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We always believed that spring would come;  
Believed that summer would flower again,  
ill-prepared for the season of drought.  
The Angel-Wing mounds in finished growth  
Petals drop over the berm.  
Red cherries ripen under an Indian sun.  
Apples firm for picking, their juice runs tart, cool  
Red cherries ripen under an Indian sun.  
Petals drop over the berm.  
Ill-prepared for this season of drought.  
Believed that summer would flower again,  
We always believed that spring would come;  
• • • • •  
where they always kept it, and then backed out, closing  
Leora leaned the rake against Roy's old smoker, just  
and told that preacher, “I'm saved!”  
just three, said the child marched right down to the altar  
worst of all.  
moving little creatures, so Leora got her fill of them after  
them, “ as she liked to put it. Truth is, the Fletchers only  
my dear, old friend had rued the day the Fletcher clan  
marched toward the shed door. It was no secret that  
the girl. “Because I say so. “ Leora turned her back and  
“Why?”  
“Why?”  
Leora let go the rake. “That's Mrs. Harper to you, ”  
leaving the slats to quiver like plucked guitar strings.  
“Uh-hum. I know something else, too. “  
To see her blink.  
right in her eyes, but she didn't want the child  
up at the child. She told me the sun shone  
what Winnie Fletcher was, but she was  
“That so?” Leora turned, looked  
Winnie said, “I know you got a  
trying real hard not to say it anymore.  
Winnie was right. “No matter how ornery a creature is, ”  
made. Leora decided to name the cat. Hissy. I said it fit.  
I darn near fell over laughing, but the point was  
barbeque sauce. “Well, I might love it,” she said, “with a little  
road whinnied. The Johnson boy drove by in his new  
She gazed at me a while. The horse across the  
do-able to skewer it with a rake and flush it out with  
poor Leora. It was bad enough when the thing was tiny,  
also stopped chasing it, swinging at it and hollering at it.  
Still, every time I was over there, no matter how  
Leora tried to share her space with that cat, it'd arch its  
back. Shoot every hair straight up like a porcupine. And  
his? Why, that little fur-ball hissed something fierce at  
poor Leora. It was bad enough when the thing was tiny,  
but what with it growing so fast, I figured it just might  
someday sink its claws into Leora's throat. Draw fatal blood  
like its relatives the she-lion over there in Africa. But I didn't  
say nothing. Just watched, day by day, as the kitten grew.  
Nat 'll mid-August anyway, when we had that  
cold snap. Temperatures fell to, oh, f'd say about ninety  
degrees, so Leora and me, we fixed up some iced sweet  
tea and enjoyed the afternoon on Leora's front porch,  
sharing ourselves with folded newspaper and eating from  
a platter of black and salted tomatoes. All she wanted to  
talk about was that kitten. The way its eyes turned to dark  
slits and how its tongue turned white if it hissed a good  
long time. It was clear Leora's pleasure in doing right was  
curdling, even if she didn't let on to anybody else.  
She poured me a second glass, and I commended  
her for taking on responsibility for one of God's creatures.  
She huffed, said nothing good had come of it, then  
adDED, “Isn't love supposed to win all?”  
The words popped out without me thinking. “Do you love the cat?”  
She gazed at me a while. The horse across the  
road whinnied. The Johnson boy drove by in his new  
Chevy truck. “Well, I might love it,” she said, “with a little  
barbeque sauce.”  
I darn near fell over laughing, but the point was  
made. Leora decided to name the cat. Hissy. I said it fit.  
But even named, that cat was a devil, spiteful and  
hissing and purling its Cats D'Light. Leora might have  
been able to endure if it weren't for Winnie's blue eyes  
constantly watching over that fence. A home-school child  
can have too much time on its hands, and Winnie was  
obssing on Hissy. Leora complained that each  
morning, that child climbed her fence and stayed there  
nearly all day, singing and talking and cooing, trying to  
coax Hissy out from under that shed.