

4am



Together we were three figures wrapped in her effort
Of pain cries and pushing
Filling the dark corners beyond the gold nightlight perimeter
The baby finally tumbling from her

Breathless

Crumpled

Onto the white bed

Silent in its absence

Of spirit

Still clinging to me

she spoke into my hair and encircled arms

do you have children

Yes

Jeremiah

Fists clenched from having fought a recent battle

The secret battle of holding life

Your only sound in this world

a soft plop into water

Knees drawn into tight fetal position

After all you are only a fetus

Never meant to be seen under lights

You stay perfectly folded

No stretch or sigh for you

With you the dreams that briefly began end

here

So easily caught on a rough towel

You come beyond the dreaming of this life

The tinge of aeons still upon your soul

Reaching out beyond our small world

Last night a baby was born
the mothers effort filled the room
She clung around my shoulders
But only silence after cries and pushing
This silent room
With its lack of crying
Silent in the bare absence of any movement
Of nothing more to be done
The baby tumbled out of her body breathless
Onto the bed beneath her
Clinging to me
This woman I had never seen
Do you have any children
Yes
Forms filled in for still birth
The baby only known for its lingering stillness

In the year of the dragon

Black ink runs in rivulets across hands and feet

this is done to stamp a card with a delicate web of life lines

That criss cross like leaf vein

a weft imprint of time not had

For some

time drips off them

Runs like water with metronome repetition

My mother and I smile across our tea cups

With faces that mirror each other's with twenty one year's difference

and know we are in year of near misses

In the dragon year

we shelter from a demon tail

that can replace a road with a tree

or uproot it in a minute

In the case of the placenta that is shorn from a fecund abdomen

plucked ripe then thrown down to rot blood red

The tree stands helpless with a garland at its feet

We stand wide eyed in disbelief at all this errant carelessness

I place the small pink album with a litany of vital statistics in her outstretched hands

One short life

Death is the discarded shell at the end of this life

So cold it is unbearable to touch and once felt is easily remembered in the limp beauty of limbs as they
now no longer care to hide and rearrange themselves

It is take it as you see it

Silent and still

It plumbs the depths of peace

When final longings are put down

And now nothing is left to be tidied

Long after sun is unable to warm skin and bones

The only other time I ever spoke to you my dear was beneath your mothers skin

We sat in the sun her belly warm on a late autumn morning

Horses snuffled out in the paddock next door

We heard your heartbeat and talked about you

The wind blew around us

The only time I ever saw you my dear was on your cold bed stretched out three weeks from your birth

Not much to know from your short life

Except a smattering of clouds in thin autumn air

24

Birth in the lift

Cobalt blue cloud closes in from distant thunder

Palm fronds wave frantic

as thick air like a caress

encloses me in heady breathe

trickles deep between shoulder blades

The mothers arms wiry and thin veined

Holds the sodden headed newborn in a bundle of heavy birth fluid soaked sarongs

Snuffles open mouthed

Then tries long pale pink fingers and the white towel wrap

We bundle them out of the lift

Leave behind the telltale trail

Placenta comes away neat

She rests spent

like all that air spilt around

For Yepa tea toast and strawberry jam

From beneath a bright yellow shirt

A dark breast is offered

The black nipple pushed between crimson lips

Tongue and mouth responds long before any memory

Strong Woman

At Saltwater

Tears run out from between her thighs
leave water trails across brown skin
like rivulets of rain on sand

Her head thrown back bargaining to the ever- so- blue sky
She wails with pelican , gulls
and soft rippling sea currents
where she floats weightless
despite the fecund heaving abdomen

the push and pull of her body
about to burst forth the new life
under Saltwater sky

Toes claw into the sand beside the birth tree and no standing sign
she grips with white knuckled fists

He opens his eyes as the caul is lifted from his face
She gathers him to her a welcome to her skin
as they rest neath the dappled light of the birth tree

Gulls pierce the air and pelicans watch from high vantage points
like guarding sentinels