

The Atomic Library - Feral Story Hour
Season 1, Episode 4 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 Hazel is walking and 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]

[SFX: a mob outside the door is yelling and banging on the doors]

HAZEL: I know this day comes every week but...

MARJORIE: I'm sure we will get through this.

HAZEL: If I don't make it

MARJORIE: We have prepared for this day.

HAZEL: There is a hatchet in the first floor storage room.

MARJORIE: Surely you're not suggesting we get that close to them...

HAZEL: And, a shotgun in my office. There's extra ammunition in my desk drawer.

[SFX: Heavy door squeals and groans open]

MARJORIE: The drawer marked "extra ammo?"

HAZEL: The very one.

[SFX: The crowd is even louder. A shotgun is cocked and fired into the air. The crowd goes silent.]

HAZEL: Good Morning everyone! You're just in time for.... Toddler Story Time.

[SFX: thunder rumbles in the distance]

[Transition music]

CONST Good Morning Children! Let's start with our warm up song- "Sewer Shark!"

KAREN That will be enough, Ms. Constance. I'll take it from here.

CONST Oh! I really don't mind helping! The children love me! **(begins to sing "Sewer Shark" very off key)**

[SFX: Children crying]

CONST **(in deep demonic voice)** I SAID YOU LOVE ME!

[SFX: Crying intensifies]

KAREN **(trying to regain control)** Good Morning Darlings! Let's all stand up and stretch! Stretch out those arms! Stretch out those legs! If you got em, stretch out those eye stalks! Yes! That's beautiful, Cole! **[SFX: gelatinous jiggling]** Let's shake all those wiggles out!

Fade Karen slowly to background beginning to tell a story

HAZEL So, this is what a typical Toddler Story time looks like here at the Orson Welles Community Library. These happen on Wednesday mornings -- usually right as we open to the general public...mostly because all of the slime that these creepy crawlers tend to bring with them. It can be very dangerous. We figure - get it over with first thing!

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

STARLA Creepy crawlers? **(pause)** Are you talking about the children!?

HAZEL I know, I know. I still haven't gotten used to them, either.

STARLA **(trying to recover)** Okay.... ANYWAY... What kind of adult programming do you offer here? I can't wait to dig in and learn more about Haven Hollow. Everyone here seems so... interesting!

HAZEL We haven't had a Reference Librarian in quite some time. So.. not much.

STARLA: I'm... starting from scratch?

HAZEL Pretty much.

STARLA Ok, well... I really love the idea of a challenge!

HAZEL Hey! That's the spirit! Here - this is your office.

HAZEL And now let's head upstairs to sign that paperwork and make everything official!

STARLA: Wait. What is that?

HAZEL: A desk?

STARLA: Noooo. Over the desk. The... big ... is that a deep space telescope?

HAZEL: Oh thaaat! No, that's just a camera. So ... paperwork?

STARLA: A camera? That's a camera? For what?

HAZEL Just... surveillance - no, that sounds terrible. Um...safety? No, no. Uh - communication! Yes, that's it. To keep the lines of communication open. The director - they don't really interact in person, per se, So they have cameras. Nothing nefarious! We all have them in our office! They're all over the public areas too. Just not ... not as big, but

STARLA It looks dangerous! What if it falls when I'm at my desk? It looks like it's secured with old shoelaces and tape!

HAZEL **(nervous laugh)** shoelaces and tape! Oh you are funny! We are going to get along sooo well! How about we head to the reference desk, yeah? See where all the magic happens?

STARLA: **(voice muffled)** Ok, just a moment my pen fell somewhere under the desk and I can't quite see it

[SFX: intercom clicking on]

DIRECTOR: It's to your right.

STARLA **(startled)** What? What was that?

HAZEL The Director. There is an intercom... on your desk.

STARLA What? Oh!

[SFX: Starla clicking the intercom button]

STARLA Uh - thank you Director! It's a pleasure to meet you!

[SFX: rapid button clicks]

STARLA Director?

HAZEL **(slightly embarrassed)** Ummm - It's a one-way intercom.

[Transition music]

HAZEL Ok you can see the Reference Desk up ahead. Looks like Constance is holding down the fort right now. It's pretty quiet this morning.

STARLA Is she one of my staff members?

