

Their bruised neighbors

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [March 15, 2017](#) issue

Once again this morning I was early to my town's library
And again there was a constellation of other bookies of all
Ages, the little kids eagerest and pressing against the door,
But this morning I noticed how many men were a bit worn
At the edges. It's a capital mistake to make judgments by
What people wear or carry, or how neat or not so their hair,
Or awry their spectacles, or battered their footwear. Yet we
Do see each other, and get a sense of each other from some
Deep mammalian thing; and what I felt was that we all felt,
Somehow, deeply, inarticulately, that the library was gentle
And friendly and warm and peaceful and safe and attentive.
If you ask for help at the library someone helps you. That's
A huge and amazing sentence. I am not always a total idiot,
And I can well imagine that library people spend thousands
Of hours contemplating their responsibility to their bruised
Neighbors, and how the library is and isn't a shelter, and if
The word *public* can be diced to mean some things and not
Some others. I get that. We all get that. It's a question with
No easy answers, isn't it? Especially as we are them are us.
But all I see this morning, as we gather by the library doors,
Are my neighbors. Some are sprawled in the grass. One guy
Is asleep, I think. The sun is the best brilliant sandwich ever.
Finally the librarian unlocks the door, grinning, and the little
Kids pour in like a kindness of wild headlong new sparrows.