

Sample from “In the Gift of Choice”

Every dead pigeon in the world can be found underneath the western brown-line train stop in Rome, Indiana. This is strange mostly because there is no shortage of good places to go and die in Rome. You have, for example, Mom & Pop’s Old Tire Shop, founded probably one hundred years ago by the Mom and Pop of Mom & Pop’s. It is said that, the instant they crossed over the Ohio River from Kentucky, they felt the hearty, tan Indiana earth under their feet and knew this land was theirs. Since pigeons always find cozy nooks to die in, one might think they would flock to the innards of the old tires surrounding the shop, but they do not. The tires are covered in an earthy dust and smell of faraway cement, so the pigeons must think they aren’t suitably quaint places to die. There’s also the forest just outside of town, which must be filled with natural, little graves. There’s the old “Jesus Saves” billboard, whose faith has eroded over time to read “esus caves,” and whose rotting structure houses crypts for small creatures. There are basements, there are several irreparable cars perched up on blocks, there’s that general store that closed back when everything you needed in life was less than a dollar, and there’s the sturdy, wooden cabin that used to house an old Indiana governor who sailed around the world once, so we’ve all been told. None of these structures will do. All pigeons choose to die in the abandoned maintenance room below the train stop, and that is where I met Patricia.