

He Sent the Flood for Them Too

by Nikia Fenix

By the 18th day of rain, I knew God had abandoned us. It was unrelenting, the rain. To step outside was to step into infinite curtains of gray. We no longer knew what it was like to walk on solid ground for the mud would consume our sandals, squishing through the spaces between our toes. Our roofs could not bear the weight of the water. We got used to sleeping with wet skin, and even now, I cannot remember what silence sounds like.

About a month ago, the village carpenter had appeared at our door. He was never truly a friend, simply just a face to smile at the market because his son happened to be around the same age as my daughter. For what, then, was he banging on my door for? A bushel of wheat, I had assumed. The town fields were marred by the quarreling between the villages, stretching our resources thin.

But when I opened the door, I saw in him a man I did not recognize. His hair was matted in all sorts of directions and there was a craze in his eyes comparable to that only of a rabid animal. Upon seeing me, his eyebrows melted into a furrow of pure gratitude – as if his life depended on my welcome. And then he lunged. He grabbed my collar and forced my forehead upon his. He inhaled deeply before pulling away and letting go of my tunic. When I looked down, I saw that there was blood where his hands had been. When he saw the disgust creep onto my face, he bowed his head down, and in a hushed whisper spoke, “Forgive me, Alexandra, for my hands have worked tirelessly under His will.”

“Noah, might I ask why you have come?”

At this, he laughed. What started as a chuckle grew into mania, and then as quickly as it started, it ceased. His eyes, deep with sorrow, seemed to look through me.

“Alexandra, I came to tell you that you must go. Take Joanna and the babe with you, and leave as fast as you can.”

Now it was my turn to laugh. Old Noah had always seemed so pious. I never would’ve taken him for a drunk.

“If it’s bread and water that you need, just say that,” I laughed. He did not understand.

“You must listen to me! His plans are beyond belief, and he will not allow you on the ark. The space is reserved for the cows and the donkeys and the birds and the tortoises and the-”

“Do you bring your son with you? Is Ham here?” A new voice entered, a small one. I turned to find my daughter peaking out from behind the wall. Immediately and delightedly, he scampered over to Joanna, falling to his knees to match her eyeline. He grabbed her hands and started swinging his head in figure-eights, whispering “no” everytime his chin hit his chest. After nine swings, he turned back to me, still kneeling, and pleaded, “Forgive me. Forgive me for I did not give you enough time.”

He looked back to my daughter, and wiped a fearful tear off of her cheek, and broke into a sob. At this, I could not entertain this any longer. I grabbed his bony wrist as he yelled more nonsense about the absence of time and cast him to the door. Elijah now cried out in his crib as well.

“Do not return.”

“You must believe me. You must, you must, you must, you must, you must-” Thunder cracked despite the blue sky and he winced into himself, before his last deliberate warning, “He will not have mercy this time.”

Noah, why didn't I listen?

When the rain first started, the village laughed as Noah, followed by his circus of animals, piled into his boat. But, those who did not laugh admired the great wooden structure. It was an unbelievable feat. When I saw the bow of the ship tower above the trees, I understood then why his hands were bloodied and why he had seemed so deranged that day. When a week had past, no one was laughing or admiring any longer. Instead, the people had started to surround the structure. Banging their fists against its body, only to be met with the cries of disturbed animals. They yelled, asking why he hadn’t built more boats or even warned any of them. Some would drop their babies off in the nighttime in hopes that maybe Noah would take them into his haven, but the babies always went silent within days of waiting for his mercy.

It took me ten days to work up the courage to leave. It would take years to rework the fields into something usable. Our home was nothing but a soggy mess. Only drowning awaited us if we had

stayed in the valley. The mountains were about a five days journey away. I gathered the last surviving crops and rolls of bread into a basket. They would serve as cushioning for Elijah until we ran out. And so we set out, Joanna and I each holding a handle of the basket of our future.

On the seventh day of walking, we stopped at the top of a waterfall for the night. The cool stone was the first solid ground we had felt in a long, long time. By this point, I believe that Elijah had fallen into a state of hibernation. He cooed every so often and rarely took milk anymore. It was a good thing, I suppose, because I ironically had started to go dry. I re-swaddled him carefully, though I doubt the wet cloth provided any comfort. I placed the basket upside down over him, wedging a rock in between for air, and laid down next to him. This was the only way to protect my son from the rain, even just for just a few hours. Looking through the crack, I marveled at the fact that I could still see his little chest rising and falling.

“When will we stop walking?” Joanna’s voice startled me. She too had started to grow silent as we made our way to the mountains.

I looked up at her. Snot made her Cupid’s bow shiny. And yet, she somehow looked older now. Hunger had hollowed her cheeks. The humidity, though, had exploded her curls into a frizzy mane. It was almost a funny sight, her disproportionate hair drowning her gaunt face. I was so proud of her.

“When we reach the top of the mountain.”

“When will it stop raining?”

And to that, I was silent. We faced out to the valley below. Noah’s ark must have started to float by now. Though we were falling into night, pinks and purples of sunsets were a sight of the past. Now, the sky simply made its way from gray to black.