

*A Slick Six from  
Camouflage Country*



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# Editor's Preface

In fifth grade or so, we were probably all told that stories must contain certain elements: plot, character, conflict, theme, and setting. And we may have been tested on our ability to identify conventions in the English language. It is possible, too, that at one time writing formulas restricted our imagination. And even today, as adults, we hear whispers of, “What makes a story?” or, “This isn’t a *story*.”

But if you want a picture of life, or a *story*, take a beer bottle and smash it to the ground where those gleaming *fragments* are often the most complete picture one can hope for—pieces of which there is no clear beginning, middle, or end. To us, a story is merely a translation or reflection of a real or imagined experience, whether that experience is long or short, linear or a blur. And when it came to Mel and Ryan’s work, we loved their micro-fiction pieces not only for conveying quite a lot in very little space, but also for its strength in conveying uncertainty. One of the hardest things about life is that even when we share it, we still live in a kind of lonesome vortex, where individuals exist inside us, and we imagine and hope that we exist and are perceived inside other individuals to some mutual degree of understanding: we hope and then translate with words.

So, dig in and enjoy the seventh story in our series of twelve.

Yours,

The Editors

## *An Introduction to Gender & Sexuality*

My father drove me to a campground and said: “Welcome to college!” He pointed to a stand of oaks beyond the municipal showers and said: “Future books.” Then he pointed to me and said: “Future grad.” Then he pointed to himself and said: “Future woman.” Then he pointed to the cooler and said: “Let’s have a manly beer!” Later, pensive and buzzed beside the warmth and crackle of our campfire, I took a cool swallow of Michelob Ultra, fired a snot rocket into the darkness, and told my father he’d make a damn fine mother.



## *Go Wildcats!*

He decided to propose during intercourse. Here's what he proposed: "How about I take this condom off?" She accepted. Then, midway through intercourse—you could tell it was midway because of the giant game-clock on the ceiling—she presented a proposition of her own: "How about we run off together and save the world?" His eyes moved from her bare, augmented breasts, to the dimple on her chin, to the picture of her parents with her little brother on the nightstand, and hey, her mother is still hot, which is a good sign. Then his eyes hardened with the look of purpose in her eyes, his lips parted, and he was about to answer when suddenly her little brother tripped from her closet wearing her old cheerleader uniform. "Go, Wildcats!" The boy shouted. "Go, Fight, Win! Go, Fight, Win!"



## *Different Jurisdictions*

We searched the creek for your old man. You said you loved him. I splashed cool water onto my sunburned arms and pretended I did, too. We walked the trails that trailed off like idiots and I considered the way your father considered me. And sure, he was probably right by his estimates considering I was the CEO of an unsuccessful Ayahuasca travel agency and he was an old-school son-of-a-bitch who ran the grand jury, but even so his good judgment couldn't keep him from himself. When they finally found him hanging from his tie in a Broward County brothel closet, I couldn't help but close my eyes and pray that the judges of the next world didn't bring their gavels down as quickly as his.



## *Honolulu of the Heart*

Inside my Subaru we warmed our hands over the vents. I needed to get the newspaper. You needed to not be alone. The sky was big dawn and yawning winter. “How long?” you asked, and I pushed out my bottom lip. “Not sure. Ten years?” You sat back, fingers flexing, and said: “I guess I can live with that.” I nodded knowingly and ripped a hidden machete from beneath my seat. I twisted the blade in front of your face and said, “It’s better than dying with this.” You: “You’re amazing.” Me: “I’m never taking you to Hawaii.”



## *Heartbreak Special*

She said she'd sell him the bike for fifty bucks. Over a bowl of cold clam chowder I told her she could get at least a hundred for it on Craigslist. She told me she was giving him the "Heartbreak Special." I said, "That's mighty saintly of you and given the media-saturated hyperreality we find ourselves faced with today, saints are rare specimens indeed. Martyrs happen all the time, but a modern saint is about as rare as a one-armed gymnast." I finished my soup and there was a beat of silence and then she said, "You're right. I'll give him the bike for free."





## *Donner Party Time*

His femur snapped between the rocks, making his legs go nowhere. It was a sound only our stomachs recognized. We were hungry, damned hungry. We licked our lips and lit a fire.



