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Life is a Scar

by Janie Reynolds

It burst through her pelvic floor, rupturing the pink perineum into two chunks of fissured flesh, hanging helplessly between her legs.

Limp and languid, they lifted it into the sour-smelling air. Pressure piled upon its chest and it stalled, suffocating, still as death, on the brink of life.

Blinding light bled into its brain but, sensing danger, it squeezed its eyelids soundly shut. It cared only for its dim, dull, pulsating past.

Voices rose and fell around it. Commanding it into this world, assuming life necessarily followed birth. Six blue plastic hands lunged at its belly with luminous blades, rupturing the rope, cutting the cord. It screamed.

They thrust it onto its mother and the smell of itself calmed it down. The mother's every muscle twitched as she held her nipple to its lips.

Three days later all the two of them could do was cry. Ball and sob, day and night. Her leeched chest bled from its bite. Her heart was empty. She could all but bother to breathe. This baby, she thought, doesn't love me. It isn't mine, she thought. Woe was the day it was born.

As she sunk in her sweat, all she could sense was her heartbeat thumping in her head. She cowered under the covers. She camouflaged it within the covers. She wandered around the ward and back. She stood up and sat, stood and sat. She tried to get back into the bed but it was there, taking up all the space. She held the pillow hard over its head. Until she knew it was dead. And then she cried. Deep, deep tears. Of relief. At the new start. The second chance. The whole new life that lay ahead of her.