

# 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*

Ms. Stella is a member of the  
Class of 2012 at the University of  
California, San Francisco, School  
of Medicine. This poem won  
honorable mention in the 2010  
*Pharos* Poetry Competition. Ms.  
Stella's address is: 346 Kirkham  
Street, San Francisco, California  
94122. E-mail: jennifer.stella@  
ucsf.edu.

Illustration Erica Aitken

