



## "The train slowed..."

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The train slowed. Dice rose to collect his luggage from the overhead rack. He was so short he had to stand on tip toe. Gigi helped him and he didn't seem to mind.

"Well, I get off here. Nice talking with you."

"You too."

"Good luck. Watch out, now. Don't get wet."

If the boys standing across from the bus stop in front of a kind of barbecue grill had said No, this is Alcorn, Mississippi, she probably would have believed them. Same haircuts, same stares, same loose, hick smiles. What her Granddaddy called "country's country." Some girls were there too, arguing, it seemed, with one of them. In any case, they weren't much help but she enjoyed the waves of raw horniness slapping her back as she walked off down the street.

Tuesday 6th September, 1994

First dust, fine as flour, sifted into her eyes, her mouth. Then the wind wrecked her hair. Suddenly she was out of town. What the locals called Central Avenue just stopped and Gigi was at Ruby's edge at the same time she had reached its center. The wind, soundless,

came from the ground rather than the sky. One minute her heels clicked, the next they were sunk in <sup>swirling</sup> dirt. On either side of her tall grass rolled like water. <sup>All around</sup> ~~Behind~~ her closed doors and shut windows where parted curtains were swiftly replaced.

She had stopped <sup>five minutes ago</sup> in a drugstore ~~and~~ bought cigarettes, and learned that the boys at the barbecue grill were telling the truth: there was no motel. And if there was any pie it wasn't served at a restaurant because there wasn't one of those either. Other than the picnic benches at the barbecue thing, there was no public place to sit down.

<sup>So much for</sup> ~~Later~~, Ruby, she thought. <sup>(cover)</sup> ~~Much, much later~~. Sooner or later one of those trucks parked on the street would have to start up and she would hitch out of there.

Holding on to her hair and squinting against the wind, Gigi considered walking back to the drugstore. Her back pack felt heavy in high heels and if she didn't move, the wind might topple her. As <sup>suddenly</sup> ~~quickly~~ as it had begun the wind quit, <sup>absence</sup> ~~and in its silence~~, she heard an engine coming toward her.

"You headed out to the Convent?" <sup>A man in a wide-brimmed hat</sup> ~~opened the door of his van.~~  
Gigi tossed her backpack on the seat and climbed in. "You



And the <sup>thick</sup> ~~ass~~ <sup>hole</sup> <sup>fre all.</sup> on the train must have been sent her that

Not only was there

She just wanted to see <sup>Not just</sup> it. but  
if there was anything <sup>IN</sup> ~~(rock tree or water)~~ the world had to say  
<sup>(for itself)</sup> about that wasn't <sup>bodybags</sup> war or  
<sup>little</sup> death, or boys spitting blood into  
their hands. So, Alcorn. She  
might as well start over in Alcorn.

kidding? anything but. Can you put me near a bus stop or train station or something?"

"You in luck. Take you right to the track."

"Great!" Gigi dug in the pack between her knees. "Smells new."

"Brand new. You all my first trip."

"You all?"

"Have to make a stop. Another passenger going to take a train ride too." He smiled. "My name's Roger. Roger K"

"Gigi."

"But you free. The other one I charge," he said, cutting his eyes away from the road. Pretending to examine the scenery through the passenger window, he looked at her navel first, then further down, then up.

Gigi repaired the wind damage as best she could, thinking, Yeah. I'm free all right.

And she was. Just as Roger said, there was no charge to the living, but the dead cost twenty-five dollars.