New York's Finest: A Pair of Rooms, A Pair of Meals.
New York, NY, 10020. Part II.

By Alex Forrest

Grand Central Station reaffirms my belief that trains will never become obsolete. Its main room is a magnificent underground cavern—a convergence of impeccably engineered, labyrinthine webs of rails, wires, wheels, and cars. It has a comforting and beautiful reverberation that sends your footprints to the ceiling, walks them across the moon, dances them with a complete stranger's, and sends them back to your ears familiar, recognizable, but not the way they were when they left. They come back older-souled, educated, appreciative, not unlike a son returning home from far-off places. And oh, how it stays in the ears: that sound we get when footsteps drop into the pond of a hundred footsteps, with only a ripple to show you where they landed. And there are constellations painted upon Grand Central's ceiling: they mysteriously and forcefully draw me in, they paint themselves upon the skies of my dreams for days, moving across the intangible plaster canvas in their mystical arcs, painting themselves on every American sky that is hung over the hundred highways we've driven. They lead me back to a childhood spent sitting on the roof through cold damp Pacific Northwestern nights, staring skyward with stardust in my eyes.

Below the horizon, Grand Central's marble arteries coalesce into a maze of food and people in transit, two things that make life worth loving and keep lives living: paths to cross, and things to eat. One of those things is Two Boots Pizza: Italy meets Creole in the City. Italy's one boot, Louisiana another. I love maps, too, and the shapes made by the borders of states. Idaho's panhandle took an hour and forty minutes to cross heading east through a thunderstorm and torrential downpour. A thin-crusted slice of pie with andouille, crawfish, shrimp, sausage, and Creole seasonings takes fourteen minutes to eat. The conversation occurring overtop takes a lifetime to complete. New York City, Center of the Universe: Cross its heart before you die. Your ears, your eyes, your mouth, and your memory will all thank you.