

OV¹, you said?

by Céline Miani

It was not that bad
It was not an insult
It was not a swear
How come it still bites?
Menacing, perceptible, somewhere in the air.
It was a sentence, an attitude maybe
No hello, no name, just a body
Which entered the room unannounced
Laid against the wall, arms crossed
And in a detached (and was it mocking?) manner,
Pronounced few words that were not to be forgotten:
"If you didn't scream that loud it would go faster"
Can it be a violence when it is true?
Cause then came silence and the head was through.
But years later, still hearing the weight of these words
The sting, the wound, the shame and the guilt,
A burden that shouldn't be, a burden of no reason,
And wondering what if, this midwife had not been there,
And (re)searching how, maternity care could be better.

¹ OV stands for *Obstetric Violence*, defined as any form of dehumanizing treatment during childbirth.

Céline Miani is French by nationality but she currently works in the department of Epidemiology & International Public Health at the School of Public Health at Bielefeld University in Germany. She is a mother of three and a health and healthcare researcher. This poem is about obstetric violence, or the right to respectful maternity care during childbirth.