

New World

by Michelle Elvy

The baby was conceived on the day the earth slipped closer to the sun. Maré was not quite sure which came first: the flash of heat, the powerful orgasm, or the sun and moon suddenly a few millimeters closer within reach. Perhaps they happened concurrently, perhaps it was pure chance. She would never know, of course, but she felt in the ensuing weeks slightly guilty, as if she might have caused the slip with that one uncontrolled moment of lust and love. She had felt the world shift as she cried out repeatedly -- not the hollow 'Oh God!' that accompanied earlier orgasms, real and imagined, but something more primal, more heartfelt, more natural. Something that came simultaneously from within her abdomen and from a source greater than any one individual.

Never mind the causes. The flash of love was real, the life within her was real, and the main thing now was to climb.

She set out and never stopped, searching for higher ground as the snow and ice melted off the tops of mountains and dripped at first slowly then in greater cascades and finally in waterfalls, down into every valley and rock crevice. Deserts filled, and people built platforms from which to save their electronics, for though the sun's closer proximity heated the earth almost overnight, it was the rising water they feared most. Maré did not mind; something guided her to the highest mountain and she climbed each week.

The father of the child gave up by Week 15. He gave it a shot, at least, but she didn't expect him to stay with her, or to understand her calm in the face of perceived calamity. She carried with her a certainty that grew stronger each day, and the marvelous memory of the Big Bang that started it all, and so they parted friends and she sent him back down the mountain to join the panicking crowds below, where he belonged.

And so she carried on alone, through week 16, 17, 18, 19... And the earth heated and filled, and her belly heated and filled. Newspapers and radios and televisions far below lamented the good old days of the Great Flood, wished for a mere 40 days and 40 nights, but Maré knew in her heart that 40 weeks was her reality, and all that mattered. Her belly grew with each week and she climbed higher and felt lighter. The thinning air did not press on her lungs; she felt full in all ways, elevated and elated. By Week 35 she knew she was close to the top. An energy lifted her and guided her, and she climbed, her belly swelling and leading her forward, each step lighter than the previous.

In the 40th week Maré breathed her last breath, just as the baby was born. There was no panic, no pain. Her contractions began on a Wednesday morning, and she found a flat rock and lay down, welcoming the end of her journey and the blessing that was this new life. She was grateful that she was here, alone, with the world of blue all around -- blue sky above, and blue earth climbing up to meet her here at the highest peak. She wondered briefly what happened to the people below, how high they had built their towers and whether they saved their cell phones or their children first. She wondered if there were others like her. But she didn't wonder for long, because then the pushing began in earnest and the baby was on its way. There was one last hot flash, much like the Big Bang from 40 weeks back, a sensation so terrifically new, where she felt the sun, the earth, the water all around her, and the birth of this new world, too. She knew in that moment that she would call her baby Blue -- if she were around to call her baby anything at all, that is. With her last breath she connected with Blue, and saw her gorgeous girl blink once with large knowing eyes, smile, and swim away.

