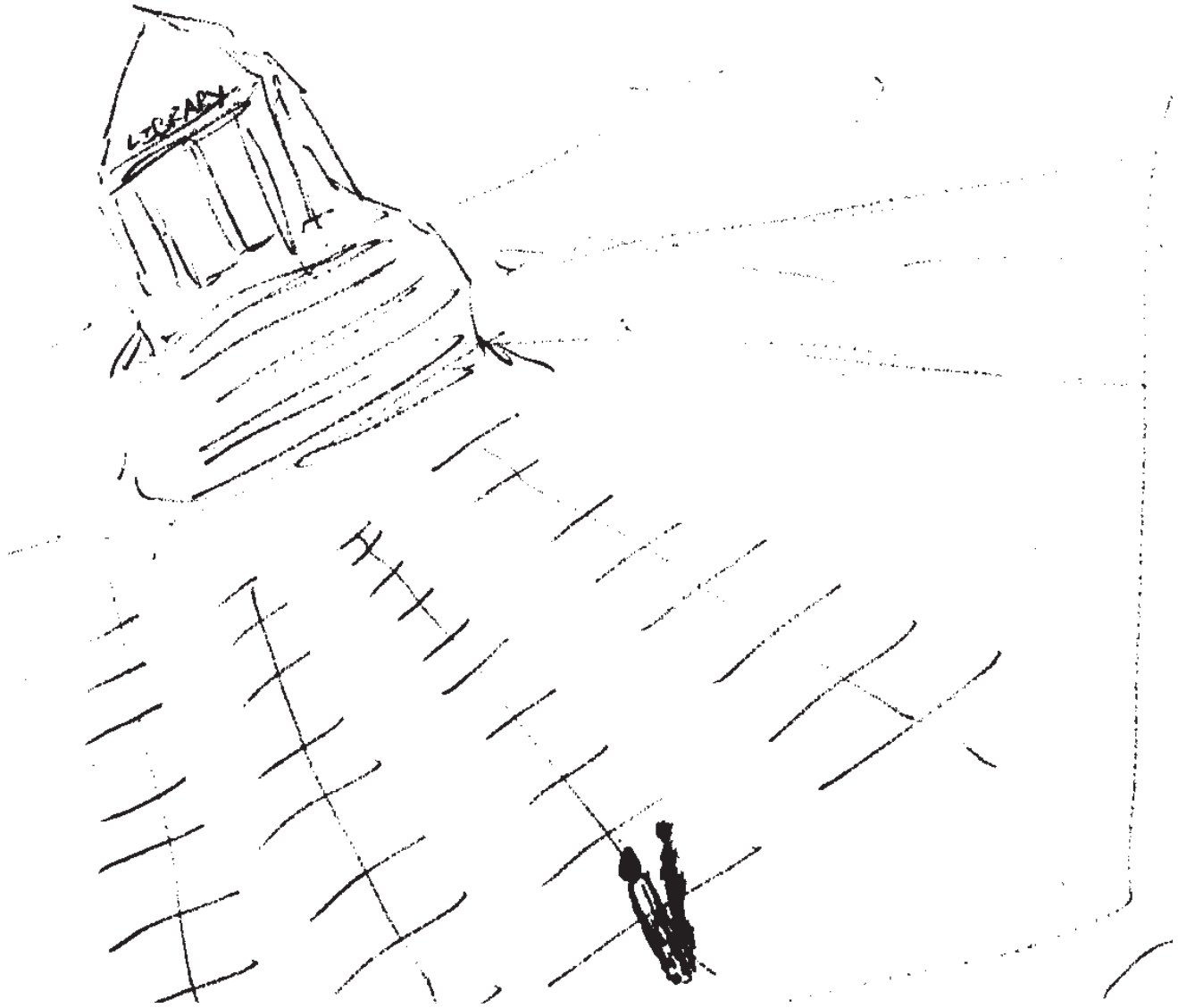


The Librarian



Once upon a dreary morn, while I walked weak and forlorn,
Past many a quaint and curious vehicle, towards the library door,
As I shuffled, slipping, sliding, came a shadow, gently gliding,
As if some angel, with good tiding, gliding o'er my mental roar;
'Tis an angel,' I blurted, 'gliding o'er my mental roar—
Only this, and nothing more.'

Ah, so clearly I did sigh, for 'twas in the bleak July,
And each filled parking space increased my walk across this pav'd floor.
Eagerly I wished the night—vainly I had sought to fight
The Imposter sapping all my might—might I needed for the chore—
For the vacant, vapid Imposter made once-loved job a chore—
Nameless here forevermore.

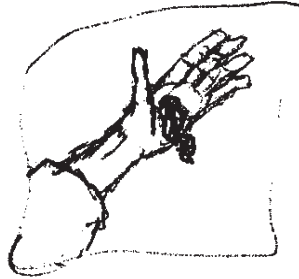


And the shrieking, sorrowful sound as each car alarm did confound
And irk me—jerk me with trembling terrors never felt before;
So I said, to soothe the peck I felt just then aback my neck,
‘Tis some visitor’s call and beck, at the entrance of the library door—
Some early visitor’s call and beck, at the entrance of the library door;—
This it is, and nothing more.’

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
‘Sir,’ said I, ‘or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was walking, and so gently you came stalking,
And so faintly you came talking, talking at this massive door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you’—here I looked up from the floor;—
Morning light, and nothing more.

Deep into that gloaming peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before
But the silence was unbroken, and the morn light gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, ‘Impostor!’
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, ‘Impostor!’
Merely this and nothing more.

