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Deluge

by MaryPat Campbell

My partner is broody and fretful as she searches for a safe place to lay her eggs. I help as best I can, this was about my survival too. Water to drink and bathe in is scarce, while an ocean sent from the skies surrounds us.

Occasionally she and I quit the rigging and glide down to the deck to scabble for some grain or fruit that has been left uneaten by our fellow travellers. The mood is tense and tight. The baboons have stopped chasing the cats and growling with hatred at each other. The giraffes lean out of the boat in a forlorn way, turning their long necks this way and that trying to see if there is any end to this sea of grey water.

Noah and his sons fight continuously, while their mother works hard to keep them, and us, fed as best she can. She sings ballads, hymns and incantations to soothe herself and us. Sometimes, you can hear a sort of calm settle on the beasts as they lie on the deck and sleep fitfully or preen themselves.

Overnight, our neighbours began to look at us differently, with suspicion and an eye to their own survival above everything else. We had started to behave like humans, each bird, each animal out for themselves. I too scabble and fight for morsels the other creatures have left behind, I peck, kill and swallow like the rest of them.

I wonder if Noah has forgotten about asking for my help. He says nothing. I wonder if he has given up hope. Sometimes before dawn, I see him from my spot high on the rigging, kneeling on the bare boards of the ship's deck, clasping his hands together, lifting his eyes to the cloud filled sky and praying loudly to God to save us from this

deluge. Still nothing happens. Rain continues to pour from the sky and the wind sweeps it horizontal against our bodies. The land disappeared. Even the dwellings and trees vanished eventually until all you can see is water, water, in every direction.

I wonder at the frailty and impatience of humans like Noah and his family. Hungry and irritable, and squabbling among themselves. Having no patience, they have nothing inside them they could wait or hope for, their resources are spent. And meanwhile, Noah prays, looking for salvation from the same sky that brought the rain and the flood.

I fold my wings more tightly around me and settle down for another hour before the sun rises. I press up close against my partner's warm, egg filled belly, full of sleep and the new life growing inside her.