

The dogs barking in the middle of the night woke me up. I didn't think much about it, even though they persisted, off and on, for some time. Deer, raccoons, and even skunks often pass through the yard during the dark hours. Kate or Blue—sometimes one, sometimes the other—sleeps on the roof of the dog house in fine weather, and both of them hear and see everything. Sometimes, they also reply to coyotes in the distance or to the sound of an owl in the night.

So, when I looked out the window at 6 a.m., I was mainly trying to see how much it had rained while we slept and to check the temperature on the thermometer that is fastened to the woodshed wall.

But, my gaze soon detected movement in the round pen where Pony had spent several nights since her foaling time had come closer. Runo and our Amish neighbor Dennis had looked at Pony the evening before, concluding that it would be about two weeks before she would have her baby. So, that was not a concern.

The movement in the pen, even from a distance, made it clear that the estimation of Pony's foaling date had been off—by two weeks. For, there was a little rain-soaked entity following her around the pen.

We went out, the dogs looking knowingly at us—"We tried to tell you!" and took Pony and her foal to the barn. The new baby—all legs, as foals are—followed along after her mother. Pony is about twelve years old and had never given birth before. Still, she seemed to be fully aware of her new responsibilities. She and the foal quieted down, and by now, have settled into a routine. We put them in the box stall at night, and during the day, they are in the grassy lot between the cabin and the barn. There is plenty of pasture for Pony and lots of space for the foal to run and play. There is also shade for their comfort and protection during the hot, sunny days of summer.

The filly foal now has a name, too. Long before my time, there was a riding pony here on Coe Creek with the name Topsy. The family children, according to stories, spent a lot of time riding the pony and trying to control her. She wasn't mean or wild, but she usually had better things to do than carry kids around the barnyard. So, she generally tried to go into the barn with riders still on her back. We aren't expecting the present Topsy to carry on this tradition, but the name seems appropriate.

Topsy will probably be a chestnut hue, although it isn't really clear yet what her adult color will be. Pony is a Halflinger, and the stud is a black Morgan. Topsy has a white patch on her face—bigger than a star, but not as long as a blaze—that our friend in Sweden, after looking at the picture I e-mailed—said looked like South America. So, maybe Topsy should have had a Spanish or Portuguese name. But, Topsy she is, anyway.

And, that morning after she was born during the rainy night, I left a message for Dennis on his phone: "It was a short two weeks." He knew, when he saw that, what had occurred.

