White Treasure

by tommy klehr

Alex paced the tiny kitchen in her trailer. A few steps, then she had to turn around. She wore a dirty white tank top and a pair of blue boy shorts. On her feet, she wore a pair of grungy pink bunny slippers, no longer resembling rabbits of any form.

Her sister had called her white trash. At the time, the comment stung. It didn't sting any more. It was only a label. Maybe she was white trash. It didn't matter. Yes, she lived in a trailer park. Yes, she was pregnant... again. Yes, her husband — well they weren't married yet, but had been together for almost a year and a half — had a blue collar job on the train. They were happy — for the most part. What did it matter what her sister thought. She recalled the saying about “one man's trash...” and considered herself white treasure.

He'd be coming home soon. Jimmy had been away for a week. He'd smell of beer and burnt oil. If he didn't, that would mean he stopped somewhere along the way home for a visit and to clean off her smell. She knew his patterns. Knew him well. She didn't mind if he fucked around a little — it was bound to happen. He just couldn't do it around here. And he'd better treat her well when they were together. She taught him that lesson early on.

He came home once smelling of beer, train, and some slut. She called him on it. The next time, he came home smelling clean. She figured it out. She was smart. Not book smart like her sister, but wise nonetheless. She let that one pass. It wasn't worth it. Billy was a good provider. Gave his paycheck to her, keeping a small allowance for his simple pleasures. Beer and cigarettes. The occasional hooker. The rest was hers. To take care of things.

He wasn't bad, especially compared to the previous ones. She had five kids already, one more on the way. The most recent was Billy's.

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She was pretty sure of it. The previous was Stan's. The two before that were also Stan's, but everyone thought they were Samuel's. Everyone but Alex. Stan was Samuel's neighbor, and well... Samuel used to travel.

Her first child, Adriana, was Freddy's. Freddy was her high-school sweetheart. He knocked her up right before her senior year. She dropped out when things got messy. Never got her GED either. Didn't need it. Freddy dropped out too. Swore he'd always love her. Promised so many things. Words. Words that she believed. She never believed a man again. Men would say anything to be with her. She was that good. Was.

Years of raising children, smoking, drinking, and a short stint on the street took many years off her. She wasn't that good any more, but Billy didn't mind. She was good enough for him. And Billy was good enough for her.

She saw the clock and realized that he still wasn't home. Her eyes moved to the crock on the top of the fridge. She hated herself when she spotted it. “Vacation Fund” it said. She took the crock down. The coins jingled in it as she lowered it. On top of the funds, all $7.23 of them, was a pack of cigarettes and a Playboy lighter. She had cut way back on her smoking when she found out she was pregnant. She looked forward to being able to smoke full time again after this one was born. She felt embarrassed when she lit up in front of people with her stomach like this. It fits the white trash label, though. Fuck 'em. White treasure.

She took out the pack of cigarettes. There were a handful of them left in the box, but that's not what she was after. She turned the pack over and found it. Tucked in the plastic wrap, right were she had left it, was the rest of the joint she had smoked when she found out she was pregnant. Seven months it has been there, awaiting her return.

She removed the joint, a stale cigarette and the lighter. Seven months is a long time.