

Time passes and then stops passing. And in this immeasurable darkness—
here, always, is J. For every contraction—and there are thousands upon thousands, a
thousand years of breathtaking pain intensity—he is here offering water, offering silence,
feeding me drops of honey, liquid gold.

I throw up everything, and when there's nothing
left in my stomach I throw up water,
and when there's no more water I throw up nothing.
And J stands facing me,
for every tsunami

tsunami

TSUNAMI

TSUNAMI

Past midnight, the nurse asks me,

On a scale of one
to ten, how much
pain do you feel?

And I can't figure out the answer
to the question, because is ten the most
pain I've ever felt, or the most pain I can
imagine feeling? And what if I take the
ten now but it gets much worse
later? Should I leave room for
the unknown? Finally I
tell her

Fifteen, but I've
never had a leg
amputated, so that
might be worse.

But J isn't sure I want the epidural because
we'd agreed to try for a "natural" birth,
even though by now I've had Cytotec and a
Foley bulb and Pitocin. The nurse gives him the
side-eye, possibly suspecting he's an abusive partner
for preventing my relief from this *tsunami* of pain, but
then the shifts change again and that nurse is gone
and no one comes again to ask me about the
epidural.

It's time she gets
the epidural.

And somehow, in this darkest night, I believe
that I must not skirt the tsunami, must not slow this
process, must not resist the lowest ebb, but rather
ride straight through the center of it,
or else—I fear—I will never
make it to the
other side.