

## POETRY

## Dirt

Eras ago, giving birth was  
 woman becoming woman  
 on all fours, fistfuls of dirt and  
 diving into the loam face first,  
 beneath the bones of the earth  
 into marrow for the feast  
 of clay and ashes.

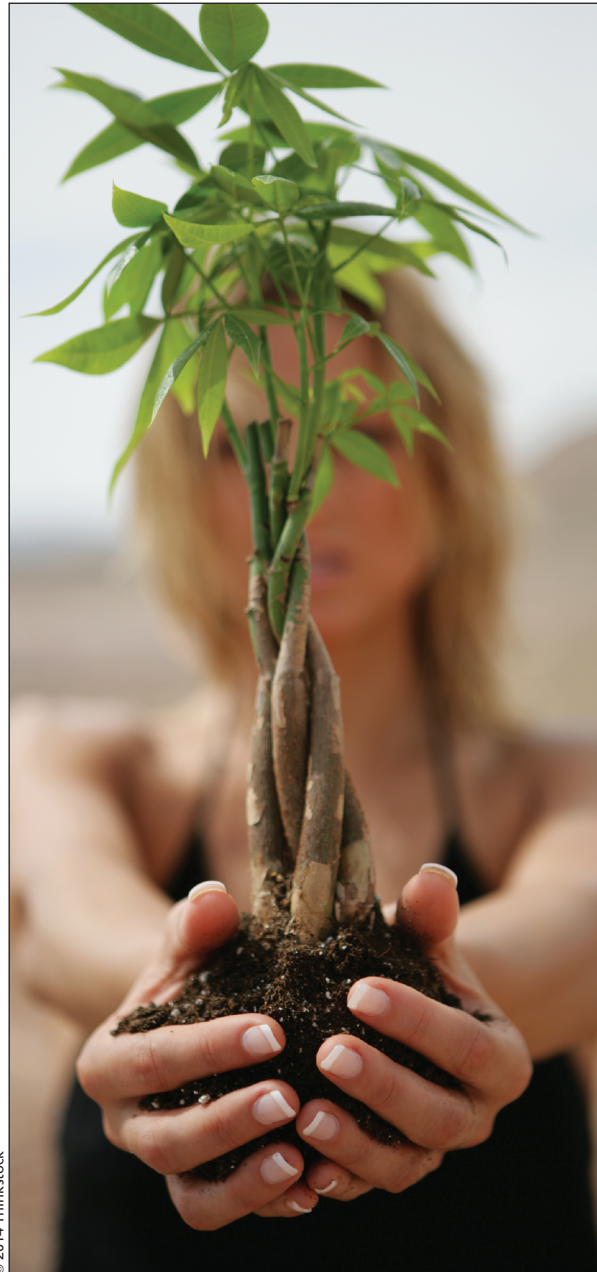
Now, any outsider might see:  
 the pregnant woman as hockey goalie,  
 legs elevated, nonchalant and naked,  
 but here is a skein, on her ankle to the dirt  
 where women still sink under,  
 the clay is warm, the feast awaits,  
 the doctor's voice is a raven  
 arguing against a dream.  
 The baby's head a ripe peach,  
 the cervix melts like ice cream,  
 a mouthful of salt for every push  
 to the surface.  
 Life claims life for its own.

Once the baby is out,  
 once the placenta is coaxed,  
 once the tears repaired,  
 baby skin to mother skin,  
 what will survive is  
 this mystery, of how women  
 can breathe in the dirt,  
 live in the grit and not say  
 a thing.

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**Editor's note:** This poem won honourable mention  
 in the "Best Poetry" category of the Ars Medica and  
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