



AN ACT OF READING Bastian or the Reader

He acts like he's already been here, although I am pretty sure I've never seen him before. I would have remembered a 12 years old kid crossing that door. He goes around, moving from one book to another, as if they were all part of the same story. He looks like he is following a thread: every time he opens up a book he makes the thread more complicated or entangled, he ties and unties it, and all of that makes the thread always longer.

Many librarians say that real readers are tireless of rummaging through the pages, of buying tons of books that could be read twenty years later. Those readers, as fearless knights, follow their quest moving their heart through the land of the page.

Yet, when he gets to the checkout desk, he has nothing but a question: «What's that?» he says, pointing to one of the books left on the desk. «Oh, don't pay attention to it, that book¹ has just been returned and now it is waiting to be reintroduced into the system of the library. A very underrated but delicate proced...»

«I'll take it!» his words sounded like that book was the last one left on earth.

«Well, I just don't think this is the right book for a kid...» I say, trying to discourage him, although the fact that he couldn't leaf through its pages made his will stronger.

The kid keeps staring at me like I haven't said a word, then he shows me the card of the library to encourage me to start the loan.

«Alright, to have the book you must... Oh... ops, according to the system, the library already loaned you four items. The maximum allowed here».

The phone rings, the kid is still staring at me, quiet. I go to take the call in the back office and when I come back the kid is gone. A note left on the desk says: "Don't worry, I'll return your book!"

i. Position: tunnel IV, shelf VIII right side, spot n. 12 between *Come ordinare una biblioteca*, Roberto Calasso, Adelphi and *Ficciones*, Jorge Luis Borges, Einaudi.