The Great Deluge and Its Coming

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We were tangled together and carried roughly by the vicious waters, thrown about, buffeted cruelly in the racing surge. We were a snarl of bald pates, bellies and spines with their multiple links, all wound together, a bolus, hairy bodies, snouts of fur, woolly appendages, scaly appendages, fingers, hooves, claws, a clamor of sputterings, groans, and screeches tumbling over and over, each of us surfacing momentarily, taking air from the sky, then submerged again, tossed, undone, entwined anew. Two spider monkeys, dripping and wheezing, scrambled over my head for a place on top. A hoary marmot grabbed my ankle, slipped, caught a scrabble of branches drifting by carrying a rooster and corn snake. A weasel-like creature curled around my neck, jumped to the grizzled back of a warthog thrashing in the wake. What was it clawing and clutching at my shoulder?

Once, in the flooding mayhem, I came face-to-face with a blue-faced mandrill

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and his fear-whitened eyes. Once a spotted bat grasped
my collar, hung there until I was hit by a wave
and wrenched away clinging upside
down to a mule braying its harsh treble.

For a distance a dog, a dingo, held on
at my waist. I circled her mangy head
with one arm, clung with the other
to the bulk of a musk ox
pitching past
in the swell. Seeds and nuts and the roots
of tundra grasses were matted in his long
hanging fur, among which roots crouched
numerous mice harboring nits and fleas
and wingless flies.

We were mewing
and choking, spitting
and barking in our plight, the bundle
of us in a jumble, struggling, shifting constantly, losing hold
in white water, breaking apart,
carried away, found again. We were
knocked and shaken, buffeted against rocks,
engulfed flailing,
swung into shore by the current and jerked out
to mid-torrent again by the same.
Direction was destiny.

But were those really white wings spread wide,
    gliding silently over us
all the way in the tumult?
Or was it simply a deeper heaven of moonlit clouds calm
in a certain prophecy
that hovered above us through the night?
Or was it the ultimate stillness of the dependable void
that kept us comforted
until we were brought, finally floating
slowly together, almost sleeping,
into a growing light burning and blinding
like the conflagration of dawn over an open sea?