

FIVE, SEVEN, AND FIVE

a one-act comedy by

David Lefkowitz

David Lefkowitz
2320 Spring Lake Drive
Timonium, MD 21093
970-405-3077
lefkowitz.dave@gmail.com

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FIVE, SEVEN, AND FIVE

CHARACTERS:

THE LIBRARIAN

she is middle-aged
businesslike but not quite cold
with a job to do

MR. WAKABAYASHI

graduate student
harried, hurried, desperate
for his M.F.A.

MR. HARRISON

a suburban dude
the kind you'd find at Walmart
or a football game

SETTING:

Late fall afternoon
A suburban library
The front checkout desk

A man waits on line.
The Librarian
does not look up from her work.
The man waits . . . and waits.

VOICE ON THE P.A.

Attention patrons:
The library is closing in 15 minutes.
Please check out your books.
The library is closing in 15 minutes.

The Librarian
finally stops her typing.
The man approaches.

THE LIBRARIAN

How may I help you?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Hi! I'd like to renew this.

He hands her a book.
She flips to the end paper
and looks carefully.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

It's not overdue.

THE LIBRARIAN

This is not our book.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

It was a special request:
interlibrary.
It's due on Monday.

THE LIBRARIAN

Right, but we can't renew it.
Only that branch can.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

But I got it *here*.
I filled out the request form.
Took weeks to get it.

THE LIBRARIAN

I understand, sir.
But we are not authorized
to renew their books.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Well, can you call them?
I need this for my thesis.
They're the only ones -

THE LIBRARIAN

Let me see if they -

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Please, I'd appreciate it.

The Librarian,
skimming through the patron's
book, dials the phone and waits.

THE LIBRARIAN

Seems interesting.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

It's, like, unbelievably crucial to my work.

THE LIBRARIAN

Japanese writing?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Mainly poetry -
from twelfth century to now.
How form fits function.
So I need the book -
just for another two weeks -

THE LIBRARIAN

Someone's picking up.
Hello? Yes, I'm at Franklin.
I have an I.L.L. here.
(reading) "A World of Waka."
I have the ISBN:
936 dash 2, 544 dash 315, 67 dash 5.
(*slower*) Sure: 9362, 544315, yes? and 575.
(*to man*) Their system is slow.
(*into the phone*) 9362 - what? Oh, it's back up and running?

(to man) The system's back up.

VOICE ON THE P.A.

Attention patrons:

The library is closing in just 10 minutes.

Please check out your books.

The library is closing in 10 more minutes.

The man checks his phone.

Another man joins the line.

Both share cordial nods.

THE LIBRARIAN

He wants to renew.

I just need your permission.

What is the problem?

I told him our branch -

uh huh, uh huh, uh huh, right.

But why can't you just - ?

Oh, so during that process . . . ?

But what if he has -

uh huh, uh huh -

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Just kill me.

THE LIBRARIAN

Well, thank you so much.

You too, have a good weekend.

(to Mr. Wakabayashi) Bad news, I'm afraid.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

I was sensing that.

THE LIBRARIAN

The book is in transition.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

It's changing gender?

THE LIBRARIAN

Classification:

from open stacks to storage.

So they need it back.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

They don't need it *now*.
What difference will two weeks make?

THE LIBRARIAN

I'm really sorry.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

(*to the man behind*) Do you believe this?
(*to The Librarian*) I still have two days on it -
Right? It's due Monday?
I'll bring it back then.
I'll get no sleep for two days,
but, hey, *shouganai*.
Lemme have it back.

THE LIBRARIAN

I'm afraid I can't do that.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

And why would that be?

THE LIBRARIAN

I checked it back in.
When you handed it to me.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

So check it back out.

THE LIBRARIAN

Unfortunately -

MR. WAKABAYASHI

You can't check out in this branch.

THE LIBRARIAN

I'm very sorry.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

I should have kept it.
I could have held on to it.
Paid a little fine.

MR. HARRISON

Can I go ahead?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Excuse me, I'm trying to -

MR. HARRISON

You're trying to what?
She's told you repeatedly
you can't have the book.
Why don't you buy it?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

It's fifty years old.

MR. HARRISON

So eBay or Amazon?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

No, and it's not digitized.

THE LIBRARIAN

It's not. I just checked.

MR. HARRISON

My condolences.

Mr. Harrison
makes a move to go ahead.
This is unwelcome.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

What do you think you're doing?

MR. HARRISON

Don't hold up the line.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

I'm not finished here!

THE LIBRARIAN

There's really nothing -

MR. HARRISON

Why don't you just move along?

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Hey, mind your business.

MR. HARRISON

You mind your manners.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Really? Like *I'm* the asshole?

MR. HARRISON

You said it, not me.

THE LIBRARIAN

Keep your voices down.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

(*to her*) I just want my fucking book!

MR. HARRISON

Whoa, buddy, language.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

You want some language? *Kuso kurae* - look it up.

VOICE ON THE P.A.

Attention patrons:
we are closing soon.
Kindly finish checking out.
Doors will be closing.

MR. HARRISON

Get out of my way!

Mr. Harrison
pushes past the poor patron.
The latter lunges,
and he swats Harrison's books
down to the carpet.

MR. WAKABAYASHI

You dropped something.

MR. HARRISON

I'll drop you!

THE LIBRARIAN

Both of you, please leave!

Wakabayashi
kicks Harrison's books away.

MR. HARRISON

You motherfucker!

THE LIBRARIAN

Take it to the parking lot!

MR. WAKABAYASHI

Yeah, right now! You. Me.

MR. HARRISON

Let's do this. Come on!

Pushing and shoving,
both exit the library.
We hear their fighting.
The Librarian
sighs as she starts packing up.

VOICE ON THE P.A.

The library is now closed.
Thank you to the staff.
Have a good weekend.
The library is now closed.
Have a good weekend.

The telephone rings.

THE LIBRARIAN

Franklin branch, hello.
Oh, hi, yes, thanks again for -
(nods) The Japanese book -
the one for storage.
I'll ship it back on Monday.
Uh huh, uh huh, but -
So it isn't storage?
Really, you're discarding it?
I hear you: no space.
So do I need to -
uh huh, uh huh, that's easy.
No, we have no room.
So I'll just discard?
Thanks for the heads up on this.
You too, good weekend.

She hangs up and shrugs.
The fighting sounds have faded.
She goes to the door.

THE LIBRARIAN

(calling out) If you still want that -

She goes back inside
and quickly dials a number.

THE LIBRARIAN

Hi. Can we get an ambulance?
For two guys, they're both -
Yes, I can hold, thanks.

While she is waiting,
she finds "A World of Waka"
and thumbs the pages.
Bored, she then stamps it:
REMOVE FROM CIRCULATION.
BOOK IS DISCARDED.
She throws it away.

THE LIBRARIAN

Hello? yes, I'm still here.
Keep holding? Sure, no problem.
(sighs) God, bureaucracy.

LIGHTS DOWN - END OF PLAY