

Storage Space

Storage Space

A Collection of Contemporary Poetry

Darren A. Stein

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For my best friend, Ryan Schroeder,
whose memory is always with me, and for
Grandpa Ted and Grandpa Pete to whom
I promised I would one day dedicate this book.

Storage Space

“You have a rented storage space!” he laughed contemptuously.

“Whatever happened to the shed in the backyard?”

“It went with the backyard,” I replied, thinking of my tiny two-bedroom unit for my wife, my two children, and me.

“You need to learn to get rid of your junk,” he sneered.

“If you don’t use it, you don’t need it.”

So I thought of my little stockpile—among the odds and ends, the baby cot and pram that we may or may not use again; the antique furniture my grandmother left me, which isn’t practical, but which I just don’t have the heart to throw away; a bicycle which my son is still too small for, and the extra chairs that we might need if we ever have that dinner party we’ve been planning for years;

In the boxes: old books, comics, and CDs, which, like old friends, provide a warm reminder of an earlier time, and like all good friends, we daren’t betray.

My little storeroom is a window to my soul—a snapshot of all my hopes and dreams, my memories, and relationships. To discard it would be to reject a part of myself—to amputate that which I find meaningful.

We all need a little space to store the things we treasure, no matter if its worth cannot be weighed in gold. No one denies a bloke a bank account where fictitious ones and zeros rise and fall in virtual vaults but do not have the comforting smell of granny’s inlaid side table, or the dusty CD you used to play over and over again.

So I’ll keep my junk, thank you. I’ll risk being called pretentious or oversentimental because there’s nothing wrong with that. Like a child clinging to his teddy bear, I gain security from my physical memories, and when I am gone, then they can sell my junk, or my kids can put a little bit of Daddy in their own storage rooms, which is impractical, but which they too may lack the heart to throw away.

Watching Old Men Playing Tennis

Watching old men playing tennis,
Limbs held together with tape and
plaster, knee guards and arm straps;
Cardiomonitors and Nike shoes worn
by the world's top athletes.
Like pros, they smash their service,
their free hand clutching at the twinge
in their hip or lower back.
"Good shot!" he shouts,
"Humph!" he answers,
"Aaagh!" they chorus. "Game set and match,"
and off they shuffle in painful preservation
of their manhood to the loving arms of their
physiotherapist or chiropractor.

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