



The Room Behind the Library Door

At the far end of the library, where the shelves grow taller and the hum of the lights softens into something almost like silence, there is a door. One might miss it. It wears the same dull shade as the wall, as though it has been painted over too many times, each layer erasing it a little more. People pass by, their eyes grazing over it without catching it. Yet the door waits.

The first time I noticed it was by accident. My arms full of books, the edges slipping, my balance faltering, then the push, the click, the slow swing inward. It opened with the weight of something long forgotten, not reluctant, simply unused. The air met me at once, still and thick, as if the room had been holding its breath for years.

It is not a large space. A window, dust-choked, lets through a blade of light that shifts across the floor like the hand of a clock, though here, time feels uncertain, stretched thin. The smell is layered: paper grown soft with age, the faint dampness of wood, and some sweetness, distant, almost imaginary.

Books rise from the floor in crooked stacks. They lean, they buckle, they hold one another upright. Some have lost their titles, some their spines. A small journal, barely a book at all, waited on the top of a pile. Inside, careful handwriting curls across the pages. Margins are alive with sketches, birds that seem ready to lift off, leaves tangled with themselves, a clock with no hands. The drawing unsettled me, as if it spoke without words.



There is nowhere to sit except on an old crate. I lower myself onto it, and the boards mutter under my weight. Dust swirls, golden in the light, spinning in circles before settling again. The room has its own quiet, not empty but full, like the silence between two people who understand each other. Sometimes, a faint tremor runs through the windowpane.

The hours change the room. Morning spills in, pale and sharp, cutting the corners into fragments. Afternoon softens everything, folds the space in gold. By evening, the light has withdrawn, and the room belongs to the dark. It feels older then, as though it remembers things it cannot tell. I have not spoken of it. To say the words aloud would make it too ordinary, strip it of whatever it holds. The librarians must know, but their silence matches mine.

When I leave, I pull the door until it clicks and disappears again into the wall. People pass by. They do not see. Yet the thought follows me down the aisle, out into the street: how many doors like this, plain, almost invisible, wait behind the walls we never touch?