

# Bookends of a Life: I

*by* Linda Simoni-Wastila

Do I love you enough? You, the aftereffect of endless appointments and near-daily blood sticks, the needles' cross-hatches marking me a junkie of sorts; the disappointment of every failed implant only fueled my appetite for the next humiliating procedure under the tented sheet, legs parted wider than the jaws of life. You, my quarter-million dollar princess; you, whom I desired more than my soul, my marriage; you, who for years existed but in fantasy: your warm baby-powder body snuggling against my breast, lazy afternoons playing peek-a-boo in Indian summer leaves, the scent of your milk-stained breath... Now, your red face agonizes confusion, wanting food, wanting sleep, wanting, always wanting, your selfish wail pervades, your needy blue eyes follow; I can't shower, can't piss without you clinging to me. You have transformed me into an aimless, sleepless wraith pacing the endless hall and all I want is to slam you against the wall or hand you to a stranger, perhaps the woman who gazed longingly at you in the park, but I keep pat-patting, trying to get you to burp into the disgusting white flannel draped over my shoulder, my snotty badge of motherhood. Isn't this proof enough of my love?

