

## **The Librarian**

I once found a man napping on the floor of the reading room--worn wooden flute across his chest. All's blurred by June's mid-day heat, I dreamt I slept in dark wood I dreamt I slept before I was asleep. Down rows of colored bindings hive of words swirl, pages I'll not turn and lines I'll never write. I once found a man napping on the floor of the reading room-- worn wooden flute across his chest--when I woke him he said it was the only quiet place he could find and asked if I'd like to hear his song. The loneliness up in the stacks like a finished poem but not mine, and summer's early sway out the window a lullaby half-swaddled in my throat.

When I woke him he said it was the only quiet place he could find. Out the window on the 3rd floor, great grey sky rain on glass. This is not the loneliest place I've been, field of colored spines, sullen void of space. That summer I detasseled, woke at dawn drifted down rows sideways and watched dew burn down corn blades. One morning the thunder and lightening and grasshoppers stinging, three of us walk off the job -- *go to hell Pioneer Seed*-- bus parked along the field's edge. All the windows slid half-way open, the drench of the dust rising independence heated in our mouths, wait for the downpour day to end. Humidity's high-- books faint scent of damp earth-- the katydids at night commence.

He asked if I'd like to hear his song. *I would. But this is a library.* Librarian is not the most dangerous job I've ever had. The illustrations never match the memory. A sea of books-- box of stars--paper sky. We spray the beans, cut-offs soaked in blue pesticide--trickling down legs and seeping under skin--golden day looms--back home in summer dusk my bed spins electric field of beans lush and green. A silver haired woman smooths wrinkled paper onto the desk between us. She stammers, words jammed at the back of her throat. *How can I help?* She opens her book of days and all the pages are blank. Up on the 3rd floor the morning stacks fill with gauzy light. The cure for loneliness is to sit in silence. I hear a girl crying near the windows and listen. I want to say *put your head against the cool glass.*

*I would. But this is a library.* What I heard in my head- he said *play a song with me.*  
The flute's song drifts down rows walks a mile into town sideways back and around flips  
stars in their sockets--hearers hidden in corners, listening eyes, watching ears-- if I am  
quiet this will pass me by. Backward time clock's hands whirl. Out the window on the  
3rd floor golden trees gleam a hundred sparrows sling the cloudless sky.