HAZEL Welllllll... she's a temp. So she works all over where we need her. When we need her. **(a little quieter)** Honestly we need her a lot more than you would think... maybe don't let her know that, though.

STARLA Hello, Constance? I'm Starlandria Norwood, the new reference librarian. Please, though, call me Starla. I look forward to -

(Constance breaks into a wail and runs off crying.)

STARLA **(bemused)** to...to... oh my...

HAZEL She may have interviewed for your position.

STARLA May have?

HAZEL Well yes, she did actually interview for your position. Four times.

STARLA Is she going to have a problem working for me?

HAZEL Oh I am sure no more than any of the other Reference Librarians.

STARLA How long do these librarians last-

MARJORIE Haaaazelll! Hazel Hazel Hazel!

HAZEL What??

MARJORIE **(out of breath)** Story room... emergency... Karen's leg... need to ... need to read to ... the kids...

HAZEL Slow down! You aren't making any sense!

MARJORIE **(deep breath)** Karen's. Leg. Is. Malfunctioning. Big Time. Someone needs to take over storytime. **(hisses)** They're getting restless!!

HAZEL Why do I have to take over storytime?! Why can't you?!

MARJORIE Well, you know I'm shy...

HAZEL Ha!

MARJORIE And if you don't do it, Constance will!

STARLA Hazel, I can read to them. I won "Most Mellifluous" four years in a row at the Louisiana Library Conference.

HAZEL **(to self)** Why does that not surprise me...?

STARLA I would have won five but that was the year I caught Triassic Mange.

PATRON Excuse me? Do you work this desk? Do you think you could possibly help me?

STARLA **(slightly flustered)** Of course! I am here to help. In fact you are my very first patron here in Haven Hollow. Sorry Hazel. I guess you need to take care of the kiddos. I'll be ok here. **(little laugh)** Like you say in Texas - it's not my first rodeo!

(awkward silence)

MARJORIE **(deadpan)** No one says that in Texas.

One more beat of silence.

HAZEL Fine. I'll go read to the little -

MARJORIE **(warning tone)** Hazelllllll...

HAZEL Darlings. I'll read to the little ... darlings.

[SFX: Hazel stomps off.]

STARLA Now what can I do for you? Looking for something to read? Need some assistance with a device?

PATRON No, no I need directions to the closest food pantry from here - my bike is in the shop so I'll also need to know public transportation options.

STARLA Of course!

[SFX: Papers shuffle]

STARLA Let me see where they keep Ready Reference... it is actually the first time I have been behind this desk! Let me check this shelf here... odd... these aren't in any order I recognize... I know! I'll do it the old-fashioned way!

[SFX: typing on a computer. The power surges.]

STARLA Rats! Onnne moment sir. Let me look over here again - what ORDER are these in? Are these in order of ... color?! What kind of...?

BENJAMIN **(slick voice)** Heyyyy Starla... how's the first day going?

[SFX: Books and files being opened, shuffled, and dropped on the floor]

STARLA Well, I'm trying to help Mr. ah... Mr. ?

PATRON Green.

STARLA Green? Mr. Green here find a food pantry and public transportation.

PATRON **(to Benjamin)** I usually stop at one along the bike trail but my bike is in the shop and - well gosh, the bike trail isn't over here is it?

BENJAMIN Nooooo. But I tell you what - there is a pantry very close by, Just one block over - here hand me that map by your foot Starla -

[SFX: map folding]

BENJAMIN See the X here? That is us on Willowy Lane. The pantry is just over here on Fireside Drive. It's walking distance no problem.

PATRON **(fades off)** Thanks! Say, you guys are so useful you should think about being put on that bike trail...

STARLA I really appreciate you helping me. I have never seen materials organized like this!

BENJAMIN I think Constance gets bored... anyway I was wondering if you wanted to get a coffee sometime? I have a secret stash of "special occasion" coffee that has only been run through two or three times! I can give you the lay of the land. **(casual stretching)** yep, I'm kind of a big deal in this town. I have a pretty widely read blog. Remember you saw a little of it already? It's called --

CONST **(teary voiced)** Benjamin?

BENJAMIN **(sighs)** It's Doctor Brittle ... Oh! Constance! Hey! I was just -

CONST **(runs off crying again)**

STARLA There goes my staff....

