

She Lives in a Small Cell

Category: Poems

written by Linda Evans | December 27, 2013

Linda Evans

She lives in a small cell
on the Maximum Security Unit
pregnant with her tenth love child
the other nine scattered
like dried leaves in the wind.
Beneath the baggy government-issued jumpsuit
her belly swells and shifts with the weight of life
a heaviness of never hearing first words,
seeing first steps, or kissing cherub cheeks goodnight,
thoughts as chilling to the bone
as the December blizzard outside.
Over the intercom Officer Ryan's frantic voice,
"She's in labor!"

Groans ricochet off cinderblock walls
and tile floors of the infirmary
the rhythmic wave of her contractions
roll into a tsunami of urge
the babe slides into latex-covered hands
skin wet and glistening from its amniotic bath,
I swaddle him in a white cotton blanket
lay him gently in the cradle of his mother's arms
she folds him in against her breast holding close
like a spring branch holding snug its bud,
forgetting in the miracle of the moment
it's always autumn in this place.

About the poet:

Linda Evans is a writer, registered nurse and legal nurse consultant in the small college town of Newark, Delaware. A member of the [TransCanal Writers Group](#), she has a short horror story published in the collection [Tales of Madness and the Macabre: Scary Stories for Scary People](#) (Lulu Press, 2011). She performs poetry readings at various venues and has collaborated with her fellow writers on an anthology, [Five Bridges](#), published last fall.

About the poem:

"This poem's inspiration comes from when I was working as a nurse in a female prison. Some of the women were pregnant when they entered the system, and I watched these women carry their babies, some to full term, only to have to give them up to family (if they were lucky), or to a foster home, until the

mother's release. The new mothers would return empty-handed, just a few pictures in their pocket. What I tried to capture was the seemingly hopeless situation of this mother, the miracle of the moment and the profound loss that is always a part of being incarcerated."

Poetry editors:

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