Back towards the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I felt a tapping somewhat sharper than before.
'Surely,' said I, 'surely to see that strange pain that burns within me;
Vertebrae under attack be, and so this mystery I explore—
Let my eyes open for a moment and this mystery I explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more!



Pulling back my hand in fear, a scarlet stream I observed appear,
Red, my hand, from my own blood, a stream began to pour,
Blood-soaked hand from wound or peck, emanating from my neck;
The source of which I would inspect, determine whither wound or sore,
But whence the cause of all this trouble, all this pain and gore,
For attack was ended, nothing more.





Then a weight sat on my head, and a claw my scalp did shred,
A black bird sat perched on my top with claw in scalp it tore,
'Though thou pain'st me, messenger Norse, I bid thee fly back to thy source.
Ghastly grim and ancient force, wandering far to Pacific shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is, Huginn, Muninn, Odin's whore!
Shhhhed the raven, 'Nevermore.'



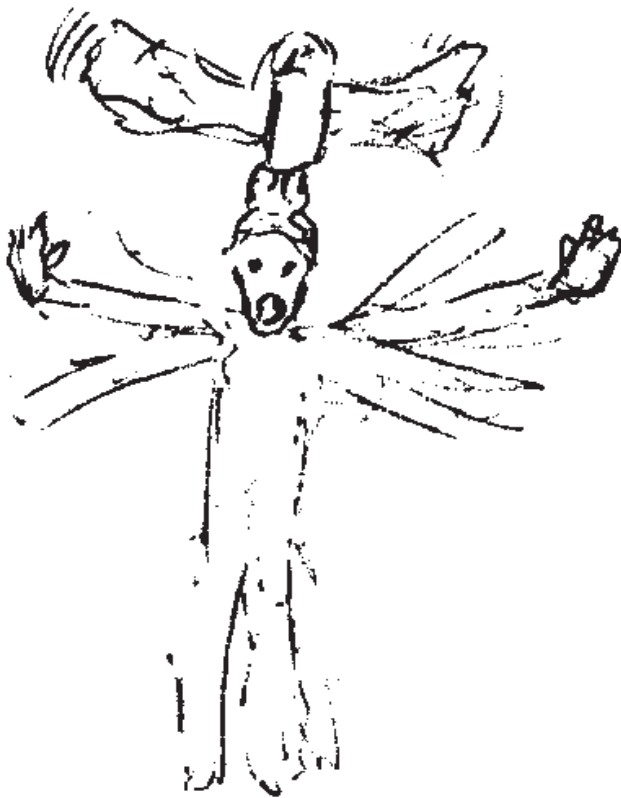
Much I marvelled this strange bird, to shhhh so boldly with a word,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird perched on her head before—
Bird or beast above the sculptured bust above her body's core,
With such name as 'Nevermore.'

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid head, shhhhed only,
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered 'Other friends have flown before—
Mayhap soon too he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.'
Then the bird shhhhed, 'Nevermore.'



Startled I of being hushed, never had librarian been shhhhed,
'Clearly,' said I, 'I was quiet, no racket I made heretofore,
This bird must come from a master, with hermit's skin of alabaster,
Whose pleas of silence followed faster, drove single sound into his core—
Till the whisper of his silence echoed down into his core,
Hushing, shhhhing "Never-nevermore."

But the raven sat there still, and now a plan my head did fill,
Straight I walked towards library entrance, heading towards its massive door;
Then, upon my desk arriving, I betook to try deriving
Queries, reference, designed for driving away this ominous bird of yore—
And no hushing, shhhhing, grim, ungainly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore
Would croak unto me 'Nevermore.'



Thus I jumped up, my arms flailing, but sadly and so utterly failing
To dislodge the fowl whose sharpened feet now clawed into my cranial core;
Running, stopping, jerking prance, dancing a St. Vitus dance
Unable to break this painful trance that made my voice break in a roar,
The velvet violet violent trance with sound of voice breaking in a roar,
Shall it leave, ah nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew thicker, choked my throat till I felt sicker
Denseness from a faker whose foot-falls crashed on the hard-wood floor.
'Wretch,' I cried, 'thy master made me recall memories of one who pains me
Pains me daily by a dearth of knowledge that I do abhor!
Erase this dream of dearth of knowledge from this obstreperous Impostor!
Shhhhed the raven 'Nevermore.'

'Messenger! you thing of evil! Voice of Odin or the devil!—
Whether whisper in his ear, or whether lost trust to restore,
Avaunt thee from my top of head, and leave me with my soul undead—
Heed these words that I have said, truly, servant I implore—
Flap thy wings and leave this place, and return to distant shore!
Shhhhed the raven, 'Nevermore.'

'Messenger! you thing of evil! Voice of Odin or the devil!—
Get thee back to Niflheim, Valhalla, or distant shore!
Flapping wings and piercing beak, evil word that you do speak,
Causing melancholy bleak, when I must face the Impostor -
Avaunt from head to some high peak, and let me face the Impostor—
Shhhhed the raven, 'Nevermore.'



‘Be that shhhh our sound of parting, bird or fiend!’ I shrieked upstarting—
‘Get thee back into the stacks and dust-filled tomes of unread lore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit my hair bun thy claws tore!
Take thy beak from out my neck, and fly thy form out library door!’
Shhhhed the raven, ‘Nevermore.’

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On my head as I am sitting at the reference desk just like before;
And his mouth speaks questions tasking, like a patron’s reference asking,
But no light of flatscreen on him throws a shadow on the floor;
For now each soul in this vast room sits silent staring at the floor
And I shall shhhh them—nevermore!



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