

LITERARNO DELO:

THE TEXT MATTERS

If anyone told Nico that he was the unluckiest person alive, he would wholeheartedly agree.

He's had many unfortunate things happen in his life. Being stuck in a library was arguably one of the worst. In his defence, studying was boring and who was he to deny his very sleep deprived body of taking a quick nap? Only it apparently wasn't a quick nap but a very long and deep slumber. Which of course got him in this mess. Being stuck in a library. And a dead phone on top of that.

So, Nico was hoping a security guard would come along and rescue him. If, for some reason there was no security guard, he would be in serious trouble. He didn't know when the library opened because admittedly, he didn't visit it often. Only when it was absolutely necessary. Which, in this case it was absolutely necessary because he had an exam the next day. An English literature exam.

The library was awfully big, filled with books of different shapes and sizes. Even looking at them made Nico's dyslexic eyes burn. If hell on earth existed, this would be it.

Deciding to stretch his legs, he lifted them off the thick book he was using as a leg rest and headed towards a random corridor.

Because the library was so big, sound echoed through the whole building. Aside from his footsteps, it was so silent you could probably hear a pin drop. He shuddered.

Then, suddenly he heard footsteps. Relief flooded him until he realized it wasn't a security guard.

Natečaj vključuje objavo izbranih literarnih izdelkov v posebni publikaciji. Objav ne honoriramo. S prijavo soglašate, da se v publikaciji objavi literarne izdelke in podatke o avtorstvu. Sodelujoči dovoljete uporabo vaših podatkov za interne namene in za obveščanje o natečaju. Vaši podatki so varovani v skladu z Zakonom o varstvu osebnih podatkov.

“Quick! We don’t have all night!”

“I’m coming! No need to shout, what if someone hears us?”

“No one’s here. We made sure of that. The security guard is going to be knocked out for a few more hours. Now come on, we have to find that book!”

A chorus of “yes ma’am’s” could be heard as the footsteps shuffled further away from Nico.

What the heck? Were these guys seriously robbing a library? Nico couldn’t believe his ears. Who in their right mind would rob a *library*?

Momentarily distracted by his disgust, he almost didn’t notice that he was once again alone in the dark. In the distance he could faintly hear bickering.

Now, Nico knew that he wasn’t a saint. Stealing ketchup packets from McDonald’s could prove so. But if he was clearly the only one who knew that a library was being robbed, would he do anything about it?

Looking in the direction of the burglars, he sighed. He better gets some free tutoring lessons after this.

Stealthily creeping against the wall, Nico peeked from behind a bookshelf.

“No, that’s not the right one! I told you, it’s big and very old looking,” a raspy voice exclaimed, only to be cut off.

“How are we supposed to find it, if the only description of it is ‘big and old’? We might as well take the whole library!” a younger male complained.

“The book is very big and old, yes, but the text in it is the one that matters. The book doesn’t have a title but is thick and has a single poem inside of it,” said a serious sounding woman.

“What’s the point of having that many empty pages? Isn’t that just wasteful? Man, I thought I’d never have to step foot in a library again after I finished high school. Turns out I was wrong and here I am 5 years later robbing one. And for what? A couple of bucks? This place sucks!”

Nico could empathise. Imagine robbing a bank to make a living. He suddenly had an urge to puke.

He thought about the book they were trying to steal. Big, old, no title, thick and a lot of empty pages? His eyes widened. That sounded familiar.

He thought about the book he used as a leg rest and cursed his luck.

Nico ran back to his previous resting place, in the opposite direction of the hooligans. He took the book, flipped through it and landed on the last page. He stared at a poem written in cursive which was just torture for him.

Barely he could make out:

"Hello Crow, I said. Good to finally meet you.

And he was gone.

For the first time in days I slept. I dreamt of afternoons in the forest."

Nico was unimpressed. They were trying to steal a book for *this*? A stupid poem which made no sense. Baffled he tried to think of a good reason why any sane person would want to steal it, only to come up with nothing. Except maybe English teachers, but they clearly don't fit in the category.

Suddenly he heard fast approaching footsteps and came face to face with the three intruders.

All of them wore black clothing with masks and they were staring at him or more specifically the book he was holding.

It was awkwardly silent for a few seconds, until the woman spoke with a mischievous grin: "I don't know what you're doing here kid, but you have exactly what we need. Now will you be a dear and hand it over?"

And she suddenly pulled out a knife. Uh oh.

Nico ran away as fast as he could, swerving around the bookshelves as he tried to keep the hooligans off his tail.

"Get back here kid!" shouted the woman while running in heels. Quite an impressive feat.

Circling around another bookshelf he came face to face with the bald man. Jeez, he was fast. He was standing with his arms and legs outstretched blocking the exit. It would've been pretty funny in any other situation but this one, so Nico didn't dare laugh.

Suddenly the clicking of heels stopped behind him.

The woman stood behind him with her hands on her hips looking very smug.

"Looks like you've got nowhere to go now kid," she grinned widely. "Now, first tell us what you're doing here."

Nico only managed out an: "Err..."

The man shot him a glare: "Now boy, or it won't be pretty."

Nico gulped. What to do in a situation like this? He thought about every self-defence lesson he ever attended and was met only with memories of him and his friends messing around while giving the poor instructor grey hair.

Distracted by his thoughts on how to escape he didn't notice another set of footsteps approaching him. Whiny boy had arrived.

"Holy," he wheezed, "how are you two so fast?" He leaned against a bookshelf and tried to catch his breath. He looked like he would fall over any second. That guy really has it rough, huh?

The woman looked unimpressed: "You're just slow."

The boy wheezed again and dramatically put his hand on his heart. "Why are you guys so mean to me? I thought we were all in this together!"

The bald man promptly ignored him and set his gaze on Nico, mouth twisting into an ugly smile.

"You know what, kid?" he finally said.

Nico gulped.

"You're going to give us that book right here and right now. Or else," he smirked.

Nico stiffened: "And what if I do? Will you let me go?"

The woman laughed, sounding like a dying hyena. "Oh, you poor little soul," she became serious. "There is no escaping this situation. But it might make it easier for you. We'd hate to ruin your pretty face."

Nico was torn between feeling scared and feeling honoured that the lady called his face pretty. This was probably not the best situation to feel that conflicted though. He had to escape!

Looking around once again, he assessed that the easiest target would be the boy. He was still leaning against the bookshelves, out of breath. He thought of what the woman said to hi: "*We'd hate to ruin your pretty face.*"

He winced, silently apologized to the boy and chucked the book straight at him.

He bolted towards the exit and found the door unlocked, probably because the thieves broke it. Finally, sweet freedom!

Oh right, he should probably call the police. Hopefully he'd get to miss his exam.

Apparently, a situation like this doesn't mean I get to miss my exam, Nico thought miserably as he stared at the first question.

But then he stared at the first question in shock.

1. Read the following poem and describe what you think its meaning is:

"Hello Crow, I said. Good to finally meet you.

And he was gone.

For the first time in days I slept. I dreamt of afternoons in the forest."

He read the question again and again before finally looking at his teacher. She was staring right back at him, her eyes clearly holding one message:

Tell anyone and I fail you.

Nico weighed his options. Was he really about to fail the only English Lit exam he actually studied for?

He kept his mouth shut.