

TW: themes of domestic violence

## rhea (a mother's love)

she cradles a baby in her arms; bundled in cloth,  
his little face screwed up, but peaceful, as he sleeps.  
she can hear her husband's thundering footsteps,  
feel his anger,  
his violence.  
she wipes her tears, hides her baby.  
tearing her own dress for a piece of fabric, using her teeth  
when her hands aren't strong enough,  
she picks up the nearest rock and wraps it in silk.

he's here.

he demands her baby, demands she hand her baby to him,  
and she weeps.  
she weeps for her other children, trapped by his ego, his paranoia,  
and prays that his voice won't wake her baby, hidden in the bushes.  
his words are like the cracks of whips, striking her skin,  
until she ultimately has the 'baby' ripped from her grasp  
and swallowed whole right in front of her like all her babies before.

he leaves.

she wipes her tears, takes a deep breath.  
her baby is alive, and he's asleep.  
she reaches into the foliage for him, and cries again  
as she cradles him in her arms for a second time.  
she fears for her life, fears for what she may endure  
if her husband found out—  
but as she looks at her baby, his screwed up little face,  
she'll go through anything to keep him alive.

for you do not know what a mother would do for her children.