



Flash of Life

by Kara L.C. Jones

Dedication

This collection comes to you from the love and care of so many people. My thanks goes to all of you including my dear husband NightHawk, the spirit of my son Dakota, Nanna-Memoo, Jiddu, Auntie Mame, Mekosun, and Auntie Moon. This collection would not have been finished without the tender eyes and hearts of Shelley Tucker, Jojo Jensen, Dr. Michael Fuhrman, Minister Sonja Williamson, and Amy Jay.

To the women of my writing workshop:
Thank you for saving my life so many times.

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Table of contents

Intro...i-iv

The Pregnant Poet

The Sure Thing...12
Poet Pregnancy 101...13-15
Girls' Night Out...16
Glowing Under the Green...17
Sleepy...18
Strange Dreams I...19-21
Strange Dreams II...22-23
Comfort from my husband...24
You've outgrown your clothes...25
Progress...26-27
At five months pregnant...28
Take Pictures!...29-31
False Labor?...32-33
Learn the Basics...34-36
Last Trimester...37
The Guest Appearance...38-40
Waiting at the bus stop...41-45
Plan all you want...46-47
Get Wired...48-49

Poet Not Pregnant

Shock...52
When it happened...53
Blame I...54
Guilt...55
Anger I...56-58
Do not mistake it for acceptance...59-61
My husband sighs...62-63
Anger II...64
Blame II...65-66
Nothing...67

The Goddess' Husband...68-69
Sadness...70-71
I've begun to mark time by my son's birthday...72-73
Alone for the first time...74
First Day Back...75-76
When At First You Don't Succeed...77-78
At the shore...79-80
Acceptance?...81-82
When Children Stare...83-84
Nutrition 101...85
Dakota's Journey...86-90
A Story of Faith...91-93

Resources

Online Resources...94-96
Offline Resources...97-98

Introduction

3.11.99

4:47 p.m.

Poet not Pregnant

“Dolls
by the thousands,
are falling out of the sky...
have the planets cut holes in their nets
and let our childhood out?”
-anne sexton, “The Falling Dolls”

Words used to fall
from my fingertips,
words about the childhood
I had.
Now the words
fall from my fingertips
about the childhood
my son will never have.
-kara l.c. jones, 1999

This has been a very difficult book to put together as it is the only thing I have left to mark our son’s physical existence. Our Dakota was born still on March 11th, 1999 at 4:47pm.

This collection of poems is the path of our journey through pregnancy and the stillbirth of our son, Dakota. While the purpose of most of this writing was to work through many different stages of grief, the first section of poems is about the pregnancy. We felt it was important to include the pieces I wrote during the pregnancy to give you some idea of how this story is about the LIFE Dakota had with us, not just his death. If you have lost your own child, the first section of poems may be too difficult to deal with. Please

use this book to help you, and if that means skipping straight to the grief poems in the second section, so be it. We simply hope you find something in this book to let you know that you are not alone in your loss.

For us, our pregnancy had its ups and down in physical sickness and energy. You can read about those ups and downs in the first section of this book, “The Pregnant Poet.” Overall, this pregnancy was just perfect. Every prenatal appointment was perfect. My blood pressure perfect. The baby’s heartbeat perfect. When Bev, the medical assistant, would check Dakota’s heartbeat I would ask, “Is it okay?” And she would answer, “150, perfect.” The ultrasounds were perfect and showed us he was indeed a boy. Doctor Pat was pleased, and everytime Dakota moved inside me, I was thrilled to know he was okay.

Then in my eighth month, I began getting sick—just the normal winter cough, cold, sniffles, etc. My husband, NightHawk, and I took turns passing this silly cold back and forth to each other. It was annoying to be so pregnant and to have stuffy sinuses and nose, but Dakota continued to move around and have a normal heartbeat. I had no fever, so Dr. Pat wasn’t worried. We tried hard to get to birthing classes that month, but it was difficult as my husband and I were constantly low on energy. I slept a lot.

One day in the beginning of March, a week after we were considered “term,” I had a particularly bad day. I had no energy and just couldn’t seem to get out of bed. We were only 8 or 9 days from our due date, so I didn’t worry too much. I just slept. My husband came home after work that night, and I hadn’t moved an inch from where I was in the morning. When he asked if I was okay, I answered, “I’m fine, but Dakota hasn’t moved since last night.” It wasn’t

until I heard the words coming out of my mouth that it struck me with panic and worry.

We tried to sleep that night, but I was starting to really panic. At 4:30 am that morning I got up, sat in the livingroom, and tried to reason with Dakota, telling him I really needed him to move and reassure me. Nothing. I wrote about this in the poem, “When it happened” on page 53.

In the morning we went straight to Dr. Pat’s office, and I told Bev that I hadn’t felt Kota move in a while. She used a sensitive machine to look for his heartbeat. Nothing. Dr. Pat came into our room and asked us to come to the ultrasound room. And there in the dark, green glowing room, Dr. Pat began to look for Kota’s heartbeat. It took a minute for her to find what she was looking for and then I heard the words that haunt me to this day. “Kara, your baby has no heartbeat.” I thought she was joking. We were 8 days from our due date! How could that be?! “No, I’m not joking,” she said, “I don’t always like my job, especially at times like these, but this baby has no heartbeat.” I immediately wanted to die, and I have fought the desire to die everyday since then. I screamed at my husband, “She took him from us,” meaning the God/dess.

Later that day, Thursday, March 11, 1999, at 4:47pm, Dakota was taken out of my body by c-section (I had refused to birth him naturally). You can read about all of this in great detail in the second section of this book titled, “Poet Not Pregnant.”

Dakota is still very real to my husband and me. It isn’t like some people seem to think, “Oh well, miscarriage, stillbirth, whatever. They never had a baby.” Dakota was with us in spirit for a very long time as we spent several years trying to

get pregnant in the first place. We spent nine months bonding with his physical self. And we both still ache for him.

This book is dedicated to Dakota, to the love he brought us, to the Angel he has become who guides us. This book is dedicated to my husband, NightHawk, for his unwavering love, for being my life saver, for staying by my side on every step of grief's path, and for helping me go on with life knowing that Kota will forever be an Angel to us, not an earthly child. Also this book is dedicated to my mom, Nanna-Memoo, who held and loved Dakota after he was born, who encouraged me to finish Kota's baby book, who has understood my everyday tears, who has reminded me time and time again, "Kara, you will always be Dakota's mom, and Hawk will always be Dakota's dad. Nothing, not even death, can change that."

Kara L.C. Jones
Seattle, WA
1999

Section One
The Pregnant Poet



photo by Mindy Schuller

The Sure Thing

When i was a small child
my aunt told me cottage cheese
was really little bird turds
packaged up and sold for money.

i don't like cottage cheese.

At age 27, i am a married woman
whose husband likes to tease her
about bird turd cheese—
it's a guaranteed gross out he says.

He and i go for dinner
at the Jet Deck.
Meatloaf is the Monday special.
The waitress asks what side dishes
i'd like with my Meatloaf. i tell her,
“dinner salad and cottage cheese, please.”

My husband stares at me.
The waitress walks away.
My husband says,
“You have got to be pregnant.”

Poet Pregnancy 101

I feel almost like
I felt at Tom's house
but no one here is
dying of cancer
so it is safe
to come forward
with my belly full
of hopes & words &
the perfect birthing plan.

The bathroom is cold
like it was at Tom's house,
but death isn't mucking up the floors
with muddy feet
so it is safe to make many pit stops
in this restroom where purple
smudges the tiles and dances
on the waves of steam that roll
from exhales.

It doesn't feel anything like
San Francisco, no murdered neighbors
haunting my entry- and hall- ways,
no shiny black hematite stones
in my pockets being rubbed
to pieces in prayer & protection—
No, This Isn't San Fran At All.

I mailed a letter to myself
just so I could see that the To: & From:
addresses were both here in Seattle.
My mother emailed me to say
they had an earthquake in Mercer,
Pennsylvania, too. I met the male

of my dreams one day at Northwest Hospital
when I was possessed by a demon
who shoved my manuscript into his hands
saying, "Please read this."

