

ICU Nursery

The potatoes in the ground
must be dug before it freezes,
so her husband is halfway to Idaho
in the pickup.

Doctors had said earlier
it looked like the baby could be weaned
from machines and make it.
His crop in the field
is food on the table.

She stands by the isolette
while the doctors work on her baby.
Sometimes she cries out, “No!”
You always think words like that
can stop something.

When there is no more they can do,
they pull up a chair,
hand her that baby still hooked
up to life and let her rock.
She tells about the baby’s sisters, her Daddy,
about potatoes in the ground.
No one breathed till the baby
couldn’t.

Farming is risky business.
Mostly it’s hard work
and luck in judgment calls.
You never know when a frost
will come over a crop and, like that,
it’s gone.

—Marilyn Darley Williams