

Get Me Gone

by Mark Reep

On a corkboard in the entryway of the Leetonia Shurfine Market a curling handwritten sign said *Room for Rent. Kitchen Living Room Laundry Privileges. \$65 Weekly.* Tear-off tabs offered a phone number. Quail took one.

When he came out with his sub the sun had sunk behind the Shurfine sign and the truck fallen into cool of shadow. He'd not got the driver's window to work so he leant across and rolled down the other. Propped the Shopper against the wheel and ate scanning pages for more likely prospect. Finding none Quail checked the minutes on his Dollar Store phone, called the number.

At length a distant oldtimey ringing. Faint echoes rolling away between. *BRRING! ing ing ing... BRRING! ing ing ing...* The eighth or ninth broke off midclatter but nearby a trainwhistle blew and if someone answered Quail didn't hear. A louder blast. Quail put his phone down. A locomotive rumbled past drawing tankcars and containers. Bright grafitti blooming over old: HAIKU. DEAS. EAT THE EMPIRE. Quail watching wondered was this one he'd ridden, only guessing where it bore him. Caring little. Get me gone.

When he tried again a man said yeah. The what? Oh the *room*. Yeah sure. Where you at? He named a river to cross, a hill to climb. Ways and landmarks: A slatbridge, a crossroads, a church with a red door, a road with no name. Icons from some Appalachian Tarot unlikely of portent. A barn says to what?

Quail scribbling on a scrap of Shopper stopped to listen. Hello? he said. Hello?

