

KATHRYN PETRUCCELLI

B: THE ROAD HOME

The B was “bayit,” or “house” to the Phoenicians. It started out looking like a simple square, over time bulging to the left, a stray line below becoming a second belly during its transference to the Greeks, and ultimately facing right. It was one of the first symbols deciphered among the inscriptions found in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula that gave birth to the alphabet.

Babies born in the caul — the sac — they say, are imbued
with special intuition,
luck.

A month ahead of schedule, the moving boxes not yet touched,
your son shifted down the canal, red with blood and desire into your arms,
still enveloped

floppy doll, quiet.

You leaned in, breathed your greeting, waiting for him to rally
in the dark room of hope.

Perhaps it was luck
when the doctor detected the deviation,
the *lump-thump* beat of the tiny heart
with its additional whispers, secrets you could not know.

Perhaps it was intuition
that lead the child to arrive with the hush and hiccup
of his first language to shore him up for the voyage.

You thought you would give over this baby to the larger world much later —
after he’d been grounded in home

his heart fortified for the hero’s journey.

But so soon, the barbaric whirring machine, your infant on an operating table,
rib cage pried apart, heart stopped, a masked man
hovering above him with a blade.