He returned the next morning with
his guitar in hand, a manuscript full
of music, and a briefcase full of
marriage proposals. "Don't ever
go back to San Fran," he said—
that was the only score of music
I was ever able to read and play.

Yes, now it feels like
the Pacific NW, the spiritual
vortex of the universe, the only place
in the world where you find
nests of ladybugs living
inside the lampshade of your
honeymoon cabin, flitting around
the pinwheel your husband planted
in the window just so the fertility
Goddess from Ghana could find you.

This is the only place in the world
where you can find your pet turtle
five months later, dead in the garden
down the street, under jojo's rosemary bush,
the corpse begging to be washed away
the shell begging to be cleaned—
"Okay, so i can't chase your white socked
feet around the livingroom anymore,"
this dead turtle said, "but I can
cook a potent fertility soup
right in the pot of my shell."

Now even the thought of the smell
of the corpse makes me faint dead away,
pulling the table cloth to the floor,
putting cooked broccoli and cauliflower
in the same category as the smell of
a dirty litter box—

How come no one told me
the first sign of pregnancy would be
vomiting in Starbucks' bathroom
from the offensive smell of coffee?

Girls' Night Out

I'm craving Thai food, so
Heather takes me to the best
restaurant in the City.

Baby sniffs
as I eat the most amazing
coconut soup I've ever had,
And Baby says, "you will leave now
or i will throw up
from the smell."

We leave.

We drive away with
Thai leftovers
in the back seat
as we sit
in heavy traffic
in the middle of I5
going North.

Baby says, "i told you
the smell is making me
sick."
So I throw up
in a tiny zip lock bag
in the front seat
of Heather's car
in the middle of I5
going North.

So much for the best coconut soup
I've ever had in my whole life.

Glowing Under the Green

Jojo, Heather, and I
were sitting by the pool.
They were bugging me,
wanting to know what
my problem is lately.

I caved to aggravation,
“I’m pregnant, okay?!

I’m pregnant.”

Wide eyed Heather sighs,
“Well that explains why you
sleep all the time lately and why you
throw up whenever we go for Thai.”

Jojo scrutinizes my face announcing,
“Honey, I do believe you are glowing!
Yes indeed, under that morning sickness
green, you are glowing!”

Sleepy

Our cat, Trixy, is curled
up on the arm of the couch
back paws stretched up
to meet one front paw
tail wrapped around to keep
warm and the other front paw
over her nose.

I'm curled in the recliner
cervical pillow under
my neck, cushy pillow under
my back, blanket pulled
up to my nose to keep warm.

My husband laughs
standing in the kitchen says
out loud to no one in particular,
"Twins, born of a different species."

Strange Dreams I

i read in a book
somewhere that pregnancy
increases the dream state
during sleep.

No kidding.

i have the weirdest dreams now:

My hips are on fire—literally.
Tiny blazing flames shoot out
from just below my belly, right out
from my hips.

i walk naked thru a cafeteria
and people give me all kinds
of round food to eat. Apples,
provolone cheese slices, cheerios,
ancini pepe pastas, seedless
watermelon, pints of ice cream.
“Round food will make your
body round. The way it should be.
Round for a healthy babe,”
they all say.

Crossing a street to get to a
sea shore, i think to myself
“What am i doing here? i
should be at work.” And then
i look down and can’t see my
toes. There is a huge belly
in the way. As i get to the water
huge waves crash and a lovely
healthy baby washes up

on shore. i look over and see
Rosie O'Donnell. She laughs
and points at the baby, says,
“Good work you did there, Kid!”

There is a snowboarder ice skating
on the frozen pond in jojo's
backyard, and he falls thru
the ice. He survives, but demands
that we take him and his family
of 10 out to dinner. We throw him
out. When a police man shows
up to take a report, the only one
around to tell him the story is
Michael, and he gets it all wrong.

Before going to sleep one afternoon
jojo tells me she plans to paint
her kitchen, and i dream of a freshly
painted stand at the Market
where jojo and michael are selling
Primanti Brothers sandwiches
and they make mine so big
that i can't fit it in my mouth.

i've worn red high heels with
wool socks to travel back home.
Arriving there, i meet with old
friends: Michelle who never
believed she could go to college,
Erin the would-be playboy bunny,
Timberlan who knew everyone's
destiny, D. who married a senator.
It is like a nightmare, i feel out
of place, wearing a swim suit in

mid-winter, unable to catch the
moving bus that everyone else
is on for the tour or something,
ending up in locked closets
screaming to be let out. All i want
is to have the red shoes and wool sock
so i can get back to seattle.

When i corner the senator asking
what he did with my shoes, he says
he sent them to representative coins'
office in my district.

Now what should i do?
How will i ever get home
from all these strange dreams?

Strange Dreams II

i remember reading
a story about a woman who
lopped her head off
in an attempt
to stop thinking.

i lie in bed
during the wee hours
wondering
if i lop my stomach off,
will it stop me from eating,
eating the world
eating up all God's creations
feeding his latest creation,
the 14 week old child who
has taken up residence
in my womb.

i fall back to sleep
without eating anything
without feeding the fetus
and i have vivid nightmares of
armed tuna sandwiches,
their rifles aimed at me,
and of black belt hard boiled eggs
who wish to crack me open with karate chops
and even of pork chops,
friendly enough, dancing with
baked potatoes, telling me i must
learn to soft shoe.

About three hours into
the dream delicatessen,
i think to myself, "it has been

a good 13 hours since i ate last.
i should get up and eat.” But
my heavy body crashes back
into the flannel pillows, saying
“Forget about it!”
Then out of nowhere,

THUMP!

A strong almost painful thing
on the left side of my belly.
“Get Up Momma!”
he screams from deep inside.

it is our first! Our first kick!
And he was strong and
loud and clear! i call to my husband,
he puts his hand on my belly,
he doesn't do it again. But he does
scream the heartburn of an empty stomach
throwing acid up to me, yelling,
“Feed me tuna & egg salad
with diced red peppers for breakfast--
NOW! or else!”

Comfort from my husband

Do you realize
there is a whole entire
person growing inside you?
Did you feel that?
He moved!
He kicked you!
Hey, ask him
to do it again???!
What do you mean
you feel worthless
since you quit your job?
Because you do nothing
all day long??!
Hey, you know what?
You are Creating Life.
That counts
for doing something, Hon.
Please don't feel badly that
I'm working the 9 to 5 job.
You know what you need?
A job description:

To produce a healthy baby.
Sleep often, eat a little something
every hour or two, outgrow all
clothing items in the household,
buy new clothes, go to prenatal
appointments (looking at the scale
for weigh-in is optional), call the
ob/gyn office everyday with a new
question or worry, relax, finish
writing that series of poems
about pregnancy titled
"The Pregnant Poet."

You've outgrown your clothes

By 16 weeks along
your waistline really does
outgrow the clothes you own.
Maternity clothes
becomes a must, unless you plan on
never leaving your house again
(at least for the next year or so).

But why didn't anyone tell me
how traumatic this kind of
shopping can be? Have you ever
noticed that maternity stores and
departments rarely carry clothes
over size XL? And when they do carry
"plus sizes," the largest they sell
is 3X or 24/26 women's size.

Guess what, People?!
Some of us are size 1X to 3X
to begin with! And guess what else?
Those of us who are 1X to 3X
to begin with often
get pregnant, too!!

After days of maternity shopping,
much to my annoyance, there is
nothing in my size. So we shall
have a panty-less pregnancy,
and I am seriously considering
staying in my house for the
duration of this pregnancy.

And that pisses me off.

Progress

I wake up one morning
during the 19th week
and try to get dressed.

My panties don't fit anymore.

I stare at my morphing
body in the mirror
and realize
my bellybutton is
disappearing.

My husband wonders
outloud if we really are
going to have a panty-less
pregnancy, and begs me
to try shopping
for maternity clothes
again.

I agree to try.
We go to Motherhood
at the Mall, and I ask,
"Do you carry anything
in 3X?" That smirky sales
woman looks at me, answers
"You'll have to find *Those*
kinds of things in a catalog."

We return home with
a bag full of tears
and a bit of self-loathing
and I call my mom
who tries to reassure me

with her memories
of how difficult it was
to shop when she was
pregnant.

