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The Ark of the Marindor

Barry Targan
Unknown $23.00 (234pp)
978-1-878448-80-4

In this cinematically potent novel, we meet protagonist, Katherine Dennison, who suffers from a series of acute personality foibles due to the death of her son and subsequent divorce from her husband. She has spent the last three years in near isolation on her sailboat, the Marindor, and seems perfectly contented to revel in her moribund ague.

Barry Targan, an accomplished writer whose fiction has appeared in Esquire, Yankee, and several major anthologies, seems reluctant to delve beneath the patina Katherine has created to protect her from the world. The outward action of the contrived plot overtakes her, undoing the slender tether of the narrative dreamscape. The vessel slips mooring and glides away.

The major disappointment of the novel comes in the litany of ill-conceived characters that Targan has unveiled to flesh out a time-worn plot: the lone sea captain pitting her talents of navigation and survival against dim-witted, vicious pirates. The final moments of Dennison's escape in the Ark (the Marindor's lifeboat) are fraught with action yet devoid of true emotion. Targan seems to have rushed the ending into existence rather than letting it evolve from any tidal force of dramatic tension.

One cannot shake the feeling near the end of this watery tale that perhaps the captain should have exercised her last right of command and gone down with the ship.

RAY NARGIS (May / June 1998)

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