

The Atomic Library - In Search of... A Reference Librarian Season 1, Episode 3 Transcript

[SFX: Civil defense siren in the distance]

(V.O.) It has been five years. A warming climate lashed the earth with storms. Melting permafrost awakened ancient disease and dormant terrors. Panicked nations unleashed their arsenals, which drew extraterrestrial attention and ... you get the picture. It was a really bad day, okay? Don't overthink it.

Where do you go when it all goes wrong? Where can you start to make sense of a world turned inside out? If you answered "the library" you are a cunning survivor indeed. **(in the background someone is faintly humming a tune)** These are the stories of the small but determined staff of The Orson Welles Community Library of Haven Hollow, Texas. Opening its doors each morning is loyal secretary Hazel -- **(humming stops abruptly)**

HAZEL **(off)** I'M NOT A DAMNED SECRETARY!

Narrator **(sighs)...** **(sarcastic)** pardon me. Library Operations Specialist Hazel Adams.

Narrator **(Dramatic)** Step inside **(beat)** The Atomic Library.

[Atomic Library theme music - upbeat acoustic guitar]

Sound of keys then Hazel pushing continuously against a resistant door.

MARJORIE This is my favorite part of the day! When we fling open the doors of knowledge--

HAZEL Fling open? **(grunt)** When is the last time **(grunt)** we were able to **(oof)** "fling" open these doors? Phew! Come on, put your back against the door and help me!

[SFX: heavy door slowly begins to grind open]

(grunting through her speech) You'd think -- being one of the last

establishments of culture in this city, we could at least afford to grease the door!

MARJORIE One... two ... three! Atta girl!

[SFX: Door makes a final racket but yields.]

MARJORIE **(out of breath)** Welcome! Come in, come in! The Library is open!

HAZEL; **(To self as Marjorie continues in background)** I don't know how she stays so chipper...

MARJORIE **(off)** Wait, wait, wait You can't bring that in here! No, please leave all flammables in your ... whatever you arrived in. It's a building full of paper, you know!

[SFX: Patron chatter and general library sounds - scanners beeping, books being stamped]

[Transition music]

HAZEL Ok. Today we have three candidates for reference librarian to interview. Only one is actually qualified but... The Director says we have to interview three candidates.

BENJAMIN Why do they insist on following these old rules? Who is watching, exactly? Just give the job to the qualified one so I can get on with my day! I have a mountain of records to digitize and a very important blog post to polish up...

MARJORIE Blog! Honestly, Benjamin

BENJAMIN **(under breath)** Dr. Brittle...

MARJORIE Just who is following your "blog?" It's typewritten sheets you nail to trees around town! Bird nests from here to the next county are lined with "Brittle Blather."

BENJAMIN **(defensive)** Banter! Brittle Banter! Plenty of people read it - dare I say RELY on it - for TIMELY analysis of current issues.

MARJORIE ...and we are all busy! I was up half the night copying books. When I started as a Librarian I didn't expect I would spend most of my career locked in a scriptorium like a monk!

BENJAMIN **(outraged huff)** Well! Fancy you calling yourself "Librarian!" Last I checked - no MLS after your name, hmmm?

MARJORIE **(voice rising, hysterical)** I was halfway through my online degree when--

HAZEL ok! Back to your corners! We have a lot to get through today.

M and B **(grumble and quiet down)**

HAZEL Now we are - wait. Where is Karen?

MARJORIE She is looking around for an extension cord or something.

HAZEL **(makes frustrated sound)** Benji, can you go and round up some fresh coffee? I feel like we are going to have a very, very long day ahead of us.

BENJAMIN **(whispers huffily)** Dr. Brittle... **(Hazel cuts him off)**

HAZEL Brittle. Coffee. NOW. PLEASE.

BENJAMIN **(fading out as he leave the room)** I don't know who made you the bomb-damned director and me the coffee boy...

[SFX: Karen enters dragging numerous extension cords and surge protectors, making a ton of noise as she comes in.]

KAREN I'm here! I just needed to find enough extension cords and surge protectors to get the old leg from down there to up here!

HAZEL THAT is a fire hazard. Connected to a series of fire hazards. You have daisy-chained the concept of fire.

MARJORIE Building full of paper, you know!

KAREN Oh it's fine I do this all the time at home. There have been plenty of fires in the other apartments, but never mine!

