

POETRY | SPRING 2022

Baby Girl

By Raeshell Sweeting

Born on a sunny Friday morning
Early, sparing us a drive through the storm -
You were perfect.

Days after you entered our lives,
your aunt cried rivers sitting on my bed
Watching the story develop
We saw our neighborhoods torn apart
All the while, your little mouth searching
for milk

We cocooned, baby girl, as the world descended into chaos
Blood over our door
You lay safe inside
Oblivious and innocent
You remained constant in your ever changing

Soon, I would have to leave our fortress
wearing new armor - I took an oath.
Disease did not wait during a pandemic
It capitalized on indecision and inaction
And thus,
 my world away became dark

I crumbled in your absence.

Each night I came home and washed away the world
Just to hold your tiny growing body
Needing me.
I was able to sustain you, as you sustained me

Baby girl, you have been ours and ours alone
Our quarantine, your beginning
Insulated in a marvelous bubble of joy

Your growth marking the passage of time
A year of beauty and light,

perfect.

Bio: Raeshell Sweeting serves as Assistant Professor of Surgery, Breast Fellowship Program Director and Vice Chair for Diversity and Inclusion at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. In her role as Vice Chair of Diversity she focuses heavily on recruiting and hiring practices medical center-wide. Her research focuses on health disparities and economic implications of health care delivery. Dr. Sweeting, who received her undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University, worked for two years as an economist at Lehman Brothers Bank in New York City, then studied medicine at New York University School of Medicine, followed by surgical residency at the University of North Carolina Medical Center where she had the honor to serve as Chief Resident in her final year. She completed a fellowship in Breast Surgical Oncology at Vanderbilt University where she now remains as faculty. IG: @myrecoveryroom

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