



The Hush

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Set in a dystopian future, the novel *The Hush* is filled by instances of surveillance and suspended human rights. Eerie and prescient, it covers the lengths that a family will go to protect themselves.

A mysterious plague appears in England's birthing wards: healthy newborns who showed no sign of distress refuse to open their eyes or take a breath. Midwife Emma delivers Intrapartum X, or "doll babies," with a frequency that frightens her. The world has weathered pandemics, climate change, and revolution, but this terrifying development hints at an infertile future.

Meanwhile, Emma's seventeen-year-old daughter Lainey contends with an unplanned pregnancy of her own—a change that puts her at risk for being disappeared by the state. In order to save her daughter, Emma reaches out to her estranged mother and works with a group of women who are willing to resist the government's invasion of their lives and bodies.

As a cautionary tale, *The Hush* is horrifying. Playing to the natural conclusion of current events, the novel is set in a future that seems both familiar and possible. From daily temperature scans to watches that monitor citizens' every move, the book plies the dark sides of technology, policing, and the justice system. And its world building includes frequent nods to news stories, social media, and London landmarks. The combination of the familiar with the fantastic intensifies the sense of violation that Lainey and Emma feel: their world is unreformable, and their subversive response to it is terrifying. Yet, despite their jarring environment, the mother-daughter pair conveys genuine caring for one another.

The Hush is a novel about the nightmare of womanhood in a culture that treats mothers as vessels or disease vectors. Here, friendships between women might be the only cure for a sickened, suppressive world.

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