Midwife

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My hands were
cold and dry
from hauling water,
hay and grain
to nourish the swollen ewes
and their steamy embryos.

I'd wire pens
for newborns
and their nursing mothers,
scoop water into buckets
with an old coffee can,
and shovel grain
into orange plastic pans,
crooning to them constantly,
lying to the new ewes
about the pain of labor.

And, as I finished
and slid the door roughly
across its track,
I'd stop,
pulling mittens off
with my mouth,
to rub my hands
into the warmth and lanolin.