

Honeymoon Cruise

The ark nearly capsized
when the elephants came aboard.
The lucky couple in honeymoon mood
dodged confetti as they came up the gangplank.
She threw her bouquet over the rail;
he cast a sigh as the bridesmaids faded from sight,
never suspecting there weren't enough arks
to carry them all to safety.
Trunks entwined, they stood on the deck
watching the water rise.
His efforts to carry her over the cabin threshold
provided the day's entertainment:
the two-by-two rule didn't apply
to elephants passing through doorways.

As weeks went by,
they began to get cabin fever,
two elephants squashed in a four-by-four
with marmots and multiplying rabbits,
struggling to keep the lions and lambs apart.
They grew tired of jokes about ballast
and pranks where they woke to find
destination labels stuck to their trunks.
"Where are the others?" he often asked
raising a telescope, focussing on the horizon.
She, the lucky one, only shrugged, hearing the tick
of her biological clock.
All around her mothers were nursing their young,
giving birth in the hold, in the scullery,
under the canopied lifeboats.
It was hard, an elephant in oestrus:
too visible to make love,
gazing on grey, wrinkly waters
thinking flesh,
watching the others scuttling off in pairs,
hearing soft squeaks and mock protests
from dark corners.
Besides, space was at a premium and
an elephant great with child is great indeed.

Noah himself was no help at all,
kept out of sight below deck
under mosquito netting, ear trumpet laid aside
to shut out the babble and roar.
Seasickness, they said, but the elephants' ears
could pick up his plaintive moan.
He'd hadn't a clue where Ararat was
and supplies were running out.

In spite of the spatial constraints,
the newly weds drifted apart.
When they finally ran aground,
can you guess who was first off the ark?
(Not the cheetahs, not the gazelles!)
The groom was ecstatic, the bride newly shy.
"Alone at last!" he cried. "Let's gallop off into the sunset!"
"I haven't a thing to wear," she began,
"and I do have a bit of a headache."

But suddenly nothing mattered
but one small whispered word
light as a breeze-borne seedling; and
two silhouettes sloshing through mud
at the top of the unmapped world

Sylvia Adams

From S. Adams et al. [The Field Stone Poets],
Whistle for Jellyfish (pp. 64-65).
Toronto: Bookland Press, 2011.