

# Her Baby With Colic

by Mary Lou Sanelli

Sitting cross-legged on a receiving blanket  
spread over grass on the first sunny day in a month  
in this coastal town where winters are long  
and summers unreliable at best,  
she seemed a stranger—hardly the woman I knew.  
face pale as beach sand. Smile  
sarcastic as if she withheld some secret  
that could destroy me.

Eager, I wanted details of delivery. The whole of it.  
How her body felt its way through the pain.  
But she wouldn't talk about that. Instead  
she told me what it was like to cook  
using one hand and to sleep  
and breastfeed at the same time.  
And how tired she was. How tired.

I wanted to say the right thing.  
Something *new-agey*  
like someone might add at a spiritual gathering or write  
in a self-help book, but nothing came to me.  
I looked around. Diapers hanging on a rack  
cast shadows. In silence  
I took to counting how many times one widened  
to blend with the next.

When the baby woke  
with so much sound I remember thinking  
from such a tiny opening, I reached out to hold her  
and we sat like that for a moment  
as if I knew how to quiet her  
without ever having done so before.  
But blood-red-faced, she grew louder  
bathing us in screams and landing me  
smack in the middle of her distress. Taking me  
with her way down  
to the place of colic—the place  
I now see reflected in the slap  
of her mother's stare.

*Mary Lou Sanelli's poems have appeared in many literary publications. Her newest collection, Close At Hand, is forthcoming from High Plains Press.*

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