

CHIP BROWN

Before the Flood

(for my father Sandy Brown 1924-2016)

In other news—I did spend two hours yesterday
with a piano tuner who resurrected six dead keys
on the Steinway you left me. He was a Jehovah's

Witness who told me humanity is only 6,000 years old.
And you and I would meet again someday, in a garden
or possibly a music store. So maybe you'll want

the piano back, you restored to age 19, traversing
the Pacific on a Navy tug. Or will it be wheelchair you
at 91 and too unseaworthy to form an easy chord in C?

Short on details the tuner was. But he knew his way
around the action of an old upright, where every
Easter you hid licorice jelly beans on the black keys

and our dogs would lie in level heaven gnawing bones
and plastic dinosaurs. As the sweet loon droned on
about the flaws of carbon dating and the true shape

of Noah's ark, I heard your leitmotif, that leafless
melody you played the day the movers came
and I bum-rushed you off the bench, shortchanging

your last turn because they were charging by the hour.
The way you stood and closed the lid. *Never meet again.*
The way we both stood, stranded in the rising water.