

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 *Nooooooooo*, 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.