

NEW WORLD CULTURES

THEY STOLE THE RUG TOGETHER.

SAME WITH THE LICENSE PLATES
ON THE RUSTY OLD PICK-UP
TRUCK,

AND THE PAWNED GOLD TOOTH,

AND THE BABY.

HE HAD STOLEN THEIR NEW NAMES
THANKS TO A LITTLE WHITE-OUT IN
THE UNION COUNTY DEATH REGISTRY
AND A BOOTLEG PRINTER WRAPPED
IN MOTH-EATEN SHEETS HIDDEN
AMONGST THE FROWNED UPON
COUSIN'S SLY BASEMENT HOARD.

SHE HAD STOLEN THE MONEY WITH
THE RUSSIAN REVOLVER FROM THE TIP
POCKETS OF FOUR PITIABLE TEENAGERS
CLOCKING OUT OF THEIR LATE-NIGHT
SHIFTS AT THE 24-HOUR DENNY'S; PALMS
SLICK WITH GREASE TREMBLING AGAINST
THE SYRUP STICKY WALL OF THE BACK
ALLEY, COLD SWEAT ON COLD SWEAT.

THEY WERE ON THE ROAD FOR THREE DAYS
UNNOTICED (WITH A COUPLE OF CLOSE CALLS)
TAKING U.S. INTERSTATE 20 FROM
BUFFALO TO BOISE.....

....AND SWITCHING OFF AT THE WHEEL
EVERYTIME THEY CROSSED A STATE
LINE.

AROUND NOON IN OHIO, IT WAS HIS
TURN TO DRIVE.

UNBUCKLED IN THE BACKSEAT DIRECTLY
BEHIND, SHE POPPED OUT THE DRIVER'S
HEADREST TO BLEACH HIS HAIR INTO A
HANDCRAFTED DISGUISE.

HALF OF HIS SCALP WAS JUST STARTING TO
BURN WHEN A KING VULTURE DOVE BEAK-
GREEDY TOWARDS THE ASPHALT FEET AWAY,
SCAVENGING ON THE SMEAR OF SOME
ILLEGIBLE ROADKILL.

HE BEAT THE BRAKES INTO PANIC,
SCREECHING LIKE THE WARNING OF A
MORNING ROOSTER WHO JUST WOKE UP
FROM A NIGHTMARE.

SHE SLAMMED FACE FIRST INTO THE BACK OF
THE DRIVER'S SEAT, TEETH SINKING DEEP
INTO ITS PEELING LEATHER BARK.

THE BOX OF DYE JILTED FORWARD FROM HER
LAP,
SPLATTERING ON THE WINDSHIELD,
ALL OVER THE DASHBOARD,

AND RIGHT INTO THE BABY'S LEFT EYE.

SHE WIPEd THE BLEACH CLEAN OFF OF
HER FINGERS ON THE ROLLED-UP RUG
BENEATH HER FEET, THEN REACHED FOR
THE CENTER CONSOLE TO CHRISTEN..

...THE SACRED FLASK OF HOLY WATER
LEFT BY HER LATE GRANDMOTHER.

IT WAS ONE OF THE ONLY THINGS IN THE
CAR THAT THEY HADN'T STOLEN, AND SHE WAS
DESPERATE TO RESTORE SIGHT TO THE
SCREAMING BLIND.

BUT GRANDMA WAS A LIAR TOO, AND A
GODDAMN GOOD ONE, BECAUSE OUT FROM THE
PEWTER SPOUT CAME ONLY A FLOOD OF
HOMEMADE PROHIBITION gin.

HER GUILTY WHITE HANDPRINTS WOULD
STAIN THE CARPET,

THE BABY'S EYE WOULD BE STRUCK A
STRANGULATED BLUE FOR LIFE,

AND THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE JUST OUT OF
REACH FROM A BLESSING.

AFTER HOURS OF THICK SILENCE, A TIMID
MOON BEGAN TO RISE NAKED AND COOL
SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE OF IOWA CITY. SHE
WAS CRY-TIRED AND FALLING ASLEEP AT THE
WHEEL.

THEIR SAVING GRACE WAS A SLAB OF
CRACKED AND QUADRATED CONCRETE,
CROWNED WITH A CROOKED HOME MADE
SIGN,

MARTY'S REST STOP.
No dogs.

THEY SPREAD THE RUG OUT IN THE BED
OF THE TRUCK, HOPPED IN FLAT SHOULDER
TO SHOULDER WITH THE BABY IN THE
MIDDLE, AND DRIFTED INTO A TWITCHY
SLEEP.

THEY DREAMED ABOUT hollowing out
THEIR HUMANITY AND UNTAMING THEIR
COILED SPINES, FREE LIKE CITY
PIGEONS.

THEY WERE SAFE HERE, FOR NOW,
POSED AS YET ANOTHER AUTOMOBILE
LEFT TO STUTTER ON THE HEM OF THE
OUTSKIRT THAT IS INTERSTATE 20.

SO LONG AS NOBODY LIGHTS A MATCH
UNDER THE MATTRESS.