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The Doll in the Sheepfield

Susan Davis
THE DOLL IN THE SHEEPFIELD

She sets me high on the fence post so I can watch them move sheep. The family can’t afford a sheepdog so by token of size the girl runs them, staggering through mud, a stick in her hands, tripping herself up, yelping at the stray’s heels. And over and over they get away from her, the man yelling “Can’t you do anything. Turn them. Turn them all at once. Don’t scatter them.” until at last it’s done. They go to walk the fences and she grabs me soaked with sweat in the cold wind and flushed crawls in under the fig leaves. Rolls me contorted into a ball forced up to her face to muffle sound. Her hot breath pushes through me. I can almost imagine breathing. Until, calm, she smooths my arms and legs out and rocks me, sings me to sleep: “Ann’s not alive. Neither am I. Ann’s not alive. Neither am I.” Infinitely calm and rocking. Rocking.