

Like a Prayer

by Janet Ruth

I.

The monsoons have unleashed twice.
The first was fierce hail and a deluge of rain;
water, in its rush to the Río Grande,
flashed
 down the driveway,
 pushed heavy beams from the garden
 aside like matchsticks,
sliced
 new arroyos
 through the back yard
 on its race downhill.
Water the color of café au lait filled
drainage ponds, acequias, to overflowing,
dropped sand on the roads as it
 slowed.

This next storm was slower, gentler,
a Navajo “female rain,”
soaking slowly, steadily into
saturated ground.

II.

Everywhere the sound of water
 drips
from canales, tree branches;
rivulets run
 down stuccoed walls,
 tears of joy after the drought.
Beneath the cholla
a curve-billed thrasher murmurs his whisper warble—
his throat quivers—
a lilting hymn to gentle rain.
Spicy wet sand sage
perfumes the air.

Clouds to the east sink,
shroud the Sandias;
fog forms from the damp earth below,
ascends to meet them.

Everyone is out and about—
Gambel's quail, greater roadrunner,
white-winged dove, black-chinned hummingbird,
MacGillivray's warbler, ladder-backed woodpecker,
cottontail rabbit, and a mosquito
sings a love song in my ear,
searches for a blood meal to
lay her eggs.

There are more young plants
than I have seen in years—
clammyweed, datura, desert willow,
sunflowers, some short, annual grama grass, and
those I could do without—
who is it who loves goathead?
their tiny spiked fruits like medieval morning star weapons,
surely not bicyclists or barefoot walkers!

III.

A breeze comes up,
startles the leaves,
sprinkles raindrops—
holy water on
my head.
Shreds of clouds
cling
like tattered prayer flags to
the crest of the Sandias.

—published in *WATER: a Poets Speak Anthology*, Beatlick Press, and Jules' Poetry Playhouse
Publication, 2017