Jaw Breaker - 2nd place 2018

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“Jaw Breaker”

“The library closes in fifteen minutes,” erupted a voice over the PA system. “Please manage your remaining time accordingly.”

Jane sauntered down the aisle, lost somewhere in the drama section on the second floor, looking for a copy of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Her hand hovered beside the row of books on the shelves next to her. Her eyes darted from book to book, reading every title she passed by.

She stopped in the middle of the aisle and stared blankly at the wall of books. Between copies of the *Taming of the Shrew* and *Timon of Athens* sat a vacant gap, a book-less void. Alphabetically speaking, this is where *The Tempest* should be, but it seems that someone else had gotten to it first.

With a half-hearted sigh, Jane turned to trek back down the aisle, but a subtle sound caught her attention. It was a sort of light thud, kind of like the sound a baseball bat makes when it hits the dirt. It came from above.

Jane looked up and locked eyes with a man peering over the shelves. The books obscured the lower half of his face, but from the nose up, Jane could make out the form of a bald man with a long nose and blood shot eyes.

His eyes were fixed on her, unblinking and fixed with intensity.

Jane stopped in her tracks. She stared back at the man, and for a long time, the two remained in a stalemate. But Jane blinked first.

She looked away.

“Dude, I gotta get going,” she whispered.

She looked back. His eyes were still dead set on her. They appeared immovable, like two glass orbs lodged in his skull.

Jane turned to leave, but stopped when she saw something moving on the lower shelves. Blood slowly oozed out of the shelf over several books, washing the white pages red. It flowed steadily, and trickled down each shelf.

She looked back at the man. He still hadn’t moved. She reached up and removed the books in front of the man’s face. Behind the row of books, she found a row of teeth, clenched to the edge of the shelf.

Jane cautiously tiptoed down the aisle, and peered around the corner.

The body of a man hung from the top shelf, propped up by his top row of teeth. He was suspended in the air, his feet barely hovering above the ground.

Jane slowly approached the man. She reached out, and tugged on the back of his coat. He slipped off the shelf, and landed on his back.

Jane immediately caught sight of his face. His lower jaw had been torn off, leaving a mouth-less void. Blood poured out of the hole in his face.

Several teeth were scattered around the corpse, and the mangled remains of a mandible sat a few feet from it.

Footsteps, steadily growing louder, approached Jane’s location. Without hesitation, Jane sprints off, leaving the jaw torn mess of blood behind.