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## SUSAN BRALEY

### Country Bounty

#### *Classic Country Cooking!*

The magazine trumpeted from its rack by  
the cash;  
On the cover  
A burnished matriarch presided,  
smiling, satiated,  
over a rustic spread in crocks and bowls:

Roast beef (our own!) floating in cream  
gravy  
with buttered mash on the side,  
Homemade bread swaddled in calico cloth,  
and from the garden, of course, c  
arrots and cabbage and peas...

Then, withheld until the end, for those  
meat-and-potatoes men,  
Taut red cherries, plucked fresh from the  
orchard,  
Simmered, sauced and latticed into pies,  
And anointed with whipping cream before  
their demise.

#### *Should last till the day after tomorrow,*

She thought, unloading her six items onto  
the belt;  
Boxed mac-and-cheese dinners, tinned peas  
on sale,  
And no-name peanut butter to spread on day-  
old white bread:

Not what the last locum doctor ordered  
when he saw her pale skin (she didn't push  
up her sleeves to reveal the real reason she  
came in).  
Derek's under pressure too, he says, there's  
no money except for bills, banks, and (truth  
be told) booze...

She should tell someone, of course, but the  
shelter is forty miles away;  
The computer at the library ties her fingers  
and stomach into knots, A  
nd how can she ask when she can't do the  
search on her own?  
Best submit to the troubles she knows.

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