



THE FIRST BORN

Diamond Forde

The Second Book of Alice Called Exodus

Exodus 2:1

The First Born

And the LORD said unto the womb of Alice, Sing, and the uterus bellowed its trumpet, and the tubes rattled their maracas, and the eggs clattered their ovarian gourds.

Sometimes the first man would hymn his lips on Alice, would play a melody she couldn't sing alone, and it was then she saw him the way other women saw him, like a finger fluttering her valves. Sometimes the first man would wander, so Alice went to bed with the sheets heaped into the shape of him, ignoring the bedside candle oscillating its anemone-scented eye.

Alice longed to tip that candle, to let its fire silk its glossy slip around her. *Heat*, Alice thought, *is the birthplace of living*. But Alice could hardly remember the hills that raised her, could hardly remember anything that wasn't the smell of him: smoke and nickels, someone's perfume petaling like a kiss on his chin.

Another night the first man wandered, and it was then that Alice could hear the trains screech their metal nocturnes outside her window, the dogs unhinge a mechanical howl, a stranger's voice siphoning the drainpipes, then Alice said unto the LORD, Lo! that I should love

a man in parts, that I should want a man for his fingers
when I cannot have his heart, and the LORD said unto Alice, Take
what you want, so Alice jammed her hand into the pitch between her legs, pulled
out the song God nested there, the melody of a daughter black with blood,
her throat wet and red as a melon.

Alice pressed the song to her chest, fed her the honeyed milk of her breast,
and the child's cheeks billowed like linen on a line—Alice stained warm
by the lapping tongue. In the dewy eye of the streetlights
Alice and the song-child slept to the *snik-snik* of a hunger quenched.