

() = Verbal Sound Effect

..... = Pause

|| = Internal Thought

Percipient Proposal

|How loud was that? No one heard that, right?|

.....

|Probably no one. After all, it's the middle of the night, there should only be one person in here! But damn, if my little bookworm doesn't have incredible hearing.|

.....

|No, this is work! They're probably off, sorting books or... night guarding? Maybe I should ask them what their job actually entails. Seems like it's mostly just normal librarian stuff, but they have that baton...|

.....

|Focus! We find our bookworm, and we propose. We've been planning this for weeks, I won't mess it up now!|

.....

|Let's just move very quietly to the office. Not making a sound... Totally sneaky...|

.....

|Ah, there you are. Working on... something. Looks like... spreadsheets? I can't tell but I'm not sure if it's too far away to see, or if I'm just not focusing. I mean, come on! You're right there! In your element. Just... working.|

.....

|Hot.|

.....

|Yeah, brain. Obviously, hot. We're about to propose, you think I don't know that?|

.....

|But really. What I wouldn't give to let you see this. Maybe that'd convince you that you really are as perfect as I say.|

.....

|Oh well. We have the rest of our life to convince them. Assuming this goes well.|

.....

|They won't say no, right? Well, I know they wouldn't say no. You could ask for a kidney transplant and they'd say yes to avoid confrontation. But, do you really want me, bookworm?|

.....

|Wow, who's the shy one now? Come on, psych yourself up. We are proposing here. It's the perfect moment. We'll bring them up to the second floor and-!|

.....

Gesundheit.

.....

[Shit, all this planning foiled by a sneeze?! Okay, run salvage, now!]

Hey there sweetheart! I was looking to check out a book. Would you mind helping me?

[Why does that sound so cheesy now?]

.....

Yes, I know it's-

[What's eight minus one in clock numbers?]

-five hours past closing but, I thought that since I know the lovely, generous, wonderful caretaker of this library, they may just let it slide.

.....

[Their job title is Caretaker, right? Did I get that from a game?]

Well, I don't think that's important at all, honey.

.....

[Quick! They're going to ask again. Decide if the truth is too weird.]

.....

Come on. I know you're a little protective of your books but, I'm not gonna take anything. You don't need to know how I got in here, do ya?

[Yeah, the power of love sounds forced. Go for the truth.]

.....

Well, if you must know, I may or may not have bribed Gertrude into lending me her key.

.....

Why, with the only thing a woman of her class would care for! Agreeing to shovel her driveway next winter. You know Gerty! Loves to go out on the town, but she's a little too old to swing a shovel.

[Note to self, maybe check in on Gerty every once in a while. If she throws a hip, her cats might do her in.]

.....

What was that?

.....

Oh yes, my book of choice. Well, I'm thinking about picking up a cookbook. I've got this absolutely lovely bookworm at home, but I think they've lost interest in the only six dishes I know how to make. I was hoping you could help me pick one out?

[Is it obvious enough that they are my bookworm at home? Wait, is it too obvious that I'm trying to move them?]

.....

Cookbooks are on the second floor? Back right wall? I don't suppose you'd care to show me?

[Please, just play along and say yes!]

.....

Why thank you, my little bookworm. Lead the way.

.....

[Wow, they look good dressed up. Does this place have a uniform, or are they just...?]

.....

[Stairs! Don't you dare trip because you're staring at their ass. You've seen them naked just... put a lid on the horny for a second! We've got work to do!]

.....

[I've got the ring. I've got the line. We're going to the perfect spot. Just remember the moves. Left knee down, box in left hand, open with right. I am going to get this perfect if it's the last good thing I do!]

.....

Are these all the cookbooks?

.....

[Why yes, darling, it is! However did you know?]

(clear throat)

Do... any of these catch your eye, particularly? I've got no sense judging book covers but, I'm sure you know all the good ones, right?

[I hope that doesn't sound like a subtle diss about judging people.]

.....

This one?

.....

Well then, I trust your judgment.

[I'd trust you with my life, darling.]

.....

Say, why does this spot feel so familiar?

[Do you remember?]

.....

I think, that three years, seven months, and nine days ago, you and I were in this very spot!

[I hope I counted that right.]

.....

Yep! You weren't working here yet. You were just another patron, one week away from finishing your Cognitive Science degree if I'm not mistaken, and then some loveable buffoon practically piledrive'd you looking for an encyclopedia. Ring a bell?

