

# **STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY**

by Jenny Lyn Bader & Martine Sainvil

# STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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# STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

*This play is dedicated to the drama students and teachers  
of the City of Orange school district —  
and to drama programs and librarians everywhere.*

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## Authors' Note

*Strange Happenings at the School Library* was originally imagined for a physical stage. At a certain point it became clear that its premiere would have to be virtual.

But the script as it is now could be done either virtually or onstage.

—Indeed, we look forward to seeing how interpreters might theatricalize the zoom meeting scenes in real life.

This play was originally created for a particular community in New Jersey but if you are staging it elsewhere, please feel free to substitute a local sandwich shop (or other food shop) and a local pizzeria for those mentioned in the first scene.

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## About the Play

Once upon a time, during a pandemic, a drama program canceled its spring show.

Teachers decided to make it up to the students who lost their spring musical by arranging to have a professional show written expressly for them. Mike Seidel, Dana Levin Grenell, Marc Levenson, and Britt Keshner talked about it with Donna Sinisgalli, Orange Public Schools' Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts, who approached Luna Stage Company about the possibility of commissioning a fall play, a comedy.

The educators wanted to be sure the students would have input and the play would somehow reflect their recent experiences of lockdown. They thought the students would be back to in-person school by fall, and at one point imagined an in-person, live stage production of a series of vignettes on themes of quarantine. They also asked the students what the show should ideally be about, creating a spreadsheet with these questions:

*Are there any movies or historical events you'd like to see reenacted in a quarantined atmosphere?*

*Are there any stories or situations from your life during the pandemic you'd like to see reenacted on the stage?*

The 8th and 9th grade students filled in the spreadsheet with their answers. The teachers shared the spreadsheet with Ari Laura Kreith, the Artistic Director of Luna Stage Company.

Ari loved the idea of creating a customized piece for this community. She also liked the idea of the play containing distinct vignettes, which are always easier for school rehearsals — especially if the school district decided to continue lockdown. In that case, scenes could easily be rehearsed in separate Zoom meetings. She considered asking multiple playwrights to author different vignettes.

She then shared the spreadsheet with playwright Jenny Lyn Bader, who suggested setting the play in a library, interweaving the vignettes within the framework of one overarching story there, and bringing in one co-author not just to divide up the vignettes but also to co-create this cohesive narrative.

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Jenny Lyn reached out to Martine Sainvil, a fellow member of the New York writers group Playwrights Gallery, where they had both developed their work, but never created work together before.

The students were also asked about movies, historical events, and real-life scenarios, but some of their ideas for book settings stood out and seemed especially intriguing. Jenny Lyn and Martine talked about what might happen to a fictional librarian encountering some of those book and story settings in new ways. How might familiar characters whose stories are going a little sideways help locate the comedy during these overwhelming times?

Together, the two playwrights worked out and refined the framing device, developed the story of the librarian, and wrote the play. As they wrote, they found ways to incorporate a wide variety of the brainstormed ideas from the class spreadsheet so that the play would truly reflect what the students most wanted to see.

The authors are grateful to all of the then-8th and 9th graders who shared thoughts during the early stages of the creative process, both specific and general, beginning with freshman Elvis Fuentes who wrote on the spreadsheet, “I would like to see fun.”

The spreadsheet brimmed with intriguing and inspiring suggestions. A few of the students who filled it out deserve particular special thanks:

Diego Portillo wanted to see “two famous characters that are always with each other now dealing with social distancing.”

Ricardo Salazar suggested adapting *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

Taniyah Davis suggested exploring the BLM movements.

Melissa Pierre-Louis wrote about not being able to see her friends and also suggested reenacting *The Hate You Give*, a book that would get mentioned in the play.

Jullian Desormes suggested reenacting *The Fault in Our Stars*, another book mentioned in the play.

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Zahkyah Wideman wrote, “I think that the story should be about fairytale creatures in our world. Like without the singing, dancing, villains, and happily ever after endings...”

Giana Silien wrote, “Quarantine can feel as if you’re locked up but... in your own house. Like Rapunzel. She was locked up in her home and couldn’t get out.”

Mohamed Yasin wrote, “I think Greek Mythology would come in handy with this, you could like social distance the gods and get them in their different parts like Poseidon in the sea, Hades in the underworld etc. and maybe put them on a zoom call maybe, I think that would be hilarious.”

