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## Centreville Pentecost

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**Centreville Pentecost**

for Vicki

Half-past ten on Monday night and we're sitting on ripped orange vinyl at the Twix-n-Tween, bored and waiting on her decaf, listening to the Mexican boy at the counter try to explain where he's going. The cashier is shaking her head,

repeating *no speak-o, no speak-o*. Vicki's two years of high school Spanish taught her at least the words for *lost* and *hungry* and *home*, so she goes to the counter to try and translate. The cashier removes her bifocals

to peer at her. She's wondering if Vicki is on drugs, but she's relieved of her Christian duty and can now get back to her crossword puzzle. All Vicki can surmise is that the boy is enroute from Mexico to Atlanta. He needs

somewhere to sleep. She has run out of words, so we buy him a hamburger and pay our check. There's an old woman coming out of the kitchen. She's wearing a white apron and too much eye shadow. She looks tired and walks slowly,

reaching her gnarled hand into an old, white refrigerator, and she crosses the dirty restaurant as we start to leave. Vicki wonders aloud how to say *good luck*.

I see the old woman handing the boy a Dr. Pepper

while saying what are probably the only words she remembers from high school Spanish. *Mucho gusto*, she says in her Alabama drawl. *Pleased to meet you*. And he smiles. The cashier hasn't noticed any of this.

We're back on the highway, windows down, and I'm wondering if this was a miracle, this old woman's Spanish. I'm picturing a tongue of fire over the woman's dyed-red hair, a scene

from a stained-glass window. This was the Pentecost. . . But I know that the boy is still lost, the cashier is still oblivious, the old woman is exhausted and still waiting tables, and the road has never seemed so flat, so black.

--Seth Stewart