“I don’t recall going out
to shop,” she says, “It seems
to me that one of Gram’s friends
made a few dresses for me
and that was that.”

I don’t ask her, but I wonder
what did she do for panties?
How did she manage to leave
the house before the dresses
were made.

“Things are different now,”
she says. “It will be fine, honey,
I promise,” she says. “We’ll
work something out,” she says.

At this point I either believe her
or crawl in a hole to hibernate
more naked than the bears
who at least have fur
that grows with them
when they get pregnant!

At five months pregnant

I pack up old boxes
filled with my favorite
clothes that don't
fit anymore.
They will be like
opening presents
when I finally fit
them again.

And thanks to the
perseverance
of husband and mother
we start getting
new boxes in the mail
from Pennies and
Lane Bryant.

Imagine my relief
when I find panties
that fit me in one
of those new boxes!

I guess I can leave
the house after all.

Take pictures!

“Evidence of life:
a split-second’s death
to live forever
in something called
a *print*.”

-erica jong, “The Evidence”

My mother 3000 miles away says,
“Are you taking photos
of your changing belly for me?”

My friend, Judy, the ultimate
scrapbooker says, “Are you
taking pictures so we can do
1st thru 9th month pages?”

My sister, Heather, in New York
sends me designer baby clothes, says
“I need photos! I’m missing
all the changes in you!”

There is no film in my husband’s
camera, I keep forgetting to
buy some, we don’t own a polaroid.
So,

Snap.

I can’t see my toes.

Snap.

My arms randomly
go numb as my breast
tissue swells and swells.

Snap.

I am possessed by a demon
whose ransom is a baked potato

with butter, real butter, in exchange
for several hours of sleep.

Snap.

When I walk by window fronts
there is this stranger possessing
my reflection, and she walks
very differently than I do.

Snap.

My dreams are vivid & crazy
and my dead grandmother
shows up at night to give me
parenting advice.

Snap.

I eat so many
calcium fortified TUMS
each day that I could donate
to victims of osteoporosis
if it only worked that way.

Snap.

My nesting started when I
had this need to make all the foods
my dead grandmother gave me
handwritten recipes for.

Snap.

When I lay flat
to try and sleep
I suddenly can't stop
burping.

Snap.

Some nights I turn
carnivore and demand that
my husband take me out
to dinner for T-bone steak.

Snap.

When the cat lays on me
she gets bounced around
like popcorn kernels

in hot grease as the baby
inside me starts a kicking
protest against the loud
purring from the neighbor
who suddenly moved in
upstairs.

Is the film developed
clearly enough?

False Labor?

Now there's a heady topic for a woman who is five months pregnant—a terrified first time pregnant woman. It is a cliché, but I spend time wondering how I will deal with the pain, will I be big enough “down there” to give birth, will this child tear me to shreds only to never let me sleep again? Can the terrifying ideas about labor be considered false, wrong, incorrect?

“You'll forget the pain,” they say.

“It is a miracle,” they say.

“You'll be fine,” they say.

Oh, I dread the moment when pain will whisk me to the new heights of the highest mountain and my husband will calmly turn to me and say, “Don't scream, Honey. Breathe with me.” I dread being told to pant like a dog in summer heat when I want to scream from the mountain top!

And when the baby is finally outside of me, still connected with that throbbing cord, covered with white slime, will he be too slippery, too hard for me to hold onto, will I drop him, dangling by the cord over a cliff while I'm planting a flag at the peak to say, “Look! I did it.”

And 24 hours later, the nurse will wheel me out, tell me it's okay, I know everything I need to know already, the swelling and soreness of my breasts will be relieved once I get out of base camp, hike to higher ground where my son and I will be masters of the ice pick, masters of breastfeeding. Yeah Right, Lady Nurse! Are You Joking?! I don't know how to do this, I don't even own a pair of hiking boots.

But my husband is waiting with joy and a warm blanket to take us home where everything is just in the right place. “It's fine, Honey,” he says, “It's fine.” And he shows me

how the changing table is all set up, the cloth diaper hamper has the air freshener inside the lid, the glider rocker is all put together, "Don't worry about a thing," he says. But he won't let me near the kitchen, doesn't want me to see that during labor our two part time teenagers have managed to use up every dish, spoon, cup, fork, and knife in the house without rinsing off a single thing, without loading a single dish into the dishwasher, "I'll take care of it," he says when I do spy it out of the corner of my eye. I don't have the heart or the patience to tell him that I can also see the hills of dirty laundry, the make-up stained towels and the food stained clothes out of the eyes I've grown in the back of my head, the mandatory eyes that every mother grows immediately after the placenta is birthed.

Oh, but this is false labor, right?! Please tell me it is! Please tell me these are the false ideas born of fear and the unknown! Tell me that a first time mom who is only five months pregnant can only know what False labor is. She cannot know Real labor-- not yet.

Learn the Basics

The Moon and Night are consistently
on the last shift with me as I
pace thru the house wondering
where we will all fit.

In despair, I look up to the Moon
and ask Her, “How would you rearrange
to make room for the new baby?”
She laughs at my worries and tells me
to look inside myself, to see the vast
galaxies of love and curiosity
that keep me in tune with the
children we already have.

“See that planet of water, over there
between the third & fourth galaxies,”
She says. “Look thru the water,”
She says. “That new child has plenty
of room, and cares only that you make
time to hold him, hear him, hug him—
he does not care where you put
the changing table, my Dear,”
the Moon says.

And I point to the book cases
that need to be moved to make room
for the rocker & the Night giggles at me
out loud. He says thru giggles that
I am foolish. “What?!” I ask, insulted.
Night looks at me with those
piercing eyes & lovingly laughs
as he starts singing a rhythm that
makes my body begin to sway,
back and forth I am lulled between
bits of comet tail dust
and the luminescent hands of the stars.
“Look,” Night says, “Look how your

body moves, how your baby calms down,
how the two of you dance perfectly well
without the help of a rocker," He says.
"I don't need a rocker?!" I ask Night.
"No," He says, "You only need to open
your ears to the music of the late shift."

And when I foolishly doubt
the wisdom of both the Moon
and the Night, I begin to cry,
to ask aloud how families
blend together, how a mother
makes certain her family works.
It is then that the Mother Goddess
bends down from her mountain top
and shows me how it all goes.
"Look here," the Mountain Mother says,
"Look at how my family blends together
and all I have to do is be still."

I watch as the Clouds and Cold Air
gather around Her, a shawl and a dress
tailor made for Her body, I watch
as the snow begins to fall, tears of
joy & pleasure rolling down her cheeks.
I watch as the snow melts when it reaches
that middle place, Her womb from which
the foot hills & valleys are born. I watch
as the snow melts with the heat of Her
sex and begins to drip into streams
becoming mighty flows of ecstasy.

And Mother Mountain interrupts me now,
says "Look, Child, carefully at how my
children work together, but don't always
get along." And I see Her Water pushing
Her Rocks & Stones around, making them

tumble head over heels down the length
of Her legs. "Look, Child," She says,
"If I let them go, let them find themselves,
figure out how to relate to one another
on their own, look what happens." And I
see it, at Her feet, the lovely Swimming Hole,
filled with Cool Water and Bright Shiny Stones,
surrounded by the love and warmth of Her
Grassy Moss -- the most peaceful children
you could ever want to picnic and play with.

"Child," She says, "All you can do
is give birth, love them all for
who they are, and find some way
to calm your mind during
the wee hours of the late shift."
And I ask the Great Mother,
"What will I do if I don't spend my time
worrying?" She looks at me with
kindness and patience, answers,
"If you can learn to fill your pen
with the Light of the Moon and let
Night be your sheets of paper, then you
will see a lifetime of poems fall
from your hands, putting stars
in the Night sky of the late shift."

Last Trimester

In my body
a flower is full bloom
petals open wide
leaves dripping with rain water
roots overgrown
pushing against the constraints
of the flower pot,
moving bellybuttons
out of the way.

