

## A Little Invisible Thing

Semester 3

By Anne Latetia Barbould

Germ of new life, whose powers expanding slow  
For many a moon their full perfection wait,—  
Haste, precious pledge of happy love, to go  
Auspicious borne through life's mysterious gate.

What powers lie folded in thy curious frame,—  
Senses from objects locked, and mind from thought!  
How little canst thou guess thy lofty claim  
To grasp at all the worlds the Almighty wrought!

In the first stanza of the poem, the speaker begins by using a technique known as an [apostrophe](#). This means the speaker is talking to someone, or something, that cannot hear them or cannot respond. In this case, the speaker is talking to an unborn child. She refers to the child as the “Germ of new life.” They’re growing every day she says, and will soon enter into the world, leaving behind this period of their life. It’s a slow process and one that she celebrates.

The speaker wonders, through several exclamations, what the child’s life is going to be like. What powers are in the child’s future? How could the child, she says, ever understand how important they’re going to be? In these lines, Barbould’s language is fairly complicated, but the use of the [perfect rhyme](#) scheme helps create a sing-song-like pattern that feels suited for a child.

And see, the genial season's warmth to share,  
Fresh younglings shoot, and opening roses glow!  
Swarms of new life exulting fill the air,—  
Haste, infant bud of being, haste to blow!

For thee the nurse prepares her lulling songs,  
The eager matrons count the lingering day;  
But far the most thy anxious parent longs  
On thy soft cheek a mother's kiss to lay.

In the third stanza, the speaker continues to talk to the child, telling them about everything beautiful they’re going to see as soon as they’re born. She’s so excited to share the season’s warmth, the beauty of flowers, and the simple breath of life.

“For thee,” she starts the fourth stanza, the nurse is preparing songs and other women wait, counting down the days. All the while, the child’s parents are waiting for the opportunity to kiss the child on the cheek.

She only asks to lay her burden down,  
That her glad arms that burden may resume;  
And nature's sharpest pangs her wishes crown,  
That free thee living from thy living tomb.

She longs to fold to her maternal breast  
Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;  
To see and to salute the stranger guest,  
Fed with her life through many a tedious moon.

The poem gets a bit more complicated in the next stanzas as the speaker alludes to what this child's mother hopes. She wants to hold her child and feel the child as part of herself, a new part that has limitless potential. The child is going to go farther and do more than she ever did. It's possible to read these lines, as well as the rest of the poem, as an argument for equality, between the sexes and economic classes. She's celebrating this child, without naming them or gendering them. The [narrator](#) is thrilled for their entry into the world for their sake entirely.

Come, reap thy rich inheritance of love!  
Bask in the fondness of a Mother's eye!  
Nor wit nor eloquence her heart shall move  
Like the first accents of thy feeble cry.

Haste, little captive, burst thy prison doors!  
Launch on the living world, and spring to light!  
Nature for thee displays her various stores,  
Opens her thousand inlets of delight.

In the eighth stanza, she uses another exclamation to call forth the child and ask them to come into the world to see the love that's waiting for them. They're going to "Bask in the fondness of a Mother's eye" and live a good life from the start. She believes that the child's cry when it enters into the world is going to be far more beautiful than any [verse](#) or song she's ever heard.

The ninth stanza uses a [metaphor](#) of a captive in prison to depict the child in the womb. "Burst thy prison doors" she says and enters into the light. The child is so important, she implies, that nature is putting on a display.

If charmed verse or muttered prayers had power,  
With favouring spells to speed thee on thy way,  
Anxious I'd bid my beads each passing hour,  
Till thy wished smile thy mother's pangs o'erpay.

In the final stanza of '*To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to Become Visible*,' the speaker says that if there was any way to hurry the child along, she'd been engaged in that action. No prayer, she thinks, or song (like this one) has the power to [affect](#) the speed at which the child comes into the world. But, if they did, praying, singing, or reading would be all she did every day so she could sooner see the child's and the mother's happiness.