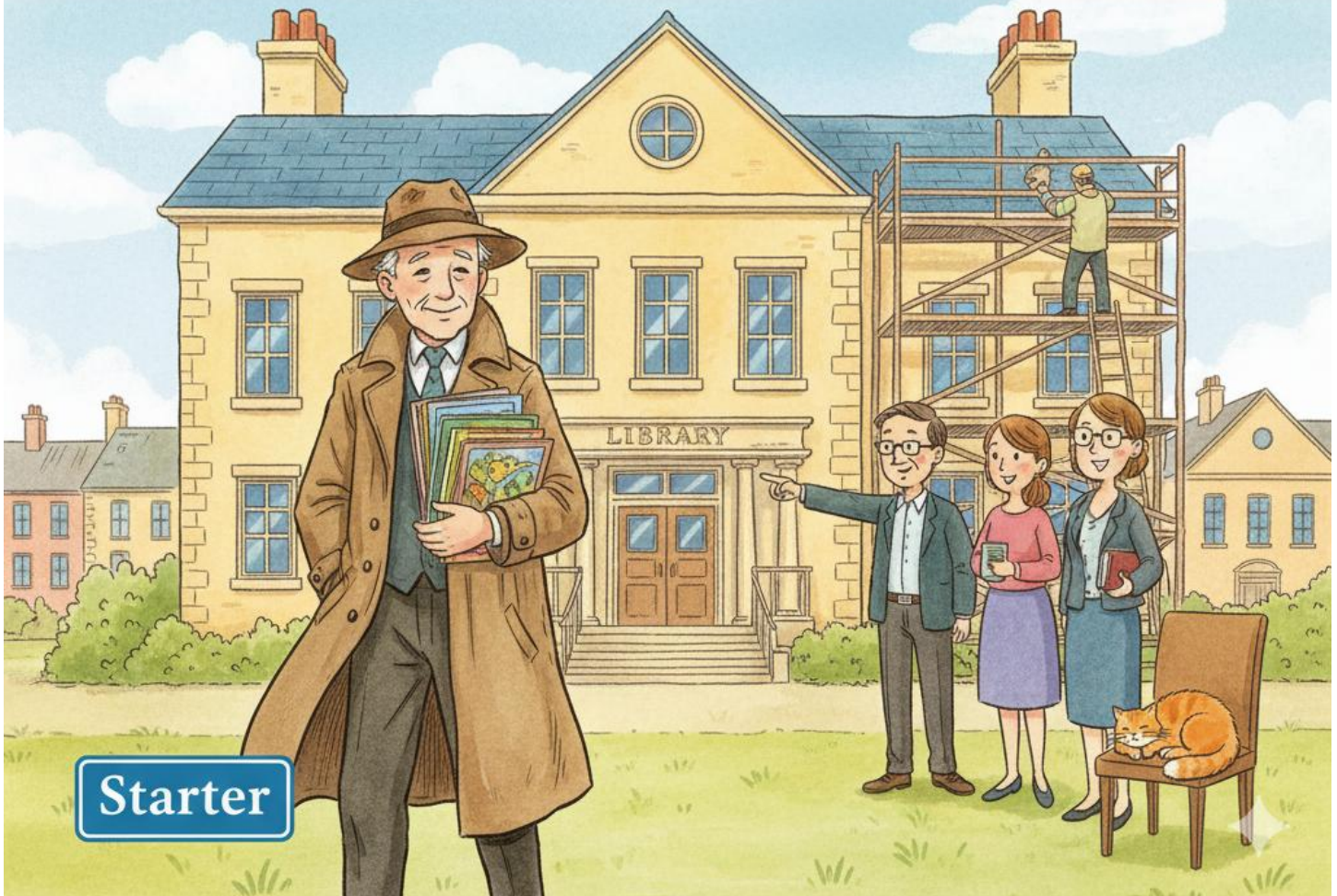


The Old Man and the Secret Helper

Dan's English Student Original Story



Starter

The Old Man and the Secret Helper

Mr. Arthur Peterson is an old man. He lives in a small, quiet town. He has a small house and a small garden. He lives alone, but he is not sad. He is a happy man. Every morning, he looks out the window and smiles. He loves his town and the quiet life.

Arthur is always busy. He likes to work in his garden. He likes to read books. He goes to the local library every day. The library is old, but it is a warm place. The people in the town love the library. It is the heart of the town. Arthur always thinks that the library is the most important place in the world.

But one day, the town has a big problem. The library building is very old. It needs a lot of money for new paint and new windows. The town council does not have the money.

