

**You'll Be A Collyer Brothers Hermit!<sup>1</sup>**

Even then  
my fingers were  
stained with newspaper ink  
gleaning information  
for when I was  
ready to speak.  
And I thought-  
the more news  
I consumed  
I could fill  
some unarticulated  
gap  
and prove  
there was something  
behind all that  
fat.

The stacks accumulated  
in my room-  
a garish, headlined  
womb.

And when my father  
evoked the brothers  
at the side  
of my bed  
I retreated  
under many covers  
to bandage my  
riotous head

-- Doug Holder

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<sup>1</sup> \*Homer Lusk Collyer (November [1881](#)–[March 21, 1947](#)) and Langley Collyer (October [1885](#)–[March 1947](#)) were two [United States](#) brothers who became famous because of their reclusiveness, filth and [compulsive hoarding](#). For decades, neighborhood rumors swirled around the rarely-seen, unemployed men and their home at 2078 [Fifth Avenue](#) (at the corner of 128th Street), in [Manhattan](#), where they obsessively collected newspapers, books, furniture, musical instruments, and many other items, with [booby-traps](#) set up in corridors and doorways to protect against intruders. The brothers are often cited as a paradigmatic example of compulsive hoarding associated with [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder](#), or [OCD](#), as well as [disposophobia](#), or Collyer Brothers Syndrome, a fear of throwing anything away. They died of malnutrition within a few days of each other, in the [Harlem brownstone](#) where they had lived as hermits, surrounded by over one hundred tons of [junk](#) that they had amassed over several decades