

Moro

by Kathy Fish

My parents said it was unbecoming for a young girl to wear eye shadow, especially eye shadow that sparkled when I closed my eyes. The shade was called Morning Sky. The case had a spring loaded hinge so after checking myself in the tiny mirror, I could snap it shut with a delicate pinch of just two fingers. I've learned it's easy to startle a newborn with a sudden noise. It throws its arms out and its head back. This is called the Moro Reflex. The first time Henry did this I thought he was dying. I rushed over and pinned his hands down to the bed and planted my mouth over his and when he started to cry I rolled over beside him and started crying too.

When my friend Melanie's baby was stillborn, she and her mother were given one hour to take photos if they wanted to. They called me and asked me to bring my new digital camera. When I arrived, I had spots of milk on my blouse so I kept my coat on. I hoped they couldn't smell it. Melanie's mom was sliding lipstick over Melanie's mouth the way little girls put makeup on a doll. I didn't realize at first the lump on the hospital bed was Melanie's baby.

"That's Cory," Melanie said and her mother threw her hands up. "You made me smear it!"

I brought along the Morning Sky eye shadow and Henry's satin baptismal gown. Melanie's mother thanked me for the eye shadow and dusted it over Melanie's eyelids like she was waving a magic wand. My parents would've said they both looked like tarts, but I thought they looked nice. I held up the gown, but Melanie shook her head.

"Let's just take the picture," she said. I settled the bundle on her lap, and moved her arms to cradle it. Melanie looked at me and said,

"Thanks for not bringing Henry," and I thought, of course I wouldn't bring him.

I raised the camera and backed up a couple of steps. Melanie's mother smiled until she remembered and her lips turned down. "I guess we won't be going to The North Pole," Melanie said. That was our plan, to take our babies to the North Pole in Colorado Springs to have their photos taken with Santa.

I snapped the picture, then showed it to Melanie and her mom. Melanie lifted her hand to touch the camera and it, the baby, slid sideways down her lap. "That turned out pretty good," she said and I touched my friend's hair where it had been carefully combed and parted to one side, but I can't remember what I said.

