

What people gave me one night in rural coastal Oregon after I told them stories in a lovely tiny library

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [June 22, 2016](#) issue

A stack of brownies as big as bricks for my children.  
A small paper bowl of red and orange salmonberries.  
An antler from a spike buck, perhaps three years old,  
Perhaps a black-tailed deer, perhaps now gargantuan.  
Cranberry syrup made up the coast about eight miles.  
Handshakes of all sorts. A photograph; their one son,  
Just deceased; *we just thought that you should have it.*  
Blackberry jam, homemade. Honey, homemade. Salal  
Sprigs, elderberry sprigs. Canned smoked salmon and  
Tuna, caught about two miles to the west of where we  
Stood in the library. A baby girl hoisted up so she and  
I could look each other in the eye. She sneezed. Books  
To scrawl upon. Huckleberry leaves. A cougar's tooth,  
Gleaming. A man gripped me by the shoulder and said  
Nothing. His was a remarkably expressive grip. People  
Give you things without any things in their hands. You  
Know what I mean. They are eloquent without needing  
To speak. We hardly ever talk about this. I shuffled off  
With my arms full. I had been slathered by the glorious  
And only a little of it was in the basket I tucked into my  
Car. People were hungry for something. I knew what it  
Was and it wasn't me; but I could tell stories that could  
Point to what it is we are all starving for. We work and  
Yearn and struggle and dream for it. Occasionally when  
We gather together, if there is humility, if there is story,  
If there is honesty, then there is just enough food for all.