

Deluge

Even before the flood
Noah's life capsized,
his heart felled like a tree
in the stiff wind of the spirit.
Weathering the neighbors' complaints,
scraping pitch from his feet,
checking the groins of beasts
whose names he didn't know yet—
it was as if his world were
already submerged in inanity.
And in the end, when the riverbeds
turned to seas, he longed to see
dogs and horses swimming,
fish leaping over treetops,
anything but the stew of carcasses
that would fill his eyes.

How could he have known
what to expect from the
requisite madness of following
the foghorn voice in your head?
Maybe we can never know,
when the world falls upside down
and we swim in the skies,
holding our breath against tides of
everyday sense. But we are still
the living cargo of our dreams,
trapped—two by two, if we are lucky—
awaiting the creak of the tentative door,
the splash of puddles, the odd
mischief of starting over.
Like doves to the ark,
our hearts return to
the only windows we know.

—Michael Hicks

This poem won first place in the *BYU Studies*
2001 poetry contest.