

## SUMMER VACATION 2003

The school year was over and I had sex on the brain while we drove our van along the gravel road to the family cabin. We got there with plenty of daylight left so Mom and Dad put us kids to work turning on the electricity or gassing up the push mowers and getting the yard mowed. I didn't mind working because we had no TV, so what the hell was there to do anyway? I'd started mowing at the apple trees and flattened the tall grass all the way to the canal. I stopped to wipe sweat off my face and look over at the camper across the water to see a girl my age squatting near the cabin's hitch with her pants at her ankles and a pair of bright pink panties around her bare knees. I had never seen her before, and nobody had ever stayed in that cabin the six years we owned ours. I watched her while the push mower sat roaring. I fantasized about going to her and kissing her mouth and pushing her blonde bangs out of her eyes. I wanted to see what breasts looked like up close, and maybe convince her to let me touch them. Never mind the fact that I was spying on her while she went to the bathroom. I wanted to see her sunbathe in a two-piece swimsuit. I wanted to have long conversations about the music she listened to and TV shows she liked. I could imagine us holding hands at a Fourth of July bonfire and making out late at night while my parents slept. Maybe even figure out what going all the way was.

SERENGETI SUMMER

Puberty is creeping up on me and I am in heat  
because it's July and the A/C unit can't stop Mercury's climb  
from thermometer bottom to tip.  
I'm watching Discovery Channel in the living room and there is a documentary on  
Cheetahs living on the African plains. I watch them tear through tiny Tommies  
and drag them off to shade trees to hide from buzzards and noonday swelter.  
Fast forward to just before the rainy season and the whole Serengeti stinks of sex.  
The males go wandering in search of mates to fuck then leave  
with offspring they must raise alone by some boulders, or near a tree cleft by lightning.  
And I didn't know sex could be shown on TV,  
Even educational footage of the act feels as if it should be forbidden,  
but there it is on the screen.  
My first time watching a sex scene, and it's cat on cat,  
Positioning, mounting, repetitive penetration  
of my one defense, my sense of shame; as the Cheetahs claw into my sexual identity,  
I watch innocently enough at first, but subconsciously (but not really  
subconsciously), I slip into my own hands, wanting to unleash the inner beast and howl  
into the act with the feral vigor of the natural, animal side of the self.  
In my mind I see cute classmates on all fours  
and there is growling in my guts like African wild dogs fighting for a bone,  
and I think of how natural and freeing my fantasies are; as the sex shots keep coming,  
I assume my cheetah mask, and I do the mounting. My innocence is rotting in the  
grass, overcome by something strong in me, as I form a philia for fur and beastly  
tendencies for using tooth and nail to prey on shame and savor its taste.

SITTING ON MILK CRATES BEHIND THE GAS STATION IN SHANNON, IL

Sitting on milk crates behind the gas station in Shannon, Illinois with my cousin Lane was a regular occurrence. We'd made couches out of crates complete with arm rests. We talked bands and girls. He had his eye on one girl whose sister was an identical twin. Both girls from very Christian parentage. How he could tell them apart and not choose the one actually interested in him I will never know. He would always talk about her cute pixie cut, capris, camisoles under loose-fitting sweaters. I had a new girl that he knew. She was one of those girls with a dye job and daddy issues. Wore a lot of black and branded a heart on her hip. Sometimes we'd hang out as one group and screw around back of the bowling alley, before we built a beer garden there, and other times just walk around, or sit at the park and do absolutely everything to avoid doing nothing. On one such occasion, sitting on our brown and orange couch of crates, we talked of the future, both of us planning to be out of this town, and in some major city like Chicago or Milwaukee. Lane made it to Madison. I stayed in Chicago two years before retreating back to this nowhere town tail betwixt legs and miserable to be back. At twenty five it's no longer okay to park it on the milk crates, and the new manager is kind of a dick.

WE CORN FED MIDWEST TEENAGERS

only care about finding something to do  
with our time and take it out  
on mailboxes and front lawns  
our body  
long journey of the senses  
tingle of the brain  
illegally purchased beer  
teeth numb and everything a little funnier  
hours of porn  
watching for televised side boob  
the caress of guilt at first  
sex the uncaring waxing with waning apprehension  
the practice of the craft becoming  
useful in this state  
regions beyond  
dizzying aromatic lust  
a response to boredoms vanquished  
there are indie albums in cars  
forgotten 90s bands  
the sound of teen spirit  
a huge disparity from the country  
of pop common  
rap during gym class  
basketball and weight training  
some of us grew to wear  
black hair  
band T shirts daily  
everyone else  
spent the sum of days at the mall  
buying fake gold chains  
cheap cell covers  
the clothes of clique-mind  
no watches  
because time can only be told by fields and minutes  
force fed empty spaces spanning seven years

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