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fetal heart, realm, horse, baby, naomi, moment, born, envision, shrimp, hospital, befallen, advanced maternal age, slow, session, trimester, definite article, galloping, mother, twinkling, life

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I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down

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during the final trimester of my pregnancy with Naomi, because of what the medical profession referred to as my advanced maternal age, I was all of 37 years old, I was required to visit the hospital for fetal heart monitoring sessions almost every day. The technician told me that the baby would become more active if I ate something sweet right before my session. So I'd pick up a donut from the donut cart outside the hospital. It was a short walk from my apartment, and it was late summer or early autumn. I remember those days as blissful, though, I know there was also fatigue, discomfort, insecurity at the astonishing changes that had befallen my body, and the changes that would soon overtake my life. How much time did I spend during that season, trying to imagine who the baby was that waited to be born. It was an enterprise like no other. This attempt at deciphering not just the traits, but the essence of the child I'd soon meet. When I sat in the fetal heart monitoring station, in a little cubicle behind a drawn curtain, I felt myself tugged into a magical, mysterious faraway realm, tuning into the baby's galloping heartbeat. I'd always envision a horse running across a field, I'd envision a tiny little girl with wild dark curls, racing across the horizon, on her horse, as if they're inside the globe of my belly just millimeters from my hand yet, a world away from where I sat, she found herself in the midst of her own life, her own autonomous realm. Oddly, or perhaps predictably, it was my memory of fairy tales, and fairy kingdoms that informed my view of Naomi's realm. She lived in a cottage in the woods. Her friends were birds, and foxes, and a brown horse with a white diamond on its brow. She was fierce and free, and brave. It will make no sense to say this. But I believe that by some measure, I was exactly right. Even then, in my estimation of my daughter, perhaps now that she is born, the realm she wants inhabited. The cottage and the forest must live inside her. Today's poem bears witness

to a father to be perspective. I love how it taps into the cosmic feeling of awaiting your baby. Hello, by Shaun Hill. She being the midwife and your mother's longtime friend said, I can see a heart Can you see it? And on the gray display of the ultrasound, there you were, as you were our nugget in that moment becoming a shrimp or a comma punctuating the whole of my life separating its parts before and after a shrimp in the sea of your mother. And I couldn't help but see the fast beating of your heart, translate it on that screen and think and say to her, to the room to your mother to myself. It looks like a twinkling star. I imagine I'm not the first to say that either. Unlike the first moments of my every day, the new of seeing you was the first deserving of the definite article moment. I saw a star at once so small and so big, so close and getting closer every day. I pray.

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