—His image of putting Greek gods into a zoom meeting proved a powerful muse.

Deep gratitude goes to those who suggested those ideas, all who suggested any ideas, and everyone who acted in the play, designed it, delivered props to students’ homes for recording sessions, and generally made the impossible premiere happen. And to all of the teachers and students and parents at Orange High School, Orange Preparatory Academy, and STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges who helped along the way, from the moment the Performing Arts Department students filled out that spreadsheet onwards.

This virtual suggestion box filled with ideas and hopes, community resilience, many beloved books and myths, and of course the shared experience of living through 2020 all inspired the writing of *Strange Happenings at the School Library*.

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

**STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY** was originally commissioned and developed by Ari Laura Kreith/Luna Stage Company on behalf of the Visual and Performing Arts Department of the City of Orange Public Schools.

It premiered on December 18, 2020, in a virtual production by Orange Theater Arts in association Luna Stage and with the Visual and Performing Arts Department of the Orange Public Schools. The director was Michael Seidel.

The Assistant Director was Dana Levin Grenell. The Production Manager was Mark Levenson. The Technical Director was Tammy Baldwin. The Assistant Technical Director was Peter Abazia. Costume Design was by Britt Shubow Keshner. Art Direction was by Avril Bogle.

The cast was:

LIBRARIAN.....	Michelle Carrera
ARES, TWEEDLEDEE, JORDAN.....	Guadalupe Aguilar
APOLLO, HANSEL, BROOKS.....	Elliott Holmes
ZEUS.....	Brando Beltran
ATHENA, RAPUNZEL, HILDA.....	Mackela Carasco
POSEIDON, HAPPY.....	Zain Hayden
ARTEMIS, SNOW WHITE.....	Michelle Viglianti
HERA, ALICE, CUPCAKE.....	Faith Lewis
HEPHAESTUS, TWEEDLEDUM, BREAD.....	Rebecka Francois
APHRODITE, AMELIA.....	Esther Metor
HADES, MUFFIN.....	Jasmine Ascencio
JANE, GRUMPY.....	Junie Guelce
JILL, SNEEZY.....	Carine Guelce
JACK, DOPEY.....	Jesus Noble
GEORGIANA.....	Melissa Pierre-Louis
GRETEL.....	Samantha Gonzalez
BASHFUL.....	Esmerelda Rubi Tapia



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The play received its professional premiere in a virtual production by Luna Stage, directed by Lily Greenberg, Dillon Mitcham, and Alex Oleksy. The Animation Designer was Danielle Stecki. The Sound Designer was Megan Culley. The Visual Designer was Cameron Filepas. The directing team, from Luna Stage’s Emerging Directors program, was mentored by Jessica Bauman. A Fairytale Voiceover that introduced the play and described how the story came to pass was done by Turron Kofi Alleyne. The video, recorded over Zoom, was edited by Joey Yow, with subtitles designed by Alana Garcia. The cast was:

LIBRARIAN.....	Christie Lynn Devoe
ARES, BROOKS, BREAD.....	Romello Rodriguez
APOLLO, MUFFIN, DOPEY.....	Tanner Roncace
ATHENA, GRETTEL, GEORGIANA, HILDA.....	Mary Walker
ZEUS, TWEEDLEDEE, CUPCAKE.....	R.J. Christian
POSEIDON, HANSEL, BASHFUL.....	Patrick Singer
HERA, RAPUNZEL, AMELIA.....	Julia Creutzer
ARTEMIS, JANE, HAPPY, JORDAN.....	Naiya McCalla
HEPHAESTUS, TWEEDLEDUM, SNEEZY.....	Nic Sanchez
APHRODITE, ALICE, JILL, SNOW WHITE.....	Kiana Lum
HADES, JACK, GRUMPY.....	Zach Canter

The virtual production was produced by Luna Stage Company (Artistic Director, Ari Laura Kreith)

### *Note on Set Design*

The play can be done with a simple interior set: desk, computer, and piles — or shelves — of books. Scenes involving characters from books can be staged as if they are coming from the librarian’s imagination.

