



Coast Range Chronicles 17: “Vernal Equinox”

by

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After the vernal equinox, rains taper and days lengthen and the sun angles higher and the air warms. Soils are moist, growing conditions prime.

You can smell biomass piling on the landscape. You can hear it in the birdsong. You can see it on the hills flush with green.

Annuals that germinated after the first fall rains and grew slowly through the winter now stand tall and thick. Perennials brim with new foliage.

Manroot appears from nowhere and twines through the scrub, tendrils grasping like fingers. Catkins dangle from oaks. Poppy, lupine, and violet paint the earth with color. Vile but beautiful weeds like mustard, Bermuda buttercup, and French broom carpet the fields with yellow.

Creeks churn with runoff. Trails are overgrown. Insects buzz everywhere. Gopher and garter snakes slither through it all.

As spring yields to summer, rains vanish and soil moisture dissipates and brown spreads across the hills like a slowly rising tide. Stratus pushes in from the ocean and clings to the mountains. Plants go to seed or dormant or back underground to await the return of rain in the fall.

And then comes winter and another spring, exactly like before.

But different.