

Character: Dutch because: The Dutch have a wonderfully bureaucratic streak in them (or so I'm told). They also tend to have a facility for other European languages, and I've known more than one person from the Netherlands who had remarkable English, with a nearly imperceptible accent. Point is, the accent should be very light, and the actor should pay more attention to developing the "idiolect", meaning "an individual's unique way of speaking".

Like the set, the character should imperceptibly transform over the evening.

One last note: THE LIBRARIAN's narrative is written, generally, in the past tense. However, the less the narrative is actually presented in the past tense, the better. Immediacy, I think, is key to giving this play some theatrical life. As THE LIBRARIAN narrates how he found a claim ticket in the Baedeker's, for instance, he can "find" the claim ticket all over again.

Without sacrificing pacing, of course, the goal is to make THE LIBRARIAN's saga, in the end, nothing like a lecture, but rather, something that is happening now.

(Stage contains a chair [which should never be used for sitting], a large chalkboard [to be used at director's discretion]. There is also a battered screen for showing slides, the slide projector to be operated by the actor. A rather old and disheveled man in decrepit suit shuffles onto the stage carrying a battered suitcase full of scraps. The suitcase, once open, may have various homemade contrivances to display the "evidences."

([Perhaps, over the course of the play, he also keeps certain evidences in his pockets, with evidence tags dangling out.] He wears a date stamper tied with string around his neck.)

LIBRARIAN: So. Right. We'll proceed. I have only one night for this. I would like to have more, oh yes, but due to the extortionary rates demanded by the proprietors of this auditorium...I have only one night for this. Still. We'll proceed. *(He points significantly to suitcase he has set down.)* Box of scraps. Significant scraps. Or rather...they're all I have...to prove a life.... To prove one life...and justify another...and if you're thinking "that's a tall order for a box of scraps," well just you wait. *(With ominous significance)* They're not just scraps. *(Announcing)* An Impressive Presentation of Lovely Evidences. Hold on to your hats, gentlemen. Bonnets, ladies. *(Suddenly realizing)* Hold on... *(Scanning seats)* ...is this all there is? *(Despair and*

indignation) I don't know what more I can do! I put up signs, I did, on the poles, "Impressive Presentation!" but as soon as I turn my back, they're plastered over! With other signs! And mine were nicer. And important. And tomorrow, I'll be gone.... (*Pondering it on a more personal level—*) ...in no time at all...I'll be gone.... (*But pulls himself out of it*) ...Still. We'll proceed.

I am...a librarian. From Hoofddorp, that's Holland. Or rather, I was, before I was fired. Or rather, I retired. Against my will. Without my pension. Or rather, that's none of your business. Or rather, it will be, but not yet. My special duty for more than many years being to check in the books that came in overnight through the overnight slot. In the back of every book, you see, there's a little envelope, and in this little envelope, there's a little card, and on that little card...*the little date the book is due.*

(*Holds up stamper*) This is my stamper. Oh yes, I wasn't letting them keep this. It's lovely— It contains every date there ever was. You don't believe me? (*Closes eyes, fiddles with stamper dials*) "August 27, 1883," ...there, that's the date Mount Perboewaten explodes in Krakatoa, thirty-six thousand people perish under the ash. It's all in here! All the trials and joys of history. (*Closes eyes, fiddles with dials*) "January 25, 1971" ...oh, January 25, 1971...Helen...Shattock is walking her dog in Dayton, Ohio when a frozen block of urine from the lavatory of a Pan Am jet, falls, and hits her on the head, killing her instantly. Mind you, (*Fiddles with stamper*) same date, "1836", Cetewayo, King of

the Zulus, is born! Oh yes, this stamper contains every birth in this room, not just Cetewayo's. And death. Yes, our deaths too...somewhere... My death is in here...somewhere...I just don't know...where.... Still. Gives you a bit of respect for it, doesn't it. The stamper.

So. Yes. So, each and every day I woke up, took the bus, no, no wife, no children, I lived alone, got to the bibliotheque, put my labeled lunch in the employees icebox, gave a but-just-perceptible nod to Brody van Brummelen, works in reference fine fellow I'm sure except that I'm sure that he's not and always angling for that acquisitions position that by all rights is mine, I'm the next in line! ...em, arrived at my desk, yes that's next, quieted the patrons, "ssh" and advanced the date on my little stamper...one notch.

Now listen, the overnight slot is strictly for those books *not overdue*. But we checked anyway. That was my job. To check. Now and then you'd find a book a day or two overdue. Sometimes a week. Once, a book was returned, in the *slot* mind you, three months overdue—well we got over it, but we weren't amused. And neither was the violator when he saw the fine ho ho. Still. We'll proceed.

One morning... (*He writes "1986" on the chalkboard.*) ...one fine and miserable and typical morning, nothing to give an inkling of what was to come— (*Significantly*) I found this book in the pile. (*He takes out a battered book from the box with a tag attached to it labeled "Evidence #1".*) We'll label it Eveydence #1. It is a Baedeker's travel guide, in deplorable condition. Well, I was just about to