

Rough Start

Category: Hands

written by Jutta Braun | July 15, 2016

Approaching the hospital bassinet, I glimpse his hair first—long, carrot-colored fuzz sticking out in all directions from his pink, bowling-ball scalp. A chubby, scrunched face comes into view next, cherry-red lips forming a Cheerio and one eyelid wavering just enough to reveal a soft blue puddle beneath it.

Gingerly, I slide my hands under his sausage-like arms, my fingers cradling the doughy curves of his tiny neck, caressing the orange-yellow cornsilk on his occiput. Slowly, I lift him from the sterile white mattress he's called home for the month since his exit from the womb, since his insurmountable hurdles began.

My heart turns to jelly as I bring his head to rest on my shoulder and gaze at the furrows already carved into his small forehead. From the corner of my eye, I glimpse ugly tremors in his doll-like ankles. A nurse walks over and syringes a clear drop into the corner of his mouth.

"What is that?" I ask. "Methadone," she answers. My eyes cloud, my hands tighten around the little bundle. He nestles his head deeper into my shoulder, a sigh heaves his small chest, and his translucent eyelids relax once more.

I fight the anger that wells up inside me against the woman who did this to him, the woman who is not here to comfort him, the woman who chose her own wants over her baby's needs. But if I give in to anger, this little one will sense it and respond. I breathe deeply and, during the moments we have together before my other duties call, cuddle him closer. Maybe, on some level, he will remember and be comforted.

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