

Migrant Workers

by Katie Norton

Emma pushes through the door of the corner market, aiming briskly for her car, keys in one hand, grocery bag in the other, shoulder bag slung. Best not to make eye contact with the loitering boozers and bikers from the bar next door.

Double take. Can't avoid this mess, parked right next to her car: 1970s GMC Suburban listing on a flat tire, like none she has ever seen, rubber completely worn away, the tire nothing but white threads. The other three tires on their last legs too. A Caucasian family, dreadlocked down to their waist every one of them, even the toddler, clusters around the vehicle. Pot trimmers, rolling into town, happens every year at harvest time in Mendocino County. Daddy drove that death trap on the freeway. A girl, about five, looks old beyond her years, huge brown eyes wary.

Calm, sweet-faced, lovely, dreadlocked Mrs. approaches Emma. "Do you know where we can get a tire around here?" Too smiley, not right, not the least bit perturbed at a vehicle breakdown in a strange town. With small children. They need so much more than one tire.

"There's a service station that sells tires about a mile and a half up the road." Emma jerks her head in the direction of the gas station as she opens her car door, gets in and drives away. The eyes of the five-year old girl follow her.