Time: 2020

Place: The school library

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## Cast of Characters

There are a total of 34 roles, or as few as 11 with doubling:

Librarian (a.k.a. Veronica Pacelli)	Georgiana
Ares	Hansel
Apollo	Gretel
Athena	Cupcake
Zeus	Bread
Poseidon	Muffin
Artemis	Snow White
Hera	Amelia
Hephaestus	Bashful
Aphrodite	Grumpy
Hades	Happy
Alice	Dopey
Tweedledee	Sneezy
Tweedledum	Jordan, a student
Rapunzel	Brooks, an interviewer
Jane	Hilda
Jill	
Jack	

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## SCENE 1: Flipping Through

*The library is empty of people except for a lone LIBRARIAN, Veronica Pacelli. On her desk, there is a pile of books and a pizza box. The phone rings. She answers.*

**LIBRARIAN.** School library, may I help you? (*Listens.*) Sure, I can look that up for you... Absolutely I can tell you whether we have a book. That's no problem at all. I know, I'm delighted too! ...Yes, we have that! ...No, you can't come get it. We're in quarantine... Unhelpful how? (*A little offended.*) I don't think so! I think it's nice to know that we have it! —And that one day when this is over, you can read it! We're keeping the books safe for you... Me? Of course, I'm safe. Oh, you mean because the school is in lockdown... Well, it's a long story, involving a leak in my ceiling and a plumber who was quarantined in the next county and a flood and a cat... Let's just say, I've moved into the school library, and it's not bad, I have a little fridge in the back, and Sandwiches Unlimited delivers, and GiCarli's Pizza delivers, and comfort food is important. (*Pats the pizza box.*) And I don't have my two-hour commute anymore! Because I'm already here! And that's two more hours with the books. Four if you count mornings and afternoons. I keep my favorite ones right here. (*Indicates a pile, which may be labeled FAVORITE BOOKS.*) And I'm the only one in the building, so if I'm safe, the books are safe. Have I read all of them to be sure? No. But I remember this one well, it begins on Mount Olympus where all the gods are gathered together... Let me just flip through it... (*Flipping through.*) I do enjoy flipping through, finding things, remembering things... oh this is such a good one...flipping through, flipping through, flip — (*Screams.*) Aaaaaah! Um. There's something a little strange about this edition... let me call you back. (*She puts her face further into the book until she is obscured by the cover.*)

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### **SCENE 2: Zoom Olympus**

*The sounds of Zoom are heard and... The Olympian Gods enter, in a Zoom meeting.  
—Or, if being played in a theatre, in a theatrical staging of a Zoom meeting.*

**ARES.** Dad, you said we were going to have the family meeting in person!

**ATHENA.** And you said it would be at your place.

**ZEUS.** I know I said that. But then the world went into quarantine.

**POSEIDON.** That shouldn't apply to the Gods! We shouldn't have to meet on... Zoom!

**ZEUS.** Really, Poseidon? Really? For years you complain about your long commute here...how much you hate it... how dry it is on Mount Olympus. You always want to meet under the sea. Now, you're there! Isn't that what you wanted?

**POSEIDON.** No! *(He says something that sounds like bubbles.)* Blub blub blub blub Blub blub! Blub blub blub blub blub blub blub blub!

**ZEUS.** Sorry, I didn't catch that last thing.

**POSEIDON.** What I wanted is for everyone to come to the ocean. Videocalls are very unstable under water!

**APOLLO.** On water, on land, or in heaven, I can attest the sound quality on here is awful. And the asynchronous singing? My whole choir is freaking out!

**ATHENA.** Did you try adjusting your advanced audio preferences?

**APOLLO.** Yes, and we still sound horrible!

**ARES.** I find fighting battles is impossible at a distance.

**ARTEMIS.** I obviously can't hunt.

**ATHENA.** At the risk of sounding petty: my owl does not like staring at himself all the time.

**ZEUS.** I realize it's not ideal. I wanted you all here and not socially distant.

**ATHENA.** Just a small clarification, Dad: I think you mean socially "distanced." Not "distant." When we are "distancing," that doesn't necessarily mean we are distant. And from a grammatical standpoint, technically... *(HERA interrupts.)*

**HERA.** Oh, shut up, Athena.

**HEPHAESTUS.** Yeah, shut up, Athena.

**ARTEMIS.** Also, Athena, I don't know if I agree. I feel both—distanced *and* distant. Far apart physically, and emotionally detached from all of you.

**ATHENA.** Why would you care? You're always distant.

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**ARTEMIS.** That's not true.

