New Expressions

A Woman's Litany of Cries in the Night

A Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator, Sally Lochowski Tanaka uses poetry "to communicate the emotional aspects of birthing and parenting to clients, patients, and colleagues." Here, in her own poem, Sally touches on the poignant stages of motherhood. "Pregnant women relate to the first verse as they anticipate the newborn coming soon into their lives," she says. "Moms with other children find they can identify with the later stages of mothering. And grandmothers recognize the full circle of caring for—and letting go of—a beloved child."

Out of the night floats the cry of the newborn—
Hesitant, halting, a newly-formed sound,
Encouraged by hunger and cold unfamiliar.
Calling for Mother, her womb to reopen
Calling for Mother, her breasts warm and round.

Now from the dark breaks the wail of the infant—
Gums hot and swollen, erupting inside,
Pounding, relentless, the teeth slowly push through.
Calling for Mother, the calmer of rough times
Calling for Mother, her arms open wide.

Up from the depths rise the screams of the toddler—
Haunted by bad thoughts that march through the dream,
And burst through the conscience, then into the dark room.
Calling for Mother to scare away monsters
Calling for Mother to come stand between.

Slowly from slumber sifts the moan of the child—
Tremors of fever, cheeks flushed, body sore,
Seeking a cool hand, a word gently spoken.
Calling for Mother, the soother, the healer
Calling for Mother to come walk the floor.

In the dim twilight mute sobs rack the young teen—
Heart nearly broken, cruel words from a friend,
Spurned by a new love, not ready to grow up.
Calling for Mother to remember her baby
Calling for Mother, the heartaches to mend.

Amid silent darkness stream the tears of the Mother—
Birthed of the good-byes of those she has borne,
Nourished, and tended all the long nights of childhood.
Calling for Fortune to please turn the time back
Calling for Peace in her heart so forlorn.

—Sally Lochowski Tanaka, BSN, MN, LCCE