



Treasures

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Works produced from the Words on Fire: Finding the Flow Writing Meet-ups 2023
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I'm in her mess knee deep and it's no longer funny. All of those things I used to laugh about are at a distance, like a Malay saying, the distance it takes for a pot of rice to boil. And I used to laugh quite generously. However today, my patience stretched like gum placed discreetly under a bench waiting for its owner's return, only to be forgotten.

I used to find her quirky character adorable, and couldn't wait to meet her weekly to go through her crowded house. There were treasures in there, I tell you. But a hoarder once, a hoarder for life. She'd buy five sets of t-shirts on sale because she thought of each one of us, plus an extra for herself. It was a purchase with love. And that's what I realised hoarders were, they were people full of love yet lonely and in their loneliness, they'd amass treasures, each to have a tale of its own. And here I am this sunny afternoon, knee deep in a room of treasures she'd refuse to throw out. The word refuse, I've seen once as a label screwed against a panel door, "Refuse Chamber", and I thought of her. A woman of only four feet and eleven inches, but gosh her temper was mightier than a sword and could pierce through any armour as it may have had, but dodged his heart because that was left intact. This tiny hot tempered little lady was full of life and vigour once, but that is no longer there, and I feel and sense more of her these days than I'd like to admit.

I am becoming her in my hoarding, but I hoard in cyberspace. I hoard terabytes of audio files, unused and unedited raw videos of events passed, I hoard photos from an entire generation of android phones from the time they were flip phones to the smarter ones of today that connect to a watch. I'm knee deep in her treasure trove sorting out Christmas decorations from a decade ago and think of the \$14.99 I'm paying monthly for that 2TB of data to store photos, WhatsApp messages and data from apps I would hardly ever need but know it gives me comfort in safe keeping. And then bingo, it clicks. I get it now. Hoarding makes her feel snug, as if someone were hugging her, telling her she's loved, telling her she's enough and that she doesn't need to think of us the next time she sees a sale item. And so I head to the next room and give her the tightest squeeze I could afford without squashing her bones and we both laugh but she soon pushes me away!

Stop it, it's not funny!

Who are you?