**ATHENA.** Artemis. You hang out with deer.

**ARTEMIS.** And my bear!

**ATHENA.** You hang out with deer and your bear... you refuse to date.

**ARTEMIS.** As if dating ever worked out for you...

**ATHENA.** I happen to be immune to romantic love.

**ARTEMIS.** Oh, but when a guy doesn't say you're the most beautiful woman in the world, you start a war?

**ATHENA.** I also happen to be easily insulted.

**ARTEMIS.** At least you know it.

**ATHENA.** Of course I know it. I'm the most meta-cognitive person around!

**APOLLO.** Please! I'm just as meta-cognitive as you.

**ATHENA.** You would be, if you weren't so distractable! (*APHRODITE enters. Painful screechy audio feedback can be heard.*)

**HERA.** What is that awful sound?

**APHRODITE.** Oops! Oops, oops, oops. (*The awful sound disappears.*)

**HEPHAESTUS.** Sorry, that was Aphrodite.

**APHRODITE.** That was me.

**HERA.** Oh, Aphrodite, It's always you.

**ATHENA.** No, Hera, sometimes it's you.

**APHRODITE.** Hephaestus and I signed on at the same time, so there was an awful reverberating sound. It happens when two people sign on from different devices in the same place.

**HEPHAESTUS.** Because one of them refuses to share a device with the other.

**APHRODITE.** Because one of them insists on doing metalwork at 3000 degrees!

**HEPHAESTUS.** It's my job! I'm the god of metalwork!

**APHRODITE.** It's hotter than a volcano in here.

**HEPHAESTUS.** I'm also the god of volcanoes!

**APHRODITE.** And I'm the goddess of pleasure, and it is no pleasure to sit next to a forge! It's hot enough over here on the couch! Where you are? Is impossibly hot! I'm surprised your computer isn't melting!

**HEPHAESTUS.** It's made of the highest-grade steel in creation, so it wouldn't!

**HERA.** That's enough out of you two! You have the worst marriage out of anyone here and that is saying a lot!

**APHRODITE.** Doesn't help to have you as a mother-in law.

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**HERA.** Darling! Are you going to get this meeting started or what?

**ZEUS.** Yes of course. But is everyone here? Who are we missing?

**ATHENA.** Dionysus. I doubt he'll make it. He's been in his wine cellar all month.

**HERA.** Binge-drinking, I'm sure. Typical.

**HADES.** Let's start without him. It's very crowded down here and I have a lot to do.

**APHRODITE.** And as I think I've mentioned, it's so hot here. It makes me grumpy that I can't visit the mountains!

**ARES.** You're not the only grumpy one.

**APHRODITE.** Why? You miss me?

**ARES.** No!

**APHRODITE.** No?

**HEPHAESTUS.** Honey, do you have to do this in front of the whole family?

**APHRODITE.** I love you Hephaestus, but I can't stop flirting just because of a pandemic.

**ARES.** Aphrodite, don't take that the wrong way. I mean, I miss everyone! I'm a soldier! I need battalions of people around!

**ZEUS.** I don't understand all of you. Hades, you usually love it when so many people are dying that the underworld gets crowded! Apollo, you always want more time to practice your music. Without all the concerts and public events, you can rehearse all day now! And Artemis, you insisted on having your own virginity cult, but today you're all upset about being socially distant?

**ATHENA.** Distanced!

**ZEUS.** Distanced!

**HADES.** It's true, Zeussy.

**ZEUS.** Don't call me that.

**HADES.** Oh, you know I will, Zeussy.

**ATHENA.** If you let him know it annoys you, then he'll only do it more.

**HADES.** You're right, Zeussy, I used to love the sudden wars and famines and plagues... kept things exciting.

**ZEUS.** Yes!

**HADES.** So why am I not enjoying this plague? I think it's just... too drawn out and too predictable! So obvious when the numbers are about to spike again. Not a challenge at all. Just a lot of extra paperwork. And disgruntled customers, showing up before their time. Maybe you're right I'm being a little negative. Just because I

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am death, does it mean I have to be negative all the time? —No!! I should focus on the positive: we're populating my underworld beyond what I ever thought possible. We are! Thank you, Zeussy!

**ARTEMIS.** For me, the hardest part of this time has been keeping my distance from my faun friends and my favorite bear! But father, you're right, I do enjoy being by myself and chatting with the moon. Instead of fretting about how I miss my animals, I should think of this as an opportunity. —A chance to talk to the moon a little more!

