

## POETRY

## String theory

*... As small as the sound of a human conceived —  
the god in Delphi, mouthing the words ... tuning the strings  
with the squeak of the wooden pegs ...*

— *The Throne of Labdacus*, Gjertrud Schnackenberg

All night, you laboured at home,  
left early for the hospital.  
I entered the birthing room,  
an obstetrician who knew too much.  
The fetal monitor welcomed me;  
an empty *Isolette* nearby.

Earlier, you'd asked, "Why the heplock?"  
and I said, "Anything can happen."  
I watched the nurse struggle  
to find a vein, heard "Dizzy," ...  
ran to your side.

Where were you when I called,  
doll eyes staring forward,  
wrist cold, pulseless —  
as I waited in silence,  
but for the tick-tock  
of your baby's heart.

The room cleaved in that moment  
into a place of possibilities,  
one of many held before me,  
as if gazing between mirrors,  
ourselves reflected again and again,  
each a different outcome.

In one, a code was called,  
doctors and nurses swarmed.  
An anesthetist found a vein,  
restored your blood pressure  
and you awakened.  
In other rooms, you did not.

**Richard Bronson MD**  
Professor, obstetrics, gynecology  
and pathology  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY

CMAJ 2011. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.101865



©2011 Thinkstock