BENJAMIN There goes my night...

[Transition music - distorted and a little eerie]

[SFX: Echoey and dripping]

GHOST Hey, it's me! The guy who haunts the second floor bathroom here with another great product. You know we spend at least a third of our life sleeping, right? So when is the last time you splurged on a new mattress? Try a Sack Full of Empty Plastic Water Bottles Mattress!

That's right - voted best new product by Unverified Polls it's the Sack Full of Empty Plastic Water Bottles Mattress! Your new mattress arrives in a box so small you won't believe a mattress could be inside! But the people at Sack Full of Empty Plastic Water Bottles Mattresses, Inc. use a patented technique to compress each bottle as small as possible. You just take them out, squish them back into shape and place them in the

provided sack. Instant mattress!

I love my Sack Full of Empty Plastic Water Bottles Mattress. It's eco-friendly and adjusts to my shape. Is it noisy? A little. Is it affordable? You bet! For your 30-day free trial yell "I want a Sack Full of Empty Plastic Water Bottles Mattress - code GHOST!" out your window every few hours until one shows up at your door. If you aren't happy after 30 days just yell "Take it back!" Remember! That's code: GHOST!

[Transition music]

[SFX: Karen's robotic leg malfunctioning]

KAREN **(still sweet voiced)** It will be ok children! Just a little glitch! Ooh! Don't get too close! I know you like to sit close but now wouldn't be - oh!

[SFX: leg kicks one of the children who yells "wheeeeeee!" other children: "my turn! My turn!" a mom exclaims "Branson! No! " Kids move closer.

KAREN Oh, did that look fun? No no, stay back kids - Parents? Parents! **(parent in background "Montana! Get over here right now!")** I need you to come get your kids? **(parent in background "Branson, no!")**

HAZEL What is happening here?

KAREN Oh, it's silly! I was drinking some water to refresh my vocal cords when I spilled a smidge onto my leg and, well

[SFX: Leg kicks Hazel]

HAZEL Ouch! Gah, that was worse than stepping on Legos...!

KAREN The battery will run down before we know it and

HAZEL Have you tried unplugging it?

KAREN Yes! It just ... keeps going! **(gasps)** Is the ghost in MY LEG?

HAZEL **(groans)** The ghost is NOT in your - look, we can't just have you just ... sitting around kicking kids - **(Another child is launched, giggling and screaming "wheeeeeee!")** it's got to be against some safety regulation!

KAREN Maybe we can fill a garbage can with rice? And I can stand in it? To dry out my circuits?

HAZEL **(takes a long pause)**

[SFX: Leg kicks again]

KAREN No?

HAZEL Karen what do you think this is? Some phone you dropped in the toilet? Wait - didn't I see some Disciples of the Very Slow Rapture earlier?

KAREN Maybe. They usually do a pamphlet drop on Wednesdays.

HAZEL **(loudly)** Does anyone here have IT experience? Is there a circuit doctor in the house?

From different corners of the library we hear running and "IT?" "IT?" "Did somebody call IT?" "Information technology?"

Group converges with a rhythm like hup-hup-hup-hup as they say "IT-IT-IT-IT..." then begin tending to Karen. We hear group mumbling and the occasional "did she turn it off and turn it on again?" "maybe have her stand in rice?" "hard reboot?" then in unison "HARD REBOOT!" [SFX: the whirr of electric tools] "I feel alive again!"

HAZEL Yes! Crisis averted. Good job, Hazel! Now back to...

[SFX: The sounds of restlessness begins to grow -- children are crying]

HAZEL ooh...oh-kay. Uh...

Hazel can hardly be heard over the sound of the riotous children.

HAZEL **(clears throat, says tenuously)** Children? **(takes breath and says louder)** Children...

Hazel begins to sing “Daisy Bell (Bicycle Built for Two)”

Everyone is silent for a moment. In the background a child asks “Mommy, what’s a daisy?”

HAZEL **(chokes off singing and regains composure. The song obviously makes her a little teary. Takes a breath.)** Ok now I have your attention - who wants to hear the story about the little mutant who....tried really really hard, thought he could, but didn’t quite make it?

A chorus of “Me!”

