

bunkered

She had a dream in which a mother and a father sat opposite one another at a small square table. They were pulling on latex gloves. The father put on the table a newborn baby girl, naked and still smeared with amniotic fluid, and held her down while the mother took up a sanding block and began to sand the baby down. As she rubbed vigorously at its flesh the baby began to swell. The father struggled to hold her down as the baby became a child; the mother worked harder and harder as the child grew into a teenager, and she rolled up her sleeves as adulthood approached. The woman now sprawled naked over the table, skin rubbed off and bleeding, continued to grow, accelerating outwards now. The mother and the father stepped back as she bulged hideously, her flesh ballooning outwards, the skin that was left stretching purple and shiny, her wounds gaping. Suddenly the body split, ripping open from groin to neck just as the table beneath her collapsed. She woke as the ground shook to the impact of artillery shells bursting up above - and lifted her head from where it rested on a book. Her candle was still lit, guttering in the draft from the ventilation shaft that connected the bunker to the sky; she snuffed it out with her fingers. David was still sleeping, in a pile of rags in the corner. She got up and joined him; he opened his arms to accommodate her entwining form, without waking, and she closed her eyes as the dream replayed, until early morning.