The Guest Appearance

And so here we are again
in another workshop as Kara
writes another poem
about the child who is growing
inside her. And he kicks,
and i think, even giggles,
when Claudia and Shelley switch
Rumi's stanzas around--
"Look how fun that is, Mom!"
Dakota exclaims from within me,
"Look what you can do when you
give up knowing what comes next!"

Dakota continues talking to me,
telling me he knows i want him
to make his guest appearance
on the Spring Equinox, telling me
to let it happen, telling me
that in not knowing what comes next
we could suddenly experience
the earthquake that sets the volcanoes
of the NW to exploding, telling me
we'd be like Pompeii then, buried but
kept exactly as we are. This child knows
i fear earthquakes and laughs at my
fascination with lava lamps.

And i flash on a dream i had,
there was an earthquake in my body,
rumbles & shakes that set off the volcanic
explosion of my water breaking
and the run run run of after shocks
in contraction after contraction,
all building up to the lava flow,
blood, cord, placenta, and

of course the greatest gift
from the mouth of the Hot Goddess,
my son very much alive and well,
not buried and preserved like
the Pompeii babies. And Dakota
speaks up again, "So, Mom,
after all that action, does it really matter
if i wait for the Equinox or not? is it not
the body quake gift from the Great Mother
that matters? Does it not prove to you
that living on live fault lines
does not mean we know
what comes next?"

i have to laugh when in my dream,
Dakota becomes a police man pulling over
drunk drivers, testing their sobriety
by seeing if they can walk a straight
fault line. And i have to laugh
when in my dream, Dakota becomes
a God who directs Broadway musicals
and is rehearsing the chorus line girls
to death. And i have to laugh at myself
when i am angry about waking from
the dream because i need to make a
b-line to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

And after all the talk & dreams about
lines, lines, lines, is it any wonder
that i try to make sense of lines,
to think in a linear fashion,
to wait in line on the freeway ramp
so we can wait in line in traffic
to get me to workshop on time
where i immediately make another
b-line for the bathroom,

only to settle into class
and to have Claudia and Shelley
show me that lines and going in order
mean absolutely nothing because
the truth is that it all goes around
and around in circles and ends up
with me writing yet another poem
about the child growing within me.

Waiting at the bus stop
I feel I am part of
possibility.

It could all go
either way. I can take
the 16 going south
to Wallingford
and walk around the
shopping center that used to be
an old school house, hallways
still haunted by laughing
children and chiding
teachers. The baby
I'm carrying in my belly
hears the children laughing
and starts kicking
wanting to run with them,
maybe having been one of them
in a past life.

I could take the 317 north
to Aurora Village where I'd
have to catch another bus
in order to get the whole way
home. And if I should miss
the connecting bus, my husband
would be home at his desk
writing computer code
trying to forget the time
trying to code instead of worry
about where his wife
and child are. And as the baby
gets impatient wanting to tell
his daddy that we are fine, he would
start pounding on my bladder

saying *hurry hurry*
i can't wait much longer.

Part of possibility.
A handful of people stand
all around me going anywhere
and a woman sitting on the
bench behind me asks,
“When are you due, honey?”
3 more months for me, and I find out
6 more months for her. The old
lady sitting next to the other
mom starts telling us about
her labor of four children,
how hard it was to be
a turtle on her back
legs in stirrups, no
one listening to
what she
wanted,
banished
from having
the comfort of
her husband to just
hold her hand and pet
her sweat matted hair & brow.

I block out her story,
things are different now
my husband won't leave us
ever during our labor, I will be
in any position I damn well please
and the birthing staff knows that we
hired them, not the other way around!

The old lady continues, “Oh, honey, and
the pain! You just can't imagine.”

Yes I can. I can imagine my Power
spot, the Goddess Power running thru
me as the currents of contractions run thru
me. I'm on all fours in my Power spot,
I raise my head in pain, and the house
is ahead of me, the red clay path
leading to the front door,
Green Tara music pouring
from every window and doorway
just as pain pours from every
opening of my body
and passes into ecstasy.

I look off to the left
and there on the crest
of the ridge is Huntress,
my guide and protector,
standing with legs spread
one hand on hip, the other
firmly holding the tall staff of
Power that connects her
to the core of the Earth.
And the pain crests
when Huntress taps the staff
on the ground, sending a current
to the core that bounces back
up to my toes, that runs the
length of my body, that
reminds me I am
part Goddess.

And to the right, is the city,
the huge water fountain
that runs continuously,
never freezes, never
stops, and I am reminded
to flow with the rise

and fall, the waves
of Life coming
thru me, the
blood and water
that pours out of me
making the way for a child
who will someday run around
the edges of the fountain, dipping
his toes in the cool water, being blessed
by the holy water that is so similar to the
water he lived in for the first 40 weeks of Life.

And I collapse onto my side, wanting to rest
between the crests, and I look past my
feet toward the trees in the forest,
opposite the position of the house.
And in the openings, between
the trees, between the shadows
and leaves, I can see the
Little People, the fluttering
fairy wings, that carry
blessings to strengthen
me, my child, my husband
thru this birth,
and the Little ones
remind me to
open, to be
the space
between
the
leaves
to let them
slip thru, to let
my baby slip thru
and come forth to be
held by the soft moss of

the forest floor, to be held
by the blessed hands of my husband.

And the old woman is there
looking on, telling me she
always wished her births
could have been like this,
wishes she could have seen
the blessings of Power
rather than the restraints of
her day. And the other mother
at the bus stop is there, eyes wide
saying she hadn't thought that far
ahead, hadn't considered her fears
and desires for birth, and the busses
keep coming, keep taking people to the
many destinations of their lives.

And I am still standing at the bus stop
feeling part of any and all possibilities,
wondering which bus to take
where to go, where to stop
how to get home the
quickest to tell my
husband that his
wife and child
are fine.

Plan all you want—
The Gods will do
as they please anyway.

This is the first few moments
I've had in an entire week
to sit down, to devote myself
to writing. Where did
the week go -- it slipped
like a slimy snail into
a sea of salt where it curled up
and died-- you, too, must have
lost days or weeks in this way.

So what did happen to my week?
Part of it was eaten up by
the phone line that dragged
tooth marked pieces of myself
to NYC where my sister has been told
by her friends that she is too
intimidating for them to introduce her
to their eligible men friends--
in the next breath this
monstrously intimidating woman
is telling me how she bought
new shampoo to help her kitty
stop itching dry skin, but she fears
she'll never get to use it because
her cat won't let her wash him
without putting up a fierce fight--
now that does sound like a woman
who is too intimidating to fix up
with an eligible friend, doesn't it?

and part of my week was eaten alive
by the modem line that pulled out my hair
and sent anxiety messages to the fetus

inside me so that he kicked & screamed
at me while I kicked & screamed
at my slow bulky crashing computer
as I tried desperately to edit
the events calendar on my web site--
hours of spinning hard drive leaving
my head spinning and my nights spinning
away away away

and part of my week was bundled up
and carefully sent off on a pack mule
to climb the mountain to the Goddess
and tell Her how much I thank Her
for the blessings in my life,
for the abundance of newly released books
and the newly born babe to come.

and part of my week is taken up
planning-- the planning of the Spring Equinox--
the planning of the first few moments
of my son's life-- the planning of when I
want him to be born--

and the last bit of my week is eaten up
by NYC, by the Goddess at the mountain,
by email messages and phone calls
that mock my planning
and the answer that
digests all my plans is this:

"Kara spends an entire week
planning the birth and first few moments
of Dakota's Life while the Gods
roar with laughter and her entire week
floats away on the whim of the Goddess."

Get wired

My hands are full of promises,
but can I handle them all? They
roll around and go clanking
about like marbles, but the hardest
one to handle is the cleary –
you know the cleary, don't you?
It's that marble made of clear glass,
the coveted one, the marble
no one wanted to lose in those
childhood games of chance –
So anyway, like I said the cleary
is the hard one to deal with.
The cleary is straight forward and
obvious, the cleary is the wedding vow
that says all that “in sickness & in health”
stuff, all that “till death do us part” stuff.
But Wow! How does a good wife handle that?
How does she handle Forever?
And then my husband comes home
late one night with the answer. He tells me
that the cleary will not be hard to handle
once the baby is born.
He tells me how he felt when his
first two children were born. The instant
he saw them he felt an electric current run
thru his body that flashed the neon sign screaming,
“My life for theirs, My life for theirs.”
He felt the same current when he met me,
he says, when he read my poems, he says.
That cleary of “till death do us part”
in the marriage vow will not be
so hard to handle he says
when you get plugged in,
when labor starts,

when you give birth to the one being who is
two parts us & one part himself.
My husband promises
that once we get my clearly wired,
it will glow with the neon words
“My life for his, My life for his.”

