Stale Mate

Little curl girl walking across the field barefoot and growing, swelling, smacking into a kind of woman and I watch, all the while picking cotton with my toes and whistling Dixie with chapped lips because I can feel the scorch and sniff the ginger smell of the rotting tobacco in the barn and feel my breakfast of tomato gravy boiling in my stomach while She Walks, from one end of the field to another, dancing with the cotton in the absence of wind while I sit here watching and waiting for her to prick her finger because it will bleed into the ground like water and She Will Die. But Joe, the Prince in overalls, whose family has endured the stench of the Carolina sun for a hundred years or more, will, leaping valiantly off a shining John Deere, give her mouth to mouth resuscitation, awakening her, for such is the rite and right of a planted Carolina girl.