Undivided attention

By Taylor Mali

A grand piano wrapped in quilted pads by movers, tied up with canvas straps—like classical music’s birthday gift to the criminally insane—is gently nudged without its legs out an eighth-floor window on 62nd street.

It dangles in April air from the neck of the movers’ crane, Chopin-shiny black lacquer squares and dirty white crisscross patterns hanging like the second-to-last note of a concerto played on the edge of the seat, the edge of tears, the edge of eight stories up going over—it’s a piano being pushed out of a window and lowered down onto a flatbed truck!—and I’m trying to teach math in the building across the street.

Who can teach when there are such lessons to be learned?
All the greatest common factors are delivered by long-necked cranes and flatbed trucks or come through everything, even air. Like snow.

See, snow falls for the first time every year, and every year my students rush to the window as if snow were more interesting than math, which, of course, it is.

So please.

Let me teach like a Steinway, spinning slowly in April air, so almost-falling, so hinderingly dangling from the neck of the movers’ crane. So on the edge of losing everything.

Let me teach like the first snow, falling.