KAREN **(yelling from afar)** Oh! Great choice!

HAZEL Great. So, once upon a time in a green green valley there lived a little mutant... **(fade)**

[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: Keep your risk of infection down by using one simple thing: Soap! Soap not only helps to get rid of germs and bacteria, it helps keep you clean. Need more information on how to make your own antimicrobial soaps? Check with the reference desk for information on where the soap making books are kept. 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]

CONST I'm sorry I can't seem to find the legal books... do you know the color of the spine?

[SFX: Phone rings]

STARLA Excuse me ma'am, just one moment - I'm short handed today! Orson Welles Community Library could you hold please? Ok now, legal books legal books .. ah ha! Squatters rights, right?

[SFX: Phone beeps]

STARLA Augh! (**sweetly**) Just one moment, please - wait! Benjamin! Could you help me for just one moment? Could you show this lady how to get to our legal databases next time the internet is working? I have a call on hold and it's just crazy here!

BENJAMIN Sure thing, right this way ma'am (**voice fades in the distance**)

PATRON 2 Thanks for the help Ben!

[SFX: phone beeps again]

BENJAMIN No problem - it's my job. You can call me Dr. Brittle, by the way...

PATRON 2 Oh!

STARLA Thank you for holding what can I do for you? **[SFX: unintelligible voice on other end of line]** Uh huh... uh huh... you read it in third grade, uh huh... a mouse... or a moose, got it... author's last name started with a D... or an M? Right. Or a C. And - what was that? Or maybe you dreamt it? (**deep breath**) Let me take your name and number and I will get back with you when I come up with the title you are looking for... or dreaming of? Right... ok, got it.

[SFX: Hangs up phone]

BENJAMIN That sounds like a fun one! Man, reference is slow today.

STARLA (**not too confident**) I love a challenge! Wait - this is slow?

BENJAMIN oh yeah. Don't worry - it will pick up! So... about that coffee?

STARLA I'll... take a raincheck. If you will excuse me a moment?

BENJAMIN Sure sure sure. No problem. I'll just be upstairs in the archive ... archiving things...

Starla walks off

CONST **(angrily shelving books and muttering to self)** ...thinks she can just waltz in here like Miss Brainy Bayou Bombshell ... take over MY department and flirt with MY sometimes... uh ... well I don't know what he is but whatever it is it's MINE and ...

STARLA I think K comes before P?

[SFX: Books tumble as Constance is startled]

STARLA Oops! Didn't mean to startle you! I just wanted to come over and say I think we got off on the wrong foot?

CONST Oh no what EVER makes you think THAT? I mean you are obviously qualified for the job, and Benjamin CERTAINLY thinks a lot of you...

STARLA I'm ... ah ... I'm sorry I got the job? But I'm not sorry. I really needed a new start and, well, I could use some help learning how you handle the reference desk HERE.

CONST **(pause)** wellll....

STARLA Also, Constance? I have no interest in Benjamin. Really. Look at me. Seriously. Not. my. Type.

CONST Ohhhhh. Well, frankly, he's kind of a pompous ass anyway. Has he shown you his blog yet?

STARLA Not yet - but he did mention it's **(mimics Benjamin)** "kind of a big deal" **(both laugh)** So... friends?

CONST Ahhhh...

STARLA Ok, maybe that is too much for now. How about... co-workers?

CONST ok... co-workers.

STARLA That is great to hear because I really need help figuring out how my books are organized.

CONST **(fade out)** Oh that's easy! First I group them by spine color, then I put them on the shelf in descending order of author aura...

[Transition Music]

HAZEL **(finishing up a story)** "... and that's how the moon fell apart. The end"

[SFX: Children clap cheer and make gelatinous jiggly sounds]

KAREN Alright kiddos! Miss Karen's leg is allll better thanks to the nice IT people, say "thank you!" kids! **(to IT people - whisper)** No, no, no - you may NOT pamphlet the children! You know the rules! Go on! Shoo! - Yes, thank you circuit doctors! Thank you for being helpers!

KAREN Ok, now it's time to say goodbye to Miss Hazel - she needs to get back to her secretary stuff! Come now children, off her lap! Say thank you!

Chorus of childish "thank you miss hazel!"

