

Francesca is born. Pink, with evenly spaced features, crying in a modest, bleating way, more air than volume, eyes squinted shut, fists clenched. I sense she comes with deep feelings. The doctor cuts the umbilical cord, the nurse carries her away, and another churning cramp hits. Something is off. I moan and lean forward, clench the rails on my hospital bed. Isadora? Ethan says, alarmed. Should she still have contractions, he asks, making circles on my back but also barely touching me. He is repulsed by the intensity, blood, intimacy and annoyed I can hear his thoughts, also heart smacked by the baby we made. Don't worry, it's the afterbirth, Dr. Han says, kneading my belly. I groan. Dr. Han thinks about lunch, hopes the cafeteria isn't out of tuna sandwiches, glances up at the clock on the wall above my head. 12:50. They run out after 1:30 or so. Then it's ham. Yuck. I would have asked Ethan to recite Milton, to keep Dr. Han's thoughts out of my head, but another contraction hits. Mother of fuck, I yell. Dr. Han thinks women always get a pass for swearing during deliveries but does swearing mitigate the delivery pain? No. Another baby crowns. Holy shit, Dr. Han says, leaning down to meet the baby. She asks the lord for forgiveness for cursing, wonders how she could have missed the second baby. Nurse, assistance. Push, Isadora, time to push, you can do it. I clench my teeth, crush Ethan's hand against the bed rail, lean forward and push. Dr. Han has never experienced the unexpected twin. How did she miss it? A baby emerges. Hair covers her little body, black lines on tawny skin. Smaller than the first—the doctor instantly forgives herself. The larger baby shielded the smaller one. The lanugo seems more animal than infant, Isadora thinks. The nurse thinks of her Lab's pink belly lined with coarse black hair. When they turn her to pat her back, waiting for the cry, I see the meticulous pattern of hair from her nape to her buttocks. She takes a deep breath, doesn't cry. The doctor turns her again. My unnamed baby girl scans the room, her world out of focus, but looks at the nurse and purses her lips. Her gaze is direct and clear. I sense she comes with