

Matthew David Manning

The Bottom Shelf

I sit Indian-style and see
the books on the bottom shelf.
Kerouac's *Book of Blues*, Kumin's
The Nightmare Factory, and others
by authors under K were there.
Somewhere a computer chirps like a cricket.
I pull two books from the shelf and listen
to a man whisper to a friend.
I can't make out what he says.
His voice is like pulling a good book
from the shelf—hardback covers gently
sliding from between two others.
The other second floor occupants sit quietly
in their own rows. When I walk past them all,
I break their silence. They look up
with words to tell me.

Matthew David Manning is an English instructor at Pittsburg State University (PSU) in the Intensive English Program. Matthew holds degrees in creative writing from Arizona State University and PSU. His poetry has appeared various publications including I-70 Review, Red Paint Hill, Rust + Moth, Kansas Time + Place, and Chiron Review.