

HARD LABOR

I saw a lawyer once
who surveyed his grandson's birth
with somber, deadpan countenance,
investigating the event.

It was hard labor, hard birth
for anxious new mom and dad.
I worked my hardest in years,
laboring, thinking, pushing with her.

He had bobbed about the station,
making staff aware of his trade,
even giving his card to a nurse:
a dealer in obstetric lawsuits.
Dropping words about rare complications,
disrespecting other patients' confidentiality,
he was removed twice from the monitors.
(Oh, that a video of it could be re-played
For an audience of his professional colleagues!)

Hard labor it was, but then, joy!
Joy for new parents! Joy for me!
Yet I noticed, trying impossibly to ignore it,
A grim, emotionless face, hovering. . . .

Their first baby, his first grandchild,
yet he slunk quietly behind,
Peering over my shoulder as I charted.
I tried rejoicing freely, having labored hard,
With baby okay, mom okay—
But the atmosphere was defiled
By a little man pretending a big job,
Too entranced to enjoy the wonder,
The excitement, the awesome beauty
Of his grandson's debut!

I participated in the magic,
the culminating miracle of her pregnancy,
while a lawyer scrutinized fruitlessly.
If the man thought he was really there,
the granddad missed the whole thing.
But as for me,
it was a good, hard labor. . . .

— David L. Hatton, 1/6/2000