

Mrs. Caldera's House of Things

By Gregory Djanikian

You are sitting in Mrs. Caldera's kitchen,
you are sipping a glass of lemonade
and trying not to be too curious about
the box of plastic hummingbirds behind you,
the tray of tineless forks at your elbow.

You have heard about the backroom
where no one else has ever gone
and whatever enters, remains,
refrigerator doors, fused coils,
mower blades, milk bottles, pistons, gears.


"You never know," she says, rummaging
through a cedar chest of recipes,
"when something will come of use."

There is a vase of pencil tips on the table,
a bowl full of miniature wheels and axles.

Upstairs, where her children slept,
the doors will not close,
the stacks of magazines are burgeoning,
there are snow shoes and lampshades,
bedsprings and picture tubes,
and boxes and boxes of irreducibles!

You imagine the headline in the *Literalist Express*:
House Founders Under Weight Of Past.

But Mrs Caldera is baking cookies,
she is humming a song from childhood,
her arms are heavy and strong,
they have held babies, a husband,
tractor parts and gas tanks,
what have they not found a place for?



It is getting dark, you have sat for a long time.
If you move, you feel something will be disturbed,
there is room enough only for your body.
“Stay awhile,” Mrs. Caldera says,
and never have you felt so valuable.

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Source: *About Distance: Poems* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1995)