



"anticipation, she felt kind, generous..."

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anticipation, she felt kind, generous. Unique but not isolated; important without having to prove it. When a single instance of spotting was followed by heavy clotting, she was not alarmed because her breasts continued to swell and her appetite remained ravenous. Dr. Ralph reassured her everything was fine. Her weight gain was as sharp as May's looks, and steady, like Papa's smiles. She had no menses for eleven months and would have had none for eleven more if L had not sat her down, slapped her—hard—then peered into her eyes saying, "Wake up, girl. Your oven's cold." After months of darkness thickened by public snigger and her husband's recoil, she did wake up and, skinny as a witch, rode into daylight on a broomstick.

The mother finishes nursing and rocks the baby on her shoulder. Back and forth. Back and forth. The church folk, drained of color by a rising moon, leave the lawn in small groups. Overfed. Calling out happy goodbyes.

Her baby was a son, she was sure, and had he been born she wouldn't need to sneak off, driven by an untethered teenager to a collapsing hotel in order to secure her place. [mtk]