

Cover Story

by R. A. Allen

My favorite junkyard was on Highway 61 just inside the city limits of what was then the incorporated town of Russum, Mississippi.

For one week of every summer, we would visit with some cousins who made their home there--our "country" cousins, Dad would joke behind Mom's back. Our cousins lived next door to the junkyard, twenty acres of Studebakers and LaSalles, two-toned Hudson Hornets and eyeless DeSotos; broken pulpwood trucks; and Fords, Plymouths, and Chevrolets without bound.

My tomboy cousin and I used to slip through the fence and risk tetanus and wasp attack among the rusting hulks. Pretending to drive, we would say, "Vroom, vroom. Beep, beep." And, "Skeeeeeech!"

Some years later, Kudzu vines invaded our playground. One corner at first, a verdant ground fog creeping toward the antique cars like a plague of the first-born. A Model A Sedan was the first to be smothered.

It's trite, but to stay within a botanical motif, let us say that my cousin *ripened*. In those days, the notion of having sex with your cousin was especially appealing, same as it is now--forbidden fruit and all that. Voodoo juju taboo. Back then, incest was sin exponentiated to the power of infinity. If you produced offspring, Satan rewarded you with a floppy mongoloid idiot that you'd have to keep in the attic. Your lives would be ruined. Shame would tar your families unto forever.

So we tried to be careful.

Today, if you even notice the junkyard as you drive by, the Kudzued cars look like bad topiary.