Section Two
Poet Not Pregnant

Huntress, Warrior Queen, heard the words
“Your baby has no heartbeat,” and she
dropped her staff to the ground
smashing it into a million pieces
that scattered over the lands.

*-Thank you, Claudia, for inspiring me
to write this first piece after Kota died.
After writing this, I truly began to
process the grief.*

Shock

-Denial convinces you it's real
by playing the scenes
flash by flash
over and over
in your head.

3/11/99

4:47pm

Poet not Pregnant

Kara, your baby has no heartbeat.

This baby has no heartbeat.

Hawk, why did She take him from us?

Sonja, Dakota is gone.

Mommy, I can't say the words.

He's just heavy
at the bottom of my belly
laying dead on my bladder.

Lisa stands
pale as the ghost of my child
and cries, creaking out the words
"I'm so sorry."

I can say "your son" or "your grandson"
but to actually say "My son" is nearly impossible.

When it happened

I sat in my livingroom
nine months pregnant
only 8 days from my due date
drinking the strongest cup
of dark black tea I could brew—
I hadn't had caffeine in
nine month, but this morning
I was going to make this
baby move—he hadn't moved
for almost 24 hours by then.

I kept drinking and poking
my belly saying, "Move! I want you
to Move!" My baby lay dead
on top of my bladder. And suddenly
I heard him outside my head saying,
"Momma, it's okay." And suddenly
I could feel something heavy
in my arms, about 6 lbs. 4 oz heavy
and I cried because I knew
it wasn't okay.

The Goddess floated thru
my front door like a ghost
and She took my baby from
me and walked away without
so much as a word of explanation.
And now, three weeks later,
my arms still ache.

Blame I

I want to hate the Goddess
for taking my baby from me,
but I need Her to help me cope
with the death of my son.

I can't handle this,
I can't hold all this grief
in my two hands, so I turn
to the damn Goddess, hand Her
even more of my life,
beg her, "Please
I can't carry this, please
take it."

I let Her take my son
and then I let her take my grief.

She is a greedy Bitch.

Guilt

“It’s time to change the tapes that are
playing in your head. Do you know
what I mean, Darling?”

-my husband to me when I told
him I wanted to die with our son

Somehow I feel I’ve failed as a woman.
I just didn’t get it quite right.

Most women come home with a baby
after nine months of pregnancy.
I came home with a table top
full of drugs.

And let me tell you,
that percocet is good stuff,
not a baby,
but damn good.

Anger I

“Even upside down
you think of your death.
Even upside down
you curse the emptiness”
-erica jong, self-portrait in shoulder stand

“Butterflies in clouds accompanied her standard;
Pigeons miraculously fluttered toward her;
Men fell into rivers and were drowned;
Dead babies yawned and came to life;
Flocks of little birds perched on bushes
to watch her making war.”
-vita sackville-west, saint joan of arc

“You can write out your grief,
perform out your grief,” they all tell me.
“Fuck you,” I answer,
“You write out my grief,” I answer.
Even my husband has already
written a song about our
dead son, two weeks gone,
and I still think writing out my grief
is bullshit. What does it matter?
Nothing matters, nothing is real.
Some guy says he’s glad he finally
got a steady job because he and his wife
are expecting and I think,
“Yeah right, we’ll see if you get to bring home
a baby or just a goddamned jar of ashes.”
Write out my grief, what a joke.
Words cannot tell you
how my heart stops
when I wake with the morning light,
reach down to my tummy & feel
the heavy numb scar where there used to be
Life, when I realize the words
“Your baby has no heartbeat” are real,

not some bad dream I can leave
to the night life and dream catchers.
And speaking of dream catchers,
those damn things don't work either,
whichever Native American person
thought up dream catchers
to make a buck on stupid white people
was really smart and is now really rich
because we all bought them,
I even hung a purple one over my son's crib
and the damn thing didn't catch
any bad dreams, it just hurled images at me
days before it really happened, yelling at me
over and over "your baby will die."
And after my son did die,
friends went into our home and cleared out
all the baby clothes, furniture and paraphernalia,
but the one thing they left on the wall
was that damn dream catcher.

 "O," they all say, "but your writing
will help you work thru your grief."
Fuck grief. I wrote about my son
constantly when I was pregnant.
For nine whole months, I wrote him
into existence and in the end
I gave birth to a dead body
and a book with a purple cover.
I'd like to burn that damned book, but
instead they burned my baby's body
into a jar of ashes, not the book,
and i scream up to whatever god
you think is there, i thought was there
and say, "Fuck you, I want my baby!"
And how does this god answer me?
With women all around me giving birth
to their own perfectly healthy babies.

That idiot teenage girl who was told
to be on bed rest but thinks bed rest is “stupid”
so she goes on a trip with her boyfriend instead,
she gets to go home with her baby.
And that woman who worked,
stress and pressure of deadlines and meetings,
so busy she forgot her daily vitamins,
insanity right up till the minute she dropped,
she gets to take her baby home,
and I’m supposed to write out my grief,
not turn hard and cynical,
be happy for them. But you know what?
Fuck that. I wanted to bring my baby home, too.

Do Not Mistake It For Acceptance

“like the twisted purple cord
through which we first pulsed poems...
Birth is the start
of loneliness
& loneliness the start
of poetry...”

erica jong, Dear Marys, Dear Mother, Dear Daughter

Two weeks gone
from giving birth
to a dead body
and here i am birthing
poems again
trying to feel
what real birthing
must feel like,
what it must be
to push out something
wiggly and alive,
what it must be
to be fulfilled
by birthing
instead of being
handed a lock of hair
and some footprints
in purple ink of feet
that will never dance.

Poems are a poor substitute
for a baby. Only a baby
is a good substitute for a baby
and even at that,
it won't be the same baby
you gave birth to the first time,
it won't be Dakota,

it won't be the son you
wrote into existence.

So deal with it, Babe,
get over yourself,
your grief & move on,
let go, cut the cord
in a big way, those apron strings
were never yours
to hold on to, he never had
hands that were animated enough
to catch the strings, he was
born with dead hands,
say goodbye & let him go.

Why fight it? Why won't you
just let go? You can't have him back!
Nothing you do will bring him back!
You will never hold him,
you will never come home with him
live, crossing the threshold with him
wiggly crying in his carrier,
you will only cross the threshold
with that marble jar of ashes,
his little body gone,
the blanket that wrapped him
embroidered with his name,
smelling forever of his dead body—
doesn't matter how many times
you wash it.

Deal with it.
Move on.
You better let go of the past.
You better stay in the present moment
with your husband because he needs you,

if you lose grip of his hand,
you'll lose him, too,
so you best stay here,
Mommy stay with Daddy,
heal each other,
no one else can heal you.

My husband sighs

We drive North
persistently
on Aurora
stop light to stop light
and my husband sighs
a long quiet whisper
telling the world how he grieves
for his dead infant son,
three weeks gone.

Another traffic light
turns green, says
“You may proceed,”
and my husband sighs
a sharp twisted breath
that aches the way
his arms must ache
to hold the baby we lived with
for nine whole months.

And we pull in to our
housing complex limping
quietly and slowly
over speed bumps
and my husband sighs
a roller coaster breath
that quickly rises and falls
just like our expectations
rose as the due date drew near
and then came crashing down
when my son’s heart stopped.

And once inside our home
I drag my tired bones
to bed where I sleep
next to the marble jar

full of my son
and my husband sighs
slowly, carefully
not wanting to disturb the ashes.

My husband tucks me in,
says he can't sleep yet,
wants to fight the bad guys
on one of his flight sim games
and as he hugs me tightly,
my husband sighs
heavily blowing the air
of grief around the empty
spaces of our bedroom
that used to hold a
changing table, a
crib, a gliding rocker.

