

Phase Transition

A loud clatter announces the dumpster dropped in my neighbor's driveway. I knew she had died. I knew he had dementia. I barely saw them over the past twenty years. We waved from discrete distances. The dumpster draws me on my morning run. Some magnetic pull beyond the reach of science. I slow down and peer in. Each day their children have added more. Old clothes, croquet mallets, a suitcase plastered with stickers, two rakes, a garden hose. Last week four weathered chairs. I imagine my neighbors at Walmart or Ikea one breezy spring afternoon. Trying to decide between the grey and the green. Would the cushions need to be brought in out of the rain? Would they match the umbrella? I see them sitting in their new green chairs sharing turkey and cheese sandwiches under the striped umbrella. Sipping Chardonnay as the hours dim. Talking about doctor's bills, Rachel Maddow, who should call the plumber, would leftovers work tonight. Yesterday a scratched oak cabinet with a missing drawer. Was it once filled with toys for grandchildren: Barbie dolls, Calico Critters, Thomas tracks and trains, orphaned puzzle pieces, cars with chipped paint and missing wheels. Last night there was a double mattress on top.

Today the dumpster is full. Someone will come to take it away.