

TO HIDE

**CALLISTA
BUCHEN**

She looks at me, face set, resisting the impulse to crumble. Already she knows which tears to hide, how to keep her eyes wide and press her lips together. *My daughter*, I think, kneeling before her as if she is an altar, whispering, *you are upset*. How she finally chokes against my shoulder, how she wants permission to feel. Or a place, a name for her pain and a body that pretends strength, which promises to keep her whole.

My daughter, I think later, as I sit on the lid of the toilet while her brother thrashes inside my belly, sobbing into a bath towel so they won't hear in the other room. All the broken bodies. The wet eyes of my mother, of her mother. I kneel, terrycloth in my mouth, but I don't know who is the prayer and who is the god. What am I supposed to promise? *My mother*, she is singing now, running at the door. *Where is my mother?* Illusion, for a while. I put on the body. The permission, while it lasts.