

Carole Mertz

Ballast

Should disaster strike
with evacuation necessary,
I'd be ready, I'd go quickly,
carrying nothing, nothing
but my memories.

If danger were announced,
sirens screaming and fire
engines racing across State Street,
bullhorns from black cars
blaring "Evacuate! Evacuate NOW!
I'd be ready, I'd carry next to nothing.

Well, maybe the rolled-up mat
tied to the back of the bike with two
tins of tuna, the NT, and bottled
waters tucked inside, these few
things prepared.

Should certain disaster disrupt
our normal days, we'd charge out,
he pedaling his bike next to mine,
("Did we bring the pump?") Our
memories: heaviest ballast. Our wheels
spinning, my concerns for his heart—
all the pumping! Will we endure?

When terror comes (a flood, a fire,
an explosion, a national upheaval), we'd carry
a few things. At the ready, 1,000 in
cash, split and stashed in pockets; our
cellphones at hand. (Oh God! Are they
charged?) Be sure to carry the memories.
They may be all we'll need. Ride out!
Take to the road, observe, gather
facts; be sure to hang on to the
memories.

Carole Mertz has poems at *Eclectica*, *Kind of a Hurricane Press*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Quill & Parchment*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Voices de la Luna*, *WPWT*, and elsewhere. Her critiques appear widely in literary journals. Carole reviewed poetry for

MBNA's 2018 Contest and is advance reader of prose and poetry at *Mom Egg Review*. She teaches music in Parma, Ohio, where she is at work on several poetry collections.