

POEM BY WILLIAM FARGASON

SOUR WINE

I didn't want to believe the Lord
when he told me I wasn't
guilty anymore. Because I knew
better: I was there. I saw
the need for the blood. I was

the sponge soaked with sour wine
—raised on a hyssop stalk, pressed
against the Lord's lips—to make
him feel the need: the purpose

for his death, my death through
his death, or how I'd already died
a hundred times before, back into
that stilted rebirth.

The French
call the orgasm *la petite mort*,
or *little death*.

But all our sins have been annulled,
have been covered by the guilt—
its weight necessary, its poplar
yoke wore my shoulders raw.

I've felt the guilt grip me more
passionately than I've ever felt
the love hold me. All the barley seeds
I scattered among briars—
but my burden of conviction
must be equal.

Guilt is the love
I've been given from the Lord.
Therefore, I've loved,
and love.

Some days I feel
you've never left me.