

Mr. Linden's Library

Before Jennifer even reached the door, she felt the library's unwelcoming feeling of terror. The building towered over her like a lion over a mouse. Predator over prey. The antique, 50-year-old stairs made a soft creaking noise under Jennifer's foot, like they did to everybody who visited the library. But the creak sounded even more noticeable at night, when she didn't want to be heard.

Peering in from a window, Jennifer made sure no one was present. The first room was dark and gloomy, like a beast's lair. The only things inside were dusty books. The checkout counter was empty, and everything was still. Ignoring the also creaking door, Jennifer stepped into the black room.

Her heart pounding, she grabbed a random book from the shelf, not even looking at the title. As she quickly ran away, she heard a voice. Mr. Linden. She had forgotten he slept in his library as well as worked in it. Without saying a word, he approached her and checked out the book. He warned her that the book could be dangerous, but Jennifer wasn't worried. She was about to whisper, "Thank you," but she just smiled and walked away. Little did she notice the small beady eyes watching her leave the library.

That night, she opened the book carefully and started reading it. As she read more of the story, she became more addicted. Gradually, she fell asleep with the book open in her hand.

First, a leaf appeared between the open pages. Then another. Then another. A vine sprung from the pages. More greenery. The book shook like it was chuckling, and then tons of grass, vines, and leaves erupted from the book like lava from a volcano. Once Jennifer's room was a grassy setting, the walls disappeared and she was literally in the book. As Jennifer awakened, she realized Mr. Linden's warning might have actually meant something.

She climbed out of bed and went exploring. It was nighttime there, too. The only difference was that snow was scattered in some places. After a lot of walking in the knee-high snow, Jennifer found a small cottage. Lights were on, so she figured that somebody was home. Jennifer knocked on the door and, surprisingly, a beaver answered.

"Who are you?" questioned the beaver.

Jennifer was expecting an animal to answer. She had read far enough to know.

"I don't know how I got here or where I am," she explained desperately, "but I need someplace to sleep."

“Come in. But we need to get you out by tomorrow. Strangers usually aren’t very welcome here.”

Jennifer gratefully stepped inside, and again, she failed to notice the same beady eyes watching her every move.

She slept peacefully for only a few hours. Then she was awakened by the beaver shaking her roughly.

“You must return to your home! The Master has sensed your presence!” He seemed extremely panicked.

“Who is The Master?” Jennifer asked curiously.

“No one knows. He can change his shape to whatever he wants. Usually he is a king or a ghost. Sometimes he is just a shapeless swirl.”

“But what was he originally?”

“No one knows!”

Without explaining any more, the beaver pushed her outside into the cold frosty air. Winds whipped her face like long ghostly fingers. A blizzard was brewing outside, and a strong one, too.

“Run!” the beaver cried excitedly. “And hurry! Hurry!”

Jennifer ran as fast as her legs would carry her, although she did not know where she was going. Suddenly, she stopped in her tracks. She had just run around in a complete circle, so it was useless trying to run anymore. And something that looked like a white snowy tornado was spinning rapidly in front of her.

“Stop where you are,” it hissed mysteriously.

Jennifer was about to say, “I already have,” but fear kept her mouth closed shut.

“Who are you?” inquired the swirly being.

Again, she was too afraid to speak.

“WHO are you?” it asked again, louder.

“Ummm... you don’t know me...uh...my name is...”

The mysterious figure remained silent. Jennifer decided to make a run for it. But the figure followed her and was soon caught up. It seemed angry, in a way, even though tornadoes don’t have feelings. Maybe this one did.

While making a loud moaning sound, the figure swallowed her up. After that happened, Jennifer realized she was helpless. Most likely, this would be the end. And it would have been. If not for those watchful eyes that had followed her all the way.

“No!!” he screamed, in absolute fury.

Who was he? He had followed her and made sure she was safe the whole time. But now she wasn’t safe. She was in great danger. Was he failing on his duty?

But who was he? He wore rectangular glasses, like Mr. Linden, but he was much younger than Mr. Linden. The boy did resemble the library owner. Jennifer had seen him before in the library, but had never asked him his name or why he was there. Why was he there? To help, she supposed. Would he help her get out of this terrible mess?

“No, no, no!!” Still shouting in rage, he picked up a deserted wand and pointed it at the swirly figure.

He didn’t know what he was doing. He knew he was trying to save her life, but he didn’t know how he would do it. Muttering frantically, he pointed the wand at the white snowy figure. It stopped moving, as if it had frozen. He drew in his breath. Would Jennifer now freeze to death? Suddenly, the figure changed into a block of transparent ice. He could see Jennifer turning blue in the face. Could she breathe? He muttered a silent spell, and the giant ice cube melted.

Jennifer exhaled deeply. Who was her savior?

“Come on,” he commanded. “We need to get you home before The Master finds you again.”

Without even questioning what he said, she followed him deep into the forest. There, they found a pond. The pond’s water had constant ripples in it, even though there was no rain to make the ripples with.

“Dive in,” said the boy.

Jennifer and the boy dived in to the pond. A few seconds later, they were back in Jennifer’s bedroom.

“How did you know the way out?” asked Jennifer.

“Don’t ask,” he said. “Just close the book before that happens again. That book is magic. We need to go to my dad’s library and return it. Why’d you try to steal it, anyway?”

“I didn’t want to steal it. I just...just...I don’t know. But, you’re Mr. Linden’s son? Shouldn’t Mr. Linden be your...grandfather?”

The boy gave Jennifer a dirty look.

“Oh. Sorry.”

The walked to the library together in the night to return the magical book. Mr. Linden was still awake, and he gladly checked out the book.

“I’m glad you got the girl out safely, Oscar. After all, there were ones you failed on,” Mr. Linden teased.

“There were some that never got out?” Jennifer asked worriedly.

“Just some,” Mr. Linden whispered as he winked.

Nobody has checked the book out since. The reason it pulls its readers into it remains a complete mystery.

I liked the way you had Jennifer freeze and then Oscar save her.
Some of it didn't make sense though.