

# Mother and Child

*by* Erika Byrne-Ludwig

Cybil walked into the shop, her baby in her arms, sat at the back and ordered a cup of tea. As she gazed around, her hand groped for the buttons and the clip. A suckling noise followed. Sipping her tea, an image soothed her mind. A portrait of Mother and Child.

People stepped in and placed their orders. Early morning reflection for some, eyes still drowsy, senses tickled by breakfast aromas, voices generally kept low, waiters attending to their crop of mostly regulars. A meadow spotted with grazing sheep, border collies watching on craftily. One of the sheep raised its head to stare at a cornflower. A sudden bark. Cybil's baby was feeding in the light, his fingers curling on her breast. Outrage at the portrait of Mother and Child.

Her breast denied light, she bought herself a nursing scarf. The sheep resumed grazing. All was well as it should be. The regulars were served their meals. Voices remained low. Her baby suckled wrapped in shadow, back in the womb. Their tender exchanges, whispers and gobbling sounds, now flowed through the thin fabric wall. Someone had plucked the cornflower. A faded portrait of Mother and Child.

