



*From the MixCache.com library*

SAMPLE COPY

# Beneath the Midnight Library

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

## Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** The Ashcroft Arrival
- **Chapter 2** Whispers in the Stacks
- **Chapter 3** The Locked Room
- **Chapter 4** Manuscript Diaries
- **Chapter 5** The Disappearance
- **Chapter 6** Silent Partners
- **Chapter 7** Notes in the Margins
- **Chapter 8** Eccentric Custodians
- **Chapter 9** Society of Shadows
- **Chapter 10** In the Archives
- **Chapter 11** Footsteps at Dusk
- **Chapter 12** Vanishing Pages
- **Chapter 13** The Banned Book
- **Chapter 14** Watchful Eyes
- **Chapter 15** Pieces of the Past
- **Chapter 16** The Sub-Basement Door
- **Chapter 17** Passageways Beneath
- **Chapter 18** Shadows Beckon
- **Chapter 19** Riddles & Revelations
- **Chapter 20** The Chase Deepens
- **Chapter 21** Midnight Reckoning
- **Chapter 22** The Saboteur Revealed
- **Chapter 23** Sins of Devotion
- **Chapter 24** The Last Diary
- **Chapter 25** Stories Set Free

SAMPLE COPY

## Introduction

Mia Ryder's life had not unfolded quite as she'd once imagined, curled in the window seat of her childhood room with a notebook and pen, certain that words could chart her future. Years later, after countless rejections and a growing sense of irrelevance, her dreams of literary acclaim had all but faded to paper ghosts. With another unfinished draft and a dwindling bank account, desperation led her to the steps of Ashcroft Library—a place whose imposing stone façade and shadowed windows seemed to watch the world with a knowing, almost predatory patience.

Ashcroft was unlike any library Mia had entered. Set at the heart of a centuries-old district, its labyrinthine halls and endless stacks seemed alive with secrets, as if the building's very mortar was steeped in old ink and whispered regrets. On the day of her interview, the clouds above roiled an ominous gray, and inside, the hush of the shelves felt deeper than silence—a hush that didn't simply discourage noise but devoured it. Mia's task was temporary, inconsequential: cataloging neglected archives and restoring order to forgotten rooms. Yet, something about the place tugged at her in ways she couldn't explain.

For as long as anyone in the village could remember, Ashcroft had been more than a depository—its history was dense with rumor, scandal, and unexplained events. The townsfolk told tales of vanished employees, censored volumes, and locked rooms no key would open. Patrons came and went, carrying their own burdens, sometimes leaving more than books behind. Mia, who had long since stopped believing in mysteries, found herself oddly compelled by the library's legend, secretly hoping for a story to save her own.

Underneath the high-arched ceilings and rows of battered catalog drawers, Mia encountered a cast of unexpected characters: the reserved archivist who seemed ever-watchful, the old caretaker with a keyring heavy as a curse, and a persistent local reporter who believed the library's shadows hid more than dust. Each seemed touched by secrets, and each would, in time, become entangled in the puzzle Mia had only just begun to see.

As dusk surrendered to night on her first evening, Mia wandered the deserted corridors, searching for the light switches and reassurance that her anxieties were unfounded. Yet every creak, every shift in the dusty air, reinforced the uneasy notion that Ashcroft was waiting. Not for a librarian, or a scholar—but perhaps for a seeker. And in the depths of her own self-doubt, Mia realized she, too, was searching for something lost or undiscovered—not on the shelves, but within herself.

The stage was set long before Mia's arrival, with books unread, lives left unresolved, and a silence craving to be broken. She couldn't know yet that the key to reviving her creative spirit—and uncovering a years-old crime—lay hidden behind the very midnight hush of the library. What began as a mundane job would soon pull her into an unraveling mystery, as the past reached out across the stacks to claim the present, and the line between fiction and truth began to blur.

SAMPLE COPY

## CHAPTER ONE: The Ashcroft Arrival

The air in Mia's cramped attic apartment, heavy with the scent of stale coffee and unfulfilled ambition, felt thicker than usual that morning. Sunlight, tentative and watery, barely pierced the grimy windowpanes, illuminating dust motes dancing in a perpetual slow waltz. Her laptop, a seasoned veteran of countless abandoned literary endeavors, sat open on the cluttered desk, its screen a blank white expanse, mocking her with its emptiness. Another novel, another false start, another whisper of a dream threatening to dissolve into the mundane reality of unpaid bills. The temporary library job wasn't just a stopgap; it was a surrender.

Ashcroft Library loomed on the horizon, an architectural anomaly in the quaint, pastel-colored town of Oakhaven. Its dark, gothic façade, an imposing blend of weathered stone and ornate ironwork, seemed to actively absorb the light rather than reflect it. Mia had seen it in pictures, of course, during her frantic online searches for anything that would pay rent, but seeing it in person was different. It wasn't just old; it felt ancient, rooted in the very earth, as if the foundations stretched back to a time before records began.

As she pulled her battered hatchback up the long, winding driveway, flanked by ancient, gnarled oaks, a shiver traced its way up her spine, entirely unrelated to the crisp autumn air. The library stood like a sleeping giant, its dozens of windows, narrow and arched, resembling unblinking eyes. A colossal wooden door, studded with black iron, marked the main entrance, promising a labyrinth within. For a place that housed stories, Ashcroft told its own without uttering a single word.

She parked in a small, gravel lot to the side, already half-filled with cars that looked as tired and venerable as the library itself. Gathering her worn leather bag and a fleeting resolve, Mia stepped out. The silence here was profound, broken only by the rustle of leaves and the distant caw of a crow. It wasn't the peaceful quiet of a country retreat; it was the heavy, expectant silence of a place holding its breath.

