

THROUGH

Rachel Barenblat

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Knowledge” and “Threshold” appear in *Frostwriting*, February 2009.

Licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike license,
version 3.0, 2009.

For everyone who helped me through
and anyone in need.

CONTENTS

Longing	5
Knowledge	6
Moving	7
Box	8
Twilight	9
Community	10
Threshold	11
Wordless melody	12
One day I forget	13
Request	14
Author's note	15
About the author	16

LONGING

You are two blue lines
forming a cross

the unknowable, dancing
on the head of a pin

potential coiled, poised
to change everything.

I am reeling as if tipsy
awestruck and unglued.

This must be how God feels
holding all of us

with quiet compassion
in creation's womb.

KNOWLEDGE

I knew
but I didn't want to know
turned away from knowing

I put myself to bed

such uneasy sleep
and when I woke
blood everywhere

in the hotel bathroom's
harsh light

MOVING

Avant-garde film
the camera shaky
the lens blurred

the hallway telescopes
no soundtrack, dead silence
I'll never make it through

I walk a balance beam
(how many steps
before I relearn my stride?)

the kaleidoscope tips
and all the jagged pieces
rearrange

help me rewind
blood everywhere
I wasn't expecting

BOX

Imagine a box
green and lacquered
painted with gold
polished hasps

I will write my hopes
unfulfilled
on index cards
and tuck them inside

or burn them
at havdalah
that separation between
holy and profane

a friend clasps
my hand, reminds me
you were a mother
honor that

and everything
I've been picturing
crumbles to ash
and blows away

TWILIGHT

Shabbat's "third meal"
thick windows showing
headlights outside
and the pinkening sky

we pass grape juice
around the room, share
challah torn by hand
singing without words

the tradition prescribes
psalm twenty-three
at this hour on this day

taste of heaven
departing inexorably
as the moments tick by
the sun goes down

I press my lips together
and shake in my chair
and hands reach out
and I close my eyes

COMMUNITY

One by one
every woman I know
approaches me
carrying words

it happened to me
my mother
my sister
my best friend

four times in a row
before the baby came
once, before
I even knew

three times
over six years
and then children
healthy and perfect

just keep breathing
in and out
around the stone
you've swallowed

I've been there
I am holding you
you won't feel this way
always

THRESHOLD

After a week
something shifts.

No longer thinking
“on Friday I was still...”

We return to the life
we already know

and love, evenings
by the fire again.

Wine and coffee
and raw yellowtail

and if I stay up too late
reading about wolves

no one chides me.
We set aside plans

for converting a room
reshaping our days.

I remember how
to resent my curves.

It comes to seem
like a dream, impossible

that we ever hovered
on this threshold

or imagined ourselves
ready to go through.

WORDLESS MELODY

The niggun asks
why does a soul incarnate

in this world
with all its sorrows?

The first line asks
and the second answers

though without lyrics
each of us must interpret:

is it to know God,
to be known in turn...?

There is no song
which asks why a soul

dips a toe in these waters
and then turns back

leaving a woman
bereft, bleeding.

ONE DAY I FORGET

It's a morning like any other
modah ani in the shower
cup of tea on my desk
and I'm two hours in
before I remember.

Or a friend asks
can I hand him to you
for a second? and
the baby fits on my shoulder
and no one cries.

My hands aren't empty
but reaching out
for paper and pen
for a hammer, a spoon
to taste the world.

Anything is possible
even someday
climbing again
aboard this rickety ship
over these deep, cold waters.

REQUEST

Source of all that is
source of mercy
planter of seeds
in rocky soil

You whose names
are womb
and breast
and giver of milk

protect every one
who aims imperfectly
to emulate
your loving care

guard everyone
who opens her body
and prays
for possibility

grant us compassion
when our bodies fail us
and help us try
again, and again

remind us
that deep down
something new waits
always to grow.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Various sources suggest that one in five, one in four, or one in three pregnancies ends in miscarriage. Most women don't talk about it, so no one ever knows.

No one who goes through this is alone.
Other women have been there, too.
Other women are there right now.

May everyone who grieves be
comforted.

Rachel Barenblat, January 2009

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Barenblat is author of three poetry chapbooks: *the skies here* (Pecan Grove Press, 1995), *What Stays* (Bennington Writing Seminars Alumni Chapbook Series, 2002) and a collection of hospital chaplaincy poems entitled *chaplainbook* (Laupe House Press, 2006.) She holds an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars, is a student in the ALEPH rabbinic program, and has been blogging as the Velveteen Rabbi since 2003. She lives with husband Ethan Zuckerman in Lanesboro, MA.

[velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/
velveteenrabbi.com](http://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/velveteenrabbi.com)