HAZEL **(takes a deep centering breath)** Just. Plug yourself. Into. The conference room wall. With one cord.

KAREN Oh brilliant!

HAZEL Marjorie could you please follow that... breadcrumb trail of certain death and unplug it at its source?

[Transition Music]

HAZEL Ok! We have three candidates. Here is the list of The Director's pre-approved questions. Our first interview is Constance

M/B/K **(groans)**

HAZEL Look, I know. She interviews for every position no matter what it is. Just ... you know the drill. I'm going to go and get her now... **(pause)** I need you all to be nice.

[SFX: Door opens and closes]

HAZEL **(from the other room)** Yes, it is right through here in the conference room.

CONST Hello, hello! So excited to be here. Hello. I'm Constance, pleased to meet you!

KAREN Yes... ahhh, welcome, please have a seat

CONST I brought copies of my portfolio for everyone.

[SFX: large pile of papers being dropped on the table]

M/B/K **(GROANS)**

HAZEL Ok, thank you. I'm sure we will all look at those later.

CONST **(suspicious)** Before you make your final decision?

BENJAMIN Yes, yes. Ok, question 1: What the hell are you thinking?

CONST **(gasps)**

HAZEL He didn't mean it! He misread that! It says, "what made you apply for the position of Reference Librarian?"

CONST Well, as you know, I was hired as a temp 15 years ago ...

(in background, HAZEL and KAREN to each other, confused, "15 years? Is that even possible?")

CONST ...and I have worked very hard to learn every aspect of every position here. **(voice gets an hysterical edge here)** I have done the job of the Reference Librarian many times over. **(more hysterical)** I have done EVERY job many times over. Whenever you ask. So why not just **(voice gets low and demonic)** LET ME HAVE THE JOB ALREADY?

[SFX: Struggle, chairs falling over, glass breaking]

MARJORIE **(low)** Oh boy, it's happening again.

HAZEL **(low)** That was fast... Marjorie! I'll open the quiet room door **[SFX: whooshing portal sound of "quiet room"-- you push her in!**

[SFX: Screams mixed with "Hey! This is my job! It's been 15 years!" and sounds of struggle. The quiet room door slams closed.

KAREN Oh I am glad the director put that in!

HAZEL **(out of breath)** So... discussion?

M/B/K NO!

[Transition music - distorted and a little eerie]

GHOST **(whispers)** Pssst! It's me! A lot of people around here think I'm a ghost. That's fine by me. I'm just a guy who found a sweet setup here in the unused second floor bathroom. It's free, I get to read all I want at night, and whenever anyone gets too close I just bang on some pipes and make a few spooky sounds and they run right off. As you can imagine, though, I don't get out much. But that doesn't mean I can't live like a guy living in an unused bathroom at the Mall! That's why I subscribe to RE-UNDIES. That's right. RE-UNDIES is a great new subscription service that will deliver to your door each month the best scavenged underclothes, The best part? Each item has been handscavenged in the US! So not only are you getting the best, you're supporting local scavenging! RE-UNDIES is so confident you will love their products they are offering 30% off your first shipment! Just go to the storm drain in front of the old movieplex and whisper down your name, address and the code "ghost." If you aren't satisfied with your RE-UNDIES you can return them anytime by stuffing them back in the storm drain. If you love them like we know you will, you will receive a new shipment every month. Remember - storm drain, movieplex, code "GHOST." RE-UNDIES!

[Transition music]

SHELDON So I've played the tabletop game version of working in a Library. I was a Lvl 40 Reference Librarian, so I feel like I already have a lot of experience. Plus I have read pretty much EVERY graphic novel you have here MULTIPLE times so I think I can direct people to exactly what they need to solve ANY problem...

MARJORIE But, do you have any hands-on experience?

SHELDON Of course I do! My gaming club has done the occasional Municipal Library "LARP".

KAREN LARP?

Brittle **(condescending sigh)** Live Action Role Playing... Look here, kid -- do you even have an MLS?

SHELDON A Municipal Library Squadron? Sure do! We're "The Fighting 398.2's..."

BENJAMIN **(to self, bemused)** fairy tales...?

MARJORIE No, Sheldon. A Master's Degree in Library Science. MLS.

SHELDON No... But, I'm sure I can get one of those off of the internet by next week. I can't imagine that it would be difficult to obtain.

MARJORIE Ha!

BENJAMIN LISTEN HERE YOU.....

