

Easy on the Clutch

by Patrick McGee

There's an old dirt road in Madisonville, Kentucky lined with walnut trees wearing their summer best, ripe with green suns calling to the squirrels in the woods. It reminds me of Guthrie, Oklahoma, a small town a dozen miles north of Edmond where I grew up when I was fifteen years old, but a dozen years from Kentucky, although one hundred miles away from anything else but the current moment, everything else drifting away like the white smoke from a prairie fire in Eastern Oklahoma. I threw it around real good, that green four-door Plymouth fishtailing across dust-crusting roads that curled around my girlfriend Carrie's trailer where she lived with her father, her mother and her mother's new husband all under one sunbaked, wood-shingled roof God and His forsaken commandments be damned to hell. The Green Monster wasn't mine—it was Carrie's—but I didn't give a damn since knocking that gearshift into first, popping that clutch, and spinning those bald tires felt like the Fourth of July on a Thursday and she would let me drive down to the old abandoned barn near the overgrown alfalfa fields now stabbed with golden rod and sunflower as tall as two tractors on each others' shoulders, grazed at that time by jack rabbits, raccoons, and any cares Carrie or I might have had. That old barn, sun-bleached and rotting, barely stood on its own let alone blanched by our amazement that a twister should have knocked it over years ago. I became a man in that barn a few times, although what a man was I probably couldn't have told you at fifteen. All that is gone now, or maybe still there, I don't know since I haven't been back to that place in over two lifetimes. Now, I see that same teenage boy in my home, pimple-faced, rail-thin, and full of possible. Under the surface I can see him and his fence-jumping, barnstorming, hand-holding while barreling into the unknown adventure waiting out there somewhere, sometime down the road as if all of it will happen for the first time ever but I guess on his dust-baked road, when he's ready and when the urge strikes him, it's all just a matter of perspective.