

Alice Friman

On Deck

April in Georgia and the dogwood
droops peevish. Ten in the morning,
95 in the shade, and the pond—
where a friend swears he once saw
a beaver slap his tail—gags on mud.

But weather or not, new shoots
of kudzu inching across the ground
look for a sapling to mount, while
birds, as if demented, keep up
their eggy songs of love. Funny
how wooing goes on no matter what.
Or where. Just yesterday, never
mind the UV rays taking advantage
of peepholes in the ozone, we walked
our flesh outside—me with my droop
and advancing state of crepiness, and he,
formerly known as *sweet young thing*,
bifocaled now and balding. Think old—
Adam and his girl come home
lugging their baggage and their deaths
but still hand-in-hand courageous
despite their once-upon-a-time bitter
dish of apple crumble, only to face
on their return to nakedness
the white oak's shudder and groan,

the April poplar turning away its leaves.
Damn sun suckers! Little Puritans!

Maybe in November, when light's
absence squeezes the day from both ends
and all last-ditch efforts of October's
in-your-face glitterings are flattened underfoot,
those leaves will look back, not on their spring
but on their final frippery, and what smug
joy it was. That defiance. That withering *HA!*