

Red

by Stephen Heger

There's a boarded up Chevron a few blocks down the street from where I used to live. I still pass it every now and again as I'm going to and from jobs. When I lived in the area, which was about three years ago, there was this one red-headed female gas jockey that seemed to always be working. No matter the time of day I would stop by, she would be there. I'd say she was in her mid-fifties or so and appeared to not have had an easy life. I always said hi and she would return it with a cigarette and whiskey laden hello. Over time we began to engage in small talk and eventually she would tell me more little bits and pieces of her life. A lot of the conversation revolved around her two children that she could never talk enough about. You could see the pride beaming from her eyes. I drove by the other day and a few blocks down from the boarded up station I saw her pushing a shopping cart. It seemed to be filled the brim with what I assumed were left of her worldly possessions. She looked broken. I wondered where those kids were that she so proudly talked about before. The ones that filled her with pride. It made me angry at first. Then I realized I was just as guilty as I saw her fade in the rearview mirror.

