

Survival Notes

Heather Lyons

*These poems are for all those who deeply long for a child
and fear that this may not be possible.*

*I offer them with diffidence and some ambivalence;
they seem almost too personal.*

*However, writing them has helped me to stay alongside the
suffering of people I love, and I believe it is important to
find a form of words to communicate this painful
experience which often remains hidden and unspoken.*

Secret Lamentation

February 2010

Oh my daughter,
pale, desolate and afraid,
let this bitter season
stay its hold upon the land.
To be childless now is a cruel anchorage,
the body's deepest yearning disallowed
while all around new life begins to swell.
Fierce wanting in the midst of plenty,
fragile hope too insupportable a grief.
Wounded, wistful and bereft,
lonely courage abides.
The secret translucence of your face
is before me every day.
I chop wood, fetch water, carry stone.
Empty winter silence is my only prayer.

Waiting

October 2010

In the dream I'm on the bus.
Suddenly I see her, framed by the window,
waiting on the kerb of a busy London street
trying to hitch a ride with life.

She stands alone composed and smiling
her arms weave a strange alluring dance.
Only the eyes burning with desperation
belie the happy face of pavement art.

On waking I can hardly bear to
countenance such raw unbidden pain.
It seems she knows no other way to wait
had not imagined life to be this way
nor thought to suffer so.
Give me a child, Lord, else I may die.

Here is no advent
no hushed anticipation
no promise of benediction.
Instead slow fear saps hope and time
and being left behind becomes a way of life.

At home, a grave grey eyed Athena,
tempered by trial
she returns to her books
studies at dawn
protects a vulnerability of heart
learns to endure
and waits for the next appointment.

Winter Solstice

December 2010

They came north late that winter.
Waiting, I knew it was a harsh uncertain time
their journey long and inauspicious
inexplicable delays
roadblocks through the mountains
hard black ice on the pass
and at the border crossing
bleak anxious days of waiting
their papers apparently not in order.

Yet, at the last
a low sun shone on their arriving
voices calling across the frozen moor
the air cold and clear like cut glass.
I saw then, just for a moment, a way through
to a place of sufficiency
beyond the far side of grief
and later, outside the old house,
the silent mystery of snowfall.

Heather Lyons is a committee member of the TMS. She lives on the south coast and spends some time each year in silence and solitude in the Scottish highlands.