[God, I'm so glad I did. Even if I almost squashed you.]

.....

Yeah, that was the day. You had a stack of books taller than you, and I tried to help you pick them up, and we did that stupid movie trope! You reached for a book, and so did I, our fingers brushed and the rest is history.

[I love that story.]

.....

Last time we were here, you had to kneel down to grab all the books that I'd have no chance of understanding. So, I think it's only fair if tonight, I get down for you.

[Wow, that line is actually terrible. No! Stick with it, it's probably romantic you're just in your own head!]

.....

Bookworm, would you make me the happiest person on the planet, and marry me?

.....

[Oh shit. That's not good.]

Hey, I know this is a little foreign for both of us but... you're supposed to respond.

[Please, please, please! Don't be too soon!]

.....

[Fuck, that's even worse.]

Of course, honey. If there's something you need to tell me then... fire away!

[Should I stop kneeling?]

.....

We should sit down? Sure.

[Well, at least that answers the kneeling question.]

.....

Okay, so... what is it?

[Please be something goofy and harmless! Not, "I have a terminal disease" or, "This relationship was a big prank" or, "I'm cheating." Actually, that last one might be manageable. I guess it depends on circumstance but-!]

.....

What? Focus? I am focused, bookworm. I'm ready to hear whatever you want to tell me.

[I hope.]

.....

I... I feel like that question is a little... weighted. But yes bookworm, I do know that you love me. We tell each other that just about every day.

.....

I trust you.

.....

You've been... hiding something from me?

[Here it comes.]

What have you been hiding?

.....

I can agree to that. No matter what you say, I will hear you out. I will sit here, and be civil. I promise.

.....

[Wait, what?]

I'm sorry, what did you just say?

.....

[When was the last time my bookworm slept?]

.....

No, I don't think you're crazy. I never said that, I've never meant that. I'm sure that you are telling your truth.

.....

The truth! The one, and only truth. I just... I'm just a little confused, bookworm.

[Is this a metaphor?]

.....

Not a metaphor? Okay... I...

[Did you say that because I thought that, or was it just a coincidence?]

.....

[Don't jump to conclusions. They could just be guessing this off your face. You've known each other for a long time.]

.....

Darling? It... it really seems like you're responding to what I'm thinking. But... that wouldn't make sense. Unless... you know, you were actually psychic.

.....

Right. How 'bout we play a guessing game? Just to confirm.

.....

[Wombats.]

.....

[The concept of boredom.]

.....

[Blueberry pie.]

.....

[The math version of pi.]

.....

[My middle name.]

.....

[Wow, that was all...]

That was all right. Although, I guess I don't need to tell you that because... you heard me think that just now. And... since you were... you know... actually reading my mind.

[Is this why you do so well at charades?]

.....

Yes? Oh, I just... asked a question, didn't I?

.....

[Wait, so do you hear everything I think or-]

.....

Only conscious thought. So... yes?

.....

[Wow, it's hot when you say things I don't understand.]

.....

Oh, you heard that too, didn't you?

.....

Well, that leaves a very interesting mark on... basically everything I've thought in the bedroom. Um...

[What do I even say next? Ah! I'm doing it again! I... I'm not asking you what I should I ask you I'm just... collecting my thoughts! I don't mean to-]

.....

Thanks for... I'm...

[Thinking about not thinking so I can talk what I'm thinking without talking or thinking is pretty hard.]

.....

I have a lot of questions. And I'm sure I'll be asking questions for a long time to come but... I think only one of them is important, right now.

.....

Will you marry me?

[Yes! Back on topic! Wait, you can hear this still...]

.....

I... I think I understand that but... I love you, bookworm. I don't care if you've snooped on my thoughts sometimes. We can just... set-up a safeword or maybe a hand signal and-

.....

[What do you-]

What do you mean, by that?

.....

You don't get to turn it on and off? So... does it just show up randomly or...

.....

[All the time?]

As in... all the time, all the time? Or just... often, all the time. Because one of those is-!

.....

All the time. Everything. You hear... everything I think.

[Does that mean you hear everything everyone thinks or would there be a max number? Maybe it's-]

.....

Oh, right. Everything. As in... that thought too. Sorry. It's just hard, not to think about it, ya know?

[Of course they know, idiot!]

That thought was... directed at me. Just for the record. Don't want you to think that I thought that about you.

.....

Oh, you can tell? That's...

