

from Fulghum,

— All I really need
I know I learned
in kindergarten —

MOVING IS A BLOW TO MY SELF-IMAGE. I do like to think I am reasonably clean and tidy. But comes that moment after all the furniture and possessions have been removed from my rooms and I come back to see if I've left anything, and I look at the floor and there's all this STUFF around. Behind where the desk was and behind where the bookcase was and behind where the bed was and in the corner occupied by the chest.

Stuff. Gray, fuzzy, grotty Stuff.

Look at all that dirt, I think. I am not so very nice and clean after all, I think. What would the neighbors think? I think. What would my mother say? I think. What if *they* come to inspect? I think. I got to clean it up quick, I think. This Stuff. It's *always* there when I move. *What is it?*

I read in a medical journal that a laboratory analyzed this Stuff. They were working on the problems of people with allergies, but their results apply here. The

findings: particles of wool, cotton, and paper, bug chunks, food, plants, tree leaves, ash, microscopic spores of fungi and single-celled animals, and a lot of unidentifiable odds and ends, mostly natural and organic.

But that's just the miscellaneous list. The majority of Stuff comes from just two sources: *people*—exfoliated skin and hair; and *meteorites*—disintegrated as they hit the earth's atmosphere. (*No kidding—it's true—tons of it fall every day.*) So, in other words, what's behind my bed and bookcase and dresser and chest is mostly me and stardust.

A botanist told me that if you gather up a bunch of Stuff in a jar and put some water in it and let it sit in the sunlight and plant a seed in it, the seed will grow like crazy; or if you do the same thing but put it in a damp, dark place, mushrooms will grow in it. And then, if you eat the mushrooms, you see stars.

Also, if you really want to see a lot of it, take the sheet off your bed, shake it hard in a dark room, and then turn on a beamed flashlight. There you are. Like the little snowman in the round glass ball on the mantel at Grandma's house. London Bridge is falling down and I am falling down and the stars are falling down. And everything else is falling down, to go around again, some say.

Scientists have pretty well established that we come

from a stellar birthing room. We are the Stuff of stars. And there behind my desk, I seem to be returning to my source, in a quiet way. Recombining with the Stuff of the universe into who-knows-what. And I've a heightened respect for what's going on in the nooks and crannies of my very own room. It isn't dirt. It's cosmic compost.

ONE PORTION OF A MINISTER'S LOT concerns the dying and the dead. The hospital room, the mortuary, the funeral service, the cemetery. What I know of such things shapes my life elsewhere in particular ways. What I know of such things explains why I don't waste much life time mowing grass or washing cars or raking leaves or making beds or shining shoes or washing dishes. It explains why I don't honk at people who are slow to move at green lights. And why I don't kill spiders. There isn't time or need for all this. What I know of cemeteries and such also explains why I sometimes visit the Buffalo Tavern.

The Buffalo Tavern is, in essence, mongrel America. Boiled down and stuffed into the Buffalo on a Saturday night, the fundamental elements achieve a critical mass around eleven. The catalyst is the favorite house band, the Dynamic Volcanic Logs. Eight freaks frozen in the amber vibes of the sixties. Playing