

Postpartum

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [February 2026](#) issue
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Mary pants, fists clenched, lips parted—
then the rending of flesh from flesh,
the blood-soaked straw.
She lies back, spent, barely feels
the breath of livestock in the stabled air.

Winter's long shank stretches for months,
her mornings thick with fog and slick
with sudden danger, roads rutted
like the sole of a hobnailed boot.
They hide in alleys and back rooms;
night shrouds them from the scouring
soldiers as she wraps him close,
hungry for his warmth.

One day she feels again a stirring
of desire—a few bars of music,
a lost fragrance. The streets
grow quiet again, in Gaza,
in Kyiv, or LA. It's not too late
for the bush that begins
to bloom, its flowers a shock
to starved senses. Warm rays
find wet ground, turning
dead leaves into mulch.

She opens her door to light,
and walks, a stranger,
right through it, as if naked,
except for the baby who clings
to her. Pulling open her shirt,
she gives him her breast.

If she remembers the reek,
her pain and her fear,
it was for this, she thinks,
please God, only for this.