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For These Conditions There Is No Abortion

Primus St. John

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*from his flesh, the wolf moaned
and ran, the body slipped under snow.*

Then spring, and the snow loosed
over rock to unveil a man's body.
He watched them wrap it in a sack
and saw that the eyes were blind,
the mouth too dumb for grief or story.
But their hands had locked, friends
one whole winter, until the stream broke
and blessed him with its cold skill.
He heard icy veins roaring underground
and didn't know the dead could live
so long, nor pain, nor numbness end.

For These Conditions There Is No Abortion / Primus St. John

They say the tongue is only *Praexis*.
It is only a surge forward
Between spring and God.
Months later,
God is gone. Our spring is upon us.
We learn the names for children,
They don't want us or our child.
We are just sophomores and curses.
Like Aristotle
I believe plot after plot
Means something.
It is a formula evening:
The sun is red
Night is someone beyond blue
Her belly is living and dying
And we don't sit close anymore—
Even in the lunchroom.
Her eyes are smooth stones, falling
I am a man,
Therefore I am falling.
She says today she has learned a word
For folks like us,
I am about to say sorry
She says *pathos* . . .

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Martha's story is not so simple (*yes*).
She is older and freer
Like her lover is gone (*yes*)
And she is poor (*yes*),
Poor Martha:
With her belly in her hands
With a man who is anything but Jesus.
Poor Martha:
With blood and misunderstanding
Tragedy is opening for all her roses.

Lord, legalize this:
Our bloom and decay.

Martha is something in common with rope
On fire.
Her womb should give her pleasure,
Not *hangers* and *quinine* and *soda*.

Jealousy / Harold Witt

The way I pictured jealousy was this:
an old vignette my mother often told—
she and Aunt Lillie, the young and older sister,
strolling one Sunday
in some Dakota field

with Uncle Peter, a handsome bridegroom then,
when a monstrous bull loomed toward them hooving and snorting—
lifting their several skirts the girls ran
careless of cowpies,
Uncle Peter escorting

both to the safety of an empty wagon
and helped my mother up and then his bride,
a flurry of flounces and her wide sash dragging—
which may have been the worst mistake
of his life—

in that mad second giving a hand to my mother
before he'd saved his palpitating wife—
she never forgot, or forgave one or the other,