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STEPHEN TUTTLE

## Winemaker

Everyone said the giraffes would be the hard part, but big things needed only space and there was plenty to give them. It was the small things that caused trouble. Noah did what he could, filling each nook of the ark with fur or feather, carefully separating predator and quarry. Two by two, each to its mate. Seven by seven, each to its kin. And then, at the end, when he hoped no one was looking, he sneaked aboard with a plump wasp queen, both singular and overnumerous. If he sinned in his math, he hoped that a later surplus might wipe clean the slate. His children complained when the stings came, when small, papery nests appeared overhead, and when the hum of wings haunted their sleep. Why? they asked. Hadn't the world trouble enough without this pestilence? He was sorry not for what he had done, but for what they had to endure. This was the hard but necessary work of abundance. If the world were to flower once more, it would be thanks, in part, to this violent thing. What he didn't say was that buried in the gut of the unclean creature, so vicious and vengeful, was the very yeast he would need when the deluge came to its end. Without it, there would be no wine. Without it, he saw no relief from the toil of their hands.