

# 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

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**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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