

Nascence

by [Sarah Gordon](#) in the [September 2023](#) issue

The older I get the more I reflect
upon birth, that first catastrophic,
miraculous move we make on our own.
The squinty-eyed, bright ascent
into light, up into the world
of risk and fall. Being held, hearing,
coming to terms with fingers and toes,
and, God bless us all, the incessant
release of our mortal debris.

Early intimations of distance and quiet.
Then handled and handed from one to another,
their strange breaths over and into the face:
smells acrid, sweet, often too close.
Large faces leaning, they titter and speak
in ur-utterances, ur-talk, all meaning well.

All this, approximate, imagined, detailed,
limned by the preposterous angle of age:
That first stage of knowing,
our first steps onstage.