

Cyclical

By Jonathan Horner

Beneath a coat was a dead babe. The coat lay in the corner of the bare room. Every so often people passed by, but the bundle was left untouched.

A few hours before, the girl had arrived back at the house. She sat in the doorway after knocking, clutching the babe. The girl's hair was matted, her clothes stained. She'd come for shelter. The door opened and she was left to make her way to the lounge. She sat on a small wicker chair, like an 8 year old at Sunday school. The babe started to cry.

The father looked at the girl and then the babe before turning away. He left the room and then he returned, picking the babe out the girl's arms by its head.

That's when the shaking started. The blood started to pulse through the father's veins. The babe was silent. Its head was quivering. Near to snapping. The girl sat on her hands, terrified. Blood formed on her white cotton dress as her fingernails sank deeper into her buttocks.

The neighbours' heard a soft, thudding sound. There was the breaking of glass, some crying, and then their dogs barked when it returned to silence. Nothing was done. Certainly wasn't up to them to get involved.

The girl dare not raise her voice. Silence elapsed. The girl moved uneasily.

'Get out of my house,' the father said.
She left quietly with the babe.

The party had been going all night when the girl entered. Two women approached.

'What's its name?' said one.

'Sarah' replied the girl.

She unfolded the sheet from Sarah's face. The voyeurs scattered their eyes and departed. The girl pushed Sarah deeper inside her coat and ran. When she stopped the girl unwrapped and looked at Sarah's face. Dull. She ran again until she collapsed. Her lips touched Sarah's eye sockets as she exhaled. Her back was pressed against a door. She stumbled inside.

The girl took off her coat and wrapped Sarah in it. The girl's cotton skirt hung off her and the wind blew around her bones. She closed the door and left. Inside the house lay Sarah wrapped up in the girl's coat. In the coat pocket was a pregnancy test. It was pink. The cycle had begun again.