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Dreamwalker Reincarnation Blues: The Ballad of Double D
by Michelle Antoinette

When Double D returned the first time,
he arrived at our annual Christmas Eve party
a brand-new man—an incarnation, shiny

as the six-inch buckle twanging below his banded Stetson.
His boots, too, were made of skin, and curved faintly
toward the popcorn ceiling—the fool, he was in Ruston

trading controlled flight, pilot lessons
for trailer life, square cubes floating on
four fingers of bourbon, a real fancy

Southern accent, and you bet she sure could cook good—
oven brisket bbq, no boxed macaroni, fresh corn on the cob—
all that butter his mama wouldn't let him eat straight from the tub.

But the baby wasn't his, and country was never suited for jazzy sax, electric
guitar—his first love, native tongue, the home that followed him on the road,
up the Mississippi, leather repelling the open heavens, rubber gripping hot

to the highway to show hipsters in St. Louis how he'd play
their instruments if he were them. Had to trade it all in
exactly like the van that broke down on that last trip, cuz

maybe the condom broke and maybe it didn't
but the Mandeville rich still practice shotgun weddings
even if the man is of such low stock he's never seen a blanket ladder—

after all, working class works—so he worked for her: credit cards and indentured servitude
for a mortgage her father paid. He toiled. He teetered for a decade. She got four degrees,
four kids, alimony. He got time. He got free.

He also got a TikTok account, a room at his parents' place in Picayune, and a 12-gauge
ear piercing—a silver hoop. This time, he showed up on my porch, Black Friday,
with a steel-stringed acoustic, fresh soul patch, and a bottle of peanut butter whiskey.

We were playing UNO like our elders once did, circled around the dining room table, smoking bud instead of tobacco when he gave thanks for enduring the incident—the kind our Uncle Harry and cousin Leslie didn't. I asked him how,

standing at the lake's edge, he decided not to do it. He said *I didn't—the safety, inexplicably, was on*. He took that as a sign from God that he was mistaken. He was alive. He could still go home. I told him I agree.

Maybe he practices good gun safety, but I, too, remember reading bodies, rooms instead of scripts: unlocking the door before stuffing paper towels under the running faucet, dunking my face into the pool. When the dreamlife becomes dreamwalking,

we rise from ditches, breathing water, when all we want is a solid rest.