HAZEL Brittle you better not start, or i'll throw you in that closet with Constance the creep!

CONST **(voice distorted like from another dimension)** Hey....

MARJORIE What about security work? You have so many weapons on you - is that even a little axe peeking out of your pocket protector? - How do you feel about telling people that they can't sleep in the aisles?

SHELDON Security work? Well... I got pretty far on Street Fighter II before - but... you know all those weapons are replicas, right? I uh... found them ... at the old Comix Emporium. Now if someone comes to the reference desk and says "Hey I've got a plus five zombie in my garden shed" I know exactly which issue of "Ambling Undead" to pull for them...

KAREN My dear boy you are one of our best patrons but... I don't know if you are quite qualified for the reference desk. Plus - security would be a great opportunity to put your cosplay skills to work!

BENJAMIN **(under breath)** because you have to provide your OWN uniform...

SHELDON Neat! So...(skeptical) all I would have to do is wake up people who have fallen asleep in the Library?

MARJORIE That's all! (under breath) and clear the stairway of gangs...

HAZEL (under breath) and get rid of that ghost in the second floor bathroom...

BENJAMIN (under breath) and wrestle a Llama and his purse-wielding owner...

KAREN (under breath) and find that icky glass eye...

SHELDON uh, what was that?

H/B/K/M Nothing!

SHELDON Well... ok I guess I can try security. (voice speeds up as Marjorie begins pushing him out the door) I do know some pretty sweet moves from volume 7 of the dark reboot of...

MARJORIE Fantastic! Welcome aboard! Glad to hear it! You can start right away! Hazel will get some papers drawn up! You can sign them later! Buh bye now!

[SFX: conference room door closes]

HAZEL Ok! That's taken care of!

BENJAMIN Taken care of? We're here to hire a reference librarian and all you have accomplished is hiring a sucker for a position we don't even have!

KAREN Oh no, Don't call him that! I've known Sheldon since he was just a babe. He is so sweet...

BENJAMIN Precisely! She's throwing him to the wolves! And the werewolves!

MARJORIE Ugh, don't exaggerate! There hasn't been a full moon since that bit of the moon... fell off.

HAZEL Listen he's here all the time already and we NEED at least the appearance of security here - people are getting really bold but they still respond to authority - I am sure whatever uniform he comes up with will be deterrent enough and he'll be fine.

[SFX: A soft knock and the door squeals open]

STARLA Hello? I'm the next interview... I couldn't find anyone to help me. Is this where I should be?

HAZEL Yes! Ms. Norwood, right? Have a seat I'm sorry about that. I'll just get your papers...

STARLA Oh it's fine. I know how understaffed libraries are these days!

MARJORIE It's terrible, isn't it? You came from out of town, right? I hope your trip was ... uneventful?

STARLA Not the worst.

HAZEL So... I see you are currently the Reference Librarian at--

BENJAMIN You're hired! Welcome aboard! I have to get going now.

HAZEL SIT. DOWN. I'm sorry about that ... Starlandria?

STARLA Yes it's a family name. My friends call me Starla.

HAZEL Mmm hmm. Ok so what...

DIRECTOR **(abruptly over intercom)** Hazel report to the Director's office.

HAZEL **(bemusedly to self)** What? Now?

DIRECTOR NOW.

[Transition music]

HAZEL Director, I'm right in the middle of that interview for Reference Librarian

DIRECTOR She's a spy.

HAZEL Pardon me?

DIRECTOR She's a spy. They are all spying on me.

HAZEL Who?

DIRECTOR **(hisses)** the other directors! Who do you think? Now they are trying to plant a mole IN MY HOUSE

HAZEL Is this about your feuds with the other directors in the East Northeast South Central Texas Independent Library District?

DIRECTOR This has EVERYTHING to do with the other ENESCTILD Directors!

HAZEL It's ok! She's from Louisiana!

DIRECTOR **(roars)** LOUISIANA?? Where in Louisiana?!

HAZEL **(small voice)** Shrewsport...?

DIRECTOR Even worse! Shrewsport is part of the North Southeast Western Coastal Parish Library District! NSWCPLD would love nothing more than to see my downfall!

HAZEL **(to self)** why?

DIRECTOR You can't hire her.

HAZEL We have to hire her. The City Manager says so. It's her or Constance. CONSTANCE.

