

**‘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”

“I’ll come to visit tomorrow, Mom. I love you.”

“Empty words,” she says. “You don’t love me. If you loved me, you’d bring me home.”

Her words pierce my heart and I can’t speak. I can’t breathe. My eyes burn. My chest heaves. Silence rings in my ears until I finally choke out the words “I love you” and hang up before she can reply.

In that moment I cling to the words that have cushioned life’s blows for so long. They soothe my heart and whisper through the pain, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

— Ruth Schiffmann  
“A Patch of Blue Sky”