

Madison Flood Prose

By Charles Payne

Now imagine...you have just moved to Madison, you're nearly naked and fast asleep when you awakened by your elderly mother-in-law yelling (your car is floating down the street...) on rainy night in Madison, two weeks after you moved into a rental house that you don't want to afford- in a nice community they call the Village- Within minutes you notice a grown man running down the flooded street holding his infant son over the water screaming his head off (get out of the house before the water takes it!) You quickly look downstairs to find water pouring out of your windows. You try to save what you can. But, you are not fast enough to save much. you...You freeze...wanting someone to come save you...only to be startled by your phone buzzing out of control because your partner is live tweeting everything that is happening. Beep: What do you do when your car is floating down the street? Beep: What do you do if there is water coming in your front door? You take the Bible floating past your face as bad omen. Immediately, you begin to think to yourself how the hell am I going save... My mother-in-law...Miss Charlotte is a top heavy women with child size feet. Those baby feet would never be able to kick her to safety. Immediately, you phone a friend... because Patrick, who you affectionately call Grandpa... always knows what to do. Quickly, Grandpa asks did you cut the power off? Yes, the power off. Gas? We do not have a gas stove! Do you have a concrete foundation? Yes! Good then your foundation should hold. Can you get to the roof if the water gets any higher? No! We do not have a ladder that can get us high enough! Is there something you can put your mother-in-law on if you have to remove her from the house? Yes! I think. I grab the antique dining room table from our living room and start to make a raft. Miss Charlotte screams at me. Boy that ain't gonna float it's too heavy. Your family stop everything laughs at you hysterically because you learn in that moment not all wood can float. So, you give up on that idea and eye... Ms.Charlotte favorite piece of furniture this ugly fake wood entertainment center from Ikea and prepare it for battle. Miss Charlotte looks at you like she is going to kill you if I take only piece of furniture that she had left from the move. She loves that entertainment center more than she loves you. But, you don't care. You don't have a choice... I need to save this women like Leo saved Kate in the Titanic... because I know in my marriage my Mother-in-law comes first then its what my wife wants and then it's me. And, I am single if I cannot save this woman. So, I conserve my energy and wait out the storm... then a memory floods my mind while I wait...

I am four and my father throws me in the deep end of the pool (before I can swim) and for two or three minutes he lets me struggle on my own. My eyes are wide shut with fear, My arms flapping and flailing above the water, and my legs are frantically kicking and churning up a tempest that threatens to suck me under. I open my eyes and take in the whole wide world like I might leave it soon; then I slam my eyes shut just before they begin fill with water like the windows in my home. Snot shoots out nose like a cannonball. I cannot cry. I cannot make a sound. And, only then does my Father dive in to help me to safety.

Luckily, our foundation does not break like the other houses on our block. We were safe but sadly our spirits were broken...

We lost both of our cars in the flood, the fire fighter told us our house is inhabitable, and the majority of our personal items were washed away. Including the Sleep number beds that had for only 7 days and still hadn't begun making payments on. We are displaced and homeless... until something magical happened. A friend who followed my partners live tweets posted a go fund me page and people began to donate... so we could afford to move... The Madison Story Slam where I had only been too twice posted our go fund me in spite of having one going on. Costco refunded us for the items we lost in the storm. Friends of friends volunteered to help us and spent hours throwing away everything that was ruined by the flood water. My best friend paid for us to stay in hotel for several days. We found a Uhaul truck because there were no rental cars in the whole county thanks to a little company called EPIC. We were able to take that Uhaul around to find a smaller but more expensive apartment (that made us sign a 19 month lease). I was able to get right back to work. And, then over the weekend a group of students from my partners sociology department came out to pack us up and help us move into our new apartment. This crisis felt just like it did when my father had thrown me into the water. Somehow this community pulled us out of the deep end of the pool to safety. Without the help of a community like this one here, right now, tonight the flood would have left us to drown. End.

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Madison Story Slam – Under Pressure by Charles Payne: <https://youtu.be/E4-a5amu-48>.