which shape would we choose? This book is his memorial!

Appendix:

Historical Background on the setting

Our story takes place at the Lincoln Branch Library at 851 Joseph Avenue. The site was probably Haudenosaunee hunting grounds at one time. It was certainly the Abraham Lincoln public elementary school for decades. Lincoln School No. 22 was built at what is now 851 Joseph Ave in 1882, with additions in 1887, 1889, and 1893. The building was converted to the Rochester Shop School in 1918, when a new School No. 22 opened on Zimbrich Street (still in use in 2025). The Shop School was the predecessor of Edison Tech, and left the building at 851 Joseph when Edison Tech started in 1926, relocating to a new site within Bausch & Lomb's factory grounds.

The building was taken over by the Rochester Emergency Clothing Bureau during the Great Depression. This was a relief agency that collected clothing and distributed it to impoverished individuals under the auspices of the City's Emergency Relief Committee. The WPA later took over this project, which included a sewing room where clothing was made for the poor by people being trained to sew. (This was a good location for this due to the abundance of clothing manufacturers in the area and the abundance of immigrant people (many of whom worked in those factories) who were often not particularly well-to-do in the first place, and may have lost work when the economy slowed down.

This project shut down with America's entry into WWII. The old building was officially abandoned by the City School District in May of 1943. It seems that it was briefly used by the Ukrainian Cultural Center around 1945, but the school was demolished to build a Star Market grocery store that opened in 1948. In 1963 the building was converted to a factory for B&S Lettering Company. B&S was involved in some form of sewing work (perhaps embroidering names on uniforms?); the historic newspaper archives show decades of classified ads from the company seeking seamstresses. Rochester 100 Inc, a manufacturer of plastic envelopes and binders, took over the building from 1972-1991.

That same building was converted to the present Lincoln library that opened in 1994, and the Lincoln Branch, which had been on Clifford Avenue, moved in all its books. The toy library moved in in 2000. In 2024 the mural memorializing Edgar Santa-Cruz and his dog Rosy was dedicated. The whole library was renovated recently. It currently looks very up-to-date and ready for a new technological era, while retaining its warmth.

(Adapted from research by Brandon Fess in the Local History & Genealogy Division at the Central Library of Rochester. The authors learned some of this historical research, and it helped in their story creation, particularly in their sense that the library has long been an important part of the community.)