

First Baby Poems

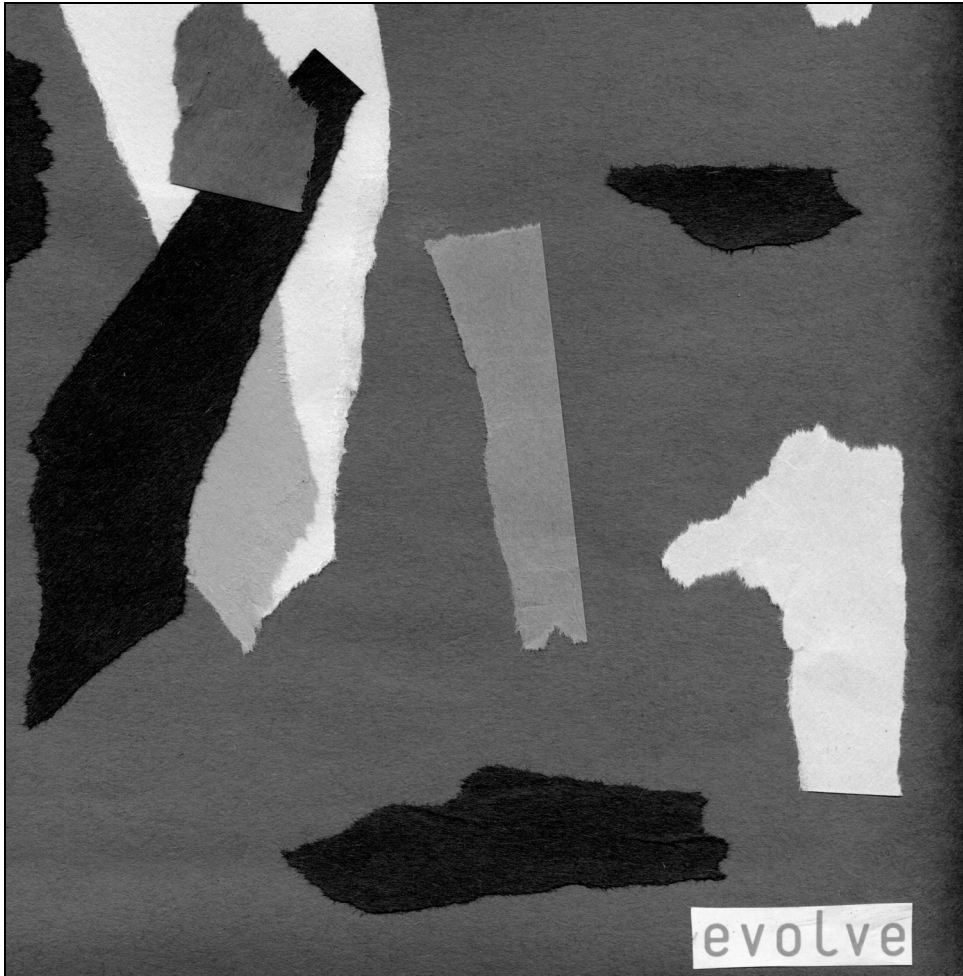
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BlazeVOX [books]

Buffalo, New York

“I feel the Sweet trouble beneath my girdle...”

this live belly-whose?-mine?
dark night, sitting-mind still-whose?
solitude-this mind-mine?
baby - what mind?
minding the breath
minding the mind inside the belly
the belly inside my mind



Seminary Sestina

We live under the eye of the Plain of Six Glaciers
300 people in a rambling chateau
owned by the Canadian Pacific Railroad. All meditators
are we, here to study & practice the glorious Buddhadharma path
I learned I'm pregnant before I left home, need soda crackers
and plenty of calcium.

Everyone, including baby bones needs calcium
It's good when you've been "sitting" neck stiff as a glacier
And your thoughts are fractured soda crackers
The workmen are hammering & sawing loudly in the Chateau
When you have a free moment you rush to the snowy path
which stretches across Lake Louise to the frozen blue waterfall.

Meditators

are walking too, some snap pictures, the skiers are not meditators
although they do a kind of meditation. Sunlight provides calcium
to everyone outside on a ski path
When you hear a rumble it could be the moving of a glacier
You can even hear this inside the Chateau
Walking with morning sickness you munch on soda crackers

The sound of the words "soda crackers"
brings me to attention. It's like when meditators
hear the shrine room gong. The Chateau
is bathed in light of white calcium
& maybe there's a tea break & some glacier
cake. There's always a SWeet with tea, gives energy on the disciplined
path

I wish I could go out with you to the narrow path
under the scented firs, there would be no need for soda crackers
to make me well. We could have tea at the Teahouse of the Six Glaciers
& live in caves like the ancient meditators
& get all the calcium
we want from the sun, & when we crave baths & postcards
visit the vast Chateau

Ah but it's warmer in the Chateau
when you are pregnant you can always take the path

to the kitchen for milk & oranges out of the refrigerator marked
"prostrators & pregnant ladies" filled with hard boiled calcium
& maybe the special outing to Banff will bring soda crackers
you ordered, along with the other special dietary needs of meditators
who sit calmly, inscrutably, primally, like glaciers.

