

Indonesia Baby

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Clare is currently in her final year of medical school, based in Rotorua. She has been writing poetry for a number of years and was a national finalist in the New Zealand Slam Poetry Championships in 2013.

You shook with the effort of dying.
There was a storm outside
and you couldn't find your way home.
I waited for your cry to take down the night.
You were silent as dream.

I dreamed you, baby girl,
even as I watched you die.
I dreamed you running up the steps of your home,
I dreamed you laughing with your mother;
I dreamed you having children of your own.

I dreamed you waking up.

They all gathered there to watch you die.
The spectacle of your fitting,
your fevering, your heart thumping,
breath gasping, eyes rolling
seemed grotesque entertainment.

We shared the same God and that night
I lost you both.

Grief dove inside me sudden as a sparrow,
beat its wings hard against my ribcage.
Every breath I took whispered guilty guilty guilty.

I left you there.
I left you there all dressed up in pink frills
and clown makeup, you looked as though
you could not have been real.
They swatted the flies from your face
and started to dig your grave.

I caught the next boat the next bus
the next plane out of there,

came home but the world was a mess.
Voices were too loud, the sun was too bright,
even the air scratched me.

I came home, your face tattooed into my eyeballs
sometimes when I cry ink runs down my cheeks.

I came home shouting:
Look!
Can't you see, can't you see,
can't you see?

I came home crying:
We are not in a game of musical chairs
I don't understand why someone always
has to be left without a seat.
We are not in a game of musical chairs
I don't understand why someone always
has to be left without a seat.

You are dust in my throat
the metallic taste of blood
in my mouth
the face of every child
we have lost.