DIRECTOR **(strangled frustrated sound)** FINE! But I want a camera installed over her desk.

HAZEL A camera?

DIRECTOR A big one. And I mean big. Make it really big. 360 degree views. I don't want it hidden. I want her to know - I have my eyes on her...

HAZEL Ooooookay... got it. Camera. Big. Eyes on.

DIRECTOR Oh! And is she certified in Ghost Hunting?

HAZEL Ghost... hunting?

DIRECTOR Never mind. She can take a course. Remember - Big. Camera.

HAZEL I'm writing it down! Big ... camera.

DIRECTOR That is all.

[Transition music]

[SFX: three tones play over the public address system]

MARJORIE **(on the intercom)** Good Morning Orson Welles Community Library Patrons! This is the Library's Safety Liaison, and Collection Development Specialist, Marjorie Slump. Here is your safety tip of the day: Katanas might be great tools for taking off the tops of Zombie heads, but they do not make appropriate bookmarks! Please, if you must use weaponry to mark your pages, use a taser or a nunchucks -- less blood on the pages, dears. This has been a message from your Orson Welles Community Library Safety Liaison, Marjorie Slump. Good bye!

[SFX: three tones play over the public address system]

[Transition music]

HAZEL So sorry about that - where were we?

BENJAMIN Hiring her.

KAREN Hush!

STARLA You asked about my trip out?

HAZEL Yes, let's start over. We haven't even introduced ourselves.

BENJAMIN Yes, I am Dr. Benjamin Brittle, Digital Archivist.

MARJORIE **(under breath)** ... still paying student loans for his obsolete Ph.D...

BENJAMIN What?

MARJORIE Pleasure to meet you Starla - I'm Marjorie Slump, I am in charge of Collection Development...

BENJAMIN **(under breath)** human copy machine, not a Librarian...

MARJORIE I'M GOOD AT MY JOB!!

HAZEL **(warning tone)** corners...

KAREN Karen Lovemore, Youth Services Librarian

HAZEL and I am Hazel Adams, Library ... **(long expectant pause)** ... Operations Specialist.

STARLA And the Director?

HAZEL Couldn't make it. Why don't you tell us a little about what you did at Shrewsport? Any ghost hunting?

STARLA **(confused)** Ghost hunting? Ummm... noooo. I oversaw a ... fluctuating staff. We did the usual - patron queries, reader's advisory, adult programming.

MARJORIE What kind of programs?

STARLA Oh all sorts! Book Clubs, jewelry making, water purification, author visits, local history lecture series, how to homeschool now that there are no schools, quilting club, sharpshooting, booby traps and ... oh! And game night is popular!

MARJORIE Game night?

STARLA Oh my yes. We have the classics - chess, checkers, Scrabble - and some "edgier" games for the young adults. Inhumane Cards, and Library The RPG are so popular right now.

MARJORIE Yes, we've heard.

KAREN So what made you decide to look for a new Library?

STARLA **(overly casual)** oh, just wanted a change! I'd been at Shrewsport for years and... **(sighs)** can I be honest with you?

KAREN Of course, dear

STARLA **(low)** We got a new Director after ... everything and they are ... intense? Paranoid. Or maybe a micromanager? I... always feel like I am being watched!

HAZEL **(nervous laugh)** Oh yeah that sounds... well, that's just crazy! Who would want to work in an atmosphere like that?

STARLA Right? So what kind of staff does the Reference Department have here?

MARJORIE Well, the Reference Librarian.

STARLA Yeesss?

HAZEL And... ah... there is a temp!

STARLA a temp?

HAZEL And... oh! One staff member on... sabbatical Yes, that's it. Sabbatical.

STARLA Sabbatical?

HAZEL Yes. He is biking. It's a biking sabbatical. He is finding himself. **(to self)** I hope...

STARLA Any chance more positions will be added?

HAZEL **(voice gets really high)** welllll you knowww, there is the buuudget and

STARLA I suppose I shouldn't complain. It's not as if jobs are easy to come by these days. It's a miracle I found out about this job!

MARJORIE How DID you hear about this?

STARLA Would you believe, I was clearing a bird's nest out of our lobby and I noticed it was made out of a shredded typewritten newsletter from Haven Hollow! I managed to make out that you all were looking for a Reference Librarian and here I am!

MARJORIE **(guffaws)** Typewritten newsletter?! Was it, perchance, called "BRITTLE BLABBITY BLECCCHH"?