HAZEL **(overwhelmed and sniffing a bit)** yes, well, it was lovely children **(sniffle)** thank you. Have a lovely day!

Hazel walks off rapidly. Marjorie walks up quickly behind her.

MARJORIE Wow, Hazel, you were so great with those kids! I never would have thought you had it in you!

HAZEL Well **(sniffle, suppressing emotion)** it's like riding a bike I guess.

CITY MGR Did someone say “riding a bike?”

H/M **(same time, startled)** SIR!

CM I’ve been looking all over for you! Oh, hello, Major!

MARJORIE **(stupid laugh)**

CM Boy, Hazel, you look terrible! What’s wrong with your eyes? **(low)** Did you have to deliver one of the Director’s “letters” again?

HAZEL No. Just reading to the kids.

CM You? Reading to the kids? Ok.. anyway, wanted to let you know I have contractors coming next week to start taking measurements for the ol’ bike trail extension.

HAZEL Next week? They can’t come next week! I will be out of town for the annual Library conference! So will Marjorie! And Karen! And the new reference librarian!

CM What’s that? Reference librarian? Where? I want to meet him!

HAZEL Her.

CM Her? Ok, her. Is she... ?

HAZEL I don’t see her, she must be with a patron. Can we do this after next week? The only people who will be here are Benjamin and ... Constance.

CM Who?

HAZEL Never mind.

CM Manderley, do you know this Constance?

MARJORIE **(stupid laugh)**

CM Right... maybe ... did YOU deliver a letter for the Director recently?

HAZEL Anyway, SIR, if you would please have them come the week after next so I can meet with them, show them our blueprints, etc? Or the week after? **(under breath)** or the 12th of never....

CM Fine, fine. Go to your conference. Wait - did I approve funding for this conference? I mean, you already know how to Library, right?

HAZEL How to... Library?

CM Mangle - why do you all need to spend money on a conference for Librarying?

MARJORIE **(stupid laughs)**

CM ok, maybe you need it...well, don't spend too much! **(voice trailing off like he's walking away)** Maybe have peanut butter sandwiches in your hotel room - you all are sharing a room, right? Hey - I bet you could all share a sandwich!

HAZEL **(frustrated sigh)**

MARJORIE **(in-love sigh)**

HAZEL I guess I should get back to Starla. We have paperwork still to sign

STARLA **(in distance, on phone)** Hello, yes, this is Ms. Norwood from the Library. I think I've got your book title! **(proudly)** Was it "The Mouse that Ate a Moose" by D. Mortimer Clark? **[SFX: patron talking on phone]** Oh? You were thinking about it and remember it had millipede in the title? Not moose? Not mouse? Pink cover? Yes ma'am **(defeated tone)** I'll see what I can do.

[Outro Music]

DIRECTOR Hazel! it's time to type up the monthly overdue notices!

Dear Patron #0597,

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

The following items have been marked OVERDUE and must be returned IMMEDIATELY or you will be compelled to appear at the next Patron Banning Ceremony.

Marjorie Slump by Lara

Hazel Adams by Chriss

Karen Lovemore by Erin O'Quinn

The Ghost by Alisha Skelton-Donley

Benjamin Brittle (**Brittle in background "it's DOCTOR Brittle**) by Aleya Stone

Constance The Temp by Rebecca Hale

Starlandria Norwood by Alia Q. Pappas

The City Manager by Ashley Taylor

And finally - The Director by Catherine Kelso

Various combinations of the above people provided extra voices.

You still have outstanding fines on "Opening Narration by Veronica Escamilla-Brady, who you can also hear on her podcast Cthulhu and Friends" (what a weird title!) and the CD "Music Composed and Performed by Jarren Chaney,"

The Atomic Library was recorded at The Innovation Pipeline.

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. But, remember to return your items in a timely manner!

[Closing music - upbeat acoustic guitar]

When music concludes:

MARJORIE Guitar guy! We told you no guitar in the Library!

HAZEL Is THAT where the guitar music is coming from?

BENJAMIN Seriously? You have interrupted all my lunch hours when I was FOCUSING on the DATA...”

HAZEL: Get out of here Guitar Guy!

BENJAMIN Seriously...

[SFX: Guitar clunk and feet run away]