

Itch

by Meg Tuite

It was nothing more than an itch that tore a hole into her single-girl-skewed-to-be-happy existence and spat on it. Clayton had a grin like the hand of a beast that stretched as long as her gravel road and there was that radio of his that always bellowed in his wake with the agonizing, popcorn-mangled moan of some despondent bumpkin battering on about heartache or doing somebody else's wife.

She kept one hand in her pocket for no particular reason. The itch would start with the tiniest gesture of a twitch in her finger and wouldn't stop until it had lurched up her arms and legs, binding her entire being with the backlash of Clayton and his demented music. He was made to be hers as surely as the beer she kept ice-cold in a cooler in her Pinto trunk.

Every few days Clayton blasted his dirt bike, like an ache, around that long stretch of emotion as she'd watch and wait, scratching away at her self in some divine sort of mosquito-bite trance. He'd head for her car and tear a cold Bud from the six-pack on ice. One faded, black high-top tapped on top of the other while he filed away at his teeth with a toothpick, leaning against the Pinto. He'd suck back the Bud and talk about anything with that ridiculous radio, duct-taped to the back of his bike, yodeling on about a life that was waiting to happen. She craved to smack that beer out of his hand and rub her crawling hives up and down his dirty fingernails until they both clawed for the same thing.