**ZEUS.** I haven't spoken to her, but I think the moon would like that. And she's certainly at a safe distance.

**APOLLO.** Wow, my word. Just wow. I'm overcome.

Our father has spoken, and his wisdom soars

His insights pierce my heart. They've struck me dumb.

He sees the truth about my inner wars...

**ATHENA.** Are you gonna make your entire point in verse?

**ZEUS.** Leave him alone, I like this one...

**APOLLO.** No, she ruined it.

**ARES.** Nice.

**APOLLO.** Yes, I was gonna make my entire point in verse. Damn you Athena, why do you have to be so right about everything?

**ZEUS.** It's technically because she came from my brain and I'm always right.

**APOLLO.** Yeah, you're both right. Athena, I was going to keep speaking in flowery phrases so you wouldn't notice how embarrassed I was. And Dad, you're right too. I've always thought that my instrumental technique could only get so perfect because I didn't have time to perfect it. But now, all my sunrise rituals and poetry slams and music festivals are canceled, and did I use the time wisely to rehearse round the clock?

**ZEUS.** No.

**APOLLO.** No! I frittered away time. I... dreamt. I... idled! I binge-watched the future.

**HERA.** You did *what*?

**APOLLO.** I would sit there staring at my oracular prophecies for hours.

**HERA.** And how does the future look?

**APOLLO.** Humanity survives, but there are some major hiccups along the way.

**ZEUS.** Which brings us back to the subject of this meeting. Certain problematic

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mortals. Here's the agenda... (*Librarian looks up from the book — and Hera spots her.*)

**HERA.** Honey, there's a problematic mortal here now!

**LIBRARIAN.** You guys! I mean, ye gods! What are you doing? Why are you on a zoom call?

**ZEUS.** Because of lockdown, mortal. Has no one told you?

**LIBRARIAN.** But the quarantine is happening now! Not in the ancient world.

**ZEUS.** Are you trying to explain time to us? Time was my father!

**LIBRARIAN.** You're... Zeus?

**ZEUS.** Who are you? How did you get onto this call?

**LIBRARIAN.** I'm the librarian so I have access to all the zoom meetings in this building.

**ARES.** What should we do to her?

**ATHENA.** Calm down, Ares. (*To Librarian.*) I like librarians. I'm going to help you.

**LIBRARIAN.** Thank you!

**ATHENA.** I know the space-time continuum is sometimes hard for mortals to grasp.

**LIBRARIAN.** Yes, it is!

**ATHENA.** Let me put it like this. We may be in the ancient world but we're also in the book you're holding. Have you looked in any of the other books?

**LIBRARIAN.** Not yet.

**ATHENA.** I suggest you look in a few other books.

**LIBRARIAN.** I will.

**ATHENA.** And: try not to talk to the characters. Just read them.

**LIBRARIAN.** Right. Got it. Just read them. Thank you.

**HADES.** Are you feeling alright? Have you been running any fevers? Experiencing any aches or pains? Do you maybe want to have a rest? A long rest?

**ATHENA.** You should get out of here right away.

**LIBRARIAN.** Thank you, Athena! Bye now! (*She shuts the book, hard. The gods exit. Having successfully escaped, Librarian sits down and catches her breath.*)



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### **SCENE 3: Surrealer and Surrealer**

*The Librarian picks up a copy of Through the Looking Glass.*

**LIBRARIAN.** (*Reads.*) “In another moment Alice... had jumped lightly down into the Looking-glass room...” (*She flips through, then reads.*) “Here are the Red King and the Red Queen...” Oh yes! Flipping through... flipping... Wait. Where’s the chess game? What’s going on? This is surreal! Even more surreal than usual! And what the...? (*Librarian turns book upside down.*) Did this arrow always point that way? (*ALICE enters, staring at the upside-down book.*)

**ALICE.** Tweedledee’s house is that way. But Tweedledum’s house is that way... How strange! I don’t think this sign is set the right way. (*Alice turns her head upside down. Then TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM appear from opposite sides of the stage. They always maintain at least six feet of distance. They are not brothers, but wish they were.*)

**TWEEDLEDUM.** He broke my rattle!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** And he’s a tattle!

**ALICE.** Can the rattle be fixed?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** I’d like to fix ’im in the head!

