

Library Lady, ©Laura Magner, March 2019,

Women in History Month: Prompt- *Create a hero that is female*

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Carmella Dewey flips through thousands of pages daily, looking for graffiti or misplaced bookmarks. She scans books and shelves books and shushes people from behind the stacks. A tiny mouse in a sea of literary skyscrapers, every day, from 10AM to 6PM. In the evening though, Carmella reads at home with just one book in front of her at a time, some tea, and her Poe the Chartrux.

Every once in a while, his fur will stand on end, her special bookmark will twitch, and she will know it's time.

Years ago, when Carmella was an apprentice, a strange man entered the library. He took a seat near the biographies. Carmella was walking through the library, pushing a cart of books that needed shelving. A familiar homeless man, seeking warmth and solace, was sleeping at a table near the fiction stacks. A boy, about 12, was lingering around the same area. She saw the boy make several passes by the sleeping man. On the third pass, the boy slipped his hand into the man's bag and removed a \$10 bill. Carmella looked around. Had anyone else seen that? The stranger had seen it. He eyed her to see what she would do.

Without concern for the veil of quiet she broke, Carmella swung her cart around and headed straight for the boy. He was not rushed, thinking he was making a clean getaway. As he walked near an L shaped grouping of tables, Carmella rolled in and pinned him against the table! "Give it back!" she forcefully whispered.

The boy was clearly shocked by Carmella's intensity. He quickly handed over the money and ran from the area, when she released her hold. The stranger got up to leave as well, but first, he handed Carmella a silver envelope without making eye contact.

Confused, Carmella abandoned her duty and returned to the circulation desk. She worked to low her breathing by taking several, quiet deep breaths. She opened the envelope and read the contents. A beautiful, ornate silver filigree bookmark was inside, along with a note.

Protector of the weak
Keeper of the word
Use your literary knowledge
and change the world for good

Curious! Carmella sighed and shoved the paper into her coat pocket. The beautiful bookmark she placed in her first edition Harry Potter book in her satchel.

Months passed and Carmella forgot all about the strange man at the library. Then one Saturday, as she was shopping for tea at London Liquid Lovers, she saw a man with a curious hoodie. The pouch on the front was rippling and dancing. "I wonder what's in his pocket?" she thought to herself.

But just as she had that thought, the man stuck both hands into the adjacent openings and pulled out four tiny kittens, two in each hand! They mewed and shivered and their paws swam in the air. "Oh my!" Carmella whispered ever so quietly.

The man put the kittens in a shopping basket that was on the floor. They walked all over each other, tiny paws slipping through the slats of the plastic weave of the basket. And then the man turned to leave. He began to walk away!

"No sir!" Carmella said. And then again, but louder, "No sir!!" He paused and looked at her, one eyebrow raised in defiance. Carmella looked right and left and didn't know what to do.

"Why, I wish I could '*wingardium leviosa*' you!" Carmella proclaimed and pointed a finger at the man who, naturally, looked quite confused. He snickered and turned to leave. But as he did, his feet rose from the floor. He sneaker-clad feet drooped, and his toes skimmed the tiles of the aisle. He was levitating!

"What!? How? Put me down!" he railed.

Carmella again looked right and left. It took her a minute. Had she just made that man levitate by using a Harry Potter spell? What!? How?

By then a cashier had come over to investigate. He stood, mouth agape. His gaze flipped from Carmella's outstretched finger, to the kitten creep, to the kittens themselves. Carmella had no explanation, no logical rational explanation anyway, so she figured she ought to leave before pressed to say something! Her only clear route out was to retreat down the aisle. So that's what she did. She walked backwards, slowly at first, but then picking up speed. She turned to run but stumbled to avoid tripping over the kitten basket and lost her balance. Her satchel fell to the floor and spilled its contents. A wallet, some tissues, gum, some pencils, sticky notes, and.... "Oh, my!" Carmella said. Her copy of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone was splayed out on the floor, the shining silver bookmark peeking out from between its pages.