



As a child, my Corbina always wanted to know about her name. How did I choose it? How did I know Corbina was the right name for her? She couldn't understand the business of taking a guess or picking something pretty. She wanted oracles, divination. She wanted to be sure she had been given the right name.

I told her, when she was eight—maybe, no, maybe nine or ten, the story of her grandfather surf fishing the day I was born. My mother wasn't, isn't, a woman to ask for anything. She hadn't asked him to be there, at the birth, so he didn't go. It might not have occurred to him to be there. He had passions after all, and parenting wasn't one of them.

Her name, Corbina, is a type of saltwater fish. My father, before he left, told me how corbinas ride the breakers into the shallows to root out sand crabs. The fish are exposed, their backs out of the water, their tough snouts in the sand. He described lunging at them with nets.

When the story was over, she nodded and accepted this splinter. She understood it would eventually be absorbed or work its way

out of her body. I was surprised she understood. She connected her name with my father's parental reluctance, her own father's absence and my bitterness. I saw it in the dark cast of her eyes. I had hoped she would be distracted by the stories of the beach. I had prepared other stories, lies, I guess—lies that would have been kinder in some ways—but, when she asked, I told her the truth in the clearest way I could.

Corbina told people her name was a variation of Corinna, a name that meant girl.

"I get to pick now," she told me after her teacher called one afternoon to report the change.

"I pick Corinna, as in girl, not fish."

"Corbina is so pretty. And no one has it, anywhere—probably."

"Exactly."

She was Corinna for several grades, all the way up through middle school and her first year of high school. She switched back to Corbina sophomore year, without ceremony or explanation. I was convinced it had something to do with angst, with not knowing who she was at that age. If she didn't feel like a girl, like a person, she might as well be a fish. I didn't ask. It was up to her.