**ALICE.** Ooooh! Are you going to knock into him, then? (*Alice claps excitedly.*) Let’s see that!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Are you saying you want us to fight?

**ALICE.** No! Yes! Sorry, I’m having a bit of a strange day... so I was just wondering if something crazy and exciting were about to happen!

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Nah. Not much happens these days.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** A lot used to happen!

**ALICE.** It did?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Oh you have no idea! We used to live in the same house!

**ALICE.** Oooh! I *thought* that sign might be upside down!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Yes it is! Back in the olden times — which were just a few months ago — it was tremendously funny because we had two different signs — Pointing to the same place! I’m Tweedledee.

**TWEEDLEDUM.** And I’m Tweedledum and a lot of people think we’re identical twins but we’re not, we just have similar but completely different names.

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**TWEEDLEDEE.** And those names rhyme. (*Alice, confused, whispers the names “Tweedledee” and “Tweedledum” to herself, unable to get them to rhyme.*)

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Which means we rhyme! And we’re both big kids!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Or very small adults!

**TWEEDLEDUM.** ...So we got these matching shirts

**TWEEDLEDEE.** ...And moved into the same house!

**ALICE.** You two have your own house?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** A tree house!

**ALICE.** How lovely! I wish I had a friend like that! I spend a lot of time talking to kittens.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** It *was* lovely! But then one day everyone who wasn’t family was told to go to ’is own house. And we wasn’t family.

**TWEEDLEDUM.** And now every time we want to punch each other, beat each other up, or just make up silly new dances, we can’t! Because we have to live in different houses.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** With our parents!

**TWEEDLEDUM.** And we can’t wrap our arms around each other or do our team huddle...

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Or our goofball kickline dance... or any of the dances from our youtube channel, which was once watched by 23 people at one time—

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Because now we have to be...

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Six feet apart.

**ALICE.** Six feet apart! But why?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** I don’t know! They said six was good, but nine would be even nicer. Nine feet apart they want us!

**ALICE.** I think you’re not the only ones. Today my mother told me I needed to stay by myself and stop going off and having adventures!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Oh no!

**ALICE.** That was of course before I fell down a rabbit hole and went through a mirror.

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Are you alright?

**ALICE.** Oh yes, I’m very accident-prone but also very solid.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Great!

**ALICE.** But wherever I went? Everything was cancelled! I got an invitation to a tea party? Cancelled. A croquet match? Rescheduled *until next year*.

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**TWEEDLEDUM.** Aw too bad! I love croquet! We don't know how to play but we hit each other on the head with the mallets!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Can't do that anymore. Now we have to have disagreements from six feet apart! Very inconvenient.

**TWEEDLEDUM.** It's impossible to fight.

**ALICE.** I have an idea... what if you could send your punches through the air?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Huh?

**ALICE.** That way you could throw a punch, and he could catch it, and throw one back, and I could watch you fight, but we would still all be apart the way the grownups have asked us to be.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Oooh let's try it. *(Tweedledee throws a socially distanced punch. Tweedledum recoils, falling down as if it were a major blow.)*

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Oof! That was a big one. *(Pulling self up.)* Here's mine... *(Tweedledum punches down. Tweedledee apparently gets knocked down from above, and reels... Alice gasps.)*

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Take that! *(Tweedledee circles his fist in the air in a fancy, amazing, wild punch that he sends through space, it ricochets and... Tweedledum somehow falls over.)*

**ALICE.** Oh wow, you've knocked him out!

**TWEEDLEDEE.** Is he alright, d'you think?

**ALICE.** Can you hear him breathing? *(A moment as they wait. Then Tweedledum suddenly jumps up.)*

**TWEEDLEDUM.** That was a great one! I love this air fighting! Thank you for helping us, person we just met!

**ALICE.** Alice.

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Thank you for helping us, Alice.

**TWEEDLEDEE.** You know I like this air-punching better than the regular punching?

**TWEEDLEDUM.** Oh yes, much more interesting! You never know what's gonna happen next, and you feel it right in your head, without feeling it right in your head... but it's *in* your head. *(He starts to air-pummel Tweedledee... Mayhem ensues as Librarian shuts book. She opens other books.)*

**LIBRARIAN.** Oh dear! I have to do something about this! But Athena said not to talk to the characters. Maybe if I just talked to them on the phone, it wouldn't count? Athena? *(A beat.)* Aren't you supposed to appear in a cloud when I say that?

