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2 1/4 pages

Carrying On

It's spring in South Georgia and the wind has died down, and following a winter of linking rains, we've had two whole weeks without a sprinkle. Spanish moss hangs from the oaks like gray fox pelts tacked to cure, sheaves of wheat broomsage dry in the noon sun, essence of pine and pear distills into a raw scent you can almost see. The sunny blue air is ripe with birdsong. Diamondback rattlers are oozing from gopher holes. I saw a man in a pickup truck towing a fishing boat, and a girl and boy with the convertible top folded back on their car. Still, the loggers can't get into the woods without bogging up to their axles, swamps have crept out into the fields and left swales of black water marbled with pollen, and bull frogs in ditch culverts blast slow bass complaints.

Today I saw a striped butterfly.

They say in California they've had flooding and mudding: whole houses have slid down hills like property on a tilted Monopoly board, a man on TV looked like the First Man formed of mud. And I've seen first-hand the aftermath of tornadoes near Greensboro, North Carolina. In Kisseemee, Florida, people were vacuumed up like junked Christmas dolls and dumped into the Atlantic Ocean. A child was sucked from his father's arms.

I believe it was Gorbachav who said, We are born, we suffer, we die.

But last evening I heard the hark of a whippoorwill, and the buzz of the first locust to resurrect from the earth after seven years of silence. Yes, he will climb a tree; he will shed, mate and die. Just after dawn, I heard a lonesome mourning dove pleading for company, and I saw a pair of wrens hard at work on their ricked nest in the fork of rafters on my front porch. Tender green leaves are sprouting from the tough old oaks, and below, grass is shooting up through the hemp rug of shed leaves. The sun is arcing northward, has switched sides behind the crown of pines across the west field. A true sign of spring, just as the last moon of March is a sign to plant.

My husband and I have two new calves and more on the way. We also had a calf born only to die. Her hooves were sheer as Cinderella's glass slippers, and when we tried to help her stand, they would toe under leaving her to hobble on the knuckled bones of her ankles. She had a whorl of russet hair on her forehead, and a pug nose like moist leather, and long girly lashes that shuttered over liquid black eyes. The first day she sucked from a bottle of her mother's milk, but the second day her teeth clamped down on the nipple. She lay broadside, shivering to death in the blowing rain. When she got still, when she sucked red hide of her exposed side quit pulsing and her onyx eyes lost light, we carried her out to the riverswamp and left her damp and dense for the buzzards to peck the jewels from her eyes. Our bull is planting more seeds for the fall.

And speaking of seeds, our pole beans and squash are coming up, our corn is pegging. Our tomato plants got stung by a late frost, but the rosettes of lettuce weren't touched. You can crop the leaves and milk will spring on the stems. Easter's coming--death and resurrection. Churches are making plans for Sunrise services, baptisms and dinners-on-the-ground. They say it might rain tomorrow.

We carry on.