

MY BUDDHIST LESSONS

by Kyle D. Craig

—after David Shumate

Five months old, my daughter teaches me how to be Buddhist. Her sleep sack is a simple robe. Her bottle, a begging bowl. A semi-bald head and verbal silence serve as outward signs of her inner refuge. Place a crayon in her hand and she marks the page in Sanskrit. Sit her on a mandala patterned play mat and she mumbles mantras to a sangha of Taggie toys. When she wants to teach me about desire, she lunges for a stuffed tiger. To instruct how desire leads to grasping, she takes the tiger and clutches him to her chest. To teach how grasping leads to suffering, she shakes him and begins to cry. To impart the lesson that liberation comes through non-attachment, she throws him to the floor and squeals in joy. Her compassionate nature even allows me to accumulate merit. *Change me. Hold me. Feed me.* And at night her screams ring out like tiny bells, to remind me that the purpose of my life is to awaken.

sunrise
a tiny thumb rubs
mala beads