

Did You Get Two

by John Riley

"106 more miles," she said.

She stared at him. "Did you see the sign? 106 goddamn miles."

We were going to grandma's house so me and mom could stay a few days. It was a long ride. I was on my knees on the backseat. Out of my safety belt. My door lock was pushed down.

She said, "You'll have less than nothing. I'll see to that. You'll be a beggar. 106 miles to the goddamn hotel. I hope it was good. Was it good? Did you ever drive 106 miles to get some of it?"

He clung to the wheel with both hands. "Everything is not all my fault," he said. He waited a minute then said, "You have too many expectations."

I held on to the hand strap and leaned against my door. The moon had been out but now was gone. The air was so hot in the car I could barely breath. She had made me close the window so her hair wouldn't get blown out of place. She got it set just yesterday. I cracked my window an inch. She didn't notice. I sucked in a mouthful of air.

"Expectations," she said, and covered her face with her hands and began to cry. My insides filled up with hot water. I needed more wind on my face.

He kept both hands on the wheel.

She cried for a long time, quietly, like she was trying to hide it from me. Then she said, "Did you get two rooms? Tell me you got two."

He didn't answer. I slipped my fingers around the door lock.