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

Sigh. (*Picks up phone.*) Hi, can I have Wonderland Directory Assistance? I need contact info for the Tweedles. Yes. And then I'm going to need to be transferred to some other worlds. To Fairyland Directory Assistance. I need to get in touch with a Rapunzel, a Ms. White, and a few other folks. Yes, I can hold. (*As she waits on hold, she starts to page through a large volume.*)

### **SCENE 4: Where's Rapunzel?**

*A Zoom call in progress. RAPUNZEL is giving a seminar on hair care in the pandemic. On the call she is joined by JACK, JILL, GEORGIANA and JANE.*

**RAPUNZEL.** Hi everybody. Welcome to my top secrets for looking Instagram-ready on a budget.

**JANE.** While socially distancing.

**RAPUNZEL.** Exactly. Thanks Jane. For those of you who don't know, that's Jane Bennett. She runs my fan club. (*Jane waves.*) Virtual hugs, Jane. I'm Rapunzel and today I'm sharing what I've learned on my hair journey so you can keep it fresh in quarantine... When I first moved into my current tower, I didn't have access to a trained professional or an exit. But, that's when I discovered a game changer. Two words — Coconut oil... It's magical and the number one secret to my long and healthy hair.

**JILL.** Wait, do we have to order this from the fairies? They charge a lot for shipping.

**JACK.** They're waiving it over \$25.

**JILL.** Are you sure?

**JANE.** It's true.

**JILL.** Since when?

**JANE.** Since quarantine started.

**GEORGIANA.** I wish they didn't use so much fairy dust in the packing material. It gets everywhere.

**RAPUNZEL.** You don't have to order it from the Fairies.

**JILL.** Oh, great.

**RAPUNZEL.** But if you do decide to get it from them, you can mix the fairy dust with a little coconut oil and it makes a great moisturizing body glitter.

**JACK.** Body glitter? Who needs body glitter at a time like this?

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

**RAPUNZEL.** It's the little things that will give you a boost Jack.

**JACK.** If you say so.

**RAPUNZEL.** Trust me, I'm an expert on this kind of thing. (*They all get an alert on their devices.*)

**JANE.** Just a reminder for everyone to put their devices on silent during our time together.

**GEORGIANA.** Sorry about that, I just got an alert on my phone.

**JILL.** So did I.

**JANE.** Looks like I got it too.

**RAPUNZEL.** What's going on?

**GEORGIANA.** It's from the librarian.

**JACK.** The librarian?

**RAPUNZEL.** Why is the librarian interrupting my seminar? We only have a limited amount of time and I still have to cover deep conditioning.

**JILL.** She's asking for all characters to get back to their books.

**JACK.** All characters?

**JILL.** Every one.

**GEORGIANA.** There's a list and there are a lot of names on it.

**JILL.** Looks like no one is quarantining in their own stories.

**RAPUNZEL.** Okay, well, I'm in my book.

**JACK.** But your name is here.

**RAPUNZEL.** I can't be on that list, I'm still in my tower.

**JANE.** There's a list of *disruptives*. It says here that she came by to check and she couldn't find you.

**RAPUNZEL.** Obviously she didn't come to the south side of the Tower.

**JILL.** What's on the south side?

**RAPUNZEL.** A stronger Wi-Fi connection.

**JANE.** I'll just send her a quick message telling her that you're still sheltering in place.

**RAPUNZEL.** We're getting off track here. Just let her know that I'll check in with her when I'm done with my seminar. We still have a lot to get through today.

**GEORGIANA.** Speaking of which, where do you stand on co-washing versus shampooing?

**RAPUNZEL.** Really great question Georgiana. But you're jumping ahead a little.

**GEORGIANA.** Sorry.

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

**RAPUNZEL.** Don't be, I love your energy. I'll just say this — You know that in my story, my hair has to do double duty. So, I have to be really careful about not causing additional damage.

**JANE.** Librarian says that you should get back to the north side of the tower because you're supposed to be waiting for the prince to come.

**RAPUNZEL.** For goodness sakes, the prince doesn't arrive for another three chapters. Why is she so concerned?

**GEORGIANA.** Maybe social distancing is getting to her. It's hard not to be able to see everyone in person.

**JILL.** I think she's trying to keep everybody safe.

**RAPUNZEL.** It's hard on all of us. Do you think it's been easy for me all these years in this story, being isolated in this tower?

