

“Real” Writing from *Now What?*

I woke with a surge of fear. My hands, balled into tight fists, gripped the sheets as my breath came in ragged gasps. The chill of the pre-dawn air wrapped cold fingers around my chest and throat. I squeezed my eyes shut, then opened them again. I could see the dim outline of my dresser and chair. The bed felt damp beneath me. Was it just a dream?

I could still hear the frantic pounding of blood in my ears. *Oh God, my baby!* The words shot through my mind as I sought to distinguish reality from the image of a miscarriage still vivid in my mind.

— Marlo M. Schalesky
“When Nightmares Come True”

Love him, my mind demanded. Tears dripped from my chin, wetting a pale blue nightgown I still wore late afternoon. The stubbornness of my heart forced me to accept the unthinkable: *I don't feel anything; I can't love him*. Through swollen eyes, I gazed into the face of my newborn son.

Gently I traced my finger over the blond fuzz of his eyebrows and continued to the tip of his right ear. Just above the ear lobe I felt a tiny bump. A true Cox, just like his dad. He was healthy, strong, and mine. Why, then, did I feel like handing him off to my husband and locking myself in our bathroom indefinitely?

I flopped into the living room recliner with an intentional thud, as if the impact might knock my senses back to normal. Overwhelming guilt dumped invisible weights on my chest. *I am a child of God! My family will be shocked. I wonder if they'll question my faith*. As I closed my eyes, a sudden heaviness of fatigue robbed every last hope I had in myself. *You shouldn't have had a child*, I chided.

— Kathryn Cox
“Beyond the Baby Blues”