

Dear Little Baby Do Not Weep

On that hot, humid July night the nurse called me to your side;
I was awakened from a sound sleep with terrible fear inside;
Restless, fearful, and moaning . . . you said you were drowning;
I told you that you were fine – you would be fine in the morning!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Three days and nights I watched you slip toward the abyss;
I watched you recount your life as you prepared for your rest;
Mama, what are you doing? “Cooking for the kids,” you said;
Mama, what are you doing? “Rocking the babies,” you said!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Stirring beans that were cooking on the stove, waiting for Daddy to come in;
Day in and day out you recalled your life – your family – places you had been;
Remembering the fun, adventure, excitement, and despair in your life,
Never forgetting a child’s birthday or the day you became Daddy’s wife!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

First came Robert, born during the dust bowl and the great depression;
Delightful and mischievous – the little imp poured oatmeal on his possessions;
He reveled in taking everything apart – because he was so intelligent and smart;
He was the bright, shinning apple of his mama and daddy’s heart!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Donald followed Robert as the family grew – the two were great little boys;
Times were hard – you and Daddy struggled to feed them and buy them toys;
They were little rascals – once even feeding hobos who came to your place;
But those were the good old days – said with a flavor of sadness on your face!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Stephen came along a couple of years later and life became a little tougher;
Water gravy and homemade biscuits filled their bellies – a home filled with laughter;
Mischievous that two couldn’t think of – three could do better and much more;
Sometimes they tested your patience – love guided you and developed their core!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

You listened to the radio – the news spread – the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor;

Your country was at war – life was uncertain, but the country rallied together;
Steady work came; your life prospered – you raised the kids with love and laughter;
Then, Pauline came along – a little white-haired girl – finally a precious daughter!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Pauline was a difficult, sickly child – you worried if she would even survive;
She was asthmatic – you propped her up at night to sleep – you saved her life;
This little child clung to your apron and wailed; she couldn't share her mother;
Four children before you were thirty, but you always wanted another!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Four years later came Marie – another girl – a chubby little blonde-haired girl;
Clumsy and awkward – always laughed when she fell – she had a cute curl;
The best kid you ever had – the quiet child laughed at everything and everyone;
Five children before you were thirty, but you always wanted another son!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Danny came along almost six years later – Danny – the baby of the family;
Everybody's baby – Pauline and Marie took turns taking care of the baby;
They dressed him like a baby-doll as though he was their very own toy;
A nervous and scared little baby – Danny jumped with each little noise!
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Our lives – 72 hours of non-stop TV programming – passed through your memory;
The fourth day you were lucid, remembering your family, friends, and history;
You wanted to rest now; it was time to go home – the doctors could do no more;
No more hospital beds; no more tubes; no more suffering; no more pain; no more . . .
Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top – your mamma loves you – go to bed and sleep;
Tomorrow we will pick some cotton – dear little baby do not weep!

Marie Lowe
7 December 1999