The interview itself had been brief, bordering on perfunctory. Mrs. Finch, the head librarian, a woman whose severe bun and spectacles seemed to be permanent fixtures of her anatomy, had barely looked up from her enormous ledger. "You can alphabetize, yes? And you're comfortable with... dust?" Her tone had implied that 'dust' was a euphemism for something far more sinister. Mia had nodded, desperate, suppressing the urge to confess her true, utterly unqualified nature for anything involving meticulous organization.

Now, pushing open the main door, the hinges groaned like an ancient beast waking

from slumber. Inside, the air was cool and thick, carrying the unmistakable scent of old paper, leather, and something else—something musty and deep, like forgotten earth or sleeping memories. The grand foyer stretched before her, a cathedral of quietude. High, vaulted ceilings soared upwards, supported by heavy stone pillars. Stained-glass windows, depicting scenes of forgotten scholars and mythical beasts, cast fractured rainbows across the polished marble floor.

To her left, a massive, ornate circulation desk sat empty, an imposing barrier. To her right, tall, dark wooden shelves receded into the shadows, a dense forest of knowledge. The sheer volume of books was overwhelming, not just the ones neatly shelved, but stacks upon stacks on carts, piled on benches, even overflowing onto the floor in what seemed like strategic disarray. It was a place where order and chaos coexisted in a delicate, dusty balance.

"You must be Mia Ryder." A voice, crisp and formal, startled her.

She turned to see a man emerging from behind the circulation desk. He was tall and slender, with precise, wire-rimmed glasses perched on a narrow nose. His dark hair was neatly parted, and his tweed jacket, though slightly rumpled, exuded an air of academic gravitas. This was likely the reserved archivist Mrs. Finch had mentioned, a Mr. Alistair Thorne.

"Yes, that's me," Mia managed, feeling suddenly clumsy and underdressed in her jeans and sensible sweater.

"Alistair Thorne," he said, offering a hand that was surprisingly firm. His eyes, a cool gray, assessed her with a quiet intensity. "Welcome to Ashcroft. Mrs. Finch is... engaged. I'll give you the basic tour." His gaze lingered on her, as if searching for something. Or perhaps, seeing right through her.

The "basic tour" was anything but. Alistair led her deeper into the library, through endless corridors lined with more shelves, each turn revealing another alcove, another spiral staircase disappearing into unseen levels. He spoke in a low, measured voice, pointing out departments - "Fiction, Non-Fiction, Periodicals, Rare Manuscripts, the Ashcroft Collection..." - each name a whispered incantation in the hallowed halls.

Mia tried to absorb it all, but the sheer scale of the place was dizzying. Some sections were brightly lit, if a little dusty, while others were shrouded in perpetual twilight, the shelves so high they seemed to vanish into the gloom. She saw old wooden ladders on wheels, some still resting against towering stacks, as if a librarian had just stepped away, only to be swallowed by the silent depths.

"Our collection is... extensive," Alistair stated, almost an understatement. "And parts of it are in a constant state of flux. Hence, your temporary role. We need order

imposed on the neglected corners."

Neglected corners. Mia imagined forgotten tomes covered in cobwebs, perhaps a skeleton key tucked into a dusty volume. The romantic in her, the writer yearning for a plot, stirred.

They eventually reached a section that felt colder, even more secluded than the rest. The air here was noticeably damper, and the light, filtering through a high, grimy window, was thin and weak. This was the "archives annex," Alistair explained, gesturing to rows of metal filing cabinets and stacks of cardboard boxes.

"This is where you'll begin," he said, his voice dropping slightly. "Mostly departmental records, old acquisitions, and... the lesser-accessed parts of the local history collection. Some of it hasn't seen the light of day in decades." He paused, his gaze drifting to a dark, narrow corridor branching off from the main archive room. "And occasionally, something... unexpected turns up."

Mia followed his gaze. The corridor was almost entirely swallowed by shadow, and she could make out the faint outline of a door at its far end. It looked different from the other doors in the library, heavier, with a thick, bolted lock. It emanated a distinct sense of disuse, and a strange, almost tangible stillness.

"What's down there?" she asked, her voice hushed.

Alistair's expression remained impassive, but a flicker of something unreadable crossed his eyes. "That," he said, turning back to her with a subtle shift in his demeanor, "is simply an old storage room. Locked for security. Nothing for you to concern yourself with, Mia. Focus on the records here."

His tone was polite but firm, a clear demarcation line. Mia nodded, but her curiosity was already a tiny, persistent ember. The way he'd said "simply an old storage room," the slight hesitation, the quick pivot away - it had the ring of a carefully constructed dismissal. Something about that locked door, shrouded in shadows, spoke volumes louder than any shelf of books. It was a secret, palpable and waiting.

He handed her a set of keys - a small, mundane cluster - and pointed to a stack of dusty boxes near a rickety table. "Your workstation. Mrs. Finch will be by later to elaborate on your specific tasks. Try to avoid getting lost. It happens." His lips quirked, a hint of a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. "Welcome again, Mia. I trust you'll find Ashcroft... interesting."

With that, he turned and glided silently back the way they had come, leaving Mia alone in the dim, archive annex. The silence settled around her, heavier now, punctuated only by the distant hum of the building itself. She looked at the boxes,

then back at the dark corridor, and finally, at the heavy, bolted door at its end. An old storage room, he'd said. Yet, a peculiar energy emanated from it, a silent invitation. She felt a prickle of intuition, a familiar tingle that had, in her better moments, once guided her prose. This wasn't just a job; it was the opening sentence to a story she hadn't known she was waiting to write. And the first chapter, she suspected, began with a locked door.

SAMPLE COPY

*This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.*

Visit [MixCache.com](https://mixcache.com) to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY