Baby

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I am not quite sure how I love a creature
That doesn't exist yet
But I do.
I wonder about you on the long nights
Trying to fall asleep
Picturing your dimpled knees, your eyelashes
Grasping at bits and pieces of you
Before your time.

Baby, you are nowhere near growing inside me
You're still half some other place
Your soul has yet to be gathered from the cosmos
And contained to two beautiful eyes…
When I hear a newborn cry
Or my heart is tugged at by a child
A cavern deep near the small of my back, in the ocean
Between bellybutton and spine
Aches and longs
To be filled up with your little limbs, your chin,
The perfect curve of your clavicle.
It's like something within me is crying out
For a you that isn't you yet
A you that is yet to be.
Baby, you will be the poem
My body writes.
I will label you the best I can:
Perhaps Peter or Delilah
Somehow describing
The miniscule leap of joy you will be in me,
Growing, growing,
Pushing me to the edges to make room
For your pieces.
I will be so afraid, baby, I know myself.
I know that all this dreaming
Will lead me to a cliff’s exquisite ledge
Off which you will ask me to jump.
But despite my flaws, my fears, my shaking hands
I will leap off the edge
Falling fast and hard into the glossy water below
Drowning happily in maternal adoration.

I will hold you forever, or at least
Until it’s almost time to let you go
And I will kiss every inch of you and cradle
Your head in the half-moon of my hands.
I will cut your sandwiches into triangles
Take you huckleberry picking until your fingers are purple
Let you see the world from atop glittering carousel ponies
And from the side of a mountain, the valleys unfurling before you.
I will write lullabies to feed your nightlight
Put you in time-out when you deserve it
Let you cry in my arms
And splash the day away in rain boots, collecting wrinkled worms.
I will read you page after page until my tongue dries up
And let your imagination fill up every corner of our home.

I will memorize you, learn from you,
And spin you around ’til the giggling stars in your eyes

Match the stick-on-stars strewn across your ceiling.
I will tell you the truth, and we’ll teach each other
About Eskimo kisses, forgiveness, and family.
I will be your hot chocolate after a day of sledding,
And I promise to give you my optimism in an heirloom chest.
I will cry when the doctor cuts the grey cord,
Severing you from me, mourning for a moment, until
Your daddy places you in my arms
And we meet again.

Baby, your momma is …
Well, she’s still figuring a lot of that out
Because this world is big and grand
And she is small with massive dreams and little hands.
But one thing I have figured out
Is this:
No matter what kind of envelope you come in
Whether you have his eyes or mine
Whether you see in rhymes or colors
Or the rhythm of a basketball bouncing
Whether you’re a Peter or a Delilah
A shy scientist or a bold ballerina
Whether you have every chromosome and all ten fingers and toes
Or not

You will be so perfect
That I will be overwhelmed for life.
Baby, each month when my world
Turns red
And I am pounded with a thunderstorm
Of knots and tangles inside of me,
I ease the discomfort and pain
By smiling to myself over the secret that we share:
Fifty percent of your ins and outs
Are more patient than I will ever be
All curled up inside a tiny pearl, tucked away
In me.

If the World Was My Classroom

Marissa Alvarez

If the world was my classroom
And a girl was my student
I would tell her she is a leaf
Ever changing
Part of different colors and race
Ever moving
With casual grace
The trees may shake
And she may fall
But the wind will sweep her away
Away from it all
She'll land somewhere new
And have to adjust
But she should remember
Who she is,
Is not up to us
Her beauty
Is in the eye of the beholder
And she doesn't always need
Someone to hold her
Society may cut her base down
But she should look for the smiles in life
And blow away the frowns
Big or small,
She can be anything
Throughout it all, she should know
That she is someone's everything
Friends can be found
Around any corner
And she should listen to them and her parents
When they talk to and warn her