

The Library of Unwritten Books

The traveler arrived at the edge of the desert just as the sun dipped below the horizon, painting the dunes in gold and violet. He had followed rumors, whispers of a place where all the world's unwritten stories lay waiting. He had no map — only the belief that he would know it when he saw it.

He did.

At the base of a sandstone cliff, nestled within the rock as if it had grown there, was a doorway with no door. Beyond it stretched a hall lined with endless bookshelves. The traveler hesitated before stepping inside, expecting dust, decay, the musty scent of forgotten things. Instead, the air smelled of ink and paper, as though the books were still being written even as they sat on the shelves.

A man sat at a desk near the entrance, dipping a quill into an inkwell, though he seemed to be writing nothing at all.

"Welcome," the librarian said without looking up. "You've come to find your book."

The traveler's breath caught in his throat. "You know why I'm here?"

"All who find this place are searching," the librarian replied, standing. "Follow me."

They moved deeper into the library, past shelves stretching so high that their tops vanished into darkness. The traveler ran his fingers along the spines, expecting names of great authors, forgotten poets, lost legends. But each book bore only a title — never an author's name.

The librarian led him to a shelf near the heart of the library and stopped. "Here."

The traveler hesitated, his fingers hovering over the books. "How will I know which one is mine?"

"You will know," the librarian said simply, and then he walked away.

The traveler scanned the spines, heart pounding. And then, he saw it.

A book with no dust, no sign of age or wear. It looked as if it had been placed there only moments ago, waiting just for him. He pulled it from the shelf and opened it with trembling hands.

The words flowed like a dream, a story he had never read yet somehow recognized. It was not the novel he had always planned to write, the grand tale of heroes and kingdoms that had lingered half-formed in his mind for years. No, this was something different.

It was a story about a traveler.

A man who had spent his life searching for meaning, chasing destinations only to find them empty, dreaming of a purpose always just beyond his reach. It followed his steps through deserts and forests, through years of longing and loss. Every page felt like a whisper from

some unseen hand, revealing not what he had intended to create — but what had already been written in his very bones.

And then, at the final page, he saw something that made his breath catch.

The words were written in his own handwriting. “Now that you have read it, will you finally live it?”

The book slipped from his hands, landing softly on the floor.

His mind reeled. He had expected a legend, a grand revelation, an answer. Instead, he had found himself. Not as he imagined himself to be, but as he was — as he had always been.

He bent to pick up the book, but when he did, he saw something strange.

The book was gone.

In its place, there was a single blank page.

The librarian appeared beside him, as silent as the turning of the stars. “There is only one way to keep your book.”

The traveler swallowed hard. “How?”

The librarian smiled. “Write it.”

The traveler looked back at the empty page, and something inside him shifted. He had spent so many years lost in imagining what he might create, what he might become. But the story had already been waiting for him.

It was time to live it.

Wordlessly, he took the blank page in his hands and stepped out of the library. The desert wind met him like an old friend, and for the first time in his life, he knew exactly where he was going.

— *William Zeitler*

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