

# Cheap and Convenient

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

*Coincidence? More like serendipity. I mean, this pink paper flapping under my windshield wiper, the only car on the street? Day care services, the flyer said. Infants welcome. Manna from heaven! Do you know how hard it is to find someone to watch babies? I had to return to work -- you know how it goes when you're single. Besides, she was cheap and convenient.*

*She seemed okay. Quiet. Sad brown eyes. She looked kind of familiar. But she rocked Sophie, face out, the same way I do. "Beautiful baby," she sang. "Beautiful baby." Later, when she said she'd had miscarriages, I should have put it all together. Because she was there in the hospital, you know. In the same room. I only remembered after.*

*I hated leaving Sophie with her. I wanted to stay home with my baby. That first week Sophie screamed herself purple when I dropped her off. Me? I bawled at my desk. Called every hour. "Is she all right?" I'd ask, and she'd say, "She's just fine, Miss Dorothee."*

*It got better. We found our routine. That day I was actually relaxed — it was my birthday, you know — so I treated myself to an ice cream cone on the walk home. But no lights were on. She didn't answer the door, so I kicked in the window, black raspberry spattered all over the front steps, but she wasn't there, no one was there... oh God, officer, please find my baby.*

