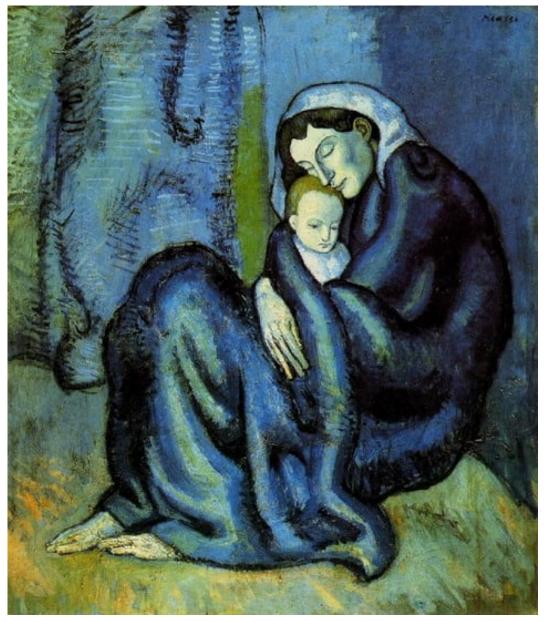
The Sudden Tenderness Between Us

by <u>Cristina Nehring</u> (January 2025)



Mother and Child (Pablo Picasso, 1901)

The Sudden Tenderness Between Us Is like a lovely squatter Surprised one night In an exploded apartment block. What brought her here, Young and shy And luminous? What brought her To this shambles Of unhinged doors And smoking ruin, Charred windows Like black eyes That ought not to see or admit?

What are you doing here, Beauty? In the crater that Once was a bedroom An infant lies fighting for life. On the landing three fugitives Stand waiting for alms. Do you not see this is the House of Insistent Emergency? Do you not know that the gods Have their hands full And cannot attend you, or even clear you a space?

And yet, there you are. Immovable, impish and pristine, A pure salt pillar In the land of Lot. Fluorescent in your frailty, Incongruous and irresistible, Your tissue paper skin as strong As the edifices of eternity.

Table of Contents

Cristina Nehring's most recent book is *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility*. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as two books in French. She writes for *Atlantic, Harper's*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Paris with her daughter.

Follow NER on Twitter <a>@NERIconoclast