

Lost in the library

There are times when it feels as though the catalogue library has a life of its own. Not an original thought, as anyone familiar with the Discworld novels will be well aware, but when it's your own library that sits there and mocks you – well, that's a bit too close for comfort.

I have spent days – literally *days* – looking for a fitting. Not anything particularly out of the ordinary, not even something ludicrously expensive just so you can see the look on the client's face (you know, that special look you get sometimes when they give the impression that they're standing on the edge of a very deep chasm and the ground has shifted beneath them – I love it when they do that). No, just a very ordinary, though exquisitely tasteful, piece of wall-mou...

No, No! What am I saying? If I tell you what I'm looking for the damned phone'll start ringing, delivery drivers with vans full of catalogues will ring to say they can't find us (good), and the postman will complain to the depot about the last time he slipped a disc delivering unnecessarily large packages to Townhill farmhouse. And let me be clear here: I still won't find what I'm looking for, because The Library has decided that it's time for some fun.

I know the fitting I'm after is in there. More than one as a matter of fact because I've seen them. But when I open the catalogue to where I last saw the fitting, it's gone! The Library has subtly shifted images around, hidden what I'm looking for between the pages of other catalogues, perhaps even moved them into a lighting product version of Narnia where dodgy product design can frolic and live the good life.

I've tried to catch it out, pretended to be looking for something else. "I really must check that reference number for that fitting I found this morning," I say loudly, hoping that The Library, in its loomingness, is having a bit of a daydream. Then, as I move towards the Zumtobel catalogue – where, strangely, nothing ever goes missing – I

perform a quasi-martial arts move and grab for the catalogue sitting on the shelf above.

As a strategy this is a hopeless one. It never works but, like the Dodger expecting something to fall off my plate – willing the food with a stare that scares me if not the sausages that he's trying to bend to his doggy will – I keep doing it.

Did I say I've been at this for days? I can hear The Library laughing at me – a sinister chuckle coming from over my left shoulder. Can you hear it? Put your ear close to the page. Do you hear that?

Look, I'm meeting the client tomorrow morning. I have no time left. I have to leave at about 5.00am

to miss all the traffic and there's a hole the size of a wall-mounted spotlight with a decorative glass shade in it (oh, bugger).

There is a theory among some of my wackier friends that you only find things by not looking for them. That everything resolves itself in accordance with the natural flow of the universe and my light fitting is just waiting for me on the other side of my fevered scratchings. I only have to give in to it and there it will be.

And that's why I'm writing this column now. If I just turn the

monitor away from The Library so it can't see what I'm writing... now then. You see, if I stop looking and give myself over to writing a partially humorous column on the world of the lighting designer, the fitting that I need (just the one, it's the last one, it's all I need, then I can stop) may manifest itself to me. In which case it had better hurry up because this is the last paragraph and unless something falls off the shelf and smacks me around the head I... ow!

'I know the fitting I'm after is in there. But when I open the catalogue to where I last saw the fitting, it's gone!'



John Bullock

