

POETRY

After the flood

He is an old man, frail fingers like blind moths
Grasping discarded, sooty dreams
An old man, with timeworn memories

“No, anything but the chest
Please, don’t throw out anything until we find it”
He lunges at the trucks, whose maws chew all of his things

“You should wear gloves, Merv”
“I can’t, I need to touch this”

Silt-scratched records that will never again play
Music For Relaxation

Keys to nothing
Keys to everything

His pile of valuables includes HVAC tubing, tubes of acrylic
paint, a “beer
on drought” sign, a record player, candle holders,
Keys keys keys
The surprising heaviness of a soaked book
Scrap metal pile
Is he a hoarder?
Or is this what my own life would spit up if soaked
through?

The intimacy of grabbing all of his personal things
His precious things, smelling of staleness and rot
Relentlessly tossed

Every decade of childhood represented
The Cabbage Patch, a waterlogged *Anne of Avonlea*, the
single Lego pieces

Massive swollen earthworm amid rusting nails
They will be the survivors of earth’s deluge
As our planet boils and storms in frustration

We are wordless worker ants hauling
Loads and loads into yawning bins
Smiling over our masks with our eyes, not many words
Strangers united, just enough

Water roared ferociously through his home
But as the hot day pounds on us
A cool drink is all we want
Ah, watermelon. Refreshing like a cold dive.



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How does one become
Elderly, vulnerable, socially isolated
Determinants of his health on garish display
Exposed naked in his own front yard
Home alone, head heavy in his hands
After the crowd disperses

He wanted us all to stay,
To tells us about the pieces that mattered
Hidden anguish
Half his world has been carted away
An old man watching his own wake
Where his things are deemed invaluable
And now they are gone
The stories forgotten, fading

He stares at discarded N95 masks, watermelon rinds,
Remnants of his life,
And waits for the next flood

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CMAJ 2014. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.131246