

Umbilicus

When he was under
the dome, spinning
core of the earth, they awaited
him, drapes around
where he would surface.

And he squirmed a knot,
effortless, into
the helix that flooded him
with blood, retied
the tether

of his foaling. The mottled
purple mantles —
chorion, amnion, and triad
of vessels — pulsed
like magma
inside his crocus mother.

After a day she labored
choppy, the restless
green flock
of doctors
rush into gowns

over gowns, gloves over
gloves, and masks to become
invisible. Each face
has disappeared.
The sterile room is
intimate.

Her eddied waters quake
when the cocoon
is slit open. Quicksilver
fish glides into flesh
for fist-grabbed

Josiah, who
wakes
up.

Jennifer Stella

“Many of us are never born—
We live in a private ocean for hours”
—Sharon Olds, “Everything” from
One Secret Thing

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