He closes the door,
off to conquer
the simulated Universe,
and the dark
closes in around me—
a room away, I hear it,
my husband sighs
a frustrated, impatient breath,
it has been a long time
since we slept together
making love under a blue moon,
it has been a long time
since he looked at me
and saw a lover,
for a long time I was
becoming a mother,
for a short time I have
been a banshee,
and everytime my husband sighs,
my wailing gets louder.

Anger II

I just screamed
at my husband,
“I want my son back!”
He took my face
in his hands
looked me right in the eyes
and said, “You can’t have him.
No matter what you do, you can’t
have him. And I need you here
in this present moment
so we can look to the future.”
I was really mad at him because
that was not the answer I wanted.

But it made me realize
that I will always want my son.
And I will never have him.

Blame II

“Evidence of life:
a split-second’s death
to live forever
in something called
a *print*.”

-erica jong, “The Evidence”

I like to blame
that case worker,
her stupidity
her inability to carry out
our wishes
her deceit about
the paperwork
she had us sign.
I like to blame her
as if it is her fault
I did not hold my son.
But the truth is
it is my own fault.
They took him from me
by c-section on
March 11, 1999
at 4:47pm and
at that moment in time
I refused to hold him.

In my own child-like
perspective of death,
I could not want
to hold Death,
Death was not
my son, Death was
decaying skin
skeleton body
scary from-the-grave visit

much like we see on
Tales From the Dark Side.

What I did not know
until I saw the photos
the nurse took of my son
was that death
was a full 6lbs 4oz
with perfect hands and feet
full lips full head of dark
curly hair and closed eyes
that simply looked as though
he were sleeping.
I did not know
that holding my son
would have been
the same as when
Romeo held Juliet's
lifeless body to him,
embracing
a Flash of Life.

Nothing

The funny thing about hate
is that when you don't have
anger behind it anymore,
you are just numb.

-two weeks after my son
was stillborn and I was
just getting sober off the
percocet.

The Goddess' Husband

It is hard to write
when I feel so numb.
Continuously I long
to have my son back,
it never leaves me,
this feeling,
so why did my son
leave me?

It is hard to cook
when I feel so numb,
I just bang around
the kitchen, swearing
to the air, seeing pain
on my cat's face
when I accidentally
step on her tail.

It is hard to sleep
when I feel so numb,
I am exhausted yet
wide awake dreaming
that my husband is
restless & keeps falling
out of bed.

It is difficult to make love
when I feel so numb,
I almost wish
I were into some
serious S&M
so that I might
feel something.

It is difficult to know
the Goddess above
when I feel so numb,
but in the middle
of the night, I walk
into the leg of a table
& bang my toe
making it bleed & I yell
outloud, "God, Damn It!"
And suddenly the Goddess
answers me saying,
"Yes, Child, sometimes I get
angry with Him, too."

Sadness

"Sometimes I see them lying like love letters
in the Dead Letter Office."

-Sharon Olds, The Unborn

My little baby son
my love letter lost
forever in the Dead Letter Office,
i cannot deliver you live
to your Daddy's arms,
he will not be able
to read the poems
in your dark eyes
nor run his fingers
thru the dark curly
iambs of your hair,
and my free verse poems
are a sad substitute
for the son I so wanted
to give to my husband,
your Daddy.

It is difficult to
let the lines drop jammed
with the sunlight and the
shadows of clouds
that will never cross
your pretty skin, will never make
you blink with surprise
as the shadows move
and the sunbeams dance
across your teary eyes.

It is as if the
substance of my soul drops
to the pit of my stomach

when I realize you
will never wiggle
cry bite my nipples
with newly grown teeth.
My soul drops
much the way you dropped
to the bottom of my stomach
when your heart stopped.

I hope you are free.
I hope you have reached the Light
and have been greeted
by the gentlest prettiest angels
the Goddess has in Her employment.
I hope they have carefully
held you to their breasts
in the way I would have.
I hope they have bathed you,
welcomed you, loved you
the way we would have.
I hope you can still hear me.
I hope you know I always want you.
I hope you know I long for you.

**I've begun to mark time
by my son's birthday**

This would not be so
odd for most people,
but for me,
my son's birthday
is also his death-day.
So when I tell my husband
that I've begun to mark time
by my son's birthday,
he says to me,
"Honey, I think it's time
to start using a calendar again."

But that is difficult to do
when my mother-in-law calls
to say that my husband's niece
has had her baby girl
on April 10th, I think to myself
"That's just one day before
my Dakota would've been one month."
So you see, I've begun to mark time
by my son's birthday.

And even when I try really hard
to just use the calendar, like when
someone asked what day workshop
started again, I answered them with,
"Wednesday, May 12th." But silently
in my head I thought, "Just one day after
my Dakota would've been two months."
Silently, I've begun to mark time
by my son's birthday.

Maybe I'm losing my mind
I think to myself

until one day when
I come across a very nice man
who has a father's grief site online
with a Garden page to display
memorials for our lost babies.
I write to him and ask him to include
my Dakota which he kindly does.
He sends me a note to say
the memorial is up for all to see
and the last two lines
of his message read:
"By the way, our boys
were just one day apart as
my son was born and died
on March 10th." And I realize
I'm not the only one
who has begun to mark time
by a son's birthday.

Alone for the first time

I took the bus today
by myself for the first time
since my son died.

I had a semi meltdown
halfway to where I was going.
So, I took out my kleenex,
said "Allergies!" to the woman
next to me, and blew my nose
really loudly! And you know what?

I lived.

First day back

“No one knows for certain
whether the vessel will sink
or reach the harbor.” -Rumi

The vessel sunk alright,
my soul dropped out as
my baby dropped dead
on my bladder.
Most of the anger has passed,
although I still find myself
now and again
wanting to scream
“I WANT MY BABY!”
Sadness is the strongest thing now.
I didn’t get to hold him—
that damn case worker had us sign
paperwork without explaining what
it was & they moved his body to the
funeral home—I was high on percocet
in the hospital aching to hold my baby
and this bitch looks me in the face
and says, “Sorry, but you signed here.”
I wanted to scream “Fuck you and
fuck your paperwork!”—
Oh look,
there’s the anger again.

I ache and have sore muscles
from drudging up
the treasure chest
of that sunken vessel and I
carry in my aching arms—
that treasure chest
full of regret weighing
about 6 lbs. 4oz.

I wanted during that pregnancy
to take yoga with my son doing his
headstands in my tummy,
but I didn't.
I wanted to learn
to bellydance with my son
playing finger cymbals inside me,
but I didn't. I wanted,
I wanted, I wanted, and when I didn't
and felt disappointment, I'd
console myself and say to my son,
"I'm sorry we didn't get to do that, Honey,
but we have a lifetime to do those things."

No one told me the vessel could sink.

When At First You Don't Succeed

"I haven't even failed once.
9,000 times I've learned what doesn't work."
-Thomas Edison

I hope it doesn't take
9,000 pregnancies
to finally get it right.
This first pregnancy
did not turn out so well,
but I learned
what not to do. I learned
not to think I know
the future. I learned
to not pick a name
too soon. I learned
that baby showers
should be held after
babies are born. I learned
that it is not a good idea
to buy baby furniture
before you come home
with your precious child.

And then I flash
on the way my husband
used to read children's
stories to my tummy
at night & I think
to myself, "Not next time!
And never again!"

In just as quick a flash
Papaji shows up, amazing
spirit guide that he is
and says, "Why not?!"

Why would you not want
to bond with your next
child & every child?
Would you rather have
ignored Dakota? Would you
rather not have the sweet
memories of spending time
as a family? Why would you
want to deny your
second child
what you knew to be
so right for your
first?"

And Papaji continues
as he fades back
into the distance, he says,
"Your pregnancy
did not fail, my child,
but your cynicism
has failed and
will fail 9,000
times more if necessary—
maybe then
you will really learn
what does not work!"

At the shore

When I wasn't looking
my son became the ocean shore,
he became that sound of rocks
shuffling around
surfing against one another
clanking like diamonds
being polished from their rough,
he became the ebb & flow
of grief, the tide inching up on me
then suddenly flooding me,
he became wet sand
grits in my hair
rubbing my scalp raw till
only my husband's tender hands
could pick out the pieces & tangles.