**JACK.** No?

**RAPUNZEL.** That's right Jack. I mean sure, it's a high-rise with amazing views and eventually a prince shows up, but there's a lot of alone time.

**JACK.** I never thought about that.

**RAPUNZEL.** It's the whole reason I started all my channels. I turned a really hard situation around with the help of my subscribers and followers. My fans mean everything to me.

**JANE.** We love you Rapunzel.

**RAPUNZEL.** I'm just so grateful that I have access to the internet and get to talk to you guys so much. And remember that all products in my Strong-Hair-All-There line are currently on sale with the discount code "Fairy Dust."

**GEORGIANA.** We can all use a little self-care.

**JANE.** What we need is for all of us to take care of each other.

**JACK.** Facts.

**RAPUNZEL.** I know that the librarian is only doing her job but so am I.

**JANE.** There's got to be a way for her to let us keep going with these meetings.

**JILL.** What if we tell her that we'll try to get Rapunzel back to her story in time

**JACK.** Can we do that?

**JILL.** Of course we can. We're not in our story and she didn't even notice us.

**GEORGIANA.** Wait, you guys are in a story too?

**JILL.** See Jack, I told you that no one would notice.

**GEORGIANA.** What story is it?

**JACK.** What book are you from?

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

**GEORGIANA.** The same one as Jane. We're not lead characters so it's easier for us to slip away from time to time. Are you from a lost story?

**JACK.** Let's not get distracted.

**JANE.** Is it a secret?

**JILL.** It's more of a poem than a story, so Jack's a little sensitive about it.

**JACK.** Am not.

**JILL.** Yeah, okay.

**JACK.** I don't even really care.

**JILL.** Anyway, once we tumble down to the bottom of the hill, after fetching a pail of water, there's a lot of down time and more than a few split ends. We need this seminar. It's giving us life.

**JANE.** So what's the plan?

**RAPUNZEL.** You don't have to do this. I don't want to get anyone into trouble.

**JILL.** What trouble? This isn't trouble.

**GEORGIANA.** Well, let's think about this.

**RAPUNZEL.** Here's what I'll do. I'll just text the prince.

**GEORGIANA.** You have his number?

**JANE.** Of course she does, they've been through this book thousands of times.

**JILL.** That makes sense, I guess.

**RAPUNZEL.** These days he's obsessed with TikTok dance challenges. I mean capital O, will not let it go.

**GEORGIANA.** Oh, I love those! What's his user name?

**JACK.** Do you think he can get the librarian to look the other way by distracting her with his dance moves?

**RAPUNZEL.** No. I mean, his dance moves are distracting but no.

**JILL.** So what can he do?

**RAPUNZEL.** I'll ask him to take a later flight into town. He won't mind, it'll give him more time to work on his choreography.

**JANE.** And then what?

**RAPUNZEL.** We'll tell the librarian that the prince is delayed. Then, if my seminar goes over three chapters, I won't miss his arrival.

**JANE.** It's a reasonable plan.

**GEORGIANA.** Do you think that she'll go for it?

**JACK.** Why wouldn't she?

**GEORGIANA.** What if he doesn't get back in time?

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

**JANE.** He will.

**GEORGIANA.** But what if he doesn't?

**RAPUNZEL.** Let's just say that fairy dust is good for more than just body glitter.

**JACK.** Are we covering that in this seminar?

**JILL.** I've heard that they're cancelling flights.

**RAPUNZEL.** Hey, let's all remember that the title of this story is *Rapunzel*. And I'm Rapunzel. If the prince doesn't show up then we'll figure something else out because this is my story and I'm where I'm supposed to be. Even if the librarian doesn't think so.

**JILL.** Okay then.

**RAPUNZEL.** Besides, if they're cancelling flights, then she's going to have a lot more to worry about than this story.

**JACK.** What do you mean?

**RAPUNZEL.** Haven't you been following Hansel and Gretel?

**GEORGIANA.** Are they doing TikTok challenges too?

**RAPUNZEL.** They've been away from their story way before quarantine.

**JILL.** Where have they been?

**RAPUNZEL.** They're always wandering off somewhere. She should go looking for them. Look, I can't think about that right now. We've got edges and split ends to discuss.

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