

## 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 tell 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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