My son became a baby crab
frantically crawling sideways,
scared to death when the huge rock
was suddenly turned over,
burrowed furiously under another rock--
not my rock, not my womb,
but back to the Goddess' womb--
he became a sea anemone,
an enigma to me, sometimes
wide open and pulsing when
washed over with salt water,
my tears, sometimes
hard and closed
barely moving between tides.

When I wasn't looking
my son left me and took on
the world, went back to being
the Spirit who is so

much bigger than
his tiny body was,
went back to become
that sound of surf,
lapping the shore,
the ceaselessness of waves.

Acceptance?

“More to the point is what do I do
Now that he is gone.
What begins in me today?
Love again, and again, and again.”
-David Kellin, “Is”

Sometimes I can go
a whole day without
looking at his baby book,
seeing the photos
of that lifeless body
that was so much
smaller than
the spirit of my son.

Sometimes I feel love
instead of jealousy
when hearing about
another woman’s child
who is healthy and alive.

Sometimes instead of crying
at the sight of a beautiful baby,
I can look at my husband
who says, “It will be our turn soon,”
and actually believe him,
know there is a child for us
whether by birth or adoption,
there is a child for us.

Sometimes I can wake up
and fill my day with poetry
and random acts of kindness
and know that the candle
lit in my livingroom

is holding on to the memory
of my son, know that
my tears do not have to
hold that job full time
anymore, part time is okay.

Sometimes
I know it is okay
to move on—
this is not to say
I am or ever will be
“over it”—but just sometimes
it feels okay
to let the baby book hold him,
to let the locket keep his hair soft,
to let the candle burn for him,
to let my body rest in the present
marking time by the calendar
instead of by his birthday,
to let my life be for Living and loving today
instead of simply wanting to die in the yesterday.

When Children Stare

My teen stepdaughter
got a gift certificate for
her birthday, so
we went shopping,
like two school girls,
purses, hats, swim suits,
dresses, hair thingys.
At one point
her buoyant energy
wore me out &
I slunk down
into a chair
outside the fitting room.

I sat there feeling good
considering that my infant son Dakota
died just three weeks earlier,
considering that Easter was
the next day and I had
an infant bunny suit
with ears and tail
that I had wanted to dress
my son in, considering
that every holiday
from here on out
would be painfully
silent without my son.

Way up the aisle
from where I was sitting
I saw a mom with a small
girl child coming
toward me, the pretty
light brown skinned

child stared at me
with curly hair
and dark wide eyes,
she stared at me
from way up the aisle.

As they drew nearer,
she sucked her thumb
more and more intensely
and then her mom stopped
right in front of me
looking at something
on the rack across from me.
The child took her
thumb out of her mouth
and silently worded
with tiny lips
some message
just for me.

I am not a very good
lip reader, but I swear
that tiny angel
recognized me & said,
“Hey, aren’t you Dakota’s mom?”

Nutrition 101

-dedicated to my son Dakota
born-still on March 11, 1999

I run out of the clinic
into the sunlit day
screaming, "NO!"
and you feed me wind.

I lay on the OR table
groaning like a Klingon
who's just lost a loved one
and you feed me dizzy stars.

I crack up one night
in the hospital bed
screaming, "I want my baby!"
and you feed me smelly daffodils.

I bang around the kitchen
swearing outloud because
the pain still kills me
and you feed me ivy crawling
slowly
up the trunk
of a tree.

Finally
I scream at you,
the Goddess Bitch,
"It is not fair that you took my son!"
and you quietly answer,
"But, Child, I did not take him,
I have been feeding you
the Universe of him
all along."

Dakota's Journey

"Tiny, perfect upon glance
these sculpted lines
telling of many lives –"
-Catherine Martin, "Feet Kissing Earth"

My son may have lived
only a short while,
but I have his footprints
to prove how far
he journeyed.

I grew up in Arnold, Pennsylvania
in a sleepy little town
on a street called Woodmont
where old Italian ladies
dragged their tired feet
across cracked sidewalks
and my son journeyed there.

I wanted to get out
but didn't know how
so I followed a then boyfriend
to the sleepy town of Davenport, Iowa
where earnest students
paced nervously through
the clinics learning their trade
and my son journeyed there.

My then boyfriend said
"just come to Seattle
for a little while
till you figure out
what you want"
so we drove through
Yellowstone one October

past 10,000 deer tracks
in the snow
and my son journeyed there.

In Seattle I couldn't find a job
so I started trafficking
temp agencies, early mornings
in the rain in a blue suit
on a steamy humid Metro
making my way downtown
with other noisy commuter
feet climbing off the bus,
and my son journeyed there.

Loathing every minute
of the corporate thing
I'd stand on the sidewalk
above Pike Market
looking over Puget Sound
dreaming of life on the islands
bare toes in the sand
and I could see
my son journeyed there.

Finally some agency
landed me at Northwest Hospital
in a quiet department
with kind people
a desk space to decorate
and creaky hallways
for quiet feet
and my son journeyed there.

After six months at the job
my would-be husband appeared
at my desk, down on one knee
foot tucked behind him

his hand on my computer mouse
pretending to install something
but actually looking at me
with silent lips, mouthing
“you are beautiful,”
and my heart melted—
surely my son journeyed there.

I was afraid when my heart
melted so fast, so I moved
to San Fran to pursue
education, to run away
from Love, and I hated
every minute of it,
called my would-be husband
four months later, said
“What are you doing
this weekend? Will you
help me move home—
make tracks to Seattle?”
and my son journeyed there.

This was it, I was
going to marry him,
certain it was right,
but was it?
He was kind he was loving
he was divorced with
two teenage kids.
Marry him
on the Summer Solstice
High Holy Day of the
Goddess, ask for Her blessing
dance around the maypole
and in the feet of the dancer
ahead of me, I could see

my son danced there.

We went to La Push
to honeymoon with
banana slugs, ladybugs
and crashing waves,
the fertility Goddess of
Ghana stood with Her
feet apart, hands on Her
hips, proudly in our cabin &
I promptly got pregnant,
obviously
my son journeyed there.

First trimester
move further north
to a family community
battle sickness
Thai food turning me
green, find comfort
only in the swimming pool
& in the wet feet that
pad across the concrete,
I could see
my son journeyed there.

Second trimester
more energy
want to write again
find a workshop
publish a book
do performances
my son picked his own name,
poems & songs for Dakota
walk across the stage
echo of little feet
yet to be born

and my son journeyed there.

Third trimester
bigger than ever
my husband reads
children's stories
to my tummy,
my stepdaughter
fascinates at the kicks
in my belly,
dancing feet that
popcorn the skin
around my bellybutton
and my son journeyed there.

8 days from our due date
something goes very wrong
my son drops lifeless
on my bladder
and I scream at the Goddess
for taking me on this path
and giving us
nothing in return
and then it happens,
a wonderful nurse
hands it to my husband,
an envelope containing
purple inked footprints,
tangible proof of my son's feet
and we can clearly see
by the mark of the lines—

for a long long time,
my son journeyed here.

A Story of Faith

Our son, Dakota, had died just 7 weeks earlier. My husband and I were still very much involved in the grieving process. We had a grief therapy session that morning with Sonja who is our good friend, the minister who married us, and the hypno-birthing coach who was with us when Dakota was born-still on March 11, 1999.

I had spent much of the session sobbing, partly pure grief and partly hormonal surges of the postpartum nature. My husband and Sonja talked about the continuity of Spirit, and somewhere behind all the tears, I knew my son was okay, had gone to the Light or Heaven or the OtherSide or whatever name we choose to label it with. But I was struggling to cope with this grief sliding into depression.

At the very end of our session, with our coats on standing on the stairway to leave, Sonja asked me what it was exactly that I was struggling with and could I name it one thing. I told her that I could not handle this hole that was left after Dakota died. It was like a vacuum, silent, empty, horrid! And it was almost tangible to me. Off to my right, just in front of me, it was like I could sense the hole and almost see it. It often looked like the entrance to a tunnel where you can see the other side with the Light coming through. Sonja asked me to sketch a drawing of it over the weekend and to bring it to her on Monday when I had my one-on-one session with her.

