

First Visit to the Library

Shy, with hands stashed in pockets,
he regards the rows of shiny spines.
The armored light is prehistoric—
the enveloping hush of a “Please be quiet.”
This is the old fire hall at Pine Point;

the sun twirls down slippery shafts,
dusts itself in a lemon-slice lattice.
Knowledge, he knows, lies in the encyclopedias
in banks in the center of the room,
like puffins on the cliffs of the bird islands.

Along the walls—his heart stops, and starts again—
are the mysteries. He picks *The Discovery
of the Skeleton Key*. He pauses in the shadows:
Little Women by Louisa May Alcott,
which makes him think of little peaches.

Books do and do not contain his loves.
He clammers onto a step ladder reaching
for Tom Swift. She says, “Careful,”
from behind the large desk. She wears
a tartan skirt with a large safety pin.

The first time he understands his own name is
writing it on library slips, papers scattering
like bread crumbs in the backyard. The weight
of the books under his arm is comfortable.
Life, he suspects, will stretch out in a long line.

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