[A little scary.]

-Cool! It's cool! I know, I just thought scary but... that doesn't count! It was a knee-jerk reaction. I promise I'm not scared of you, bookworm.

[Or at least, I'm not scared enough to run. Running is still an option though, right? Is telepathy the one where you can mind control people? Am I in danger here?]

Bookworm, I am so sorry I just thought that! My mind wandered. I know you'd never hurt me, I just-!

.....

Yes. That's... that's just about dead on. I suppose that's not surprising since... you know... mind reader.

[You did not just say that to them.]

Okay, why don't you run me through this? You can clearly hear what I think as if I was saying it. Is there anything else? You just told me exactly how I felt so obviously there's something else but-!

.....

You just know me? That's how you knew how I felt?

.....

You promise you don't have any other... powers?

.....

I... I believe you. And... that's good! Well, kinda good. At least you don't have to like... feel my emotions or something. I imagine that'd be really... draining.

[Draining.]

.....

Wait, so you hear... everyone's thoughts? I know you already said yes but... I think it just clicked. That's... a lot to handle... isn't it?

.....

That's probably for the best. Not everyone just... people near you.

[Wait, how near is near?]

.....

I thought that too, didn't I?

(deep exhale)

I'm sorry, I'm just having a hard time keeping my thoughts straight. Or... well you know what I mean.

[Literally.]

Back on subject! You said it depends. Depends on what?

.....

[We need to stop asking tough questions, it is way too attractive.]

Wow, I am on a streak of thinking off-topic things, aren't I?

.....

Let me... refocus my questions. Have you always been able to read minds?

.....

[That must have been hell. Middle school alone would...]

Is that... in any way related to your degree?

.....

[Wow, that's a smart move. Studying something actually useful. Wish me and my major in Music Science had thought of that.]

My self-deprecating comment aside, that was a very...

[What's a better word for smart?]

-practical decision. I love that about you, ya know. That your brain could run circles around mine. Turns out I just didn't know how right that assessment was.

[I thought about my word choice just then, didn't I? Oh, I'm definitely thinking about it now!]

I'm sorry. I'm trying to keep my mind empty just to... make all this easier but... it's hard.

[Maybe I should just think everything instead! But then how would they tell the difference between thoughts and statements?]

.....

I see why you wouldn't tell me about this early on in the relationship. This is... a doozy.

.....

Here, tell you what. For the rest of this conversation, pretend like you can't hear what I'm saying. At all.

[You have plenty of experience, after all. Wait, that might sound more bitter than it was supposed too.]

Ignore that! I... I want to figure this out. And later... I... well... I haven't decided yet. Just... please... let me have the illusion of private thought. For a bit?

.....

Thank you.

[Okay. This is awkward. And it's only going to get worse because... we're just pretending you can't hear me. But that's okay! I'm going to ignore that. Let's focus on what matters. My little bookworm is very special. I already knew that but... now it's a little different.]

.....

[Did they take this job because it's so isolated? Because that would be like... a genius tier move. Ah! Stop it! Bookworm knows just as well as you that you're down bad for that... evil, smarter than you, chess master archetype, but we don't need to display it now!]

.....

[I basically just... called you evil, didn't I? No! Don't think about that either. This is a private thought session. Acknowledging the implications of this being public just make it worse!]

.....

[Nothing changed in this relationship. The only difference between now and two hours ago, is that you know what's happening. And that counts for something, right? They didn't have to tell me. Maybe they shouldn't have told me? Did I even want to know?]

.....

[I can't fault them for that. It's not like they... knew what I was thinking. Shit.]

.....

[Okay. Decide! Do you care about this? You already trust them with everything, don't you? You wanted to get married! That means sharing everything. No secrets! They shared the biggest thing they could, why can't you?]

.....

Okay. I'm done thinking. I just have one question.

[I can't believe you're about to do this bit for the third time. And I just thought that out loud, didn't I? So, now it's obvious.]

.....

Fuck it! Subtly be damned! Bookworm. I love you. You are better than I deserve. And honestly, I'm pretty sure this mind-reading thing is hotter than it is concerning. Which is... intrinsically a bad way to think about a key aspect of a partner but... I don't care. It's hot. You're hot. And funny. And smart. And the closest thing I'll ever meet to a soulmate. Whether this whole thought process is a red flag or a green flag or not even a flag, I don't care!

.....

Will you please, let me stop thinking and worrying and just... marry me?