BENJAMIN **(screeches)** BANTER!

STARLA Oh my goodness!

HAZEL **(hisses to m/b)** can you two just shut up shut up SHUT UP?! **(regular voice to Starla)** Can you start tomorrow?

STARLA uh ... maybe? I will need to find somewhere to live, and pack my house up.

HAZEL You can stay at Marjorie's! She is just rattling around a big old house! She would love the company I'm sure, right Marjorie? Right?

MARJORIE I ...well... I.. it's ... I snore and **(Hazel kicks her under the table)** owwww! I mean, yes. I have so much space. You could move in. Temporarily. I suppose.

STARLA Wonderful! I am going to go out in the hall and try to call the Shrewsport Library. Let them know I won't be in, ok?

HAZEL We have one cell tower in town and it works... rarely. But you are welcome to try.

STARLA Great! Really, thank you. I'm so excited!

[SFX: Door opens and closes]

HAZEL You two! You almost blew it! I'm trying my hardest to keep the City Manager happy -

MARJORIE **(dreamy voice)** City Manager...

HAZEL - while NOT hiring Zitty McComicBook or ... CONSTANCE **(another distorted "hey" from the quiet room)** ... as a Reference Librarian!

[SFX: Mechanical stomping and faint screaming in distance]

BENJAMIN Look, SHE always starts it!

MARJORIE Nuh uh! HE starts it!

[SFX: Mechanical stomping]

HAZEL Please, for once, put your differences aside for the good of the patrons! They need us! They need good, trustworthy information! Don't scare off the ONE QUALIFIED CANDIDATE

[SFX: Mechanical stomping getting louder]

KAREN **(frustrated)** What is going on out there??

[SFX: door opening to hall, A weapon energizes and discharges. There is a scream and running down the hall]

SHELDON **(robotic voice)** CELL PHONE USE IS PROHIBITED IN THE LIBRARY

KAREN What the... ?!?!

SHELDON **(robotic voice)** HELLO MISS KAREN.

[SFX: mechanized visor raises]

SHELDON **(regular voice)** It's me, Sheldon! I dug around in my old convention stuff and found the PERFECT uniform! What do you think? Huh? Huh?

[SFX: robot turning this way and that.]

SHELDON Oh snap! I gotta go!

[SFX: visor lowers, heavy mechanical stomping]

SHELDON **(robotic voice)** HALT! DOG-EARING BOOK PAGES IS PROHIBITED IN THE LIBRARY!

[SFX: Screaming, Weapon charges and fires]

[Transition music]

[SFX: Typewriter in background]

DIRECTOR To the Directors of the North Southeast Western Coastal Parish Library District

You have been listening to The Atomic Library, an original audio drama podcast created, written, and produced by Chriss Chaney and Lara Tabri.

I have uncovered the TRUE IDENTITIES of the following SPIES

Marjorie Slump is Lara

Hazel Adams is Chriss

Benjamin Brittle (BRITTLE IN BACKGROUND YELLS "DOCTOR!") is Aleya Stone

Constance The Temp is Rebecca Hale

Sheldon is Chriss (TWO identities?? THAT is BOLD)

And finally - Starlandria Norwood is Alia Q. Pappas - did you really think I wouldn't find out?

Various combinations of the above people provided extra voices.

I uncovered your plot with the help of some spies of my own. Veronica Escamilla-Brady used her patented coded voiceover narration technique, I found her through her own podcast, Cthulhu and Friends. My other secret weapon is Jarren Chaney who helped expose your plot by composing, performing, and inserting backwards messaging in the music.

The Atomic Library was recorded at The Innovation Pipeline.

[Closing theme]

Follow us on Instagram @TheAtomicLibrary, communicate with staff by email at TheAtomicLibrary@gmail.com or @AtomicLib on Twitter. Also, we would really appreciate a nice review on iTunes. Or, tell a friend to check us out!

The staff of the OWCL thanks you and reminds you to USE YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY.

(Music concludes - a few seconds of silence)

[SFX: gavel strikes twice]

LOUISIANA LIBRARIAN 1

Our first order of business is this bizarre letter we received from Orson Welles Community Library. Are we training and/or deploying spies to Texas?

(confused mumbling among meeting attendees)

LOUISIANA

LIBR 2 Where is "Haven Hollow" anyway?

[Final musical flourish]