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Karen Marguerite Moloney

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# Jonah's Morning Song

Karen Marguerite Moloney

## PROLOGUE

"Before I formed thee in the belly  
I knew thee . . . and I ordained  
thee a prophet . . ." (Jeremiah 1:5).

"The veil, Father."

"The veil, Jonah."

"I might weaken. They say a body tires, hungers, grows cold.  
It is a long way to Nineveh.

"I have trained long for this, prepared, waited, yearned.

"But there is no guarantee!

"Father! Wilt thou guide me?"

"My son!"

## I

" . . . and he found a ship  
going to Tarshish . . ." (Jonah 1:3).

So long a child of promise, Jonah turned  
Too quickly from the mariners whose god,  
Content to smell a sacrifice of blood,  
Just specified oblations should be burned.  
He left them to the rigging of the sail,  
Begrudging all who did not yearn to be  
Loved more for self than capability,  
And slept until awakened in the gale.  
He could not know how near he was to death  
As he rejoined the mariners above,  
Nor how his God with unconditioned love,  
In three days' time, would fire new lungs with breath.  
He could not know the natural man would die  
To rise a prophet, bold to testify.

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Karen Marguerite Molony teaches creative writing at Oxnard College and business communications at Cal State Northridge. She also is a librarian in La Verne, California.

## II

“So Jonah arose, and went  
unto Nineveh . . .” (Jonah 3:3).

While, dim with distance, morning rays revealed  
An outline of the massive city wall,  
He paled to watch the brazen river, reeled  
Beneath the gates, revile Jehovah’s call.  
Again he asked the Hebrew God why he  
Who might have died in Tarshish of old age,  
Or drowned off Joppa, had not been left free  
To flee the carnal city’s certain rage.  
When he perceived, his camel briefly slowed,  
Jehovah would permit him to elect  
Retreat upon an unobstructed road,  
Could raise another easier to direct;  
It seemed the river’s impudence decreased:  
He urged his camel and continued east.

## III

“Then said the Lord . . . should not  
I spare Nineveh. . . ?” (Jonah 4:10–11).

Rebuked, the prophet, kneeling by the plant,  
Its yellow leaves already turning brown,  
Prepared his Hebrew conscience to recant  
Resentment toward the vast Assyrian crown.  
Remembering atrocity, he felt  
His anger die more slowly than the gourd.  
The sultry sunlight dwindled while he knelt  
Beyond the eastern gate and sought the Lord.  
With dawn the prophet rose, rejoicing that  
He held pure love for Nineveh—whose king,  
Proclaiming from the ashes where he sat,  
Would honor Jonah with a viceroy’s ring.  
But Jonah blessed the city from a hill  
And journeyed home to bless his sons at will.