

## **Nightly Roll Around at the Jabbok's Edge**

by [Emily Rose Proctor](#) in the [May 2023](#) issue

*for Madeleine Rose*

In the dark, wisps tickle my face like loose down.  
I hold steady for her twitches—1—2—3; she is asleep again.  
Earlier, in the shower, I combed half a bottle  
of conditioner through those corkscrew  
curls—painstakingly teasing out the knots  
with my slick fingers, cringing  
every time she cried out, wrenched away.  
By morning they will have twisted and dried  
into dreadlocks again. If she lets me, I will bind  
those blonde snakes into a gorgeously messy  
bun. For now, she rests  
in the thunderbolt cradle of my body,  
her back to my chest, my arm  
under her head, her green legs  
bent against mine. Soon we will both be  
sweating. Soon she will thrust her heel into my  
stomach, rake my thigh with toenails so long they are starting to  
curl. She will cry out *Nooooooo*, knock  
her head against the post, fling  
her limp arm out across my face. Still,  
I breathe in her little-girl scent, musky rose.  
She rolls to face me, grunts, her hot breath  
a strawberry funk. Her tiny arm pushes its way  
under my head. I move to escape. She wraps  
her other arm around my neck. She knows  
where she is at. She is at the edge  
of a fast-moving river. I am a dark angel,  
huge for my weight. We are locked  
in a terrible embrace. She will not let me go  
without a blessing.