

Could You Know?
Second Place Poetry 2002

Baby, who are you?

Could you know anything about the life you would have, or wouldn't have, outside your mother's womb?

Could you know of your mother's anguish or guilt during her time of carrying you?

Would you ever know that you were an "accident", then accepted by devout parents? Then the anguish when your doctor and parents learned you were not wholly formed?

Without a brain you would never know these things, but could you sense?

When you moved your arms and legs and spun around, could you know the confusion and denial your mama would feel?

How she would disbelieve her doctor, miss her appointments.

She didn't want to abort you, nor bear you.

She blamed herself; your father blamed her, too.

They blamed your doctor together.

Could you know the day of your birth?

Warm and wet inside your mother, swimming in the dark comfort; could you hear her heartbeat?

Nourished by her blood could you know you wouldn't be nourished by your own breath, couldn't be nourished by your own blood?

Finally you were born, face first.

You went to your mother's chest.

Your father gazed at you, touched you.

The chaplain baptized you with water, but you were baptized too, by the tears of the chaplain, the doctor, the nurses.

All Saint's Day.

You were loved.

Author: Colleen Fogarty, MD
Boston Medical Center
Department of Family Medicine
Boston, MA