



## Dear Scarlet: The Story of My Postpartum Depression

**Teresa Wong**

Arsenal Pulp Press (May 7, 2019)

Softcover \$17.95 (128pp)

978-1-55152-765-9

In the form of an extended, illustrated letter to her young daughter, Teresa Wong shares the difficulties she experienced after her pregnancy in her graphic novel *Dear Scarlet*.

Wong sets the stage by introducing her husband and illustrating her daughter's birth. It's then that the troubles begin, with forgetful nurses, physical exhaustion and discomfort, and pressure to breastfeed. Wong struggles with feelings of inadequacy and isolation until an accurate diagnosis of depression, proper medication, and outside help slowly begin to improve her life.

Throughout everything, Wong's husband seems to be everything she needs, which only emphasizes how difficult postpartum depression might be for a woman without such support. Wong's own mother also helps, taking care of daughter and granddaughter and perhaps giving hope to those who don't feel maternally inclined immediately after childbirth that there are many ways to be a good mother, at many different times in a child's life.

Wong's black-and-white drawings are simple but effective. This is a book that benefits tremendously from the sense of intimacy that a single author-illustrator can generate. Near the book's end, Wong tells her daughter why she has shared all of this with her: "I wanted to show you that you don't always have to be strong. / And that you can come back after losing yourself." There are many people, not just new mothers, who can find inspiration in that message, and in the heartfelt and utterly honest *Dear Scarlet*.

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2019)

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