That weekend was very busy, and we ran all day long till we got home after dark and were exhausted. I went to bed that night thinking that I really wanted to draw that picture but was frustrated because I was too exhausted to get up and do it. I fell sound asleep and had the most amazing dream.

My grandmother Chipoletti came to me and said I needed to take a train ride. She walked with me to the train, and I got on. The train began to move and went into this tunnel that looked just like the hole I had been trying to describe to Sonja. The train stopped half way inside the tunnel. I got off the train, and a woman came and sat in the center of the “hole”—it was as if she were sitting right on the track in the middle of the circle of Light you can see at the other end opening of the tunnel.

She introduced herself and said her name is Faith. I immediately had the urge to ask her where Dakota is, and she told me to slide my eyes to the left. I turned and looked left. She said, “No, do not turn left. Just simply slide your eyes left.” I did this and could see Dakota on a beach building sandcastles with Papaji, one of my SpiritGuides. If ever there were anyone I could trust completely and totally with the care of my son, it is Papaji. I found great comfort in knowing the two of them were together. Faith told me that anytime I start to feel that desperate feeling for Dakota that I could slide my eyes left and see him. (I have tested this theory numerous times in lots of different settings at all times of the day and night—it works for me.)

I then asked Faith if I would ever have children, or would we just have nightmares like so many women we’ve met who have 6 pregnancies and only 2 babies or 1 baby or no babies at all. She looked at me and emphasized that when a woman has 6 pregnancies, she has 6 babies even if she only raises 2 of them in the physical world. So I asked what would happen to me, and she said “Four sons and a daughter.” I flipped out saying “Five kids?! I’m going to do this five more times?!” She said that I already have one of them, my son Dakota. So then I asked her how many of my babies we would get to raise here in the physical world.

She said she did not know the answer to that question, but that she knew for certain that I have four sons and a daughter.

Faith then asked me if she could “stay here.” I asked her where exactly it was that she wanted to stay, and she said “Here in this hole as you call it.” I said that was okay with me as I heard the train starting up again. I got back on the train and the dream ended. Ever since that dream, I can “see” Faith sitting just off to my right, just in front of me, facing me.

The hole is not empty now. When I start to feel the desperation that has been with me since Dakota died, I slide my eyes left and I can clearly see my son. The desperation goes away. When I start to ache and feel empty as if life has no meaning, Faith shifts around just a little and calls my attention to her, reminds me that the hole is not empty. Regardless of how insane this stuff might seem to some, regardless of whether or not the information I got in the dream is correct, I *feel* better. The cracks in my very body and spirit are being filled with peace again. I do not know whether Faith will ever come to me in this physical world through a pregnancy or birth as a daughter, but it does not matter. She is already here. For this I thank her. And I thank Papaji for taking care of our boy.

Resources

Online Resources:

Infanlos Listserver - this is a wonderful safe space to meet others who have been through the loss of an infant. You can send email to: majordomo@taex001.tamu.edu and simply put **SUBSCRIBE in the BODY of your email** message. You will then begin getting messages from the listserv delivered right to your email box. And you can respond or write with your own story or just sort of lurk around and read about others. The people on this listserve have literally saved my life at times, and they certainly bring comfort to me often.

A Father's Grief -

<http://web.cetlink.net/~papabear/father/>

Abigail's Page -

<http://www.angelfire.com/oh/AbigailMadison/>

Sunflower Gal's - <http://www.sunflowergal.com/>

BabySteps Children's Fund Inc - www.babysteps.com

The Kindness Project -

<http://www.misschildren.org/family/kindness.html>

A Place To Remember -

<http://www.APlaceToRemember.com/>

Invincible Summer -

<http://www.drizzle.com/~hall/discus/index.html>

The Church of the Holy Innocents -

<http://www.innocents.com/>

M.E.N.D stands for Mommies Enduring Neonatal
Death - <http://www.mend.org/>

The Centering Corporation -
<http://webhealing.com/centering/>

The Infanlos Family -
<http://www.amets.net/infanlos/resource.htm>

The Lexi Legacy -
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Shores/7790/>

Bereavement Resources - <http://www.grievewell.com>

GriefNet - <http://rivendell.org/index.html>

Hygeia - <http://www.hygeia.org>

MIDS - send email to: MIDS2nac.net

Pen Parents, Inc. -
<http://www.angelfire.com/nv/penparents>

Pregnancy Loss Newsgroup -
<http://web.co.nz/~katf/sspl/>

SIDS Network - <http://sids-network.org>

The Compassionate Friends -
http://longhorn.jjt.com/~tcf_national/

M.I.S.S. - <http://www.netcom.com/~jcaccia/miss.html>

H.A.N.D - <http://www.hern.org/~hand/>

Precious Children Remembered -
<http://www.accnorwalk.com/~mom2nich/>

**S.O.F.T Support Organization for Trisomy 18, 13, &
Related Disorders -** <http://www.trisomy.org>

SPALS Subsequent Pregnancy After Loss -
<http://www.inforamp.net/~bfo/spals/>

You can also try searching on Yahoo, Excite, or any of the other engines for key words such a “grieving,” “prayer,” “miscarriage,” “SIDS,” etc. Another good resource for searching online is at www.ask.com where they search through several engines at the same time for you.

Offline Resources:

P.S. My Baby Died - This organization is physically located in the Seattle area and has many meetings throughout the month at different Western Washington locations. They also have an information line that could be helpful to anyone wherever you may be physically located. The information line is **206-782-0054**.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc - This organization has some helpful information to share about all aspects of grieving from “symptoms of grief” to “impact of grief on marriage” to “surviving siblings.” You can contact their national office at **708-990-0010**.

Pregnancy/Infant Loss Center - 1415 East Wayzata Blvd. #30, Wayzata, MN 55391,
612-473-9372

Unite, Inc. - Perinatal grief support, 7600 Central Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19111-2499, **215-728-3777**

CLIMB Center for Loss in Multiple Birth - P.O. Box 1064, Palmer, AK 99645,
907-746-6123

You can always find help through your local hospital or birthing center. Most hospitals have grief therapists on staff or working in conjunction with them. And most can tell you about support groups that would be in your area. Talk to your doctor or midwife. Ask for the help you need. Talk to anyone who will listen, and you will find the help you need. I promise.

Biographies

Kara L.C. Jones lives in Seattle where she and her husband perform their music and poetry as Night & Lady Hawk. Her poems have been published in journals such as American Tanka, PoetsWest, and Pandora's Hope Project; anthologies such as Start With Leaves, Old Growth, and Dreamscape; and online at New Works Review, Gaia, and A Father's Grief. Her book, *Che-wa*, was published by CJ Ink in January 1999. She also has several titles out from Kota Press.

Harry "NightHawk" Jones has been a singer, composer, and song writer since Hector was a pup. You can often find him in various Seattle venues performing his music live with his poet wife. He also enjoys his work at Kota Press designing books and creating web sites—if you like what you see here, then you like his work.

Also available through Kota Press:

Limited distribution of *Che-wa: Poems* by Kara L.C. Jones as published by CJ Ink. ISBN 1-89314-903X for \$6. This collection is the narrative story of meeting a soul mate and a child-to-be.

Mrs. Duck and The Woman as published by Kota Press. ISBN 1-929359-00-4 for \$10 retail. Through the Mrs. Duck Sponsorship program copies are available for donation to grief and healing foundations, groups, and services. See www.kotapress.com for more information or call for details.

For further information or to request an order form, see www.kotapress.com or call Kara at 206-297-1012 .

Flash Of Life is the narrative of one family's experience of pregnancy and still-birth showing how the death of a child affects a woman, a marriage, a family, and a community. Included in this book is a resource guide for finding support during the grieving and healing process.

"I found myself sighing, something I rarely do, with grief and feelings of loss, and your poems were a comfort and made me feel connected to your family." -Eileen Brooks

"I loved your book. It is so very real to me...you said it better than I have heard it said...very, very powerful!"

-Joanne Cacciatore, M.I.S.S Founder

www.misschildren.org

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