

Dumpster

by Larry Strattnr

Throwing heavy things into an empty dumpster produces an apocalyptic booming, a rumble of more than distant thunder; more a grumble of distant doom.

I am moving my life to another place, changing my life to another life and I cannot bring my old life along.

As a younger mover I stuffed everything I owned in an old car, or threw everything I owned in some trailer or jammed it all in a rental truck and dragged my questionable culture along to its next location hoping it would flower rather than disappear like the Anasazi, once interesting perhaps but now a pile of artifacts.

As an older mover my life's detritus and jetsam lurks and swirls in the corners or wake of my passage. Some sticks with me like mussels attached to my hull. For this last move I hired a mover to bring my stuff from the grasslands to the forest in which I will reside.

Before the move I resolved to reduce my collection of things unseen. Unopened boxes, unstable stacks, bulging brown envelopes, once deemed necessary to my existence yet after storage never looked into again.

The equation for the cost of moving is simple: the weight of your life in possessions times the distance you haul them equals your bill. If you are going a long way, it behooves you to lose weight so you have money to purchase food upon arrival.

In its density, stacked paper is one of the heavier items in life. My manuscripts, notes and myriad books all far outweigh the knowledge they hold.

I forced myself to pick my favorite mystery novel, *The Last Good Kiss*, my favorite fantasy novel, *Mort*, my favorite Russian novel, *The Master and Margarita*, and so on. A wrenching experience. Sadly, I may again love those wantonly discarded, like the reappearance of high school sweethearts in our dreams. Not long ago my favorite book was *Angus and the Ducks*.

Many books went to my Public Library. My manuscripts I flung, fluttering apart, into the dumpster, unwanted by library, literary agent, publisher, or even friend. It is traumatizing to be called unoriginal.

As serial killers illustrate, once one gets rolling it becomes easier, perhaps even enjoyable, to carry out a nasty task. Thus, in the midst of getting in the zone and giving away or throwing out almost everything I had once been, I made an astounding discovery:

No one wants a complete set of the World Book Encyclopedia. No one wants yearly World Book updates beginning nineteen eighty two, forward. I mean no one.

Now, the onerous boom of the dumpster, as I throw in one or two volumes of my World Books at a toss, seems much more immediately threatening, as thunder too soon after lightning. When flash and bang merge, according to the manual, you are in deep do-do.

I pause in consignment of a beautifully bound, green and grey, gold-leafed tome, K through L, to oblivion, feeling its softly pebbled cover.

Why does this bother me so? I talk with writers I know about content trumping form, the rise of e-readers, the thousands of electronic books in the public domain, the inevitability of new forms, new cultures and I realize. I am the Anasazi.

I am leaving behind the reverence and presence of the printed, written word. I am throwing who I have been, who I am and who I may be into the void of an e-world with no solidity, connected by some invisible pulse, subject to sudden interruption and who I am will disappear for no discernable reason.

Without words, our words, in a book well bound, as these booming into the dumpster, in this new world, within a moment, I shall find myself lost. Reaching out dumbly, with no words to touch.