The glacier is kingly on the postcard, it dwarfs the Chateau
that this week houses World Cup skiers as well as meditators, paths crossing in
the lobby, do skiers need soda crackers?
They are certainly fortified by calcium.

*Vajradhatu Seminary
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Complaints Of A Seminarian

Have you ever been imprisoned in the middle of a glacier? This
happened to a troop of boy scouts around here in the Fifties

Actually I'm inside an old slightly run-down Canadian chateau
& not supposed to get distracted

Large white curtains are drawn in the shrine hall

There's gristle in my *kanji*! *Kanji* is boiled down rice gruel often
made with meat stock & is served at 7 a.m. every morning

Cooks blame gluey rice on cheap brand. I signal with Buddha
spoon "no more" but the server doesn't see me. You have
to eat every morsel without sauce

Hammering knock at door 6:30 am with bells nudges you
rudely out of sexy dream

Other dreams are claustrophobic, as small as this room: I dream
all the typewriter ribbons I've ever used are unwound &
wrapped around my neck; I dream teacher comes to
reprimand me in room & I cower like tiny mouse behind
the radiator squeaking "But I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant! I
need special privileges!"

Radiator humps & chirps all night even after you turn it off

My lips dry up

My face wrinkles like an old leaf

I'm nothing but a dusty Tibetan mummy

I sweat over monster pots & pans like scullery maid during
dinner "clean-up." They are as big as truck wheels, oil
drums & massive furnitures. My arms expand into the
soapy trough

I'm in a galley I'm seasick all the time

I'm on a space station that's lost contact with its earth-ghetto

Mail is abominably slow. Customs people in Calgary want me to
pay \$34 duty tax on 1 grapefruit, a watch & my old black
sleep shades from home - are they kidding?

I haven't seen a newspaper in months

I can't stop thinking of old lovers & dead people

I miss all my poetry books

Other people are really irritating: There's one guy who brings
little candies in glassine wrappers into the shrine hall,
opens them slowly, crinkles paper into ball and then has
further audacity to suck on them loudly

It's really annoying when people have coughing fits for minutes
on end, blow their noses incessantly & don't leave the
shrine hall

Bathtub has no grate over the drain & big objects slip down
there constantly. The maintenance man is immensely
irritated although I give him a beer for his trouble (we're
allowed to have "drinks" during study period). He had to
haul in a dredging machine to dig up the brown washcloth
& piece of sponge, and the heavy instrument scraped the
white enamel tub

Food is alien & mysterious. Lunch today is pink rubber tubing

5 scallions glare up at me from oryoki bowl demanding to be eaten

The food chants are too fast, especially the "he" chant in the beginning: "He does not waste the roots of virtue. He is completely ornamented with all patience. He is the basis of the treasures of merit. He is adorned with the minor marks. He blossoms with the flowers of the major marks" etc. I like to say these words more slowly & think about them

The *umdaze* starts the chants too low tonight as if we're all baritones

There's a draft in the meditation hall that sweeps at me right across the kidneys

The teacher makes Tsultim the monk open all the windows in the room before he lectures & everyone runs for blankets

The teacher is telling anecdotes about theism so fast I can't take notes

The *geko* is like a predator stalking the shrine room looking for victims whose posture he can correct. Vexing to have this odd fellow breathing down your neck & staring at your back: will he pounce?

My mind gradually unwinds-is that a complaint?

The last straw is lasagna made with tofu

There are 3 pay telephones as well as 3 pay washing machines for
300 people

That stem woman gatekeeper gives me a scornful look because
I'm nauseous all the time. One day she said to me, "Hold it,
try to hold it!"

My legs fall asleep I shake them like a holy roller

My varicose veins throb & grow like blue mold

The text about the pain of being in the womb by Gampopa
that was read today got me worried: "During the first week in
the mother's womb a being is boiled and fried as in a warm
vessel" and "In the seventh week there arises the so--called
'clasp' wind', and by its 'touch' the hands and feet are
produced. At this stage a pain is felt which makes the
embryo think it is pulled up by a strong wind and spread
out with a stick by someone." Finally to top it off the baby
comes out of the womb with pain "as if being drawn
through a net of iron wires"

I can't do *tonglen* - sending & receiving - practice properly. I
keep sending out the poisons instead of taking them in &
cursing my enemies. I have to remember we aren't studying
voodoo

I get mad at You Know Who, have a violent fit & fall off my
cushion

The mountains are flat & boring like a postcard today

I have to learn to put others before myself

My travel iron doesn't work

My clothes are too hot & tight

It's after midnight & all the refrigerators are locked. There's one
of Arisha's slogans posted at the kitchen entrance saying
"Don't expect more."

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