

## SING LIKE THE BOARDIES

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OUT PAST THE tepees with their smoking maws, past the snake pits and sinkholes, past the grove of orange trees and cane fields, was a swing-set and a succubus. I'd go there, we'd swing.

She had crisp teeth, shocking red hair, and crab-apple eyes. We'd start swinging side by side, exchanging niceties, *I caught a fwog the otha day, big ole one*, breathing heavily, humming on occasion. Then I'd close my eyes, high enough in the wind without leg-pumping, and she'd hop over to my swing and straddle me. Her hair brushed my face like innocent fire. With eyes closed like that and in motion the world made absolute sense. The best thing I could think to do is jump before I completely slowed down. I'd land on the moist soil beneath a slash pine, awash in a bath of light dipping through piney limbs, my pants somehow down around my ankles. She'd take them down, it was natural.

And once, when I opened my eyes, I saw a Seminole Indian half-crouching in weeds that had grown up inside a tractor wheel. He had a hand to his mouth and was ready for flight. What kept him from running were his brown eyes fixed on me with a devious stare.

I would have liked to chase him, which was an impossibility ankle-tied as I was, so I shouted, "Go away, she and me ah in wheel love."

"How?" the Seminole said, and screwed up his face.

"Don't know how, just is," I said and tried to untangle myself.

"I can thee what ith, don't know about no wheel."

"Wheel, not wheel. She's wheel, we swing, we make love."

"Who?"

"Oh, nevamind." I had my pants up and I brushed my already-thinning hair with my fingers. He had cropped hair like a buffalo's mane, thick and greasy.

"I like to whithle and thing," he said.

"So what," I replied.

"My name is Duct Tape," he responded.

"Huh, Indians, whew!"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Hoova," I said, reluctantly.

"Hoover?"

"Yeah, I have twouble with my ah's."

"Really? I have trouble with my ethiz. Do you know how to do the thplithz?"

I couldn't but he taught me. We became pals though he was a year and a half younger than me. I sang, *Let's all sing like the boardies sing, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet*, and then he'd whistle like a blue-jay or a hawk or a crow. My Grandmother told me the song would cure my r problem, but it didn't.

Duct Tape and I danced around the tractor tire, holding hands. He stuck his tongue in my ear and called me thweetheart. I didn't think much of it. My succubus had disappeared and I missed her from time to time. Duct Tape was a poor replacement in my eyes, but he tried to win me over.

We chatted, swinging on the swing-set as the sun passed away, shadows unfolded. He was swinging higher than me and he didn't close his eyes. He jumped too early. When he landed, he stayed on the ground in a pool of light from a moon I hadn't noticed. I turned my head to find it; there, nearly full over a little rise. When I looked back at Duct Tape he was standing with his pants around his ankles, erect member in his hand, a devious stare on his face. I immediately thought of my succubus and felt betrayed.

"What's this?" I demanded.

"Thuck me, Hoover, thuck me," he said.

"You're crazy," I stated, just like that, with solid r's.

Duct Tape didn't notice, his tongue was sticking out of his mouth and he looked hungry. I stayed on the swing until he tired, softened, went away, and the moon became obvious overhead. I picked my way home carefully by that light.