Flu Days

Shivering, you drag yourself,
as if gun-shot, to the living room,
to the old movie channel,
to a Bogart festival,
your mind fogged over
(like the street on the screen)
edging toward feverish sleep
when Bogey snarls at Ida Lupino:
“Of all the 14-carat saps…”

Hours later, when you wake,
he’s smacking Peter Lorre:

“When you’re slapped,
you’ll take it and like it!”

And as if cuffed, you black out,
head pounding, and come to
upon Ingrid Bergman
and “You must remember this,”

before fading again, then back
to Bogey hacked to death

by Bedoya’s machete,
all that gold dust blown away
with the whole bloody day,
everything gone—gone black as your living room windows—
those previews of The Big Sleep.

I’m Peter Makuck and I’ve been reading my poem, "Flu Days" from Mandatory Evacuation, copyright 2016 by Peter Makuck, courtesy of BOA Editions, Ltd. You can read the poem online in Emerging Infectious Diseases at cdc.gov/eid.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.