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## Maternal Instinct

By Tara Pearson<sup>i</sup>

After my nephew was born, tiny bluish body sliding  
from my sister's blood reddened vagina—  
she clutched and pawed at the nurses,  
grasping to bring him immediately back into her circle of being—  
I knew then there would be no births for me.

How do women unearth instinct?

It is as if the song my soul sings  
for the grace of the world's children  
is not enough.  
It is as if that dumb  
pocket of muscle should  
cry out to be filled.

After reading about Nisa,  
a South African !Kung woman, and her lone birth—  
back pressed into bark, thighs against  
the grit of the earth, pain shrieking across her stomach,  
after a baby, wet and gasping,  
lay in-wait on night-cold sand—

time and distance unfurled  
and a space opened  
between mother and child still connected  
by slick umbilical rope.

It is Nisa's moment of hesitation—  
the space where *instinct* became *choice*—  
that allows my womb to speak,  
the possibility of motherhood to circle back.

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