

I Survived the Flood

by [Geoffrey Clarfield](#) (October 2018)



Italian Mural, mid-16th century

I and all my ancestors survived the flood

We did not deserve it

It was what it was

I and all my ancestors only left town
When the rains, the rains, finally came down

Then my luck was like a broken trumpet
Betrayed by a strumpet
Bump it, thump it, stomp it and stamp it
Catch it, batch it, put it down the hatchet
Catch them, match them
On their path to satisfaction

We sang, "Sumer Is a Cumen in"
Sumer was where
They started it all
Long before the fall
When Utnapishtim
Had it all
Oh, so long before the fall
When we were all for one
And one for all

Can you really imagine a stained brick hall?
That was built

Built so long, before the fall
Stretching as high as Babylon's walls
Long and tall
A very tall wall, in a very small stall

In my film of it, Marlon Brando wore the crown
Or was it the late Bette Davis, who may have worn him down?
No, they told me
Arthur stole the crown
Arthur took it back
It became a part of
Good Queen Elizabeth's rack
From abbey to abbey we see it fly
Crowns, shillings and guineas go by
When it rains the doves and rooks perch high
See it as the camera man might, camera in eye

Our luck was then like those newfangled food trucks
Onions, tomatoes, garlic, guck
Two by two
Zebra and buck
When the flood was breaking

The food chain got stuck
Stuck in traffic
Like a tame duck
Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck

Have you ever experienced sticky glue?
The is the glue that's made just for you
For just nine ninety, nine
It dries with a shine
Fine, fine, finer, fine
For one more dime
Deliver it while there is still time
The water is coming
Quick, there's still time

A cover of glue that works like a pill
It is only there to make you well
My luck is like some gluish jell
When it comes unstuck
You cannot survive the flood
You end up in hell

But in the end

You know it's all true

I once saw the Ark when it was going down

Did it take you to town?

Were you and she the only ones left sound?

Round and round and round and down

Six boys jumped, and six girls hopped

While the elephant slept, the lion stalked

Some children jumped once

They did not return

We lost all sight of them

There in the stern

After the flood

My life was like a credit card

Whose time had expired

Was it up or down, down or up

Or was it over, under, or sideways down

In the end

It cracked, without a sound

Down town, in the town on the down

Quite remarkably

Quite toned down

There are movie stars

Downtown

Sushi bars, driverless cars

Darkest by far,

Were those left around

Round and round and round the sound

Over, under, sideways down

Would they have survived the flood?

No, they'd have left town

Stuck in the mud

Yet I and all my ancestors survived the flood

We did not deserve it

It was what it was

I and all my ancestors only left town

When the rains, the rains, finally came down

Geoffrey Clarfield is an anthropologist at large. For twenty

years he lived in, worked among and explored the cultures and societies of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. As a development anthropologist he has worked for the following clients: the UN, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Norwegian, Canadian, Italian, Swiss and Kenyan governments as well international NGOs. His essays largely focus on the translation of culture, making sense of the non-Western world for Western readers.

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