

## **On Tibshelf Mobile Library**

First up is Catherine, shaking her broolly,  
murder and mayhem piled in her trolley;  
one among many who've come for the kick  
of a regular, blood-curdling crime-reading fix.

Here's Gail now, luckily not after crime,  
on a task for her Mum, 84, who's quite keen  
on love stories, suitors, but NO kings and queens.

Stand by your books! Mr Cooke, with an 'e'  
is after adventure, action on sea,  
and not far behind him, bent on romance,  
Mrs Cooke with an 'e', and both still entranced  
by that time they first met, late in life, quite at random,  
on a cruise out on deck in moonlit abandon.  
Then there's Peter, who reads about pilots each night  
and by now has exhausted life stories on flight,  
and Jean, who takes six books in case three aren't right  
and who'll take them upstairs, or in any case, far  
from the 'tink tonking' sound of her husband's guitar.

Meanwhile, all those who have boarded this bus  
have been helped by 'the girls', who've nodded and smiled  
and clunked their old-fashioned beautiful stamp, while  
everyone's welcomed and everyone knows  
the staff here are keepers and not just of notes,  
and of tickets and keys, of records and issues,  
but of sanity, secrets, of tears and of tissues.

Cont/...

Charlie's found *Peepo* again, clasps it tight  
in small fists, holds it up to the light  
while David is borrowing *Grumpy Old Men* -  
(for each of his problems, they'll have at least ten) -  
and down on the lowermost shelf, by his feet,  
*Homer's Odyssey* patiently sleeps in its niche  
between *Care for Your Rabbit* and *Care for Your Fish*.

When Barbara wakes in the night, can't unwind,  
she'll reach for a book to settle her mind –  
'something light, that'll do'. 'When you're reading', she says,  
'the nights feel much better, more like the days',  
and Gillian judges her books by their covers  
likes to get lost, absorbed and enraptured,  
(her husband can't speak till she's finished her chapter).

Danielle and Emma are joining the queue -  
'we like it on here', (they're twelve, inset day),  
people talk to them, notice them, hear what they say.

Whoops, this lady's returning a sizeable stash  
a book's missing – panic! – fines mean cash.  
'My daughter's got it – she's off round the world!'  
It's renewed with a smile, as simple as that.  
Like everyone here, it'll find its way back.

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*With thanks to Anna and Julie and all the customers who inspired this poem, particularly Jean, Barbara, Gillian, Mr & Mrs Cooke with an 'e', Peter, Catherine, Gail, Charlie, David, Danielle and Emma, and with apologies to David, who asked for this poem to be short*