One cold afternoon, Arthur goes to the library. Miss Jenny, the librarian, is sad. "Hello, Arthur," she says. "I have bad news. The library must close. We do not have money for the new roof. We need ten thousand dollars." Ten thousand dollars! That is a big number for a small town. Arthur looks at the books. He looks at Miss Jenny. He feels sad. He knows that many children come here to read. He knows that many old people come here to talk and read. He thinks that the town must not lose its heart.

"I must help," Arthur thinks. "I will not tell anyone. It will be a secret."

Arthur has an idea. He is not rich. He does not have ten thousand dollars. But Arthur likes to draw and paint. He paints pictures all his life, but he never shows them to anyone. His paintings are always small, quiet pictures of his town: his garden, the library, the old market.

Arthur begins to work. He works every day and every night. He works in his small house. He uses old paint and small pieces of paper. He paints twenty small pictures. They are very good. They look like photographs, but they are warmer.

Now, Arthur needs to sell the pictures. But he does not want people to know. He wants to be **anonymous**. This means that no one knows his name. He wants the money to come from a secret place. He does not want to be the hero.

Arthur gets on a bus. He goes to a big city, two hours away. In the big city, he goes to a famous art shop. "Hello," Arthur says to the man in the shop. "I have some pictures. I want to sell them." The man looks at the pictures. He is very surprised. "These are wonderful!" he says. "The colours, the

light... they are very special." The man wants to buy all twenty pictures. He gives Arthur three thousand dollars. Arthur is very happy.

Arthur comes back to his small town. He does not go to the library. He goes to the town council office. A big, important man works there. Arthur puts on a new, very clean coat. He tries to look like a **foreigner**—a person from another country who no one knows.

Arthur speaks to the important man. "Hello," he says. "I am here from a big company. We want to help a small town. We think that good libraries are important. We want to give money for your library." The important man is surprised. "How much money?" "Three thousand dollars," Arthur says. "But we want to be anonymous. You must not tell my name. We are a secret helper." The council man is very happy. "This is great news!"

Arthur goes home. But three thousand dollars is not ten thousand. The library still needs seven thousand dollars.

Arthur works harder. He paints forty more pictures. He paints bigger pictures this time. He goes to the big city again. The art shop man buys them all for six thousand dollars.

Arthur comes back to the town council. He puts on a different coat. He wears a big hat. He looks like another foreigner—a different person from another country. "Hello," he says. "I am from a small art group in the big city. We think that your town is beautiful. We hear that someone gives you money, but we think that you need more. We want to help your anonymous friend." The council man shakes his head. "This is a miracle! How much this time?" "Seven thousand dollars," Arthur says. "But we must be anonymous too. It is a secret gift."

Now the town has ten thousand dollars! The library is safe.

The town council and Miss Jenny are so happy. They fix the roof. They buy new paint and new windows. The library looks bright and new.

The town decides to have a big party. Everyone in the town comes. They make a cake that looks like the library. The important council man speaks to the people. "We must thank our secret helper!" he says. "Two different groups give us the money. They want to be **anonymous**—they do not want us to know their names. We know that they are good people, and we think that they love our town very much. They come here like **foreigners**, but they help us like family."

Arthur Peterson is at the back of the room. He is just an old man, drinking tea. He smiles a small, happy smile. "It is my secret," he thinks. "I know that the library is safe."

Then, a big car comes to the party. A man gets out. It is the famous art shop man from the big city. He goes straight to the council man. "Hello," the art shop man says. "I am sorry to come here. I sell all the pictures I buy from the old man. People love them. They want more of his pictures. But I do not know his name or where he lives. I know that he comes from this town. I only know that the pictures are all of your library and your streets. He is the artist. I think that he is the most wonderful painter in the country! Can you tell me his name?"

The important council man looks at the art shop man. He looks at the pictures the man is holding. He looks around the room.

The Big Twist

Then, Miss Jenny, the librarian, looks at Arthur, the quiet old man at the back. She looks at the pictures. One picture shows a cat sleeping on a chair. It is the same cat that always sleeps on Arthur's chair in the library.

Miss Jenny begins to smile. A tear comes to her eye. She walks to Arthur and takes his hand. "The artist is Mr. Peterson," she says to the council man and all the people. "He comes to the library every day. He loves this place. He is not a foreigner, and he is not a company. He is our friend, the anonymous helper."

Arthur is surprised. He looks at his cat picture. He looks at the people. He cannot speak. But the people cheer. They know that Arthur is the true hero. Arthur Peterson, the quiet old man, saves the heart of his town.