
The Believers in Mercy

Sharon Dolin

This is how Noah must have felt:
Go to sleep, rain. Wake up, rain.
The wooden flaps on the cabin leaking
inside.

This is how the world often ends:

The animals getting restive—too busy huddling
in the cold wet wind to mate or eat.

No one thinks about the cries of the
thousand thousand creatures who floated on
branches, the left-over pieces of houses—

Those others who cursed Noah and his family,
suffocating on water, paddled off
into history's amnesia.

They were the best of carpenters, they the gatherers
of pomegranates now floating on the surface
of rivers, they the trappers of birds—whose wet feathers
made them too heavy to fly and an easy catch,
though no fire will take—they the believers in mercy.

Surely the rain will stop before everyone drowns
and the crops are all smothered. Before the grain
all rots in its storage sacks
carried to higher and ever higher ground.

Being descended from Noah, I should side
with his story.

But there must have been some deserving
of forgiveness: women craving
someone else's man, the petty gamblers,
the avaricious husbands, the envious children.

Outside, save for the chosen pair:
the field mice squeal all night in the rain
raccoons knit their claws in prayer and
finally live peaceably together, the groundhog is rained
out of his hole.



Sharon Dolin's first collection of poems, *Heart Work*, was published by *The Sheep Meadow Press* in 1995. Recent poems have appeared in *Boulevard*, *The American Voice*, *The Amicus Journal*, *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review*, and other journals. She teaches literature at *Cooper Union* and creative writing at *The New School* in New York City.