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Volume 22  
Issue 1 *Deeper Roots (2013-2014 Issue)*

Article 31

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2014

## Baby

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### Recommended Citation

Woodruff, Allison (2014) "Baby," *The Promethean*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 31.  
Available at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol22/iss1/31>

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# Baby

*Allison Woodruff*

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.